

FIVE ANARCHISTS EXECUTED IN BARCELONA; 27 MORE WORKERS ON TRIAL THIS MONTH

An Appeal to World Opinion

FRANCO's firing squads have again been busy. Five of the nine leading members of the illegal anarchist Trade Union, C.N.T. (National Confederation of Labour), who were condemned to death by a Military Tribunal in Barcelona last month, had their sentences confirmed by the Central Government early last week. They were executed by a firing squad the following Friday. According to a *Reuter* report from Madrid: "In the small hours of the morning, a special Mass was said in the prison chapel and the men were asked to attend, but refused."

The executed men were Jose Perez Pedredo, Jorge Pons Argilez, Santiago Mir Gruana, Pedro Grover Font and Gines Urrea Pina. Thus Franco and his brutal régime accept responsibility for five more names to the already long list of those who have paid the supreme sacrifice for their part in Spain's struggle for freedom.

It is true that Franco's representatives have protested that these men were guilty of "three murders, armed hold-ups, and several robberies in Barcelona and its vicinity." Judging, however, by the worldwide expressions of horror when the death sentences were passed, no one believed that the trial was anything but Franco's way of suppressing opposition to his régime. A last-minute appeal to prevent the executions was made in vain by the British Parliamentary Labour Party and by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

ELSEWHERE on this page is an announcement of a Protest Meeting to be held in London. It is a meeting above party politics. It is an attempt to revive the public conscience in this country, and we hope, later, throughout the world, to the terrible things that have been and are happening in Spain, and which political expediency is attempting to whitewash. Just as when Russia was fighting on the same side as the democracies, so the horrors of forced labour and

the secret police were conveniently forgotten, to be revived only when Russia was no longer an ally, so with Franco. Now that the Americans are anxious to draw him into their military defence schemes, all the brutalities of Franco's régime, the prisons filled with men and women whose crimes are that they have fought for the elementary freedoms of assembly, of the Press and of speech, are deliberately soft-pedalled.

The real answer to the threat of Russian (or any other) totalitarianism is not war but a Free World. If in the "democracies" we not only preached freedom but also practised it, there would be no totalitarian

threat. Instead, the threat now comes not only from without but also from within. By accepting the use of totalitarian methods to fight totalitarianism, we are permitting the whole world to drift into dictatorships by consent.

The Churches seek a solution in more religion. The politicians of the Left seek it by bigger and better Governments (World Governments, United States of Europe . . .) The anarchists believe that we shall be approaching a solution when the majority of men and women will have the courage to act and think for themselves. For then they will say No! to political expediency and compromise. They will say No! to the petrol bomb and the atom bomb, to the concentration camps and the witch-hunts. Then they will say No! to "Guns instead of Butter" and to controlled thinking.

NEXT week's meeting to Protest against Franco's suppression of Free Speech in Spain and the execution of representatives of the workers' organisations can serve two purposes. Firstly, of clearly demonstrating to Franco that whatever may be America's policy in Spain, we shall protest against, and give publicity to, the barbarities of his régime until world opinion will really become effective in helping the Spanish people to free themselves from the totalitarian yoke.

But, secondly, we should make this meeting the beginning of our own "rehabilitation". The long war years, with all the horrors and exhaustion they brought in their trail, have blunted that spirit of freedom and justice, so well summed-up in the phrase "an injury to one is the concern of all". A spirit of defeatism, a pathological concern for material well-being have swept the

world and the pockets of resistance are ruthlessly being eliminated one by one.

To-day, in the world of gloom, the Spanish workers resistance to Fascism, a struggle which has been waged for fifteen terrible years is, in spite of its apparent hopelessness, the most inspiring example of a people's will to freedom. Maybe the Resistance in Spain is only a small fraction of the Spanish population. But so long as there is one man left to defend the freedom we all desire, but lack the courage and conviction to fight for, there is hope.

May the Protest Meeting on March 27th, be the beginning of a resistance movement, linked throughout the world by men and women of like mind, against injustice, irrespective of political and national considerations, and for freedom and human dignity!

SPEEDING POLITICAL TRIALS IN SPAIN

ACCORDING to the *Observer* (16/3/52): "The Franco Government is reliably reported to be hurrying the trials of political prisoners for whom the death sentence is sought, so that they will be unable to benefit from a limited amnesty expected to be proclaimed during the Eucharistic Congress at Barcelona from May 27th to June 6th. A group of 27 trade unionists are to be tried soon in Barcelona on unspecified charges of sabotage committed in 1947."

The 27 trade unionists referred to are all members of the C.N.T. and we understand that the prosecution will demand three death sentences.

The T.U.C. and the Budget

AS was to be expected, Butler's Budget has been greeted by a howl from the T.U.C. The people who persuaded the South Wales miners not to operate their ban on Saturday morning shifts in protest against the Tories' economies, want such protests to remain merely verbal with themselves holding a monopoly in verbosity.

"Strong criticism," we are told, is expected to come from the Economic Committee, who report on their inquest on the Budget on March 26. The rather amusing thing about this, however, is that, in part at least, Mr. Butler has done what the T.U.C. wanted, for they were reported a week before the Budget as urging a relief in income tax for the "lower income groups"—as workers are now quaintly called.

This, Mr. Butler has done, but because, in the nature of things in the world of finance, everything has to be paid for, obviously he had to make good his losses somewhere else. He chose food subsidies, among other things, which apparently the T.U.C. had not bargained for—hence the protests.

But what did they expect? They knew perfectly well that this was going to be a hard Budget for the workers, because they know that the money to pay for rearmament has to be found somewhere. The slimy thing about this, however, is

that the fuss is largely political in nature and is being engendered more because the Budget was introduced by the Tories than anything else.

