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Santiago Carrillo's First Coup?

The Formation of the »Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas« in Spain and Its International Context, 1933–1936¹

»Truth is not a crystal
one can put in one's pocket,
but an infinite fluid
into which one falls headlong.«
Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*²

The Spanish »Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas« (United Socialist Youth, JSU) offers the only example of a Socialist and a Communist youth organisation uniting without the pressure of the Red Army, as was to happen in a number of cases in eastern Europe after the Second World War. The organisation became famous for playing an important role during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). In addition, it brought to the fore one of the most illustrious leaders of the international Communist movement, Santiago Carrillo Solares (1915–2012), the son of a leading Socialist. Having been secretary-general of the »Federación de Juventudes Socialistas« (FJS) since 1934, in 1936 Carrillo took on the same position in the newly formed organisation. Later, he became a member of the Politburo of the »Partido Comunista de España« (Communist Party of Spain, PCE), finally to be promoted to secretary-general in 1960. In due course, Carrillo played an important part in the evolution towards *Eurocommunism* and the peaceful *transición* from the Francoist dictatorship to the constitutional monarchy of the late 1970s.³

The JSU itself became an important political actor as Carrillo, with some of his comrades, came to be co-opted into the inner circle of power of the Republic during

1 I would like to express my gratitude for critical advice with regard to contents and language at the initial stage of this manuscript to Helen Graham, one of the most important scholars of Spanish history of the 1930s. I am also grateful to Aidan Kirwan, the former Irish ambassador to Latvia, for help with the final editing of the text. I would also like to express my gratitude to my wife and children who have been patiently accepting the investment in time for the work on this piece. I dedicate this article to my parents who have always supported me in different ways with regards to my scientific work.

2 »Die Wahrheit ist eben kein Kristall, den man in die Tasche stecken kann, sondern eine unendliche Flüssigkeit, in die man hineinfällt.« Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Roman. I. Erstes und zweites Buch, Frankfurt am Main 1978, S. 533 f.

3 For Carrillo's later role within the PCE see Gregorio Morán, *Miseria y grandeza del Partido Comunista de España 1939–1985*, Barcelona 1986. For his role in the *transición* see Paul Preston, *Die Kommunistische Partei Spaniens im Kampf um die Demokratisierung*, in: Peter Waldmann/Walther L. Bernecker/Francisco López-Casero (eds.), *Sozialer Wandel und Herrschaft im Spanien Francos*, Paderborn/Munich etc. 1984, pp. 325–347. For Carrillo's own view see Santiago Carrillo, *The Consensus-Building Role of the Spanish Communist Party*, in: Monica Threlfall (ed.), *Consensus Politics in Spain. Insider Perspectives*, Bristol/Portland 2000, pp. 53–60.

the Spanish Civil War. The organisation's membership soared to about 300,000⁴, making it by far the largest youth organisation outside Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union during this period.⁵ The FJS had had a membership of about 40,000, while the »Unión de Juventudes Comunistas« (Communist Youth League, UJC) counted only about 5,000 members at the time of the merger. Between May and July, the organisation grew to 140,000, and, by 1937, the JSU would grow to more than 300,000 members.⁶ Thousands of new JSU militants became soldiers in the Popular Army fighting against the military rebellion, and many of its members rose to be officers or political commissars.

Nonetheless, the result of the organisational fusion turned out to be ambiguous, since not all Young Socialists were satisfied with this development. The leadership of the JSU had to fight tendencies of disintegration within its organisation soon after the start of the Civil War and especially when it became clear that Carrillo and other former Young Socialists had entered the PCE at the beginning of the siege of Madrid in November 1936. This was a result of the endless internal conflicts within the »Partido Socialista Obrero Español« (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE)⁷ and led to the JSU entering the orbit of the PCE, in turn increasing potential for conflict within the Socialist Party itself.⁸

4 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (Russian State Archive for Social and Political History, hereafter: RGASPI), fond 495, register 12, file 92, p. 168. The figure is given in a report from Carrillo to the Comintern on a meeting with the representatives of the SYI Executive Committee on April 8, 1937.

5 In the year 1932, the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend, HJ) counted around 50,000 members. At the end of 1933, after the forced absorption of the still existing independent youth organisations, it had been inflated to nearly 2,300,000 members, by which time it had already become a quasi-state organisation. See *André Postert*, *Die Hitlerjugend. Geschichte einer überforderten Massenorganisation*, Göttingen 2021, pp. 13, 32 and 113. The Soviet Komsomol reported a membership of 5,353,630 children from the age of six years up to young men and women till their mid-twenties for January 1932. It, however, had also a different character than the JSU, since it had already taken up the role of one of the »Soviet socializing agencies«. *Matthias Neumann*, *The Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1927–1932*, London/New York 2011, pp. XIV and 227. Both organisations also had at least two different characteristic features, since they organized children from primary school age till adolescence, while the JSU had members from around fifteen till thirty-five. In contrast to the voluntary membership in the JSU – certainly under specific conditions – both Hitlerjugend and Soviet Komsomol were based on semi- or even pseudo-voluntary membership. See *Postert*, *Die Hitlerjugend*, p. 252; *Neumann*, *The Communist Youth League*, p. 220.

6 *Paul Preston*, *The Last Stalinist. The Life of Santiago Carrillo*, London 2014, p. 65; *Sandra Souto Kustrín*, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle: políticas gubernamentales y organizaciones juveniles en la Segunda República*, in: Ayer 59, 2005, p. 118.

7 For these conflicts within the PSOE esp. see *Santos Juliá*, *La Izquierda del PSOE 1935–1936*, Madrid 1977; *Paul Preston*, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War. Reform Reaction and Revolution in the Second Republic*, London 1994; *Helen Graham*, *The Eclipse of the Socialist Left: 1934–1937*, in: *Frances Lannon/Paul Preston* (eds.), *Élites and Power in Twentieth-Century Spain. Essays in Honour of Sir Raymond Carr*, Oxford 1990; *Paul Heywood*, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain, 1879–1936*, Cambridge 1990, pp. 110–175.

8 See for this process *Helen Graham*, *The Socialist Youth in the JSU: The Experience of Organizational Unity, 1936–8*, in: *Martin Blinkhorn* (ed.), *Spain in Conflict, 1931–1939. Democracy and Its Enemies*, London 1986, pp. 83–102; *Óscar J. Monterrubio Rodríguez*, *Las J.S.U. y el P.S.O.E. en la guerra civil. Historia de una ruptura*, in: *Arbor*, 1986, no. 491–492, pp. 101–120.

Meanwhile, the JSU inherited the FJS membership of the Socialist Youth International (SYI). This was used by the Communist Youth International (CYI) – and thus in turn by its parent organisation, the Communist International (Comintern) – to try and exert influence on the SYI⁹ and through this on the Labour and Socialist International (LSI), or at least to receive internal information from the Socialist side. Only after the end of the Civil War, however, did the PSOE rescind the status of the JSU as its youth organisation. In the post-Civil-War period, the SYI in turn excluded Carrillo's youth organisation at the behest of Erich Ollenhauer, later chairman of the German Social Democrats (SPD) and at that time long-standing secretary-general of the SYI.¹⁰

The unification process, which took place against the backdrop of a highly complex national and international historical development, left the Spanish Socialists without a youth organisation, recalling a situation that they had already experienced once before, in 1920, when the Socialist youth league deserted from the party to form the first Communist Party in Spain.¹¹

I. State of Research

One decisive step related to the formation of the new organisation was a visit of a delegation of Young Socialists, including Carrillo, and their Communist counterparts to the Communist International in March 1936, shortly after they had been released from prison as one of the first measures taken after the victory of the Popular Front in the February general elections. This trip to Moscow and the negotiation process connected with it has not been reflected in the literature, although the related documentation has been accessible in the former Archive of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union («Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'noi-politicheskoi istorii»), which also contains the existing archival documentation for the Comintern and its youth section.

In spite of this open access to the Comintern archives, even recent literature does not go deeper into the question of the two Spanish labour youth organisations' delegation to Moscow and the negotiations leading to this unique merger.¹² However,

9 See *Frank Schauf*, *Einheitsfront gescheitert*. Erich Ollenhauer, Santiago Carrillo und der Spanische Bürgerkrieg, in: *Florian Legner* (ed.), *¡Solidaridad! Deutsche im Spanischen Bürgerkrieg*, Berlin 2006, pp. 133–163.

10 *Monterrubio*, *Las J.S.U. y el P.S.O.E. en la guerra civil*, p. 111; *Heinrich Eppe*, *Die Kraft der Solidarität. 80 Jahre Sozialistische Jugendinternationale*, Bonn 1987, p. 66. See also the minutes of the 1939 congress of the SYI in Lille, *Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, Amsterdam (hereafter: IISG), fond of the *Sozialistische Jugend-Internationale* (hereafter: SJI), register *Kongress der SJI in Lille*, file 184, p. 37; *ibid.*, file 175, pp. 1 and 4 f.

11 *José Luis Martín Ramos*, *Historia del PCE*, Madrid 2021, pp. 35–39; *Antonio Elorza/Marta Bizcarrondo*, *Queridos Camaradas. La Internacional Comunista y España, 1919–1939*, Barcelona 1999, pp. 19–28; *Heywood*, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 65–71.

12 For instance, neither *Brigitte Studer* nor *Jonathan Haslam*, although both deal with the Spanish Civil War and also rely on Moscow archival documentation, mentions this unique move. See *Jonathan Haslam*, *The Spectre of War. International Communism and the Origins of World War II*, Princeton 2021; *Brigitte Studer*, *Reisende der Weltrevolution. Eine Globalgeschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale*, Berlin 2020.

this event is mentioned in works on the Spanish Civil War, its prehistory and the labour movement without going into detail. In the aftermath, the formation of the JSU became subject to a long and harsh debate between the two main wings of the PSOE on the one hand and between the Socialists and the PCE on the other, but also amongst historians.

After the formation of the new youth organisation, the reformists within the PSOE accused the Socialist left of having lost it out to the PCE. The PSOE left, in turn, saw themselves as having been deceived by the PCE.¹³ Some historians see the formation of the JSU as a Stalinist coup against the Socialist movement. The Soviet historian E. Khavanov, most probably due to the conflicts amongst the Communist parties related to the development of Eurocommunism in the 1970s, goes so far as completely to delete Carrillo from the whole story. The picture he draws instead is rather absurd, depicting the secretary-general of the much smaller UJC, Trifón Medrano, as responsible for the unification.¹⁴ The right-wing Spanish historian Ricardo de la Cierva tries to prove that Carrillo, the secretary-general of the FJS, acted on behalf of the Communist Party from very early on.¹⁵ As one would expect, in his work on the Spanish Civil War Burnett Bolloten also dedicates a conspiracy theory to the formation of the joint Socialist-Communist youth organisation, which he calls Carrillo's ›coup‹.¹⁶ The Trotskyist historian Pierre Broué concludes that »beyond Carrillo, it was the line of the miniscule minority of the [Communist youth] which prevailed and continued to prevail. In fact, the JSU joined the [Communist Party], and that is the result of the work of Carrillo.«¹⁷ Antonio Elorza and Marta Bizcarrondo are also of the opinion that the Socialist youth under Carrillo's leadership simply gave in to the Comintern's requirements. For them, already by mid-February, i.e. before the victory of the Popular Front and the delegation visit to Moscow, »the subordination of the young Socialists to the demands of the Comintern was complete«.¹⁸ While José Luis Martín Ramos does not even mention the unification of the youth leagues in his recent »Historia del PCE«¹⁹, Paul Preston comes to a rather harsh and personalised judgment in his biography of Carrillo, the then twenty-one year old leader of the Socialist youth movement, at the moment of his first trip to the Soviet Union:

13 See *Helen Graham*, *Socialism and War. The Spanish Socialist Party in Power and Crisis, 1936–1939*, Cambridge 1991, pp. 31–33, 71–73 and 112–117.

