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1995 Third Camp Internationalists in France during World War II [Lanneret]

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The following pages describe succinctly the activities of the « Third Camp » internationalist nuclei in France during World War II. We do not know of any comprehensive study of this subject. Jean Rabaut [1] devotes a few condescending lines (not without errors) to the internationalists, while Craipeau [2] deals with them more extensively and without animosity, but confuses, for example, the « Laroche » group (GRP-UCI) with the CR. (Acronyms will be made clear as the main text progresses.) Therefore, this small chapter of revolutionary history is fairly unknown, even in radical circles. This article intends to correct in part this situation until such time as scholars may research private and public archives and interview the survivors.

Obviously the Trotskyist groups had to be excluded from this study. With indeed many Talmudic nuances, The Trotskyists never ceased during the war to state proudly and loudly their support of the « degenerated workers' state » and to extol the deeds of its army and its potentially revolutionary role. Before, during and after the war, the Trotskyists have constantly offered advice, suggestions, appeals for a united front, promises of support, conditional or total, to the Russian ruling class and to its French agency, the Communist Party. Within this ideological frame, it must be said that the Trotskyists remained on the terrain of class struggle during five years of constant and daring illegal activity. They have the great merit of having initiated a work of fraternisation and propaganda among German soldiers. It is not our purpose to further deal here with the Trotskyists whose activities during the war are now well documented, including photographic reproductions of their clandestine press. Suffice it to say that the divergences between the Trotskyists and the so-called « ultra-Left » were and remain unbridgeable, nonetheless.

The war period cannot be treated independently and is therefore introduced by a short history of the political currents between the two wars, at the risk undoubtedly, of some abusive generalisations: twenty years of social history cannot be properly telescoped into a few pages. References have been kept at a minimum, in English whenever possible. Aliases are in bold type.

It has been impossible to locate early documents of the International Left (Bordiguists) published during the war. Since this very distinctive political current is barely known in the US, it is deemed useful to grant it more space than its intrinsic role warrants during the war.

In 1914, the Sacred Union (l'Union Sacrée »), signifying the abandonment of class struggle and the participation in the war effort by the socialist organisations, originates at the opening of WWI. After July, 1933, the last masks fall and the Sacred Union becomes a reality four years before WWII. In 1914, the

necessity of fighting Prussian militarism is invoked: In 1935, anti-fascism is used to lead the working class towards new massacres. What has happened to the working class organisations which, since 1918, have vowed to oppose another conflict?

The Socialist Party (SFIO) (Section Francaise de l'Internationale Ouvrière)

A party of teachers, public servants and small tradesmen rather than a proletarian party, the SP still can claim a working class constituency in some areas. At the Tours congress (1921), where the majority formed the Communist Party, these Social-Democrats had one-third of the mandate. Helped by the permanent crisis in the CP, they have fast regained lost ground and have overcome the partisans of Moscow. Thanks to their old tradition and their alliance with the Radical Party (3), they have a sizeable parliamentary representation.

At Tours, under the pressure of a rank-and-file radicalised by the war and the Russian revolution, the socialists offer excuses for the past and promises for the future. In fact, they have neither learned nor forgotten anything. The party is the left wing of bourgeois radicalism: free of any commitment to a program or strategy of revolution and free also of responsibility in the bourgeois state, the SP steers a middle course, granting or denying its support to ephemeral ministerial combinations. Souvarine describes the party as being divided between reformists without reforms and revolutionaries without revolution. The party apparatus is strong enough to tolerate a noisy left wing which brings much needed life and radical varnish to the old organisation. Most often, the SP votes against the military credits [4] but nobody doubts the willingness of the party to fulfil, as in 1914, its patriotic obligations when requested.

The Communist Party (SFIC) (Section Francaise de l'Internationale Communiste)

At its birth in 1921, the CP is an heterogeneous formation where petit-bourgeois pacifists can rub shoulders with revolutionary syndicalists. Many do not fully understand the implications of their adhesion to the Komintern which, within a few years, shapes the party into a docile instrument of Moscow. The general secretary, Frossard, leaves the party in January, 1923, when the right wing is expelled. The party has already lost half of its membership, but the Bolchevisation progresses. In 1924, friends and partisans of the Trotsky are expelled or leave. Then the last vestiges of the old socialist organisation disappear; priority is given to the formation of factory cells while the number of functionaries grows along with their authority.

The party fights gallantly against the occupation of the Ruhr and later against the war in the Rif. The repression contributes to the solidification of the ranks [5] but not of the leadership. In 1926 The Bolcheviser Treint, suspect of Zinovievism, is eliminated while the « third period » begins: « Class against class » and furious attacks against the SP. Adventurism and sectarianism bring another drastic fall of the CP which counts barely 30,000 members at the beginning of 1934, but conserves strongholds in the industrial red belt of Paris.

In 1931 there begins the ascension of Maurice Thorez, to whom the Komintern assigns an occult college of supervision led by the Czech Fried (Clement), who will not leave Thorez until the war. Thorez will reign over the French CP until his death in 1964. Under his leadership, the CP will carry through the Komintern big turn from a vigorous anti militarist propaganda to a politics of national defence. At the end of 1934, the CP registers a modest increase in membership which becomes vertiginous between 1936 and 1938.

Trotsky's prestige is high in France during the founding of the CP, almost equal to that of Lenin. Trotsky knows the country and was acquainted with the first internationalists during the war: Rosmer, Monatte and others. When the campaign against him in Russia spreads to France through the Komintern, he finds supporters. But the French party has only a distorted vision of what happens in Russia, and Trotsky himself does not encourage his friends to mount a clear-cut battle against the International. Muzzled by the already-powerful apparatus of the party, Trotsky's friends cannot form a coherent opposition and either leave or are expelled. Monatte, Rosmer, Souvarine, Paz and others find support from small groups of militants. But, if they are in solidarity with Trotsky against the attacks from Moscow, they do not share all his views on the Russian crisis, on the regeneration of the Komintern or on the ever-lasting value of the Bolshevik experience.

In 1929, the Old Man may rely at last upon a group of faithful disciples who publish *La Verit* »š and found the *Ligue Communiste*. Despite their frantic activity, they cannot regroup the many communists who, at one time or another, break with the CP, and they remain a small group riddled with personal and political conflicts. In fact, there is a proliferation of opposition groups.

Often these groups include outstanding personalities but they are isolated, acting on the fringe of a party which is itself an extreme minority in the working class. Latent divergences become more precise; circa 1930, groups appear which denounce the USSR as state capitalist and Trotsky as a bureaucrat in exile.

From 1934 to the War

Described as backwards, Malthusian, usurious, French capitalism has been hit by the world depression and the working class suffers from wage cuts and unemployment. The trade unionist movement is weak, divided, ineffective and fiercely fought by the employers. Financial scandals shake the country, while politicians play musical chairs in short-lived ministerial combines. Part of the middle class supports right-wing groups which clamour for a « strong and clean » government. Fascism has been victorious in Italy and Germany. Who will be next? The workers' parties and their unions are at loggerheads and disavow the militants who here and there demand a « rapprochement. »

The political crisis culminates on the 6th of February, 1934, when the rightist leagues come close to storming the Parliament [6]. Real or not, the fascist threat arouses the Left. A general strike is called and demonstrations of socialists and communists converge and fraternise, but the leaderships remain frozen in their positions. The decisive signal for a change will come from Moscow.