In the debate in the House of Commons, Clement Davies, the Liberal leader, in the happy position of being neutral in the Labour-Tory slanging match—said, "Mr. Gaitskell (who opened the debate for the Labour Opposition) made a gallant struggle to find means of criticising the Budget, but if he had been at the Despatch Box it would have been much of a muchness."

And, of course, it would. But for the trade union leaders, the task then would have been to explain it away to the workers and to get them to accept it without disturbance. After all, Sir Stafford Cripps and Gaitskell himself did their best in their time to reduce our standards in order to deal with the economic crises, but from the T.U.C. then the cry was only for restraint and acceptance of the wage-freeze.

Just like the Conservatives themselves, and their election promises which have gone up in smoke, the T.U.C. and the Labour leaders are pulling a political

hoax. Their opposition is phoney, and it is to be hoped that the workers will see through it, and realise the situation as it really is.

Like the Labour Party, the T.U.C. accept rearmament. They are even, on the "Right" wing of the Labour movement, in support of Attlee and strongly opposed to the Bevan group and their criticism of the armament programme—which is limited enough, after all. So, accepting rearmament, what is the inevitable result?

Obviously, a policy of guns before butter, which very soon becomes, as we said last week, guns before bread and butter, for it is not only the luxuries which are being attacked, but the barest necessities, too. And since the trade union leaders are not fools—they would not be in the cushy jobs they have if they were—they know full well the consequences of the policy the Government is pursuing. And being "responsible" patriots they conceive their task to be one of support, in the national interest. The fact that the rearmament policy is leading the working-class—which they are supposed to represent—into hardship and eventually into war, is a strange interpretation of "national interest", but then the workers are used to being spoken to as though they are apart from the nation.

What a situation for the working-class! We are being worked into a position perhaps as bad as any in our history, and a century of struggle for trade unionism is being thrown away by a servile leadership.

The rank and file are willing to resist. The South Wales miners and the York railmen, have shown their militancy—but have been talked down by the leaders. If ever there was a justification of the anarchist and syndicalist opposition to leadership, the present trade union movement is it.

But while the rank and file show themselves prepared to "have a go" (miners at Katoomba colliery, Muirkirk, Ayrshire, held a one-day strike against the Budget the next day) all is not lost. It will be lost if they allow the leadership to crush all their initiative and militancy.

The time is ripe for the rank and file to begin again. It is not a matter of trying to put a theory into practice, but of having to accept the reality of the times and acting in sheer self-defence. Without a gathering of the strength of the workers, they will be crushed by the British version of the corporate militarist state. By finally accepting the fact that trade unionism has nothing further to offer and that their future well-being is their own affair, the workers will be taking the first step towards the creation of a syndicalist movement.

When they finally begin to look to themselves and to act for themselves, the degeneration in our lives can be brought to a halt.

Secret Police at the Ports

Reynolds News last Sunday published an account of an alleged clash between Immigration Officers and Special Branch detectives over the share-out of their work at sea and air ports.

According to *Reynolds*, Immigration Officers are attacking an attempt of four years standing by the Special Branch to take over their duties altogether. They demand instead that the Scotland Yard men be withdrawn altogether from duties involving passengers, on the grounds that they are merely duplicating the work of the Immigration Officers, and also that Scotland Yard men have no legal authority to carry out such duties. *Reynolds News* summarises the activity of these two agencies thus:

"Duties of the Immigration Service are listed in the Aliens Order of 1920. Officers in this service are issued with warrants signed by the Home Secretary, which grants to them powers to demand production of documents.

"They are provided with two lists of suspect persons—one for British subjects and one for aliens.

"Passengers' names are checked against these lists. Should a suspect arrive or report for departure Immigration Officers

are provided with special telephones fitted with "scramblers" to contact M.I.5 (for political suspects) and Scotland Yard (for criminals).

"Special Branch Officers have only the power of any police constable . . . to demand proof of identity from a suspect.

"Yet at sea and air ports they have established themselves as an integral part of clearance machinery. At sea-ports the detective stands to the right of the Immigration Officer.

"At Airfields, the Yard Man has a desk alongside those of the Immigration Officers and passengers are routed to him after passing first through immigration.

"He takes passports, checks names against the two suspect lists and passes passengers on to the Customs.

"This has already been done by the Immigration Officers and, legally, the detective has no right to carry out these duties.

"In addition, this double check by officers of the two organisations leads to duplicated reports—from the Immigration Officer to the Home Office and from the detective to Scotland Yard.

"The row between the two organisations began four years ago when the Special Branch put pressure on the Home Office to get control of the Immigration Service."

[Editorial Comment, p. 3]

AN APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC CONSCIENCE

Demonstrate your Solidarity with the Spanish Workers' Resistance Movement and your abhorrence of the Franco régime, which last week ordered the execution of five more militant workers

by supporting a non-party, non-political

PROTEST MEETING

to be held at the MEMORIAL HALL,

Farringdon Street (100 yards from Ludgate Circus), on Thursday, March 27th at 7.30 p.m. sharp.

Speakers will include:

H. N. BRAILSFORD AUGUSTUS JOHN
 FENNER BROCKWAY KINGSLEY MARTIN
 J. BRONOWSKI HENRY MOORE
 MICHAEL FOOT HERBERT READ

Chairman: Philip Sansom

Handbills for distribution and posters obtainable from the Organising Committee, FREEDOM PRESS, 27 Red Lion Street, W.C.1. Telephone: Chancery 8364.