14 *Evgenii Ivanovich Khavanov*, *Volei sil'ny. Shtrikhi k portretam bortsov-deyatelei Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala Molodezhi*, Moscow 1980, pp. 82–84.

15 *Ricardo de la Cierva*, *Carrillo miente. 156 documentos contra 103 falsedades*, Madrid 1994, pp. 89–94.

16 *Burnett Bolloten*, *The Spanish Revolution. The Left and the Struggle for Power during the Civil War*, Chapel Hill 1979, pp. 132–136, quotation: p. 135.

17 See *Pierre Broué*, *Staline et la révolution: Le cas espagnol*, Paris 1993, pp. 46–49 and 57–60, quotation: p. 49. This line of argument is also pursued by *George Esenwein/Adrian Shubert*, *Spain at War. The Spanish Civil War in Context, 1931–1939*, London 1995, p. 114. *Hugh Thomas*, *The Spanish Civil War*, Harmondsworth 1990, p. 200.

18 *Elorza/Bizcarrondo*, *Queridos Camaradas*, p. 276.

19 *Martín Ramos*, *Historia del PCE*.

»Although it had been long coming, Carrillo's change of position was breath-taking. He had played a significant part in encouraging the capricious and vacuous revolutionary rhetoric of Largo Caballero that had contributed to the disaster of October 1934. He had been a central figure in the project to bolshevize the PSOE and had done significant damage to the moderate and more realistic wings of the Socialist movement. Gil Robles and Salazar Alonso knew that Largo Caballero's threats were meaningless. In contrast, the insistent demand of Carrillo and the FJS leadership in [its journal] *Renovación* for the conquest of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat can only have terrified the moderates of the Spanish right and played into the hands of the conspiratorial extremists. The same can be said about *Octubre: segunda etapa*. Yet now he put all behind him without apology or regret. [...] Having contributed to the intensification of hatreds in Spain and thereby weakening the Republic, he had now initiated a process that would mortally wound the party of his father and his patron. In doing so, he demonstrated a poisonous cocktail of vaulting ambition, supreme self-consciousness and irresponsibility.«²⁰

In contrast to this, long before the opening of the Moscow archives, Ricard Viñas tried to explain the foundation of the newly united youth organisation as the understandable outcome of the efforts made since 1934. According to Viñas, the FJS undertook the enterprise of unifying the Spanish left in the broadest possible sense under the influence of the class struggles in Spain, the theoretical development of the Spanish Socialist left and the international labour movement.²¹

In this context, one has to keep in mind what Rainer-Gerd Horn has dubbed the factor of ›contingency‹ in the historical process of interaction between the Socialist and the Communist branches of the labour movement in the face of rising fascism. In relation to the Great Depression and the rise of fascism, Horn argues »that crisis points are moments of maximum choice« and continues:

»In the concrete context of 1933–1936, this meant that no inherent necessity or inbuilt determination predestined the ultimate sequence of events with the societies at large and, more specifically, the politics of the Left. These years were some of those exceptional moments in the interplay of agency and structure when the former reached maximum potential. It was a period when voluntarist notions, viewpoints that stressed the subjective factor in historical change, were widely disseminated and accepted within all segments of the European Left. For once, the impossible appeared to be within reach. Contingency was seemingly reigning supreme.«²²

Following this line of argument, it is hardly possible to see the unification of the two working-class youth organisations as either the clear result of a master plan for unity or a Communist conspiracy. Contingency indeed played a major role in the formation of the new youth organisation. This has to be seen against the complex background of a broad spectrum of actors at the level of the two Spanish youth organisations, the Socialist national and international movement, the Comintern and its youth section, the CYI, and unforeseeable historical developments, while it

20 Preston, *The Last Stalinist*, pp. 63 f.

21 Ricard Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (1934–1936)*, Madrid 1978, pp. 5–63.

22 Gerd-Rainer Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism. Ideology, Activism and Contingency in the 1930s*, New York 1996, pp. 11 f.

would be wrong to expect them to act on the basis of a coherent strategy or even a masterplan.

The role of the Communist International and of the Spanish youth delegation to Moscow in March 1936 in discussing the terms of the merger is still largely obscure. After the delegation had returned from Moscow, unification seemed to take place swiftly, as though these talks had helped to elaborate a scheme for the forthcoming months. The essence of most interpretations of the Moscow talks is that the FJS was sold out to the Comintern by Carrillo during his stay in the Soviet Union. But this interpretation was dependent on missing documentary evidence of the Moscow talks, the line of the Comintern and its youth section. In any case, the development up to the merger and the merger itself cannot be understood without taking also a closer look at the national and international context.

II. Spain's Place in European Historical Geography and the Development of Its Labour Movement

Spain has for a long time followed along a specific path in European history which might with some justice be called a historical *Sonderweg*. This particular course was confirmed by the fact that Spain abstained from the military participation in the First World War, while it seemed to have profited significantly in its industrial development by supplying both sides between 1914 and 1918. The social conflicts which came to the surface in the years starting from 1917, called the *Trienio bolchevique*, could no longer be controlled by the semi-democratic political system of the monarchy, ultimately leading to the establishment of the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera on September 13, 1923, which lasted until the early 1930s.²³ Spain thus formed an exception in Europe alongside Horthy's Hungary and Mussolini's Italy, as well as the rather peripheral Bulgaria and Turkey.²⁴ While ignoring the broader politics of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, this had important implications for the Spanish labour movement and its already existing complexities, which again seem to be historically unique in Europe.

It is a well-known fact that the Spanish labour movement since its infancy had displayed a major split between a Marxist wing, which had established itself through the formation of the PSOE in 1879 as one of the oldest Socialist parties, and an anarchist movement that had already existed since the 1860s and remained significantly stronger than its Socialist counterparts for decades to come. This division of the labour movement forms part of the Spanish *Sonderweg*.

23 On this see *Shlomo Ben-Ami*, *Fascism from Above. The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923–1930*, Oxford 1983; *Gerardo Muñoz Lorente*, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera. Los seis años que le costaron el trono a Alfonso XIII.*, Córdoba 2022.

24 The following countries moved from more or less democratic to fully-fledged right-wing or fascist dictatorship during the interwar period: 1920, Hungary; 1922/23, Italy; 1923–1930, Bulgaria; 1923, Turkey; 1923–1930, Spain; 1925, Albania; 1926, Poland, Portugal, Lithuania; 1929, Yugoslavia; 1930, Romania; 1933, Germany, Austria; 1934, Latvia, Estonia; 1936, Greece. *Michael Mann*, *Fascists*, Cambridge 2004, p. 38.

While the Socialists, in classic application of Marxist theory, had formed a hierarchically organised party and thereafter a trade union federation, the »Unión General de Trabajadores« (UGT), in 1888, both led for decades by Pablo Iglesias, the Anarchists typically refrained from organising themselves in any manner which might have come close to an ideologically homogenous, hierarchical or even centralised structure. This changed to a certain degree only with the formation of the »Confederación Nacional de Trabajo« (National Confederation of Labour, CNT) in 1910, which subsequently became the stronger of the two now existing trade union federations of the left. In addition, the geographical strength of the anarchists in Catalonia constituted – along with the PSOE's centralism in Madrid – one of the reasons for the Socialists' weakness in the most industrially advanced region of Spain.²⁵

As a reaction to national and international developments, including the Russian Revolution, labour unrest started to manifest itself asynchronously in different parts of the country starting from 1917. In this context, the two competing trade union organisations even came to agree on cooperation. Attempts were made to coordinate with bourgeois and even military opposition to the *ancién regime*. However, the breakdown of these attempts to overthrow the monarchy led to a backlash by the conservative élites, mostly aiming at suppressing the violent extreme left as it was gathered in the Anarchist movement and its Syndicalist wing, the CNT. State repression aimed at the Anarchist movement led to its leaders going into exile after the *pronunciamiento* of Primo de Rivera.²⁶ The dictatorship and the response of different parts of the labour movement had major consequences for its development at the beginning of the 1930s and up to the Civil War.

While the CNT was also seeking to join the newly established Comintern, the new division within the international labour movement led also to repercussions for the PSOE. The years 1919 till 1921 were broadly spent upon the internal conflict between the mainstream of the party and the so-called *terceristas*. Subsequently, two groups split from the PSOE in 1920 and 1921, merging into the PCE in 1922. The first of these two groups formed mostly around the leadership of the youth organisation of the PSOE, who took around 1,000 members with them, while the body of the FJSE remained substantially weakened, since another part of its militants simply left the field of political activity.²⁷

The PCE was forced underground, with its leadership mainly in exile shortly after its formation. This was one important factor for the Communist Party remain-

25 *Albert Balcells*, *El socialismo en Cataluña hasta la Guerra Civil*, in: *Santos Juliá* (ed.), *El socialismo en las nacionalidades y regiones*, Madrid 1988, pp. 7–39; *Heywood*, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 39 f.

26 *Julián Vadillo Muñoz*, *Historia de la CNT. Utopía, pragmatismo y revolución*, Madrid 2019, pp. 157–173.

27 *Martín Ramos*, *Historia del PCE*, pp. 35–39; *Elorza/Bizcarrondo*, *Queridos Camaradas*, pp. 19–28; *Heywood*, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 65–71. For the FJS before the foundation of the Republic see e.g. *Souto Kustrín*, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, pp. 100–102; *Antonio González Quintana/Aurelio Martín Nájera*, *Apuntes para la historia de las juventudes socialistas de España*, Madrid 1983, pp. 3–43; *Francisco de Luis Martín*, *Las Juventudes Socialistas como frente cultural pedagógico del socialismo español. El caso madrileño 1903–1914*, in: *Historia Contemporánea*, 1992, no. 8, pp. 249–267.

ning very small and politically insignificant until well into the Second Republic.²⁸ In contrast to the extreme left, the Socialists soon found a *modus vivendi* with the dictator, who tried to involve this wing of the labour movement, which – with the notable exception of the *trienio bolchevique* – had always despite its Marxist rhetoric pursued a consistently reformist practice. The dictator proposed collaboration to the UGT, the proposal in turn leading to sharp controversies and splits between different leading representatives of the Socialist movement, which remained virulent even after the end of the Civil War. The movement remained dominated by figures who had been active at the top level of the party and the trade union well before the dictatorship: Julián Besteiro, who became leader after Iglesias's death in 1925, Francisco Largo Caballero, Indalecio Prieto and Fernando de los Ríos. Besteiro came out in favour of limited cooperation with the dictatorship, with Largo Caballero supporting this position as long as it seemed to enhance the position of the UGT, especially in its competition with the CNT. In contrast, Prieto and de los Ríos argued consistently against cooperation with the dictatorship and in favour of cooperation with the bourgeois opposition as soon as the latter started to form.²⁹

The already existing rivalry between Socialists and Anarcho-syndicalists was intensified by the collaboration of PSOE/UGT-leadership, especially Largo Caballero, with the dictatorship, introducing an arbitration mechanism that included the UGT but excluded, and therefore was rejected by, the CNT.³⁰ Its difficult situation, in turn, led to an organisational split within the Anarcho-syndicalist movement when the »Federación Anarquista Ibérica« (FAI) was formed clandestinely in Valencia in July 1927, bringing together radicals in favour of anti-politicism and Bakuninist tradition and becoming highly influential within the CNT with the end of the dictatorship from 1931 onwards.³¹

Towards the end of the twenties, the dictatorship for a number of reasons ran into multiple crises³², partly caused by effects of the Great Depression, partly home-made, and its end began to look predictable. While Besteiro, mostly for reasons of ideological bias, refused to change the Socialists' position and to engage in a coalition with the emerging bourgeois opposition to the dictatorship, Largo Caballero, who had sided with him, in this moment took a different decision, most probably when he anticipated that the coming end of the dictatorship might otherwise damage the UGT's position with the working class. He therefore moved over to the side of the reformist camp led by Prieto and de los Ríos, who had taken up the dialogue with bourgeois oppositionists, ready to replace the current regime and overthrow the monarchy in favour of a Second Republic.³³

28 *Martín Ramos*, *Historia del PCE*, pp. 81–90, 94 f. and 113.