Notwithstanding the bombast of the Komintern, Hitler's power grows stronger and Stalin realises the danger for the USSR. He reverts to the old tsarist strategy: an alliance with France which could compel Germany to fight on two fronts. The Komintern abandons « class against class » tactics and promotes a powerful anti fascist movement. But first the French CP must break its isolation.

In May, 1934, *Pravda* comments favourably upon a socialist-communist alliance against fascism. The CP takes the hint and promotes the issue. In June, SP and CP sign a pact of united action and the CP even alludes to a possible merger. Only yesterday a « social traitor », the naive Leon Blum is bewildered by this somersault and display of good will, but more is to come. In October the Stalinist charm is turned on the Radical Party and Thorez plants the seeds for a popular front. Another move from Moscow accelerates the process.

In May, 1935, France and Russia sign a pact of defensive alliance. It will not lead to a military collaboration and it will be increasingly attacked by the majority of the French ruling class, which favours an agreement with Hitler and Mussolini. To be meaningful for both parties, the pact requires them

acquiescence of the working class to a policy of national defence and Stalin secures it. A statement is issued: « Stalin understands and fully approves the policy of national defence being followed by France in order to maintain its armed forces at the level required by its security. »

The CP adopts the new line immediately and its newly-discovered patriotism seals the alliance with the Radical Party. The Popular Front – – SP, CP, Radical Party, and the unions — is born. Thanks to the inexhaustible good will of the Stalinists, the program is palatable to the Radicals, for it contains many of the platitudes they have brandished now and then for decades but few precise demands. The working class is promised a shorter work week without loss of pay and various measures promising restoration of its purchasing power. The war industry will be nationalised and the Bank of France reformed. The economy will be stimulated and made more equitable fiscally. Naturally, the Popular Front wants « peace with security ». Needs of minorities (women, colonials) are forgotten.

The French « New Deal » does not imperil property rights or impair the functioning of capitalism; but the obtuse French Right will sabotage this last-ditch attempt at the modernisation of French capitalism.

The elections of May, 1936, give an impressive majority (378 deputies against 220) to the Popular Front. The SP becomes the strongest French party but the CP follows closely in the popular vote. Too long compromised by the Right, the Radical Party is a heavy loser, but with 116 deputies, it can — and will — blackmail its partners in the Front. Blum, who will lead the new government, waits one month to take office while the capitalists organise the exodus of capital.

The trade unions have merged and the working class is impatient. Strikes begin — spontaneously — in mid-May around Paris, spread rapidly and become a gigantic tidal wave involving millions of workers, most of them not yet unionised. Provincial industrialists are horrified when their ever-obedient workers raise the red flag over their factories and most often occupy them. Even some large farms are occupied by farm workers, causing the gentry to resurrect the old bogeyman of the confiscation of the land. Impervious to any appeal, the strikers threaten, in fact, the fragile alliance of the Popular Front. The Right foresees the sovietisation of France when Blum, at last in office, hurriedly summons delegates from Labour and from the industrialists. A general agreement on wage increases is reached, though many factories continue to strike for more. Feverishly — and only with token opposition — Parliament enacts a series of social laws: The right to collective bargaining, the 40-hour week without a loss of pay, paid vacations and legalisation of shop stewards, all dependent upon the evacuation of the factories by workers and their return to work. Government, parties and unions combine their efforts and do succeed, although some strikes linger until July.[7]

On the 9th of June, 1936, Trotsky writes that « the French revolution has begun. » In July, he states « that the workers exerted a grandiose pressure on the ruling class, but did not carry it to the end, » and he predicts a second wave. There will be no second wave. [8]

In 1937, the working class has already lost the economic gains of June, 1936. Despite a devaluation, the economy has deteriorated and the Right is joined by the Radical Party in the obstruction of the financial plans of Blum, who resigns, succeeded by increasingly conservative governments. The Popular Front is dead. The trade unions reflect the growing split between socialists and communists, first over the Spanish Civil War, then on foreign policy, as the majority of the Right and part of the Socialists favour an understanding with Hitler. War looms. The strikes of 1938 are a failure. The CP clings to its policy of class collaboration, hoping to salvage the alliance with Russia. When France reluctantly enters the war in 1939, the working class will be further disoriented by another Stalinist turn when the CP — after the German-Russian pact — discovers that the war is imperialist and is outlawed by the government.

It is worthwhile to note that the same Parliament which in June 1936 enacted the new social laws (with the workers breathing down its neck) will, in July 1940, consecrate P »štain and bury the Third Republic. The communists have been outlawed, there will be only 80 dissenters in both chambers.

In June, 1936, the workers' action compelled the bourgeoisie to grant within a few days more reforms than in the past half century. As Blum regretfully acknowledged, the factory sit-ins were an obvious breach of legality, but the workers stopped there, and remained within the limits defined by both parties and unions, which they had joined in mass without challenge to the leadership. Local committees of the Popular Front were comprised only of delegates of various organisations, and were not embryos of counter power. The workers apparently believed that fascism could be defeated by abandoning the class struggle, through an alliance with the enlightened sections of the ruling class.

It is tempting to incriminate the « rotten and treacherous leaders » of the workers' parties and maintain the pleasant fiction of a revolutionary working class, endowed with an historical mission but constantly duped and betrayed by the freely accepted leadership. Truly, the CP was so conditioned to follow the Russian line that it could indulge in an orgy of obscene patriotic propaganda — which embarrassed even the Social-Democrats — without opposition within its cadre. But the working class had deserted the CP during the Third Period, as it was to desert it after the Hitler-Stalin pact. In 1935 and after, the CP grew at a tremendous pace. [9] The exhumation by the CP of the old rags of the Jacobin tradition found a deep echo among the masses. The sad truth is that internationalism and class consciousness were only skin-deep in the working classes, except for a very small minority which we will here examine.

The Revolutionaries from 1934 to the end of the war

The rallying of the Stalinists to national defence and the class collaboration of the Popular Front provoke angry reactions and denunciations from the group or tendencies to the left of the traditional workers' parties. Despite deep differences, they are able sometimes to join in uneasy common actions (participation in class-struggle groups in the unions, meetings against the war, against the Moscow trials and the repression in Republican Spain), but further unity is unthinkable between Marxists and anarchists, for example, without speaking of the perennial problem of the defence of the USSR. They differ also in their analysis of the situation: was the Popular Front already a defeat for the working class, or was it a revolutionary movement betrayed by the workers' parties?

Although individually represented in the strikes, the leftists do not inspire them, nor are they able to carry the movement further. When the workers lose some of their trust in the workers' parties, they remain passive or follow the Right. They do not listen to the leftists. Rabaut [10] thinks that the leftists during the time of the Popular Front numbered fewer than 10.000, a reasonable figure. They are too few, too divided, to affect the course of events, and when war breaks out in 1939, there will be still fewer and those more disoriented than they were in 1936.

One can divide the leftists into three categories:

1) the anarchists;

2) organisations issuing from the communist current: the Trotskyists (which will be dealt with summarily), the International Communist Left (Bordiguists) and l'Union Communiste;

and 3) the Socialist Left (PSOP).

