

# Spain Nears Fascism As Revolt Fails

## Labor Revolution Crushed by Church, Nobility and Capital

By LUDWIG LORE

An impenetrable curtain of censorship restrictions obscures what is going on in Spain at the present time. Only this is certain—that Spain's united proletariat has suffered defeat against the combined forces of reaction. Fighting continues in a few skirmishes which will not affect the final outcome. The democratic state of the Spanish Republic has come and gone. The period of fascist dictatorship is at the door.

The prospects for labor in this fight were at no time favorable. But there was no other alternative. Spain's workers had to choose between hopeless submission, like that of their German comrades, or resistance against overpowering odds. They chose the latter, were forced by the enemy to strike only half prepared—and lost.

### The Alternative

It was that—or accept the Catholic-monarchist government which the enforced retirement of Samper had foisted upon them. Gil Robles had delegated three of his men into the new Lerroux Cabinet where they occupy the strategically most important ministerial posts. The fascist Catholic leader had accomplished what none had been able to do before him when he united the three enemies of those modest reforms which the Spanish revolution had wrought—the Catholic Church, the nobility and capital—into one solid army of reactionary aggression.

When in 1931 the Spanish crown fell and the cross showed signs of toppling, Gil Robles left the editor's chair of a Jesuit publication to become the leader of the newly founded Catholic Party, the Accion Popular. From his point of view, he had just cause for complaint. The Republic had confiscated the riches of the Church

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# Spanish Workers' Revolution Falls Before Church, Nobles

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and was threatening its influence. His Party became the refuge of resentful landowners who looked to it to wage their fight against revolutionary land reform—adopted by the republican Cortes but never carried out—and of the whole united bloc of counter-revolutionary reaction. The elections last November, in which the newly enfranchised women cast their votes for the clerical candidates, made the Accion Popular the largest unit in the Cortes.

The Labor Parties had declared at the outset that the participation of Gil Robles in the Spanish government would be the signal for a general strike. No attempt was made to utilize the victory the Catholics had won until the Catalan controversy a month or two ago precipitated what threatened to become a revolutionary situation.

A new Cabinet was organized in which Gil Robles himself took no place, but by placing his men into the Ministries of Labor, Justice and the Interior he became a dominating force in a government consisting of monarchists and fascists more than ready to go along.

This was a challenge that Socialists, Syndicalists and Communists could not ignore. With them stood the last remnants of bourgeois democracy which remained intact against the tide of reaction which engulfed the nation. The general strike was declared. The government answered at once by arresting thousands of active workers and labor leaders and declared a state of alarm throughout the Republic. The army on which the masses had counted for support, held to the government and only an occasional battalion of the Guardia Civil went with the revolutionists.

## In Catalonia

The fight in Catalonia was fought with especial severity. Early in its existence the Spanish Republic had granted the Catalan people autonomous rights in return for which that state relinquished its claim for national independence. But the recent sharp turn to the Right in the Central government revived the clamor for independence in the Catalan province. The appointment of the Lerroux government led to an open break with the Madrid regime. On the second day of the uprising the Generalidad, the Catalan legislature, proclaimed the independence of the Catalan republic and announced the creation of the "Spanish Federated Republic" under the Presidency of Azana, first Prime Minister of the Spanish Republic.

Barcelona, the Catalan capital city, fought from the start against a well-organized government force and was compelled to capitulate three days after the fight began with a terrible toll of killed and wounded. The collapse of the uprising in Catalonia was followed by surrender in the rest of the country and with the exception of Asturia, Spain is "at peace" once more. Those who led the uprising are behind prison bars. Thirty-two executions have been reported and hundreds more look forward to certain death.

## A United Labor Movement

The fight in Spain was waged by a united labor movement. All important elements of the working class had pooled their forces for this final struggle. Largo Caballero, the leader of the Left Wing of the Social Democracy, had openly acknowledged that his party's reformist tactics had been largely responsible for the failure of the Republic. To him much of the credit of uniting the Social Democracy and the free-Syndicalist-trade unions under a single head for united action, is due. "To disarm the bourgeoisie," he announced, "that, in a word, is our program." The majority of the party supported his policies and turned against the reformist leaders of the past. The political secretary of the Communist Party, Jose Diaz, was forced to acknowledge that the "Social-Democracy of

Spain has developed in a way that it is no longer the Socialist Party of yesterday." That being the case, the Communist Party, too, decided to enter the labor alliance called into being by the Leftist Socialist movement.

## The Socialist Party

"We have seen," declares the Communist Party of Spain in its manifesto, "that the Socialist Party is preparing to fight for the dictatorship of the Proletariat. For that reason we are ready to enter the labor alliance."

But Caballero recognized that an effective united front must include all proletarian groups and parties if it hopes to carry the fight to a victorious conclusion. So conferences were held with the various radical and revolutionary elements until all of them, Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, the trade union federation, Trotskyists, independent anarchists and the syndicalist farmer and labor bloc, were joined in the ranks of the labor alliance. The leaders of the orthodox anarchists at first refused to go along; later they too found their way into the proletarian united front.

Late in September "El Socialista," the central organ of the Social-Democratic Party, summed up the situation thus: "We have the plan, we have the masses. But we have not the power of the state. It is for this we are fighting." But on the other side stood the storm police, the Guardia Civil, the army. In all these military organizations there were strong proletarian units which were powerless, however, to gain the upper hand over the, for the most part monarchist officers and non-commissioned officers which had been left by the Republic in control of its fighting forces.

## Why Defeat?

For the first time in the history of the labor movement, the Spanish workers fought a united battle. But the enemy was too strong and too well intrenched, the workers' too young to permeate the masses with a conviction of their own invincibility, that feeling which is the fundamental psychological prerequisite for revolutionary success. Spanish labor returns to work, crushed and defeated. But this it has learned, that in unity lies the invincibility of the working class, in a united labor movement which will direct its energies to the task of undermining the power of the Catholic Church and alienating the mass of women voters from its dominating influence and finally in a united labor movement prepared and capable to fight for power.

Professor Besteiro, leader of the Reform Socialists last Friday approached Santiago Alba, the reactionary President of the Cortes, with proposals for mediation. But he and his group of social reformers will find that Spain's workers have lost faith in parliamentarianism as a vehicle for their liberation. Gil Robles and his fascists will complete this work of disillusionment. From them the workers will learn that they must continue on the path they have chosen, that of revolutionary self-help against a capitalist, fascist state.

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