29 *Paul Preston*, *The Origins of the Socialist Schism in Spain, 1917–31*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 12, 1977, pp. 101–132.

30 *John Brademas*, *Anarchosindicalismo y revolución en España 1930–1937*, Barcelona 1974, pp. 21–25.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 34 f.

32 *Mann*, *Fascists*, p. 306. *Ben-Ami*, *Fascism from Above*, pp. 319–392; *Muñoz Lorente*, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera*, pp. 403–448.

33 *Preston*, *The Origins of the Socialist Schism in Spain*, pp. 101–132.

Primo de Rivera resigned at the end of January 1930. The pressure remained after his successor, General Dámaso Berenguer, had taken over, and finally municipal elections were called for mid-April 1931, which were won by the coalition of the Republican parties, some of which had newly formed, and the Socialists. This, in turn, led to King Alfonso XIII leaving the country. The newly-established Republic was legitimised by general elections bringing a coalition of PSOE and the Republican parties into government under Prime Minister Manuel Azaña later during the year. With this development, Spain again deviated from the general tendency by establishing a bourgeois-democratic republic – the only European state to do so between the mid-1920s and the liberation of German-occupied countries towards the end of the Second World War.

The Second Spanish Republic partly inherited, partly itself caused, a bundle of problems which would lead, first to the end of the coalition, then to the formation of a right-wing government after general elections in autumn of 1933, the uprising of October 1934, the formation of the Popular Front and its electoral victory, and finally the breakdown of the Republic as it was confronted by military rebellion and Civil War starting in mid-July 1936.

One fundamental problem was that the Spanish economy was marked by deeply enshrined social conflicts, especially in the rural south. These problems were linked to the high degree of concentration of large estates, *latifundias*, in the hands of a small group of mostly absentee landowners exploiting the mass of landless seasonal labourers, *braceros*. The foundation of the Republic and the announcement made by the new governing parties with regard to the redistribution of land raised expectations within the social group of *braceros* on the one hand while provoking fierce resistance by the landowners on the other. This, together with opposition from industrialists to already existing labour legislation, led to the formation of right-wing forces which had experienced political defeat by the end of dictatorship and monarchy.³⁴

The potential for social conflict was enlarged by the effects of the Great Depression on the Spanish economy – a development which already had started during the dictatorship and was inherited by the Republic – and was exacerbated by the behaviour of the bourgeoisie, reacting with capital flight to the establishment of the Republic as an endogenous factor³⁵, and the deterioration of the terms of trade for the main export products of the Spanish economy as an exogenous one. Though it has been argued that the Spanish economy remained widely insulated from the Great Depression partially due to the devaluation of its currency³⁶ and was therefore hit less hard than a number of other European countries or the USA³⁷, nonetheless some export products such as steel from the north or grain, wine and fruit from the

34 See Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 38–73.

35 Joseph Harrison, *The Spanish Economy in the Twentieth Century*, Beckenham/Sydney 1985, pp. 69–72 and 77f.; Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 120 f.

36 Ángel Viñas/Julio Viñuela/Fernando Eguidazu et al., *Política comercial exterior en España (1931–1975)*, vol. 1, Madrid 1979, p. 60.

37 Harrison, *The Spanish Economy in the Twentieth Century*, p. 82.

south suffered from a deterioration of the terms of trade.³⁸ This, in turn, motivated landowners and industrialists to try to push down costs by cutting wages, which led to serious economic difficulties for workers, especially in the countryside, who had been living on the brink of starvation even before the crisis. However, the situation of the rural and industrial working classes seems to have differed depending on the region and most probably also due to the social legislation functioning better in the industrial than in the agricultural sector.³⁹ Besides this, unemployment was significantly higher in rural areas with around 45 per cent of the rural labour force affected, constituting up to two-thirds of all the unemployed throughout the country.⁴⁰

Even the limited effects of the Great Depression on Spain, combined with the inability of the government to fulfil its promises of social and more specifically land reform, resulted in economic hardship for the lower classes and unfulfilled expectations. In turn, this provoked a radicalisation of parts of the Socialist movement, which would lead, together with the changing international political conditions, to an increasing share of the rank and file demanding revolutionary steps to overthrow the existing social order. This disillusionment of parts of the Socialist movement due to the Republic's inability to safeguard significant moves towards social reform was at least partly caused by the misconception of the nature of Spanish society by the Socialist Party and the wrong political strategy deduced from this mistaken analysis.⁴¹

Paradoxically, the Socialist movement and more specifically the UGT had developed and strengthened its organisation under the dictatorship, as the trade union had been involved in the mechanism of arbitration with the employers, while the PSOE could even hold its party congresses while Communists and especially Anarchists had to remain underground. One part of the strengthening of the Socialist ranks was constituted by the establishment of the rural labourers' trade union, «Federación de Trabajadores de la Tierra» (Federation of Agricultural Workers, FNTT), in April 1930, one year before the end of the dictatorship, inducing a significant growth in UGT membership.⁴² It grew from roughly 280,000 members in December 1930 to more than one million within one and a half years, with the FNTT, as »the giant of the UGT«⁴³, contributing the larger part of this growth.⁴⁴ Heywood comments on this development: »Part of the reason for the spectacular growth of

38 Ibid., pp. 81 and 97; Viñas/Viñuela/Eguidazu et al., *Política comercial exterior en España (1931–1975)*, pp. 66 f., 70, 72 and 132. Mann, *Fascists*, p. 50, relying on more recent historical statistical research shows Spain as ranking fifth out of thirty countries with regard to severity of the slump.

39 Harrison, *The Spanish Economy in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 81 and 97; Aviva and Isaac Aviv, *The Madrid Working-Class, the Spanish Socialist Party and the Collapse of the Second Republic 1934–1936*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, 1981, pp. 229–250, here: pp. 233 and 236–238.

40 Harrison, *The Spanish Economy in the Twentieth Century*, p. 93.

41 Preston, *The Origins of the Socialist Schism in Spain*, p. 126; Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 121–124.

42 Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 30 f.

43 Graham, *The Eclipse of the Socialist Left*, p. 131.

44 Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 78.

the FNTT had been the expectation of far-reaching reform; as such expectations were dashed, the leadership found it increasingly difficult to temper its members' indignation and unilateral violent intervention against owners.⁴⁵ This newcomer in the trade union landscape changed the picture especially with respect to the strengthened ability to confront the landowners on the one hand while increasing competition with the CNT on the other. The division between Anarchists and Socialists constituted the main split within the left; the rivalry between PSOE and UGT on one side and the CNT on the other contributed to destabilising the Republic, the more so that the moment they lost their position in the government the UGT adopted the concept of revolutionary general strike aiming at the destruction of the state, as had already been the traditional practice of the Anarchists.⁴⁶

The political and social development therefore was defined by increasingly sharp conflicts not only between left and right but also within the left, when the Anarchists re-emerged and used the freedom granted by the Republic for their own ends.⁴⁷ The already existing rivalry between Socialist trade unionists and Anarcho-syndicalists had been intensified by the collaboration of the Socialist leadership with the dictatorship, while the CNT had been repressed.⁴⁸ While the Anarcho-syndicalists had not actively participated in the transition from dictatorship and monarchy to the Republic, they also did not prevent it from happening.⁴⁹ However, they characterised the new state – similar to the Communist reproach of 'Social fascism' – as simply a different form of dictatorship⁵⁰, and the new extremist anarchist leadership of the CNT made extensive use of the new liberties in order to pursue their plans of insurrection.⁵¹ The decentralised structure and the low discipline of the CNT rank and file led to permanent minor and major strikes and rebellions which weakened the left-of-centre government of the Republic without advancing any fundamental goals, thereby in the last resort strengthening the right. John Brademas emphasises the CNT's structural and strategic weakness:

»The Confederation not only was not responsible for what the organizations did, but also had no way of imposing itself on them. The atomisation of the strikes produced a multiplicity of disorders that made the government of the country more difficult every day. We do not know the social history of this period well enough to know if the multitude of strikes and riots of these years, of these months [1931] at least, were the result of a new revolutionary mentality of the workers or lack of education for the struggle. But, if it was the former, there is no doubt that the Anarcho-syndicalist game was dangerous: any joint and organized revolutionary effort was impossible, the methods followed were more conducive

45 Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, p. 122.

46 Santos Juliá, *Historia económica y social moderna y contemporánea de España*, Madrid 1991, pp. 63–66.

47 George Woodcock, *Anarchism. A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, Harmondsworth 1962, p. 361.

48 Brademas, *Anarchosindicalismo y revolución en España 1930–1937*, pp. 21–25; Santos Juliá, *Los socialistas en la política española 1879–1982*, Madrid 1996, p. 169.

49 Brademas, *Anarchosindicalismo y revolución en España 1930–1937*, p. 57.

50 Juliá, *Los socialistas en la política española 1879–1982*, p. 189.

51 Julián Casanova, *Anarchism, the Republic and Civil War in Spain: 1931–1939*, London 2005, p. 55.

to fomenting a right-wing reaction – which came – than a true revolutionary crisis. Anarchism weakened liberalism, not the right. But it may be that the riots and exaggerations came from mere worker indiscipline. Here, the disadvantages of the Anarcho-syndicalist methods against the Socialists were evident. Once a local federation went on strike, another time an ex officio union proclaimed that the time for revolution had come; the hatred between Socialists and Cenetistas worsened; the workers were divided, and the union funds and the workers' pockets were emptied. And all this without it being evident that the situation was propitious for the revolution; even more: against the profound conviction of the syndicalist leaders themselves that the revolution was still far, far away.⁵²

In due course, this situation caused splits within the Anarcho-syndicalist movement, further weakening it.⁵³ Finally, the CNT leadership decided to abstain from the general elections of November 1933, thereby strengthening the right, while the so-called *treintista* faction moved more and more in the direction of reformism and cooperation with the Socialists.⁵⁴ At the end of 1935 and beginning of 1936, due to exhaustion in internal and external conflicts, an unsuccessful and split leadership the CNT found itself close to collapse, which was prevented due to the elections and the rebellion happening in the following months.⁵⁵

The Anarchist movement was not alone in going through numerous splits, but this tendency was even more pronounced in the much smaller Communist niche. The PCE, also due to the unfavourable conditions of the dictatorship, remained a miniscule party with a membership of less than 9,000 members at the founding moment of the Republic. It managed to grow to 13,500 by the end of 1932 but then stagnated at that level for some time.⁵⁶ Right from the beginning, the party had been under supervision by the Comintern headquarters and never, till the end of the Civil War, seemed to act to the satisfaction of the International's Moscow headquarters.⁵⁷ As a reflection of the twists and turns of the factional disputes in the Soviet Union and subsequently the Comintern, it was also riven by fierce internal conflicts within and organisational splits. Most prominently, Andreu Nin, who had been a deputy head of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU or Profintern) from shortly after the inception of this international organisation of Communist trade unions and had sided with Leon Trotsky during the factional struggle of the second half of the 1920s, was expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (VKP[b]) and returned to Spain in 1930, where he helped to organise the Trotskyist »Izquierda Comunista« (Communist Left, ICE). Joaquín Maurín, who like Nin had originally been active within the CNT, became leader of the Catalan Com-