5 of 21 *l'Union Communiste* and the PSOP disappear after the beginning of the war. The Bordiguists, with two new groups, the GRP-UCI and RKD-CR, will maintain the internationalist traditions against all

The Anarchists

Despite their suspicion of a Marxist movement, many anarchists were attracted by the Russian revolution. The Bolsheviks had denounced the imperialist war and their slogan « all power to the Soviets » was compatible with the anarchists' convictions. Also, during the war, there had been some contacts between those anarchists and socialist militants opposed to the conflict. Without waiting for the evolution of the big battalions of the SP and CGT, an ephemeral Communist Party (with a few « soviets » ...) was founded in Paris in 1919, with anarchist participation. But the anarchists' good will was rapidly dissipated with contact with the Russian reality — with the Komintern, and with the Russian anarchists. After Kronstadt, the rupture is total and henceforward the anarchists will consider communist Russia as the « nec plus ultra » system of exploitation and domination by the hated State.

Between the two wars, the French anarchist movement undergoes several attempts at unification followed by new divisions. One can distinguish two major currents: on one side, the « Platformists » (from a platform elaborated by Makhno and Archinov), who advocate a clear definition of the goals, strategy and tactics of the anarchists, favouring a structured organisation with a modicum of discipline; and on the other hand, the « Synthesists », who accept only a loose federation of autonomous groups with a wide variety of opinions. The conflict is never resolved (although past and present divisions among anarchists do not necessarily reflect these issues).

In 1937, the biggest organisation is l'Union Anarchiste with its weekly *Le Libertaire* (founded in 1895). Much smaller is the FAF (Federation Anarchiste de Langue Francaise); its publication *Terre Libre* is very critical of what it considers the betrayal of anarchist principles by the leadership of the CNT-FAI in Spain. Some anarcho-syndicalists have chosen isolation within a minuscule trade-union federation, the CGT-SR (Confederation Generale du Travail-Syndicaliste-Révolutionnaire), affiliated with the IAW. Other anarchists are active in the pacifist movement and other single-issue groups (birth control, « free love » etc.). Given the fluidity of the anarchist groups and their multiple affiliations, it is impossible to differentiate between steady militants and mere readers-of-the press. All tendencies compounded, the anarchists have a sizeable and dispersed audience throughout France.

The anarchist movement speaks with many voices, and on the war question there are divergences between « integral pacifists » (peace at any cost) and the revolutionary pacifists, but they share a refusal to participate or to take sides in the coming war. In 1939, the movement tries to define its attitude. War is imminent and the revolutionary forces are too weak to prevent it, to stop it, to transform it into a civil war against the ruling classes. A well-known militant, Fremont, thinks that they should try to survive and remain in contact, even if coherent propaganda is impossible. Thus, they will be able to resume their activities later. Another well-known militant, Prudhommeaux, states in substance that the general set-back since 1936 provides no possibility of anarchists fighting efficiently for their own cause... « as to dying for the capitalists, ... too many of our people have died in Spain and elsewhere. » No concrete steps are taken to secure the continuation of the movement. [11]

When war breaks out, *Le Libertaire* is not outlawed but ceases publication, unwilling to play along with heavy censorship. The militants follow their own inclinations: some leave France, others obey the mobilisations orders, and a few refuse the draft and will spend years in military jails. France « at war for democracy » develops a vast repressive system which Vichy and the Nazis will inherit and refine: some anarchists rejoin Stalinists and foreign anti fascists in concentration camps. After the French-German armistice, France is divided into two zones, and communications are difficult until the total occupation of the Nazis in November, 1942.

In 1941-42, discussions take place among a few militants in Paris, and in mid-1943, under the cover of a picnic, some 30 – 35 anarchists participate in a meeting to attempt a regrouping, which proceeds very slowly. Not until 1944 are an internal bulletin *Le Lien*, and some leaflets printed.

During 1942-43, an indefatigable militant, Saulières (Arru), initiates an anarchist regrouping in southern France, where many Spanish anarchists also reside. Contacts are established with Voline and his friends in Marseilles and with other individuals in the area between Toulouse and Marseilles. A mini-congress is held in Toulouse (1942) with a dozen participants. Arru publishes an issue of a review, *La Raison*, a brochure and several leaflets. Let us not forget an earthy poster (150 copies) entitled « Mort aux vaches (http://cnt-ait.info/article.php3?id_article=1008) » [12] which invites the population to « kick the ass » of all belligerents, be they wearers of the swastika, the red star, the Order of the Garter, the Lorraine Cross or the Francisque. [13]

After the departure of the Nazis, there is another mini-congress held in Agen in October, 1944, prelude to the first congress of the reconstituted anarchist federation in October, 1945. *Le Libertaire* resumes publication in December, 1944.

The texts emanating from Arru and his phantasmal « Fédération Internationale Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire, » although much different in style and content from those issued by the internationalist groups, situate him nonetheless in total opposition to all belligerents and invite the working class to rely solely upon its own action. But one can look in vain for analyses of the situation, for perspectives, for precise definition of the attitude of movement in the available anarchist texts from this late period of the war. Contradictions abound: a leaflet proclaims « Down with the war » while the first *Le Libertaire* explains that « the fight against Hitlerism has not ended and must be continued. » A militant of a clandestine group perhaps explains the difficulties encountered by the anarchists in reaching an agreement on concrete problems: « The anarchists always felt more at ease in the vagueness of a remote future society than in lingering on the realities and trivialities of the present. »[14]

It seems difficult to assess objectively the role of the anarchists. The first *Le Libertaire* is self-congratulatory: « The paper and the movement never compromised themselves.... we have published *Le Lien* ... our militants have often led an heroic action against Nazism, but as a movement, we could not make a pact with the official Resistance. » Much later, when apparently all particulars on Arru's action are known, the tone of *Le Libertaire* becomes lyric when it states that to those who claim that the movement was not ready or suited for clandestine action, Arru brings an unchallengeable refutation.[15] On the other hand, Craipeau, for five years one of the animators of the Trotskyist underground, comments severely on the self-justification of the anarchists in the first *Le Libertaire*: « Thus, because reactionaries and fascists wanted to strangle the 'voice of reason', the anarchists considered it normal to remain silent and limited themselves to an internal bulletin... Their movement refuses any compromise with the bourgeois Resistance, but when its militants as individuals want to fight fascism, they do so individually in the ranks of this Resistance. It is a revolutionary movement for quiet times. »[16]

Between the triumphant claims of *Le Libertaire* and the total condemnation of Craipeau (who most certainly did not know of Arru's deeds), there is need for a sober assessment. Testimonies and information concerning hundreds of anarchists during the war are available. [17]

In short, some anarchists, willingly or not, remained quiet and waited for better times while keeping their hands clean; others behaved like isolated militants of other currents — without integrating within the Resistance, they did Resistance work and sometimes admirable work of solidarity. Not so numerous,

Clearly many anarchists were ready and able to confront the risks of illegal action, but very few were involved in activity which could be considered anarchistic. The worthy activities of Arru and his few friends does not obscure the collapse of the movement. It is its heterogeneity, its lack of cohesion and organisation (deplored ad nauseam by many anarchists), its absence of perspectives which prevented it from acting during the war.

The Trotskyists

In 1933, under the impact of the German disaster, Trotsky considers it impossible to cohabit any longer with the Komintern: « We need a spotless flag, » a new International. For all that, the Trotskyists still advocate the defence of the Russian workers' state but with new arguments. For Lenin, it had been the existence of the soviets, the Bolshevik party and the Komintern which conferred a socialist character upon the nationalised economy. Now it is the nationalised economy which confers a socialist character (although degenerated) upon the Russian state...

In 1934, the upsurge of workers' combativity, the United Front and the possibility of unity of the SP and CP are considered by Trotsky as opening new revolutionary perspectives. The Bolsheviks-Leninists cannot remain isolated and must lead the revolutionary workers. They can perform that role in the Socialist Party. This is the first « French turn ». With reticence and a few defections, the *Ligue Communiste* complies and La Verite, still adorned with the hammer and sickle, becomes the organ of the Bolshevik-Leninist group of the SP.

These prospects are not realised. The rapprochement of SP and CP leads towards the Popular Front, and accommodation to the bourgeoisie. The Bolshevik-Leninists are expelled from the SP in 1935. They have recruited new members among the young socialists but are still divided. They vegetate under the Popular Front and, out of despair, a second « French turn » is decided. In 1939, still divided, they enter the *Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan* (PSOP) born the previous year. They recover their autonomy when the PSOP collapses at the beginning of the war.

L'Union Communiste

In 1933, a conference of « unification » (it is not the first...) brings together the delegates of a dozen groups of communist oppositions and isolated militants. Trotskyists and Bordiguist are present. This is another failure but later a mini-regrouping gives birth to *L'Union Communiste*, which will endure to the war with its organ, *L'Internationale*. Chazé (<https://bataillesocialiste.wordpress.com/biographies/davoust-dit-chaze-1904-1984/>) explains the importance of the theoretical tasks which confronted the nascent organisation: « Concerning the nature and the counter-revolutionary role of the USSR, we were at least 10 years behind our Dutch comrades (communist workers' councils) and those of the German Left. We were equally behind on the institutionalisation and integration of the unions. Same situation as to the role of the revolutionary party. We faced the problems. » [18]

The UC denounces the bureaucratic manoeuvres of the Trotskyists and what it considers their political confusion: a shift from demagogic attitudes to entry into Social Democracy, overestimation of revolutionary possibilities, propagation of illusions among the working class concerning the potential revolutionary role of the SP and CP, etc. The UC denounces the Popular Front, which is considered the equivalent of the National Front. In 1935, the UC is against any defence of the USSR.

8 of 21 The war, along with the concomitant mobilisation and arrest or exodus of the foreign militants, causes the collapse of the group which, in its best period, has certainly no more than 40 members. Davoust

(Chazé) (<https://bataillesocialiste.wordpress.com/biographies/davoust-dit-chaze-1904-1984/>) is

arrested, then deported. He will survive Sachsenhausen and will resume his activities in the vanguard, but the UC will not be reconstituted. [19]

The Socialist Left and the PSOP

In 1935, the left wing of the SP coalesces around Marceau Pivert. In opposition to the Popular Front program, he offers a program of massive nationalisations, popular militia, management of the public sector by the unions and popular committees, freedom for the colonies, etc. The Popular Front must serve only as a prelude to a socialist transformation of society and, after the electoral victory, Pivert claims that « everything is possible. » Blum and Thorez deny it. Blum explains that he has been elected to exercise the power, not to conquer it.

The Pivertists organise their tendency, the *Gauche Révolutionnaire*, as a mini-party within the SP. They condemn class collaboration, attack the national defence (which Blum increases), support the POUM (<https://bataillesocialiste.wordpress.com/themes/le-poum/>), denounce the Moscow trials, and sometimes join Trotskyists and anarchists in specific actions. The relations between Pivert and the Trotskyists fluctuate, but impervious to either cooing or insults, Pivert still clings to the SP and the Popular Front.

In 1937, at the peak of its influence, the *Gauche Révolutionnaire* controls only 16% of the mandate at the socialist congress and therefore cannot affect the course of events. The Pivertists soon become an incongruity in the party and, despite their formal concessions to discipline, sanctions fall on the youth groups, then on Pivert and his friends. The Pivertists rebel and quit the SP at the congress of Royan in 1938. They form the *Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan* (PSOP).

The founding of the party is ill-timed. War looms and the working class is in retreat. The PSOP does not recuperate all the followers of the *Gauche Révolutionnaire*, and at best counts perhaps 10,000 members. This number will shrink, but it is still impressive to the small Trotskyists groups which enter it in 1939, welcomed without any enthusiasm. In the PSOP there coexist integral pacifists, unredeemed social-democrats, Trotskyists of various persuasions and militants trying to steer a course between reformism and Bolshevism. Nevertheless, the discussion is free and a long debate takes place on what attitude to take concerning the coming war. Confusedly, many militants feel that the war may be different from the previous one and may not allow the application or repetition of the same tactics and attitudes. Eventually, an agreement is reached on the reaffirmation of the traditional positions inherited from the pre-1914 social democracy.

Pivert is in America when the war breaks out. The Trotskyists immediately demand the formation of an underground organisation and, when voted down, they resume their independence, although still divided. Some militants try for awhile to maintain a legal facade for the PSOP but soon give it up. The party disintegrates and the militants scatter.

During the war one can find some ex-PSOP members (and also some ex-anarchists and syndicalists) in groups and publications which can be considered the left wing of the Resistance: in Paris, *Notre Révolution*, which later becomes *Nos Combats* and eventually *Libertés*; in the south, *L'Insurgé* (<https://bataillesocialiste.wordpress.com/revues/linsurge/>) and *Libérer et Fédérer* which later merge. Despite dissonance, there is much in common among these publications: they shun the chauvinistic language of the Stalinists and Gaullists, adopt a populist style and affirm their commitment to a socialist future. Certainly the war is imperialist, but fascism is enemy number one, which must as a priority be

fascism will bring end of « moribund capitalism. » Libérer et Federer pledges its obedience to de Gaulle as a military leader but wishes to preserve its independence. In fact, willy-nilly, these groups have a foot in the official Resistance and do not further define their political orientation. L'Insurgé dissolves its movement at the Liberation. Marceau Pivert re-enters the Socialist Party after the war.

The International Communist Left

This political current is better known as Bordiguist, from its main theoretician, Amadeo Bordiga.[20] Already active in the Italian Socialist Youth before 1914, Bordiga becomes editor of the *Avanguardia* in 1917. He supports the conferences of Zimmerwald and Kienthal prior to siding at once with the Russian revolution. In 1918, he advocates the expulsion of the reformists from the Italian Socialist Party which, all tendencies included, will join the 3rd International in 1919. He launches *Il Soviet* in 1920 and campaigns against participation in the elections, a position he defends unsuccessfully at the 2nd congress of the Komintern (July, 1920). In January, 1921, at the congress of Leghorn, the center (under Serrati) refuses to eliminate the reformist wing, and a split takes place. The Bordiga tendency allied with the Ordino Nuovo of Turin (under Gramsci) founds the Italian Communist Party with Bordiga as secretary. In March, 1922, the second congress of the ICP adopts the famous theses of Rome which defines the role and nature of the party and are still considered a fundamental document by the Bordiguist current. But the Komintern has already adopted the tactics of the united front at its 3rd congress in 1921, and against Bordiga, supports the Gramsci group (assisted by Togliatti) which conquers the leadership in 1923. The Bordiguists are crushed at the 3rd congress, held in exile in Lyon, France in 1926. The lone dissenter, Bordiga attends a meeting of the enlarged executive of the Komintern in February, 1926, and will be expelled from the party in 1930.

The Bordiguist position on the party explains the divergences and later the rupture with the Komintern. Undoubtedly, The Bolsheviks' victory has intensified the Bordiguists fetishism of the party, but their conception is original and owes little to « Leninism », which was practically unknown in Western Europe and America until the beginning of the twenties. What follows will not do justice to a theory more complex than its apparent rigidity.