52 Brademas, *Anarchosindicalismo y revolución en España 1930–1937*, p. 73.

53 Ibid., pp. 76 f. and 87–91; Casanova, *Anarchism, the Republic and Civil War in Spain*, pp. 50–53.

54 Brademas, *Anarchosindicalismo y revolución en España 1930–1937*, p. 111.

55 Casanova, *Anarchism, the Republic and Civil War in Spain*, pp. 90 f.

56 Martín Ramos, *Historia del PCE*, p. 95.

57 See Svetlana P. Pozharskaya/Aleksandr I. Saplin, *Komintern i grazhdanskaya voina v Ispanii*, in: Rossiiskaya akademiya nauk/Institut vseobshchei istorii (eds.), *Istoriya Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala 1919–1943. Dokumental'nye ocherki*, Moscow 2002, pp. 116–144; Elorza/Bizcarondo, *Queridos Camaradas*, passim; Frank Schaff, *Der verspielte Sieg. Sowjetunion, Kommunistische Internationale und Spanischer Bürgerkrieg 1936–1939*, Frankfurt am Main 2004, pp. 117–161.

munist Federation, was forced into exile after Primo's *pronunciamiento* and split from the PCE with other Catalan Communists in 1930 to form the »Bloc Obrer i Camparol« (Workers' and Peasants' Bloc, BOC) together with another dissident Catalan Communist group.⁵⁸

But the Communist Party itself also contributed further to the fragmentation of the labour movement: in June 1932 it founded the »Confederación General del Trabajo Unitaria« (Unitary General Confederation of Labour, CGTU) as the latecomer of the Spanish labour movement. It was grotesquely named »unitary« in spite of manifesting another organisational split within the labour movement as a competitor to CNT and UGT.⁵⁹ Víctor Alba concludes: »The labour movement's fragmentation was extreme.«⁶⁰

III. The International Framework

With the contingent transition, contrary to the European mainstream, to a republican form of government, Spain – on both left and right – seems to have become more receptive to international developments and implications. As already mentioned, the Great Depression, as a global development, made itself felt, even though its repercussions were more limited to certain sectors and regions than in a number of other countries. In any case, the intensifying class conflicts, and especially the reorganisation of the right aiming at a corporatist state model inspired by Italian Fascism and Catholic social theory, affected the left in such a way that in the course of 1933 it started to perceive itself as a part of the international struggle against fascism. Within the Socialist segment of the Spanish labour movement, this seems to have been especially true for the youth organisation, which earlier than other parts began to be alarmed by Hitler's accession to power as a harbinger of a larger fascist wave.⁶¹ In parallel, it started to look more than before at the development of the international labour movement, of the LSI and the Comintern and their youth sections more specifically, although their preoccupation with internal Spanish developments seems to have prevented them and the PSOE from active participation in the LSI and SYI.⁶² They became recipients in a specific Spanish way⁶³ of a European labour discourse which Gilles Vergnon has characterised as follows:

58 *Reiner Tosstorff*, Andreu Nín [sic!] und Joaquín Maurín. Vom revolutionären Syndikalismus zum antistalinistischen Kommunismus, in: *Theodor Bergmann/Mario Kessler* (eds.), *Ketzer im Kommunismus. 23 biografische Essays*, Hamburg 2000, pp. 218–229. For a detailed analysis of these dissident Communist groups see *Andy Durgan*, *Comunismo, revolución y movimiento obrero en Cataluña 1920–1936. Los orígenes del POUM*, Barcelona 2016.

59 *Martín Ramos*, *Historia del PCE*, pp. 102 f.; *Víctor Alba*, *La Alianza Obrera. Historia y análisis de una táctica de unidad en España*, Madrid 1978, p. 51, fn. 1.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 38. Original: »La fragmentación obrera era extrema«.

61 *Heywood*, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, p. 126.

62 *Gilles Vergnon*, *Les gauches européennes après la victoire nazie. Entre planisme et unité d'action 1933–1934*, Paris 1997, p. 356.

63 For the specific and partial Spanish perception of international Marxist thought and the low quality of Marxist debate in the Spanish labour movement and especially its Socialist part see *Heywood*, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, *passim*.

»[I]t is legitimate, with the necessary prudence, to speak of Communist or Socialist public opinion on a European scale, in the sense that a few tens of thousands of individuals across borders share representations and a common vocabulary, read articles written by the same authors, in short, share the same politico-mental universe which is superimposed on ›objective‹ reality.«⁶⁴

Developments in Germany had been essential for both Internationals since at least the end of the 1920s, as the SPD and the KPD were each the most important party of their respective current in Europe. These two parties had been involved in a fierce struggle over influence on the German working class, which became more and more counterproductive in terms of defending their constituency against the offensive of the Nazi party. This struggle was linked to the SPD's fundamental position in favour of the defence of the Weimar Republic and their rejection of the Soviet model on the one hand, and the revolutionary rhetoric of the Communists against the Republic and their support for the Soviet Union on the other. Linked to the intrinsic conflicts inside the Comintern and their specific analysis of developments in the capitalist world, the label of ›Social fascism‹ was developed and finally officialised as the term to describe international Social Democracy. Even though the acceptance of this phrase by the Comintern had been subject to debate, the German Communists were finally able to push their position through after the bloody repression of their demonstration by the Socialist-led police in Berlin on May 1, 1929.⁶⁵ In the following years, both sides could resort to reinterpreting political facts in such a manner as to mobilise their own supporters through mutual recriminations. This was continued by the Communists when the SPD started to tolerate the Brüning government, which pursued policies of deflation and limiting the labour movement's influence on the state. It even supported Field Marshal Hindenburg's re-election as President against the candidates of the Communist and the Nazi party as the ›lesser evil‹⁶⁶ – the same President who would appoint Hitler as Chancellor a few months later. At the moment, however, that the Nazis started their exceptional ascent, the concept of ›Social fascism‹ turned out to be an obstacle to stopping Hitler from coming to power, as the Social Democrats remained the Communists' main adversary.⁶⁷

The Social Democrats, besides being offended by the label of ›Social fascists‹, could refer, for instance, to the KPD's actions against the Socialist-led government

64 *Vergnon*, Les gauches européennes après la victoire nazie, p. 10.

65 *Peer H. Lange*, Stalinismus versus »Sozialfaschismus« und »Nationalfaschismus«. Revolutionspolitische Ideologie und Praxis unter Stalin 1927–1935, Göppingen 1969; *Leonid Luks*, Entstehung der kommunistischen Faschismustheorie. Die Auseinandersetzung der Komintern mit Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus, Stuttgart 1984, pp. 137–139; *Heinrich August Winkler*, Weimar 1918–1933. Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie, Frankfurt am Main 1994, pp. 350 f.; *José Luis Martín Ramos*, El Frente Popular. Victoria y derrota de la democracia en España, Barcelona 2016, pp. 27–33.

66 *Julius Braunthal*, Geschichte der Internationale, vol. 2, Bonn 1978 (first published 1963), pp. 378 f. and 389 f.

67 *Haslam*, The Spectre of War, pp. 116–118.

in Prussia⁶⁸ as well as the strike of the Berlin traffic workers in 1932⁶⁹, which were seen as coordinated with the Nazis. All this took place against the background of a deepening depression and the rapid growth of the Nazi Party, which emerged as the strongest faction in Parliament in July 1932 with the SPD losing votes to the KPD. Also due to frictions within the Social Democratic movement, i.e. between party, trade unions and the *Reichsbanner* (the republican defence militia)⁷⁰, neither the SPD nor the KPD acted decisively when Hitler was appointed Chancellor by the President. Within less than half a year first the KPD, then the trade unions and finally the SPD were prohibited and most of their leaders either arrested or forced into exile.

Against the background of the Great Depression and growing authoritarian tendencies, already at its Vienna Congress in July 1931 the LSI had discussed the question of how to react to the danger of right-wing and fascist take-overs. The congress had decided that in such a case violence had to be exerted in order to defend the democratic bourgeois state and thereby the achievements of the reformist labour movement.⁷¹ The SPD did not abide by this resolution when the Socialist-led Prussian government was suspended in July 1932, instead continuing to campaign for the *Reichstag* elections ten days later, from which the Nazis emerged the strongest party.⁷² After Hitler's accession to power, the SPD again did not comply with the guidance of the LSI. The explanation for this lay in a bundle of problems which the reformist part of the German labour movement could not overcome: the »immobilism of the SPD Executive«⁷³, tying itself to legalistic tactics in spite of the illegal blow of the German against the Social Democratic-led Prussian government, the weakening of the trade unions by shrinking membership and demoralisation under the pressure of unprecedented unemployment and the unwillingness of its leadership to go for a general strike under objectively economically disastrous conditions, the attempts of some parts of the social democratic movement – be it trade unions or the militia – to come to terms with the non-parliamentarian governments since 1932 and even with Hitler after January 1933, and last but not least the question whether violent resistance of the working class against the armed forces of the bourgeois state supported by the heavily inflated Nazi militia could have been successful or would have led only to thousands of lives lost in vain.⁷⁴

68 *Ossip K. Flechtheim*, *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt am Main 1969, pp. 277 f. and 282; *Klaus-Michael Mallmann*, *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik. Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionären Bewegung*, Darmstadt 1996, p. 281.

69 *Winkler*, *Weimar 1918–1933*, pp. 533–535.

70 *Hagen Schulze* (ed.), *Anpassung oder Widerstand? Aus den Akten des Parteivorstands der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1932/33*, Bonn 1975.

71 *Braunthal*, *Geschichte der Internationale*, pp. 382–386.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 388–399. For the events and consequences of the coup against the Prussian government see also *Wolfgang Benz/Immanuel Geiss*, *Staatsstreich gegen Preußen. 20. Juli 1932*, Düsseldorf [1982].

73 *Hans Mommsen*, *Die Sozialdemokratie in der Defensive: Der Immobilismus der SPD und der Aufstieg des Nationalsozialismus*, in: *id.* (ed.), *Sozialdemokratie zwischen Klassenbewegung und Volkspartei*, Frankfurt am Main 1974, pp. 106–133.

74 *Helga Grebing*, *Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Wolfgang Luthardt* (ed.), *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung und Weimarer Republik. Materialien zur gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung 1927–1933*, vol. 2, Frankfurt am Main 1978, pp. 259–279. See also *Helga*

The KPD was also paralysed, falling victim to self-deception. It gained votes in the November 1932 elections while SPD and NSDAP saw their shares fall, making a government led by Hitler seem a less likely prospect. Yet the Communists' apparent strength was shown to be illusory in February and March 1933.⁷⁵ But the wrong perception of the political situation was a function of a more fundamental mistaken analysis of the broader economic and social picture: besides the fatal consequences of equating SPD and NSDAP, the KPD, like the Comintern overall, had misinterpreted the economic crisis and deteriorating economic indices as identical with an offensive of the proletariat against capitalism: »[T]he Comintern, beaten [...] by intellectually regressive processes and bans on contemplation, did already for a long time not possess any more the strength and the concepts actually to confront the sad reality.«⁷⁶ This economic misperception, first, led to an underestimation of the class struggle as a political matter and, secondly, therefore misled the KPD into assuming that the breakdown of the capitalist social order would be a quasi-automatic consequence of the Great Depression.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, it had prepared neither to attack the state nor to defend itself against the Nazi offensive after January 30, 1933.