Before, during and after the revolution, the historical mission of the proletariat is embodied in the party, the program of which is firmly anchored in Marxist theory. « The vision of a collective action towards general goals involving the whole class and implying the total overthrow of the social system could be clear only for an advanced minority, » (*Party and Class*, 1921). The class exists only in the measure that the existence of the party is possible, even as a small minority, a conception summed up in the formula « the party is the class and the class is the party. » Only the triumph of integral communism with the vanishing of the classes, will bring the obsolescence of the party, then able to dissolve itself into the working class which has become communist. It is reactionary and erroneous to think that the soviets could be a substitute to the party. In the last resort, the dictatorship of the proletariat can only be the dictatorship of the party.

The communist program is characterised by its invariance [21], its irreducible opposition to all forms of domination of capital. The defence of the program is the party's first duty. It will not crave artificial popularity through the emasculation of its principles. One joins the party as an individual, after political agreement. There can be only one organisation defending the program of the revolution. The party refuses the infiltration of other organisations and condemns the formation of blocs and coalitions with them.

Thus, in Italy, the Bordiguists refuse the United Front with the socialists. At best, they will accept this front at the union level. Later, they oppose the merger with the socialists (advocated by the Komintern)

but refused by the socialists) and even with the Terzini, expelled left-wing of the Socialist Party. The advent of fascism does not modify the attitude of the Bordiguists, for whom fascism and democracy are only different masks of bourgeois power, to which one can only oppose the dictatorship of the proletariat. [22]

The Italian Left fights stubbornly in the Komintern (under Russian control), criticises its interference in the life of the parties, and most importantly, suggests that the problems of the Russian state be discussed by the International. After their defeat in 1926, the Bordiguists officially form the Left Fraction of the ICP in Pantin, France. Later in 1935, this organisation evolved into the Italian Fraction of the International Communist Left, signifying — belatedly say some — the rupture with the 3rd International. For a short time there is a rapprochement between Trotsky and his International opposition, followed by a total break in 1933. The Bordiguists accept only the theses of the first two congresses of the 3rd International — and those with reservations — while the Trotskyists consider the theses of all four congresses as fundamental documents. [23]

In 1933, the Fraction begins publishing *Bilan* (later *Octobre*) in French. At a very early stage of the Spanish civil war, the Fraction defined its position: the Spanish proletariat has been unable to form its class party, has not established its dictatorship, and in the name of anti fascist struggle, has left bourgeois power intact. The war is imperialist and the fractions of the ICL appeal to all workers to desert the fronts, to fraternise and to transform the war into a civil war against capital.

The *Union Communiste*, the *Revolution Proletarienne* and some anarchists are well aware of the counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinists, which will culminate in the persecution of the revolutionaries and attacks against the collectivisations. They criticise — sometimes severely — what they consider the capitulations of the POUM and CNT-FAI, but they do not follow the Bordiguists who, according to them, mechanically apply to Spain slogans inherited from the first world war. The Bordiguists are not unanimous on this question: a split occurs in the Italian Fraction and in a small Belgian group close to the Bordiguists.

The Bordiguists oppose the defence of the Russian state, which they consider integrated with the imperialist consortium. Their criteria are essentially political; since the Russian party and its Komintern have abandoned the revolutionary program, Russia cannot be socialist. An analysis of the Russian society is sorely missing; the bureaucracy is sometimes considered as a mere tool of international capitalism, sometimes as being tossed around between the proletariat and mysterious old social classes. This, perhaps, explains the archaic epithet of « centrism » applied to Stalinism even after Spain.

Intransigent during the war in Spain, the Bordiguist have no hesitation when the second World War begins. This is another imperialist war which should be transformed into a civil war against all bourgeoisies. The fraction must continue its labour towards the formation of a revolutionary party. The split caused by the Spanish question (a regrouping will be effected informally) and the war have dispersed the militants. A small nucleus forms around Perone (Vercesi), a leading theoretician of the fraction, who survives the war isolated in Brussels. In Marseilles, a small group of Italian Bordiguists and young French recruits around Marc (a veteran of the communist oppositions) form the French Fraction of the ICL. Some texts (now unavailable) are drafted. Eventually the Fraction moves to Paris and establishes contacts with the Italians who have not returned to Italy after the fall of Mussolini. A few issues of *L'Étincelle* are published near the end of the war.

In 1945, the wind blows from Italy. The Bordiguists who built their organisation during the clandestine period hold a conference in Turin. Their International Communist Party is the only revolutionary organisation in the world, with a small but real following (several thousand members), a weekly

1995 Third Camp Internationalists in France duri... <https://bataillesocialiste.wordpress.com/english-...>
(*Battaglia Comunista*), a theoretical review (*Prometeo*), and some provincial publications. Although the Italians cannot provide any material help, the French Fraction acquires some prestige and a new vitality. Among others who adhere to the fraction are veterans of the ex-Union Communiste, such as Davoust (Chazé) and Lastérade, and also the small group « Against the Current, » product of a split in the RKD-CR. The fraction publishes *L'Internationaliste* and contacts are established with several factories, notably in Renault, where fraction members play a role in the 1948 strike. These efforts produce few results and the theoretical problems resurface: In 1950, the majority of the French members consider that Bordiguism is fossilised and join *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Severely decimated, the French Fraction will start another crossing of the desert, but this is another story.

In 1944, several founding members of the Fraction (Marc and Salama/Mouso) leave to form the Gauche Communiste de France, publishing *Internationalisme*, an organ of research and discussion. They consider the formation of the party in Italy premature and opportunistic. [24] The activity of the French Fraction is deemed irrelevant and unprincipled. This group is the origin of the International Communist current which still exists.

The German and French Revolutionary Communists: RKD and CR [25]

The group known during the war as *Revolutionäre Kommunisten Deutschlands* is originally part of the Austrian Trotskyist movement and is recognised in 1938 as the Austrian section of the 4th International (RKO). Driven into exile by the repression, the RKO rapidly enters conflicts with the Trotskyist movement and its delegates vote against the official proclamation of the 4th International in September 1938. Although still in agreement with the Trotskyist analysis of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state, they differ with Trotsky on the attitude to adopt in case of war in the countries which might be helpful to Russia. They advocate revolutionary defeatism in all countries and come close to the positions of the American Revolutionary Workers League (the « Oehler group »), which in September 1939, publishes its 14 points as a tentative base for a new international regrouping. [26]

In 1941, the RKO becomes the RKD and breaks away from Trotskyism. The RKD defines the USSR as state capitalist, and categorically opposes its defence. They attack Trotskyism as a congenitally centrist current which opposes the « pure » Bolshevism of Lenin's time.

After the French collapse, the RKD settles in Southern France and displays a remarkable activity, regularly publishing the *RK Bulletin* (17 issues to 1943) and then *Spartakus*, the first issue (May, 1943) of which contains an appeal to the workers of the world to break their chains and form the international republic of the workers' and soldiers' councils. « Wir sind weder Sozialdemokraten, noch Stalinisten, noch Trotskisten –. Die Prestigefragen interessieren uns nicht — Wir sind revolutionäre Kommunisten, Spartakisten ». In addition to this impressive production must be added *Fraternisation Proletarienne*, *Organe des Communistes Révolutionnaires de France* (whose organisation did not yet exist), and other leaflets and theoretical texts. Contacts are initiated with German soldiers and liaisons established within the French revolutionary underground.

Although well seasoned in clandestine activities, the RKD is not immune to repression. In 1942, three women are arrested and receive sentences of 14 months, 3 years and 15 years, respectively. One is deported to Germany, but will survive. A second resumes her clandestine activities after expiration of her sentence. The third, Melanie Berger, is rescued by the RKD using false German papers. Two other RKD, Ignaz Duhl and Arthur Streicher, are arrested and murdered by the Gestapo. Karl Fisher (Emile), arrested in 1944, survives Buchenwald, but is later kidnapped by the Russian police in Austria (in 1947), and spends eight years in Siberia. These examples are not exhaustive.

Battered, but not destroyed, the RKD moves frequently: Montauban, Marseille, Grenoble, Lyons . . . In the spring of 1944, the organisation transfers its activities to Paris.

Even persons who participated in RKD activities cannot be authoritative as to the strength of the membership, assessed tentatively as a dozen militants (including some French) at the liberation of Paris. the organisation is led by an Austrian, Scheuer (Armand), undoubtedly adept at clandestine work. Strict partitioning is maintained by the group; members are not always well apprised of the exact influence of an organisation which is not adverse to propaganda. The RKD are masters at establishing and exploiting liaisons and contacts, alternately coaxing and virulently denouncing. In October, 1942, appealing for the formation of a genuine new International, they address a letter to the Trotskyist group *La Seule Voie*, stating that the anti-Trotskyist repression has removed one obstacle to this task. This infelicitous opening provokes an indignant response from *La Seule Voie*: « You have the wrong address, comrades. » Individual contacts are more fruitful and the RKD has some influence on young Trotskyists in Toulouse, Lyons and Paris.

In April, 1944, three French Trotskyist organisations, The POI, CCI, and the Octobre group merge and form the Parti Communiste Internationaliste. The small Union Communiste of Korner (Barta), publisher of *Lutte de Classe*, refuses to join. The RKD vehemently denounces the common proclamation of the three groups: « This appeal, instead of denouncing the pro-fascist, anglophile and pro-Stalinist deviations which pullulate in the papers and bulletins of the POI and CCI (*La Seule Voie*) consciously deceives the working class by claiming that the said groups have never ceased to denounce this war as « imperialist. » Nonetheless, a bigger organisation means greater possibilities of political work and the RKD's new French recruits form a tendency within the new party.

In August, 1944, during the liberation of Paris, the RKD and the French CR, for the first and last time, play a role in a genuine working-class movement: CR militants head the strike committee at the big Renault plant. Euphoria reigns — at the cafeteria the CR, orthodox Trotskyists (who arrive late on the scene), and two printers of the GRP-UCI (who are to set the type for the committee poster) fraternise, while a Stalinist, perched on a table, alludes to irresponsible elements. The Stalinists react fast. A militant CR is arrested and bullied. Renault falls back under Stalinist control, but leftists keep a foot-hold and will play a role in the 1948 strike launched in defiance of the Stalinist CGT.

In October, 1944, the CR tendency delivers a statement at the PCI convention and leaves the party. The French group, *Organisation Communiste Révolutionnaire*, then counts perhaps 40 members, and publishes abundant literature, alone or with the RKD: *Rassemblement Communiste Révolutionnaire*, also *Pouvoir Ouvrier* for the CR, *Vierte Kommunistische Internationale* for the RKD, and *L'Internationale*, an organ of the International Commission created by the CR and RKD.

But as the illusions of a revolutionary wave in Europe are dissipated, long-term perspectives have to be drawn, theoretical premises have to be discussed. There are questions on the issues of Kronstadt, the NEP, Brest-Litovsk and eventually Leninism itself. The mentor role of the old RKD leadership is challenged. Tension grows and defections are rife. A few militants join the International Communist Left (Bordiguists), while others form a new ephemeral organisation, CR –Against the Current (*Le Pouvoir Ouvrier*) who soon join the Bordiguists also. The leader of the RKD moves closer to the anarchists. The remnants of the organisation scatter in 1946.

Independently of any political assessment, the astonishing labour accomplished by this handful of Austrian and German militants of the RKD, under difficult and dangerous conditions, commands respect.

The Groupe Revolutionnaire Prolétarien — Union des Communistes Internationalistes (GRP-UCI)

[27]

At the end of 1941, isolated militants of various backgrounds meet to renew old contacts, and to decide upon the formation of a new group. It must be noted that at that time, Bordiguists and RKD were in the southern zone of France. A broad agreement is reached concerning the imperialist nature of the war and on the definition of Russia as a state capitalist system. The members come from Trotskyists, anarchists, and various German opposition groups, and represent many nationalities; in fact, some discussions are conducted in German, the French being in the minority.

In 1943, the GRP issues a manifesto which states that the imperialist war should be transformed into a civil war against all capitalist governments, the final goal being the international republic of the workers' councils. As immediate steps, the manifesto advocates propaganda and fraternisation with the German soldiers and workers, denunciation of the imperialists' goals; support of the economic demands of the workers; fighting against the deportation of workers to Germany, organised by the Vichy government and the Nazis; and formation of the revolutionary groups in the factories as a step towards the constitution of workers' militia and factory committees. After paying homage to Trotsky, the manifesto declares that the 4th International has been unable to unify Trotskyists and is therefore even less able to regroup all the revolutionaries. Its bureaucratic methods have emptied it of any real life, and its dogmatic attachment to the Russian experience is an obstacle to any theoretical progress. A genuine International has to be built.

Due to its social and national composition, the group is vulnerable and singularly deprived of material means. Legitimately so, its ambitions are with the RKD and with an anarchist group recently constituted in view of a concerted action. These last two contacts are fruitless. At the liberation of Paris, the group tries to secure money and material but fails. Bilingual leaflets are distributed — more as a desire to make a gesture than out of any illusions on their impact. In 1944, as a concession to the young French members still attached sentimentally to the Trotskyist tradition, the GRP becomes L'Union des Communistes Internationalistes for a 4th International.

The publications of the GRP-UCI are notorious for the poor quality of their printing. Up to January, 1945, the group published 16 issues of *Le R »šveil Prol »štarien* and 5 or 6 issues of a theoretical review, *La Flamme*. In the last two issues (decently printed in 1946), the evolution of the group towards the position of the Workers' Councils Communists appears clearly.

After the liberation of Paris, limited organising among the socialist youth brings new blood to the organisation and the possibilities of new contacts. But the GRP-UCI — it happens also to other organisations — is ill-prepared to assimilate these new people, who are doubtless motivated by a healthy reaction against class collaboration, but who are inexperienced politically and prone to be easily discouraged by the rarefied atmosphere of the group and its lack of possibility of expression. Some members quit the group, some of the foreigners leave France, not so much on account of real divergences as out of a desire to explore other possibilities. The group declines and ceases to function in 1947. It has fulfilled a useful role during the war and it is relevant to mention that despite their different evolutions, the ex-members of the group seem to have maintained friendly contacts.

Conclusions

This study attempts to explain only the historical background and the actions of the three groups which took an unequivocal attitude during the war: The RKD-CR, the GRP-UCI and the International Communist Left (Bordiguists). As they were not tormented, as were Trotskyists, by the problems of

strategy and tactics caused by the participation of the USSR in the conflict, they differed little in their analyses of the war. It is now irrelevant to know whether the RKD or the GRP assessed correctly or not the Italian situation, or to rehash old arguments on perennial theoretical problems.