For both LSI and Comintern, the defeat of their most important party on the European continent without any resistance came as a shock.⁷⁸ The first reaction was a call of the LSI to the Comintern for common action in mid-February 1933, which seems to have caught the leadership in Moscow by surprise⁷⁹, as it rejected it in spite of the united front rhetoric applied by the Communists for years.⁸⁰

Amongst the European Socialists, a process of radicalisation of a number of parties took place, which was motivated by the German disaster and by domestic difficulties including the growth of extreme right-wing parties and intensifying class struggle. While especially the northern European parties, such as those of Scandinavia, Great Britain and the Netherlands, but also that of Czechoslovakia,

Grebing, *Flucht vor Hitler? Historiographische Forschungsergebnisse über die Aussichten des Widerstandes der Arbeiterbewegung gegen die nationalsozialistische Machtübernahme*, in: *APuZ*, 1983, issue 4–5, pp. 26–42; *Stephen Salter*, *The Object Lesson: The Division of the German Left and the Triumph of National Socialism*, in: *Helen Graham/Paul Preston* (eds.), *The Popular Front in Europe*, Basingstoke 1987, pp. 20–34. For a detailed account of the German labour movement's development from the beginning of the Great Depression to the prohibition of its organization see the massive work of *Heinrich August Winkler*, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1930 bis 1933. Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, Bonn 1987.

75 *Haslam*, *The Spectre of War*, pp. 120 f.

76 *Gert Schäfer*, *Der Faschismus und die Kommunistische Internationale*, in: *Theodor Bergmann/Mario Kessler* (eds.), *Aufstieg und Zerfall der Komintern. Studien zur Geschichte ihrer Transformation 1919–1943*, Mainz 1992, p. 175.

77 *Nicos Poulantzas*, *Fascism and Dictatorship. The Third International and the Problem of Fascism*, London 1979, pp. 36–54; *Gert Schäfer*, *Die Kommunistische Internationale und der Faschismus*, Offenbach 1973. Without any specific reference their position seems to be similar to Karl Kautsky, who also sees the economic crisis as a problem for the labour movement. See the discussion on Kautsky below.

78 *Haslam*, *The Spectre of War*, p. 123.

79 *Ibid.*, pp. 124–126.

80 *Ursula Langkau-Alex*, *Von Krieg zu Krieg. Zu den Beziehungen zwischen der Kommunistischen Internationale und den Sozialistischen Internationalen – eine Zwischenbilanz*, in: *IWK* 39, 2003, pp. 446–478, here: p. 464.

maintained their position in defence of bourgeois democracy, the Austrian, the French and not least the Spanish Socialists largely moved to the left, with some parties such as the SPD in exile taking a centre position. These three currents were in evidence at the Paris Congress, the last of the LSI, in August 1933.⁸¹

The congress took two important decisions in the given context. It basically repeated the commitment, made at the Vienna Congress two years before, to deploy all means to defend the working class and its organisations against right-wing or fascist attacks and the establishment of a dictatorship. Secondly, it authorised the LSI leadership to negotiate with the Communist International, thereby seeking to prevent negotiations between individual Socialist and Communist parties on the national level.⁸² In the aftermath of the congress, the left wing of the LSI, including the Austrian, the French and the Spanish Socialists, started to coordinate amongst each other.⁸³

The interaction between both Internationals, however, did not move forward, as the XIII. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) in November and December 1933 would absurdly reaffirm the correctness of the KPD's strategy and its view of Social Democracy as 'Social fascism'. The plenary session, which was also supposed to prepare the VII. Comintern World Congress for the following year, came to the definition of fascism as »the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, chauvinistic and imperialist elements of finance capital«.⁸⁴

The crises that followed culminated shortly afterwards, in parallel developments in Austria and France, in mid-February 1934. Relations between the two main Austrian parties, the Social Democratic Workers' Party and the Christian Social Party, which since 1932 had been led by Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss and was gradually converging with the clerical-fascist *Heimwehr*, had already deteriorated after a violent clash in Vienna in 1927. The Socialists had been in opposition on the national level since the beginning of the 1920s but still held important positions in the capital and other major cities, while the Christian Socials held the federal government and were struggling to stem the growth of the pro-German Nazi party. Dollfuss prevented Parliament from meeting at the beginning of March 1933, while the Socialists remained passive, similar to their German sister party, thereby ignoring their own manifesto as well as the LSI decision of 1931. Tensions grew in the following months with the Socialist movement, amongst them the militia, the *Schutzbund*, while the regime in parallel suppressed the Austrian Nazi Party, which in turn was welcomed by the Socialists. In September, Dollfuss declared open dictatorship.⁸⁵ He seems to have taken the example of his Hungarian and Italian,

81 *Vergnon*, *Les gauches européennes après la victoire nazie*, pp. 282–298.

82 *Braunthal*, *Geschichte der Internationale*, pp. 419 f. For a more recent view on the LSI in 1933 see *Herbert Mayer*, *Die internationale Sozialdemokratie im Jahre 1933*, in: *Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 2, 2003, no. 1, pp. 4–22.

83 *Horn*, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, p. 42. For a deeper analysis of the internal dynamics of the LSI see *Bruno Groppo*, *Die gelähmte Internationale. Zur politischen Entwicklung der sozialistischen Parteien in Europa nach 1933*, in: *GG* 17, 1991, pp. 220–241.

84 *Langkau-Alex*, *Von Krieg zu Krieg*, pp. 464 f.

85 *Mann*, *Fascists*, pp. 213–232; *Martin Kitchen*, *The Austrian Left and the Popular Front*, in: *Graham/Preston*, *The Popular Front in Europe*, pp. 35–48.

but also his German, neighbours⁸⁶, and was again advised by Benito Mussolini on February 11, 1934, against the background of the events in France, finally to crush the Socialists.⁸⁷ On the following day, the police and the *Heimwehr* militia moved in against an arms depot of the *Schutzbund* in Linz, thereby sparking a short civil war throughout the country, in which the Socialist militia was defeated by the police, the *Heimwehr* and the army.⁸⁸ The miniscule Austrian Communist Party meanwhile stood aloof.⁸⁹

Karl Kautsky, for decades the main authority in interpreting Marx' works within the Socialist International⁹⁰, anonymously published an analysis of the insurrection in April 1934. Contradicting the notion of it being an offensive success for the labour movement, widespread amongst Socialists in Europe, he explained that the *Schutzbund* had been isolated and the general strike had not succeeded due to the long-term demoralisation of the working class caused by high unemployment rates and the continuous political retreat of the Socialist Party. He calls into question the notion that the experience of the German disaster had justified the heroic and bloody but ultimately futile resistance of the Austrian *Schutzbund*: »What we are against [...] is the view which wishes to reinterpret a defeat as a victory and which may seduce others to, perhaps, again unleash a fight to the bitter end, even if the ultimately defeat is crystal clear from the beginning.« Referring to Friedrich Engels' assessment of the impossibility of armed insurrection as long as the repressive part of the state apparatus was controlled by the ruling class, he argues in favour of further peaceful agitation for democracy and coalition building in order to further political progress.⁹¹ Kautsky thereby anticipated the turn which would take place in the European labour movement after the insurrection in Spain in October 1934.

In parallel to the Austrian crisis, events in France were also moving towards their climax by mid-February 1934. Against the background of the serious effects of the Great Depression on the French economy⁹², permanent government crisis⁹³, and street clashes between left and right⁹⁴, extreme right-wing movements had also developed in France: »Fascism was infectious.«⁹⁵ The most important of these had

86 *Braunthal*, *Geschichte der Internationale*, p. 421.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 427; *Haslam*, *The Spectre of War*, p. 182.

88 *Kitchen*, *The Austrian Left and the Popular Front*, p. 49.

89 *Braunthal*, *Geschichte der Internationale*, p. 432. *Kitchen*, *The Austrian Left and the Popular Front*, p. 49, contradicts Braunthal's view, explaining that the Communists joined the fighting Socialists spontaneously. With the suppression of the SDAP, the proportionally strongest Socialist party in international comparison had been destroyed. See *Braunthal*, *Geschichte der Internationale*, pp. 353 and 424.

90 *Hans-Josef Steinberg*, Karl Kautsky, in: *Edmund Jacoby* (ed.), *Lexikon Linker Leitfiguren*, Frankfurt am Main/Olten etc. 1988, pp. 205–206.

91 [*Karl Kautsky*], *Grenzen der Gewalt. Aussichten und Wirkungen bewaffneter Erhebungen des Proletariats*, Karlsbad 1934. Quote in English translation taken from: *Horn*, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, p. 126.

92 See e.g. *Jan-Otmar Hesse/Roman Köster/Werner Plumpe*, *Die Große Depression. Die Weltwirtschaftskrise 1929–1939*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2014, pp. 139–144; *Dominique Borne/Henri Dubief*, *La crise des années 30. 1929–1938*, Paris 1989, pp. 20–35.

93 *Ibid.*, pp. 75–80.

94 *Ibid.*, pp. 105–108.

95 *Haslam*, *The Spectre of War*, p. 180.

become the *Croix-de-Feu*, based on a core of war veterans and with a membership of around 150,000 led by Colonel François de La Rocque⁹⁶, which mobilised together with other right-wing organisations for a demonstration in Paris on February 6, 1934, was seen by some extremists as an opportunity for a coup d'état. La Rocque stopped the attempt at overthrowing the government, but this day of assaults on government buildings and violent clashes with the police ended with 15 dead and around 2,000 injured. The French left was quick and decisive in counteracting this revolt. For February 12, coincidentally the day of the *Schutzbund* uprising in Austria, the trade union federation »Confédération générale du travail« (CGT), led by the later Nobel laureate Léon Jouhaux, called for a general strike supported by the French Socialist Party (»Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière«, SFIO), which was supported by approximately 4.5 million workers, accompanied by demonstrations with more than one million participants, more than 300,000 of which in Paris.⁹⁷ The Communist trade union organisation »Confédération générale du travail unitaire« (CGTU) and the French Communist Party (PCF) for the first time followed the call of the reformist CGT for demonstrations.⁹⁸ This happened against the background of the PCF leadership, namely Maurice Thorez and André Marty, at the end of January and beginning of February still having defined the Socialists as the main adversary and supporter of the »fascisation« of France⁹⁹, thereby also confronting Jacques Doriot, another member of the PCF leadership, who had started to promote the idea of a united front »from above« with the Socialists.¹⁰⁰ While the PCF continued to attack other sections of the left even after February 12¹⁰¹, the separate columns meeting in the centre of Paris were a significant success and culminated in spontaneous fraternisation between Socialist and Communist rank-and-file members: »The demonstration at the Cours de Vincennes, tolerated by the government, brought together 100,000, and the two processions of inimical brothers merged into a single cry of ›Unity! Unity!‹. In both camps, activists who had experienced the split in Tours¹⁰² were crying with emotion.«¹⁰³

While the PCF for the time being did not change its line officially, behind the scenes a peculiar interaction started to evolve between Paris and Moscow. Undeniably, the changes in the behaviour of the Comintern and its turn to a ›united front from above‹ were also made possible by the reorientation in Soviet foreign policy towards France, even though the International displayed its own specific dynamics. The Soviet Union and France had started negotiations to pre-empt the German threat in September 1933, the USSR would enter the League of Nations within a year, and in May 1935 would sign a pact of mutual assistance with the French.¹⁰⁴

96 *Borne/Dubief*, La crise des années 30, pp. 93–96.

97 *Ibid.*, pp. 111–113; *Horn*, European Socialists Respond to Fascism, pp. 67 f.

98 *Borne/Dubief*, La crise des années 30, p. 129.

99 *Stéphane Courtois/Marc Lazar*, Histoire du Parti communiste français, Paris 1995, pp. 117 f.

100 *Braunthal*, Geschichte der Internationale, p. 442.

101 *Maurice Agulhon/André Nouschi/Ralph Schor*, La France de 1914 à 1940, Paris 1993, p. 112.

102 At the SFIO congress at Tours of December 1920, the PCF separated from the Socialist Party. See *Courtois/Lazar*, Histoire du Parti communiste français, pp. 59–67.