Mention of the anarchist current was deemed necessary, both to emphasise the collapse of a movement and to recognise the efforts of the militants who tried at least to pick up the threads.

With many nuances, the three above-mentioned groups were most optimistic – as were the Trotskyists – as to the revolutionary potential of the conflict. Their hopes were mercilessly crushed; the feeble attempts here and there at autonomous working-class actions promptly vanished with the restoration, aided by Stalinists and reformists, of state power.

The ultra-left analysis of the USSR was confirmed while the Trotskyist's over laboured analyses crumbled. The bureaucracy did not succumb to capitalist pressure not to a proletarian revolution. It protected and extended its power and became a contender for world domination. The counterrevolutionary role of the Russian state and of its foreign agencies, the communist parties, was again demonstrated while revelations on the purges and the Gulag exposed the barbarity of the system.

The war and post-war periods proved that the bureaucratic society was not a freak occurrence limited to Russia. Bureaucratic societies exist over half of Europe and elsewhere in the world, providing the Trotskyists with other specimens of workers' states born distorted or deformed. This is the most important event of the century, the irrefutable proof that the elimination of private capitalism without a democratic organisation of society engenders new forms of domination and exploitation.

This short history of the ultra-left is not an a posteriori justification, but nonetheless some misconceptions should be dispelled.

While not contesting the imperialist character of the war, some people have accused the internationalists of having given indirect help to the Nazis by not subordinating everything to the necessity of the anti-fascist fight. This is a most serious question, and the complexity of the problem was revealed in various discussions which took place before the war.

Then the internationalists still found their inspiration in the great tradition of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, of Zimmerwald and in slogans inherited from this period: « The enemy is our own bourgeoisie and we must transform the capitalist war into civil war, at the cost of the defeat of our bourgeoisie, » etc. But doubts existed.

With the exception of Russia, WWI involved states with social systems fairly similar and with important socialist organisations weakened and demoralised, indeed, but not destroyed. In each country there existed a revolutionary nucleus (subjected only to a relatively mild repression), the growth of which was helped by the stagnation of the fronts. Even without a revolutionary outcome in Western Europe, peace modified the frontiers but did not obliterate the working-class organisations. In 1939, the situation was different. Even without foreseeing the German blitzkrieg, who could tell whether the war was to last long enough to allow the proletariat – crushed here by fascists and demoralised there by Stalinists and reformists – to develop a revolutionary consciousness? A rapid victory by the Axis powers could plunge Europe into the dark for many years. Even Trotsky's strategy was far from simple, establishing differences between fascists and democratic countries and taking into account their possible involvement with the USSR.

American and British Trotskyists – whose countries were not invaded, whose bourgeoisies were allied with the USSR and who enjoyed a modicum of legality – had to deal concretely with these problems.

(How they did this is outside the scope of this article).(28)

The swift German victory in France brought a partial answer to these questions for the internationalists. In the measure that the French bourgeoisie, with enough duplicity to safeguard its future, stood behind the Nazis, the fight against Vichy and the Nazis became the same fights. But the war continued, and left intact the problem of dealing with the Resistance.

The ultra-left and the Trotskyists maintained their complete independence and fought Vichy and the Nazis within the framework of their respective global perspectives.

The ultra-left was only a grain of sand in the tempest, and could only assign itself modest tasks. Despite its weakness, it deemed necessary the maintenance of its organisations in order to safeguard and develop the theory, to regroup the militants and to denounce the lies and illusions spread by the various imperialists. The ultra-left stood for the defence of proletarian interests against French and German capital, advocated sabotage of the Nazi war effort and resistance to German and Vichy legislation. Although the German soldiers fought bravely indeed, they were not all Nazis. Thousands of deserters were executed. The limited but effective work of the Trotskyists among German soldiers proved they were not impervious to propaganda. This was an anti-Nazi attitude but on a class ground, without any concession to the class collaboration and chauvinism of the Stalinists and de Gaullists .

Some well-meaning people have suggested that the ultra-left – – and also the Trotskyists – – should have infiltrated the Resistance in order to influence it. The weakness of the ultra-left precluded any diversion of its militants. More numerous, the Trotskyists finally chose to concentrate their militants in the factories. But the basic objection is a political one.

Even with the best intentions, clandestine activity is not conducive to lengthy debate and democratic process beyond the phase of small-room discussions. The Resistance was not a political forum. In order to be known and respected, within a necessarily small number of people, an infiltrator would have had to obey orders and perform tasks assigned to him – – in other words, to be lost to his own organisation and ideas. Let us not even speak of the Stalinists' suspicions in the organisations they controlled. In a more propitious milieu, near the end of the German occupation, Trotskyists gained influence and respect in some factories, but as the most militant and best trade-unionists. When they unfurled their flag, the workers did not flock to the PCI.

At the end of the war, despite some recruiting, the three ultra-left groups influenced perhaps a few hundred people altogether. Clearly, the conditions had been difficult; most militants were in various degrees of jeopardy (as Jews, foreigners, forced-labour dodgers, jail escapees, etc.), and this in a country where even people living with the law suffered much deprivation. Money, false papers, food tickets, and safe housing had to be secured. Printing material was difficult to obtain. Already having to contend with the various French and German police, internationalists feared the Stalinists and were suspicious of the Resistance. In fact, they were terribly isolated and vulnerable. The anarchists, though ineffective, had at least some roots and traditions in French society and the Trotskyists, through their chequered history, had acquired at least a circle of contacts and sympathisers. The ultra-left did not have even this small milieu.

But the existing material conditions do not explain everything, and are themselves partly a reflection of political isolation. The internationalists were totally in opposition to the various ideologies which claimed the allegiance of those French people who had not already taken refuge in passivity of opportunism. Internationalists could only endure, bear testimony and work for the future.

Stalinist Crimes

Historians still disagree on the number of summary executions which took place in France in 1944, with figures ranging from 5,000 to 100,000 or more (as advanced by the partisans of Vichy.) It is beyond doubt that the Stalinist partisans liquidated a good number of political enemies in the areas they controlled. After having seen the Stalinists at work in Spain and elsewhere, one legitimately could have feared a reign of terror against the revolutionaries.

In fact, revolutionaries were murdered by the Stalinists, but the exact number is unknown, and full investigation of the crime was impossible under the political climate of the time. In October, 1943, five Trotskyists were among the 90 inmates of the Puy jail who were freed by a partisan raid. Four of them, Sadek, Reboul, Salini and the well-known Italian militant Pietra Tesso (Blasco), disappeared after their liberation. In Paris, a young militant of *L'Union Communiste*, Mathieu Buchholz, was kidnapped, tortured and executed in September, 1944. Other Trotskyists were murdered in Paris and in the provinces, as were also some Spanish anarchists and militants of the POUM in Southern France where Spanish Stalinists operated. [29]

Still, these crimes do not represent a « reign of terror. » In the chaotic atmosphere of the liberation, the liquidation of the Trotskyist leadership would have been an easy task for the execution squads of the CP who had performed more difficult deeds. On the contrary, an historian mentions the liberation by the Stalinist Marrane of a group of Trotskyists arrested in Paris [30] This may suggest that the executions were due to local initiatives and that the CP had other priorities at the time.

Pierre Lanneret (aka Ernest Rayner)

NOTES

(1) Jean Rabaut, *Tout est possible*. Denoël, 1974.