103 *Borne/Dubief*, La crise des années 30, p. 130.

104 *Haslam*, The Spectre of War, pp. 135–137, 140–143 and 153–159; *Braunthal*, Geschichte der Internationale, pp. 448 f.

A few days after the joint demonstration in France and the beginning of the Socialist insurrection in Austria, Georgi Dimitrov, who already in October 1932 had questioned the aggressive line of the KPD against the German Social Democrats as head of the Western European Secretariat of the Comintern in Berlin¹⁰⁵, was released from prison in Germany and could leave for Moscow, where – now endowed with the status of a hero after confronting Hermann Göring, the second most important Nazi politician, in the highest German court – he joined the ECCI in April 1934. He became the central figure of strategic change within the leadership of the Comintern, with direct access to Stalin and thereby tipping the balance in favour of a revision of the inadequate strategy of the past years.¹⁰⁶

The PCF was not yet in line with the changes which were evolving behind closed doors in Moscow but would occupy itself with a grotesque interlude of a conflict within its leadership, initially pointing in a direction opposite to developments at the centre. At the end of January 1934, Doriot alone had already voted within the PCF Central Committee against the confirmation of the latest Comintern decisions on the fight against ›Social fascism‹ remaining the highest priority, while he was the only member of the leadership present during a demonstration which had been called by the Party for February 9 and had led to a confrontation with the police, with nine participants killed and more than one thousand arrested.¹⁰⁷ As the Comintern confirmed its old line on March 3, Doriot continued his rebellion. In mid-April, he refused to go to Moscow together with his main adversary, Maurice Thorez, resigned as mayor of the Paris suburb Saint-Denis, concluded a cooperation agreement with the Socialists, and was then overwhelmingly re-elected. Thorez, for his part, now was pushed by the Comintern in the direction demanded by Doriot, and within three days, during a PCF conference at the end of June, he made an about-turn, offering the SFIO leadership united action and the CGT even unification with the Communist trade union CGTU. One day later, the PCF expelled Doriot, who reacted by forming the French Popular Party, which was supposed to compete with the PCF, but soon moved to the far right, ending in collaboration with the German occupation during the Second World War.¹⁰⁸

The fierce internal debate in Moscow seems to have led to indecisiveness with respect to events in western Europe. On July 1, 1934, Dimitrov sent a letter to Stalin with theses putting into question the Communist parties' struggle against ›Social

105 Langkau-Alex, *Von Krieg zu Krieg*, p. 467. Dimitrov's letter to the ECCI quoted in: *Fridrikh Firsov, Stalin i problemy politiki edinogo fronta*, in: *Politicheskoe obrazovanie*, 1989, no. 1, p. 82.

106 Haslam, *The Spectre of War*, pp. 184–186.

107 Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, pp. 442 f.; *Courtois/Lazar, Histoire du Parti communiste français*, pp. 118 f.

108 Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, p. 446; *Courtois/Lazar, Histoire du Parti communiste français*, pp. 120 and 122 f.; Alan Forrest, *The French Popular Front and the Politics of Jacques Doriot*, in: *Martin S. Alexander/Helen Graham* (eds.), *The French and Spanish Popular Fronts. Comparative Perspectives*, Cambridge 1989, pp. 145–154.

fascism.¹⁰⁹ As a consequence of the fluid situation, the VII. World Congress was postponed to the following year.¹¹⁰

Due to these conflicts at the centre, grassroots dynamics seem to have taken over in the Saar, which was preparing for the referendum on union with Germany and where Socialists – ignoring the will of the exiled SPD leadership – and Communists formed the first United Front one day later.¹¹¹ At the end of July, the French Communists and Socialists signed their agreement on united action, most probably also under the influence of rank-and-file cooperation between Socialists and Communists since the February events.¹¹² Hence, the SFIO ignored the decision of the Paris Conference of the LSI of the year before not to conclude individual united front agreements.

Motivated by the success of his party during the cantonal elections of October 1934 and a growing membership, Thorez went even further and spoke in Nantes for the first time on the Popular Front on the eve of the congress of the Radical Party, which was supposed to take place in the city. Individual sections of the Radicals, and the youth organisation more specifically, had already started to cooperate with the two working-class parties and their youth leagues; in September talks had begun between representatives of the Communist and Radical party leaderships. These initiatives did not have the backing of the Comintern leadership, and its envoy, Palmiro Togliatti, even tried to stop the PCF from taking this road.¹¹³

IV. Spain's Growing Polarisation

These events in France coincided with the culmination of the radicalisation of the Spanish Socialist labour movement in the insurrection of October 4, 1934, as the answer to the threatening fascist takeover when three ministers of the right-wing »Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas« (CEDA) entered the government. The violent suppression of the insurrection – especially in Asturias, where the army was commanded by Francisco Franco – left hundreds of workers dead and thousands injured or arrested and formed a turning point for the Spanish as well as for the international labour movement.

This process of radicalisation of the PSOE had started by the summer of 1933, when the leadership of the Socialist Party and the trade unions under its control had understood that its social base, especially the disillusioned *braceros*, could not be content with the gains made under the first Republican coalition government. The Socialist youth league took on a specific and reinforcing role in this process

109 Alexander Dallin/Fridrikh I. Firsov (eds.), Dimitrov and Stalin, 1934–1943, New Haven/London 2000, pp. 13–16. Russian original of the letter in: Rossiskaya akademiya nauk/Federal'naya arkhivnaya sluzhba Rossii (eds.), Komintern protiv fashizma. Dokumenty, Moscow 1999, pp. 326–329.

110 Haslam, *The Spectre of War*, p. 185.

111 Langkau-Alex, *Von Krieg zu Krieg*, p. 469.

112 Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, pp. 138–143.

113 Haslam, *The Spectre of War*, pp. 188–190; Courtois/Lazar, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, pp. 124 and 423; Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, p. 149 f.

of radicalisation and later insurrection, which would continue until the outbreak of the Civil War three years later and beyond. It had already started to radicalise in 1932, which became clear at its congress, where it claimed to have 50,000 members.¹¹⁴ One expression of this tendency was the decision to create its own militia¹¹⁵, which would become significant in street fighting with right-wing groups from 1933 onwards and during the 1934 insurrection.¹¹⁶ The relationship between the FJS and PSOE grew progressively antagonistic during the Republic, as was also the case for other parties and their respective youth organisations.¹¹⁷

The stalemate within the Spanish government and its inability to solve both the most pressing social problems in the countryside and the increasing discontent within the labour movement led Largo Caballero to first speak critically about the achievements of the coalition at an event organised by the FJS at the Cine Pardiñas in Madrid at the end of July 1933. He would become even more outspoken at the Young Socialists' summer school at Torreldones some days later, where Besteiro and Prieto also appeared: »From this point on, Largo was to adopt an ever more revolutionary rhetoric until confronted with genuine revolution in the Civil War.«¹¹⁸

The coalition ran into a crisis in summer and broke down in August 1933, when the Socialists withdrew their participation. Early elections were held in mid-November, after a caretaker government had been formed¹¹⁹, leading to a victory of the centre-right. Alejandro Lerroux, the long-term leader of the Radical Party, was able to form a government, which he had already been in a position to do before the elections, because President Niceto Alcalá-Zamora did not want to hand over power to the leader of the CEDA, José María Gil Robles, as he originally also had not wanted to call early elections.¹²⁰ The CEDA had been formed by a number of right-wing groups in early 1933¹²¹, in order to legally win political power for »reactionary authoritarian Catholicism« in a manner similar to the Austrian Christian Social Party, although it was perceived as fully-fledged fascist by the left.¹²² During the run-up to the elections, the actually fascist »Falange Española« was founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the former dictator's son. In any case, Gil Robles increasingly adopted fascist rhetoric and the CEDA adopted a more and more fascist

114 Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, p. 127.

115 Quintana/Nájera, *Apuntes para la historia de las juventudes socialistas de España*, pp. 45 and 49; Souto Kustrín, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, p. 103.

116 Sandra Souto Kustrín, *Octubre de 1934 en Madrid: Acción colectiva y violencia política*, in: *Hispania* 59, 1999, no. 203, pp. 1063–1103.

117 Souto Kustrín, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, p. 109. For similar processes, for instance, in Germany at the beginning of the 1930s see Martin Martiny, *Sozialdemokratie und junge Generation am Ende der Weimarer Republik*, in: Luthardt, *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung und Weimarer Republik*, pp. 56–64; Hans Mommsen, *Generationenkonflikt und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik*, in: Jürgen Reulecke (ed.), *Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2003, pp. 115–126.

118 Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 127 f.

119 Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 118.

120 Nigel Townson, *La república que no pudo ser. La política de centro en España (1931–1936)*, Madrid 2002, pp. 219–240.

121 Ibid., pp. 64 f.

122 Mann, *Fascists*, p. 331. For a sociological portrait of the CEDA see ibid., pp. 325–334. Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 69.

outward appearance¹²³, also encouraged by events in Germany, Italy, Portugal, and other countries.

The end of the centre-left government and the take-over of the right combined with international developments had three significant effects on the left of the political spectrum: first, the radicalisation, at least rhetorically, of the left wing of the Socialist movement under the leadership of Largo Caballero, culminating in the October 1934 uprising; second, originating in this radicalisation, a deepened split within the PSOE leading to a bitter struggle, which would not end until well after the Civil War; third, the reversal, again at least rhetorically, of the tendency of fragmentation in favour of one of unifying the organisations of the Marxist-inspired labour movement within a united front, later on also including the left republican parties.

The rank and file of the Socialist movement, namely the FNTT and the Young Socialists, were sorely disillusioned by the inability of the first coalition government to deliver fundamental social change. This disillusionment grew deeper when the Republican government of autumn 1933 started to dismantle parts of the social legislation created by the Socialists. While at the beginning of his rhetorical turn, before the Socialists had withdrawn their support, Largo Caballero seems to have sent signals to the President in order to prevent him from ousting the PSOE from the government, this changed during the following months:

»Between 1931 and 1933 the Republican-Socialist coalition had endeavoured to create a socially progressive Republic. In a context of world depression, it is inconceivable that their programme of tentative reform could have resolved the highly conflictive social and economic problems inherited from the monarchy. Nevertheless, Left Republicans and Socialists believed that they had done enough to distinguish the new regime from the old and to set Spain off on its first faltering steps to modernity. They agreed that any step back from the minimum achieved so far would be disastrous for the majority of the population. The Socialists, however, had been disturbed by the vehemence of opposition to what they regarded as basic humanitarian legislation. In the light of this, a growing sector of the trade union movement and the FJS, encouraged by rather reckless rhetorical support from Largo Caballero, were losing faith in the possibility that bourgeois democracy would allow the establishment of even a minimal social justice, let alone full-blown socialism.«¹²⁴

During the controversy over the next steps to be taken, Largo Caballero sided with Prieto against Besteiro, who controlled the UGT. Voting on different proposals at the beginning of January 1934 on how to proceed, Besteiro lost in light of the PSOE Executive proposals made for an economic programme drafted by Prieto and for the organisation of revolutionary action formulated by Largo Caballero in a rare moment of their cooperation. Besteiro and his supporters resigned from the UGT Executive, thereby leaving control over the trade union organisation to Largo Caballero and his followers¹²⁵, while he had already taken over the control of the

123 Ibid., pp. 145 f.

124 Ibid., pp. 117 f., quotation: p. 120.

125 *Juliá*, *Los socialistas en la política española 1879–1982*, pp. 202 f.

PSOE at the party congress in October 1932.¹²⁶ Thus, the leadership structures of PSOE, UGT and FJS now were dominated by the *Caballeristas*.