(2) Yvan Craipeau. *Contre vents et marées. Les révolutionnaires pendent la deuxième guerre mondiale*. Savelli, 1977. Also, *La Libération Confisquée*, Savelli-Syros, 1978

(3) At its founding (1901), the Parti Republicain Radical et Radical Socialist (its full name) is an amorphous coalition but can be considered as the left of bourgeois democracy. The party favours some structural reforms (nationalisation); stand for « the defence of the Republic », and is, at its beginning, strongly anticlerical. Its main constituency is in the provinces, among peasants and the middle-class. The party has practically no individual membership. It is a party of notables; of electoral committees with a very loose discipline from the Parliament down to the villages, allowing radicals to move from right to left according to necessity. The party suffered from its lacklustre role during the war and has disappeared from the French political scene.

(4) Leon Blum, *For All Mankind*. Viking Press, New York, 1946. « It is true that in a spirit of ritual fidelity to a traditional symbol, the Parliamentary Socialist party continued to vote against military credits, well knowing that its vote could not prevent their passing, and there was no doubt something hypocritical in this attitude. » Blum later explains how, once in power, he organised French rearmament.

(5) Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making: 1914 – 1924*. Stanford University Press, 1966. « Poincar »š saves the FCP, » pp 314 – 316. Excellent bibliography.

(6) Valuable information on this period in William Shirer's book, *The Collapse of the Third Republic*.

(7) Leon Blum, *L'Histoire Jugera*. Editions de l'Arbre, Montreal, 1943, pp 294 – 297. Blum relates how contritely the industrialists accepted the reproaches of the union leaders during the negotiations. In substance. « If you had not in the past systematically fired our people in the factories, we would be in a better position to order the return to work. »

(8) Leon Trotsky, *Whither France*.

(9) Annie Kriegel, *Le Pain et les Roses*. Kriegel credits the FCP with 109,000 members at its founding. It is reduced to 55,000 by 1923 and to 29,000 members by 1933. In 1934, there is a modest improvement (42,000), and this growth continues until the disastrous strikes of 1938: 86,000 members in 1935, 280,000 at the end of 1936, and more than 300,000 by the end of 1937.

(10) Rabaut, op. cit., p 377.

(11) Jean Maitrion. *Le mouvement anarchiste en France*. Vol 2, p 37.

(12) « Death to the cows, » the Gallic equivalent of « death to the pigs. »

(13) The Francisque was the war axe of the of the old Franks, adopted as a symbol and also as medal by the Vichy government.

(14) Les Anarchistes dans la Resistance. 2 vols. Published by « Le Centre International de Recherche sur l'Anarchisme. » Marseilles, 1984-85. « Testimony of a militant, » Vol 2, p 110

(15) *Le Libertaire*, No. 51, November 1984

(16) Craipeau, *La Révolution Confisquée*, op. cit., p. 82.

(17) Les Anarchistes dans la Résistance, op. cit., for example. This family album mentions militants no longer active in the movement by 1939, and obviously ignores many others, but still offers an adequate picture of the movement.

(18) H. Chazé, *Chronique de la révolution espagnole. Union Communiste (1933 – 1939)*. Spartacus, 1979.

(19) The pre-war UC should not be confused with L'Union Communiste founded during the war by the Trotskyist Barta (Korner). This very small group was better known by the name of its organ, Lutte de Classe. The French Trotskyist organ Lutte Ouvriere has its roots in Barta's group.

(20) Some people have objected to the label of Bordiguist applied to the various groups stemming from the old Italian Left. This point is well taken. « Bordiguism » is somewhat redolent of a personality cult which would be obnoxious per se if it had ever existed. The truth is that for a long time Bordiga was not in contact with the fraction. He did not play any role in the formation of the party in Italy and did not join it officially. Although real, his influence on the party was exerted through articles and theoretical texts. Vercesi even had to apologize to disappointed militants for Bordiga's absence at the congress in Florence in 1948. The Italian militants were by no means sheepish cultists; their organisations were sometimes shaken by serious crises (e.g., the split on the Spanish question and the split led by Damen in 1954). Nor did the French militants who joined the International Left swear blind allegiance to fundamental Bordiguist documents. Under the then-prevailing conditions, they saw real possibilities of revolutionary activities within the framework of an honourable tradition. Few of them were « Bordiguists ». This being said – accurate or not – the epithet « Bordiguist » has been used for more than

(21) A point stated over and over again: « The fundamental point remains that Marxist theory is immutable; it cannot be disputed by the party nor by the class, » *Le Proletaire*, No. 101, 1971 (organ of the Parti Communiste International)

(22) A few weeks after the fascist march on Rome, Bordiga explained to the 4th congress of the Komintern that fascism « has given nothing new to bourgeois policy » (Nov. 1922). See E. H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, 1924 – 1926, Part 3, Vol 1, pp 82-84.

(23) The Trotskyist *Lutte de Classe* explains the differences between Bordiguism and Trotskyism, concluding that the Italian Left does not properly belong to the Left Opposition. See *Lutte de Classe*, March, 1932 and Jan.-Feb., 1933. The problem of the nature of the Russian state is not addressed.

(24) *Internationalisme*, No. 23, June, 1947. On the Italian Party: « In one word, under the name of the party of the International Communist Left we have an Italian formation of the classic Trotskyist type minus the defence of the USSR. »

(25) Le Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Mouvements Trotskyiste et Revolutionnaires Internationaux, 88 rue St. Denis, Paris, France 75001, has published in its « cahiers » No. 10 and 11 a bibliography of the documents of the RKD and CR from 1936 to 1945. The No. 5 issue of the *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* (January – March, 1980) contains a study of Trotskyism in Austria (1934 – 1945) with some biographies and portraits of RKD militants. Institut Leon Trotsky, 29 rue Descartes, 75005 Paris, France.

(26) Published in *International News*, September 1939.

(27) Craipeau (op. cit.) mentions the GRP-UCI as the « Laroche » group, an alias of Pavel and Clara Thalmann, who were among the founders and animators of the group. Their memoirs bring alive some aspects of the period of clandestinity, but do not chronicle the group's life: *Revolution für die Freiheit*, Verlag Association, Hamburg, 1976. Also in French: *Combats pour la Liberté*, La Digitale, 1983.

(28) Trotsky's writings and the documents of the 4th International on the war question are easily available. Let us mention a polemic between Cannon and the Spanish Trotskyist Munis (<https://bataillesocialiste.wordpress.com/biographies/munis-1912-1989/>) on the attitude of the SWP during the war. Among other texts see *Socialism on Trial* by James P. Cannon, 1942, and *El Socialist Workers Party y la Guerra Imperialista*, » Spanish group of the 4th International in Mexico, Mexico, 1945. Informative article on British Trotskyism during the war in *Labour Review*, Dec. 1958, « Marxists in the Second World War. »

(29) Dazy René, *Fusillez ces Chiens Enragés, Le Génocide des Trotskyistes*, Ed. Dorban, March, 1981.

(30) Henri Denis, *Le Comité Parisien de la Libération*, Paris, 1963, quoted in Peter Novick's *The Resistance versus Vichy*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1968. No corroboration of this incident has been found in the Trotskyists literature or elsewhere.

See also:

o Bibliographie: « Révolutionnaires en Seconde Guerre mondiale » (<http://chroniques-rebelles.info/IMG/doc/BiblioSecondeGuerre.doc>) (*Dissidences*, 2007) external doc



3 Réponses to “1995 Third Camp Internationalists in France during World War II [Lanneret]”

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