In the following weeks and months, the question of a revolutionary act against the threat of CEDA ministers joining the government was at the centre of the Socialists' interests. For this purpose, they formed a revolutionary committee, which besides the party and trade union also comprised the FJS leadership, including Carrillo. Of this committee, Santos Juliá remarks:

»The most interesting novelty of the mixed committee consisted of incorporating the youth into an insurreccional organization. This connection recognised the growing importance of the youth in the Socialist movement as a whole, a consequence of the substantial increase in youth in the cities and their rapid politicization in the 1930s. Since the end of the First World War and, above all, since the economic crisis, Europe experienced a strong youth politicisation, with the entry of hundreds of thousands of young people into the corresponding sections of the political parties. [...]

The involvement of the youth in leading the preparations for revolution had an immediate [...] consequence. Largo Caballero and the senior leaders of the UGT and the PSOE were accustomed to thinking of the revolution as a general strike [...]. It was the youth who added to the general strike the theory of the seizure of power by the party of the proletariat.«¹²⁷

The beginning of this process coincided with the events in Austria and France, the former displaying the defeat of the isolated Socialist *Schutzbund*, the latter indicating that concerted action with other parts of the labour movement could be a successful approach. Nonetheless, Carrillo would cite the Austrian example as that valid for Spain.¹²⁸ In the following weeks and months, the Young Socialists would be instrumental in bringing either subdivisions of the party or the trade union under the control of *Caballeristas*, as happened with the most important regional party organisation in Madrid, or they took over control themselves of such trade unions, as had already happened with the urban transport workers' union in the year before and with the UGT's largest federation, namely the FNTT, at the end of January 1934.¹²⁹ After they had pushed Besteiro and his supporters aside, the Young Socialists aimed the brunt of their attacks at the *Prietistas*.¹³⁰

The formation of a new coalition government without PSOE participation in September 1933 confirmed the bankruptcy of the left-of-centre policies it had pursued. The Socialist left became convinced that there was no chance of reconciling the interests of the proletariat with the bourgeois democratic republic. Ironically, under the leadership of the originally right-wing Largo Caballero, the left of the PSOE, and with it the FJS, turned away from a reformist strategy towards a revolutiona-

126 Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 104 f.

127 Juliá, *Los socialistas en la política española 1879–1982*, pp. 204 f.

128 Preston, *The Last Stalinist*, p. 38.

129 Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 122 and 138.

130 Souto Kustrín, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, p. 111.

ry one.¹³¹ While Largo Caballero himself never really overcame his reformism¹³², the rank-and-file, including the Socialist youth, radicalised rapidly.¹³³ The Socialist youth developed a fundamental criticism of the reformist policies of the PSOE and especially of the centre and right-wing currents within the party. The aim, defined already before the October 1934 uprising, was formulated as the *bolshevización* of the PSOE. One of the central measures to reach this goal was to purge the party of its reformist wing and to unify the revolutionary parts of the Spanish left as far as they saw themselves as Marxist-inspired within the Socialist Party. This tendency was reinforced when in April 1934 a new youth leadership was elected under Carlos Hernández Zancajo, who was also the leader of the urban transport workers' union, as president¹³⁴ and the then nineteen-year-old Carrillo as secretary-general of the FJS.¹³⁵ This new leadership was not only younger on the average than its predecessor but also more radical.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, the international orientation of the FJS moved away from participation in the SYI, which was seen as unable to develop any strategy against fascism. This became manifest in the vote on the international affiliation of the FJS at its congress: »[O]nly 103 out of 779 delegates with voting rights voted for the continued affiliation with the SYI, 76 in favour of a Fourth International and the vast majority, 600 votes, preferred to abstain.«¹³⁷ The same was true for the LSI itself. Thus, the FJS developed the idea of joining the Communist Youth International, or of the PSOE of entering the Comintern, as a part of the programme for *bolshevising* the Spanish Socialist movement.

In the aftermath of the murder of one Socialist militant, Juanita Rico, by the fascist *Falange*, the Executive Committees of the Socialist and the Communist Youth met twice, on July 26 and 30, 1934, in order to discuss the political situation. As a consequence of the meeting, the two youth leagues organised common resistance against fascist meetings, such as that held at El Escorial later that year. In August, joint meetings were held to remember the twentieth anniversary of the start of the First World War.¹³⁸

The violent clashes between Socialist and Communist youth on one side and *falangistas* on the other, as well as the attempt of the government to curb the political activity of young people below the age of 23, which was widely ignored, had the effect of bringing the two youth leagues closer together during the summer.

131 For the development of the PSOE before the Civil War see Juliá, *La Izquierda del PSOE*, passim; *id.*, *Los socialistas en la política española 1879–1982*, pp. 197–238; Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, passim.

132 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

133 See Juliá, *La izquierda del PSOE*, passim.

134 Marta Bizcarrondo, *Historia de la UGT*, vol. 3: *Entre la democracia y la revolución, 1931–1936*, Madrid 2008, p. 99.

135 Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, p. 11.

136 Souto Kustrín, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, p. 111.

137 Rainer-Gerd Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: The Drive towards Unity, Radicalisation and Strategic Innovation in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Spain, 1936–1939*, PhD Thesis, University of Michigan 1992, pp. 396–403, quotation: p. 402.

138 Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, pp. 16–20 and 156.

Repression functioned as a catalyst for the rapprochement and finally the impetus for unification, especially after the defeat of October 1934.¹³⁹

The FJS had already started a public debate on the question of unification. For them it was always clear that this unification could only be realised by other Marxists joining the Socialist organisations, i.e. the PSOE, the UGT and the FJS, or at least becoming part of the newly-formed *Alianzas Obreras*. The refusal of the Young Communists to follow these instructions led to a suspension of the talks between the two youth organisations.¹⁴⁰

Alianzas Obreras, Workers' Alliances, had originally been developed as a concept by the dissident Communist groups centered on Catalonia. After several steps of preparation, an agreement on the Catalan Workers' Alliance was signed in December 1933 by all workers' organisations of the region with the notable exceptions of the CNT and the Catalan Communist Party (PCC). This model led to the foundation of such alliances throughout a number of regions of Spain, even including – for a brief period of time – the PCE, which joined at the beginning of 1934, dropped out again in March and rejoined shortly before the October insurrection.¹⁴¹

Rhetorically, Largo Caballero supported the idea of *Alianzas Obreras*, while refusing to enter with the Socialist Party and the UGT on the national level, as he only accepted unity through other working-class organisations joining the Socialists, leaving the alliances unable to represent a national united front.¹⁴² The region with the most fertile ground for the *Alianzas* was Asturias, where even the CNT would join the alliance and which during the October insurrection would be the region in which the left held on to control the longest.¹⁴³

The Socialists, however, never intended to join any cooperation on an equal footing with the other organisations, as they were the largest of the Marxist labour movement in Spain and internationally. Their assumption was always that the others should join the Socialist Party.¹⁴⁴ This was also true for the liaison committee

139 Souto Kustrín, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, pp. 112–115. For the role of the Socialist youth during the troubled spring and summer of 1934 see Sandra Souto Kustrín, *Taking the Street: Workers' Youth Organizations and Political Conflict in the Spanish Second Republic*, in: EHQ 34, 2004, pp. 131–156, here: pp. 135–142.

140 Elorza/Bizcarrondo, *Queridos Camaradas*, pp. 220 and 491, note 24; Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, pp. 21 f.

141 As one illustration of the contingent situation during these years, Béla Kun, the legendary leader of the short-lived Hungarian revolution of 1919 who would later fall victim to the Terror, as Comintern secretary even proposed that Largo Caballero could, as an exception, start negotiations for joining the Comintern without even coming to Moscow. This proposal was endorsed by the leadership of the Comintern on September 21, 1934. RGASPI, fond 495, register Ispaniya, envelop 4, p. 72, »Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 21. IX 1934«.

142 Preston, *The Last Stalinist*, p. 58; Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, pp. 58 f. For a detailed description of this development see Alba, *La Alianza Obrera*.

143 Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, pp. 60–62; Alba, *La Alianza Obrera*, pp. 157–161.

144 Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 156 f. and 270; Santos Juliá, *Orígenes del Frente Popular en España (1934–1936)*, Madrid 1979, pp. 70–82; Graham, *Socialism and War*, p. 32; Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 144 and 156; Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, p. 59.

formed together with the PCE in December 1934, which never developed any practical relevance.¹⁴⁵

Largo Caballero had made at least three fundamental mistakes in the run-up to the October insurrection. First, besides giving in to the growing radicalization of the Socialist rank and file – not least amongst the Young Socialists, who tried later to flatter him by calling him the »Spanish Lenin« – he irresponsibly indulged in revolutionary rhetoric, thereby reinforcing this radicalisation. Meanwhile, the Socialist movement beyond Asturias, paradoxically under the leadership of Prieto, did not prepare systematically for an armed uprising. Second, he made the timing of the uprising dependent on actions of his adversary by linking it to the CEDA joining the government through ministerial participation. Third, as it seems to have been mainly a rhetorical radicalization – again with the notable exception of the Young Socialists – of a largely reformist movement, the lack of secrecy around the preparations¹⁴⁶ made it highly likely that the threat of revolution was supposed to remain a threat in the direction of the right wing as well as the President aiming at preventing him from calling in the CEDA.¹⁴⁷

Although Socialist trade unions, especially the FNTT, had experienced several defeats throughout the year 1934¹⁴⁸, the decisive moment came when CEDA joined the government. The insurrection, a combination of armed fighting in such places as Madrid and Catalonia, but first and foremost Asturias, and an attempted general strike, started on October 4 and only lasted for a few days in most places. Only in Asturias did fighting continue for approximately two weeks.¹⁴⁹ The Young Socialists were amongst the most important drivers of the insurrection, as could be seen especially in Madrid, where their militia played an outstanding role. Nonetheless, Madrid also highlighted major organizational and material deficiencies in the preparation and the practical implementation of strike and insurrection combined with a high level of miscoordination.¹⁵⁰

The aftermath of the events was marked by draconic repression with summary executions, around 1,500 killed and thousands injured and arrested.¹⁵¹ Carrillo was arrested in Madrid on October 7 and imprisoned in the *Cárcel Modelo* with Largo Caballero and other leading Socialists as Hernández Zancajo, but also Young Communists such as the UJC's secretary-general Trifón Medrano.¹⁵² Although im-

145 Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 154 f. The joint committee would be re-established again during the Civil War, see *Graham*, *Socialism and War*, pp. 75–85.

146 *Preston*, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 139.

147 *Aviva Aviv/Issac Aviv*, *The Madrid Working Class, the Spanish Socialist Party, and the Collapse of the Second Republic (1934–1936)*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, 1981, pp. 229–250, here: p. 244.

148 *Bizcarrondo*, *Historia de la UGT*, pp. 103–115.

149 On the events of October see *Preston*, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 161–179; *Aurelio Martín Náreja*, *Partido Socialista de España*, Madrid 2009, p. 157.

150 *Souto Kustrín*, *Octubre de 1934 en Madrid*, pp. 1063–1103; *id.*, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, p. 114; *id.*, *Taking the Street*, pp. 142–145.

151 *Mann*, *Fascists*, p. 319.

152 *Preston*, *The Last Stalinist*, p. 57; *id.*, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 212; *Elorza/Bizcarrondo*, *Queridos Camaradas*, p. 231.

prisonment certainly restricted activities, conditions were remarkably lax, as the prisoners could receive visitors and at least one PSOE Executive meeting could even be held in prison.¹⁵³

The reaction of the Socialist leadership to the defeat was ambiguous. While Prieto started to reconsider the Socialist strategy and soon started to move in the direction of re-establishing cooperation with the Republican parties, Largo Caballero and the leaders of the FJS, especially Carrillo, went for an intensification of the revolutionary rhetoric, although the October insurrection had been an obvious failure.¹⁵⁴ Another strategic mistake made by Largo Caballero was his refusal to publicly take over the responsibility for the insurrection. While he might have thought that this might soften the state repression against the Socialist movement¹⁵⁵, he thereby opened the door for the Communists to maintain their authorship and – at least partially – take over the reputational gain: »Asturian October – or the immediate post-October – was justly described as »the period of the great harvest« for the PCE and the Comintern. In fact, it represents the definitive starting point for the evolution towards a mass party [...].«¹⁵⁶ This propagandistic advantage became underpinned by practical help which showed the Comintern in bright contrast to the LSI, which simply did not have an instrument such as the International Red Aid, quickly rendering material support to victims of the repression or facilitating refuge for several hundred insurgents into France or the Soviet Union. This itself created also the opportunity for the Comintern to extend its immediate presence in Spain.¹⁵⁷

V. Back to the International Context

During the phase following the Austrian and French events, the Comintern gradually changed its behaviour in reaction to evolving circumstances but also due to the French and Spanish Socialists becoming more open to cooperation.¹⁵⁸ The LSI, on their part, also had to go through further internal conflict during this period, which led to a stalemate within the LSI connected to the fact that the Socialist parties, having concluded united front agreements with their Communist counterparts, thereby acted against the position found in 1933.¹⁵⁹ Reacting to the Spanish insurrecti-

153 E.g., Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 159 and 166; Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 212, 225, 227 and 230; *id.*, *The Last Stalinist*, p. 58.

154 Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 211f. and 214f.; *id.*, *The Last Stalinist*, pp. 52f.

155 *Ibid.*, pp. 50 f.

156 Bernhard Bayerlein, *El significado internacional de Octubre de 1934 en Asturias. La comuna asturiana y el Komintern*, in: *Gabriel Jackson/Pierre Broué/Bernard Bayerlein et al.*, *Octubre 1934. Cincuenta años para la reflexión*, Madrid 1985, p. 20. Bayerlein here quotes Enrique Castro Delgado.

157 Bayerlein, *El significado internacional*, pp. 34 f. and 37; Elorza/Bizcarrondo, *Queridos Camaradas*, p. 230.

158 Langkau-Alex, *Von Krieg zu Krieg*, p. 465.

159 Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, pp. 42 f.; Groppo, *Die gelähmte Internationale*, p. 238.

on, the Comintern made a proposal to the LSI for common action, leading to the first meeting for a long time of representatives of both internationals in Brussels, on October 15, 1934. This meeting, however, evoked the protest of a number of Socialist parties, namely the Dutch, Swedish and Czech Social Democrats as well as the British Labour Party, and a sharp controversy during the November Executive session forced the LSI to reject the Comintern's offer and left it paralysed on this issue for the rest of its existence, as it had to delegate this question to the discretion of the respective individual national parties, though informative meetings between the two internationals also took place on the Abyssinian and the Spanish Civil War.¹⁶⁰ This – in conjunction with the Comintern's actions in Spain after the breakdown of the insurrection – must have made a highly unfavourable impression on the Spanish working-class organisations, not least the FJS and its leadership.

The SYI under the chairmanship of the Dutch Koos Vorrink, who also became president of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of the Netherlands, and then, from 1935, H. C. Hansen, while Erich Ollenhauer was secretary-general since 1923, largely reflected the fate of its parent organisation. The controversy between those in favour of cooperation with the Communist youth leagues and those against led to far-reaching paralysis of the SYI. The Socialist youth leagues of Austria, Belgium, France, Italy and Spain met in July and again in December 1935 in a group labelled »Amicale de Toulouse«. The first meeting took place before the SYI Congress in Copenhagen in August 1935, where the left remained in a clear minority, not least due to the formal distribution of votes. At the December meeting, they would finally form an executive committee and withhold membership dues from the SYI for their own purposes, thereby driving the conflict close to an organisational split. This conflict was defused in the following year with the general turn of the more radical organizations towards the formation of popular fronts.¹⁶¹

From the Spanish insurrection onwards, international Social Democracy – after the period since the beginning of 1933 with the tendency toward radicalisation caused by pressures from the rank and file – tended to return to a more moderate

160 Ibid., p. 239; Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, p. 43; Langkau-Alex, *Von Krieg zu Krieg*, p. 470; Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, pp. 496–500 and 502–505. For the interaction between Comintern and SAI during the Spanish Civil War see Schauff, *Der verspielte Sieg*, pp. 160–177. Alternatively, the Spanish edition: Frank Schauff, *La victoria frustrada. La Unión Soviética, la Internacional Comunista y la Guerra Civil española*, Barcelona 2008, pp. 159–175.

161 Horn, PhD Thesis, pp. 396–403; Rainer-Gerd Horn, *Die Krise der Sozialistischen Jugend-Internationale, 1934–1936*, in: Alexander J. Schwitanski (ed.), »Nie wieder Krieg!«. Antimilitarismus und Frieden in der Geschichte der Sozialistischen Jugendinternationale, Essen 2012, pp. 79–99; Erich Wittmann, *Zwischen Faschismus und Krieg. Die Sozialistische Jugendinternationale 1932–1940*, Wien 1982, pp. 92–101; Schauff, *Einheitsfront gescheitert*, pp. 133–144. For this specific question of the SYI charter with regard to voting rights see Horn, *Die Krise der Sozialistischen Jugend-Internationale*, p. 91. Viñas, who in general gives a well-founded account of the development of the FJS, is mistaken when he states that there was no meeting between the left-wing member organisations of the SYI (Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, p. 16), but it happened later than expected. There exists a short report by the secretary-general of the CYI, Raymond Guyot, who, however, did not attend personally on the meetings in Toulouse on July 25 and December 25, 1935, in: RGASPI, fond 495, register 20, file 269, pp. 46 f.

stance. The course of forming united fronts with the Communists and other left-wing groups calling for revolutionary action was now revised towards cooperation with wider circles of society within given countries, as had been demanded by Kautsky immediately after the February events in Austria¹⁶², making the formation of Popular Fronts possible.¹⁶³

The French Communists had already started to move in this direction in parallel to the Spanish events of October 1934 by offering cooperation to the Radicals, leading to the agreement on the first Popular Front, the *Rassemblement Populaire*, including Socialists, Radicals and Communists, in summer 1935. This was even before the VII. World Congress of the Comintern, which rather rubber-stamped the French initiatives as it had happened before with the formation of the United Front. From December 1934 onwards, Prieto would, on behalf of the moderate wing of Spanish Social Democracy, begin to communicate with Azaña and others on resuming cooperation with the republican groups.¹⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, in Spain the role of the Communist Party was marginal for the formation of the Popular Front.¹⁶⁵

VI. Spanish Paradoxes

These developments on the international as well as on the national level led to several specifically Spanish phenomena: first, while PSOE's moderate wing moved in the direction of renewing cooperation with the Republicans, the left under Largo Caballero's leadership remained on their at least rhetorical revolutionary position, supported and pushed by the Young Socialists who took this position seriously. The internal distribution of forces led to an internecine struggle within the party, which would produce significant negative consequences for the stability of the party itself and of the Republic as a whole. Secondly, the FJS leadership was looking indiscriminately for allies in their assumed revolutionary struggle within and without the Socialist movement, ignoring such unbridgeable differences as they existed between the PCE/UJC on the one hand and the Communist dissidents of BOC and ICE on the other. This position would be documented in the publication of »Octubre – Segunda Etapa« in spring 1935.¹⁶⁶ Thirdly, the political development leading to the ever-tighter cooperation between FJS and UJC appeared to be paradoxical, as the FJS stuck to their revolutionary position as before October 1934 and therefore fought against the reformist wing of PSOE, who would move in the direction of the Popular Front, while the Communists, though slower than their French counterparts, sought to join the Popular Front as well and moved away from – at least immediate – revolution, as demonstrated again in France and as formalised by the VII. World Congress of the Comintern and the VI. World Congress of the CYI. The obvious conclusion

162 See discussion above.

163 Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, pp. 51 f.

164 Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 215–221.

165 See Juliá, *Orígenes del Frente Popular en España*; Schauff, *Der verspielte Sieg*, pp. 28–32.

166 See Federación Nacional de Juventudes Socialistas, *Octubre. Segunda etapa*, in: Marta Bizcarrondo (ed.), *Octubre del 34: Reflexiones sobre una revolución*, Madrid 1977, pp. 83–156.

is that the analysis of the FJS was voluntaristic, self-referential, and not in line with the reality of ongoing national and international political processes. They were frantically looking for reinforcement in the internal Socialist struggle, which could not be won as the tide had already turned towards moderation.

One lesson drawn from the defeat of 1934 by several groups within the Spanish Marxist labour movement was to overcome its extreme fragmentation. This led, first, to the merger of the dissident Communists of ICE and BOC into the »Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista« (POUM) with its main base in Catalonia by September¹⁶⁷, then to the dissolution of the CGTU and the absorption of its membership by the UGT in December 1935.¹⁶⁸ The unification of the youth leagues was supposed to take place along similar lines.¹⁶⁹ By the time the unification process of the FJS and UJC into the JSU had already advanced very far, and right after the *pronunciamento* of Franco in July 1936, the »Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya« (PSUC) was formed out of several smaller groups including the Catalan Communist and Socialist organisations.¹⁷⁰

After the PCE, in the last moment before the October insurrection, had decided to join the *Alianzas Obreras*, co-operation between FJS and UJC started to intensify. The local and regional organisations began to set up joint committees, carrying out joint actions and discussing questions of common future strategy and tactics.¹⁷¹

After the abortive October 1934 uprising, the discussion about unification gained pace. The arrest of both Socialist and Communist youth functionaries helped to intensify the discourse about future strategy.¹⁷² In spite of the inherent contradiction, during the summer of 1935, Carrillo and the leader of the »Bloc Obrer i Camperol« (BOC), Maurín, started a debate focussing on the aim of unifying the revolutionary left in a purged PSOE. The new, unified party of the Spanish proletariat should, as Carrillo put it, include the PCE as well as the oppositional Communists or even Trotskyists of BOC and ICE. The discussion ended when these two groups refused to join the Socialist Party for the fear of being marginalised within PSOE¹⁷³, as it actually happened to their French counterparts within the SFIO¹⁷⁴, but merged into

167 Andy Dugan, *Comunismo, revolución y movimiento obrero en Cataluña 1920–1936. Los orígenes del POUM*, Barcelona 2016, pp. 316 f. For the complicated interaction between several groups of the Spanish left during the Second Republic before the Civil War see also Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War, 1936–1939*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 43–70.

168 Bizcarrondo, *Historia de la UGT*, pp. 150 f. and 155–158; Reiner Tosstorff, *Profintern: Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1920–1937*, Paderborn/Munich etc. 2004, pp. 684–687.

169 Elorza/Bizcarrondo, *Queridos Camaradas*, p. 272.

170 See Josep Lluís Martín i Ramos, *Els orígens del Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (1930–1936)*, Barcelona 1977, pp. 226–235; Lyudmila V. Ponamariova, *La formación del Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya*, Barcelona 1977.

171 Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, pp. 23 f.

172 Elorza/Bizcarrondo, *Queridos Camaradas*, p. 231; Preston, *The Last Stalinist*, p. 57.

173 Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 168 f.

174 Tom Kemp, *Trotskyist and left-wing Critics of the Popular Front*, in: Alexander/Graham, *The French and Spanish Popular Fronts*, pp. 104–115. For a broader view of this specific segment of the French left-wing political spectrum see Jean-Pierre Rioux (ed.), *Révolutionnaires du Front Populaire. Choix des documents 1935–1938*, Paris 1973.

the POUM instead, of which Trotsky himself was critical.¹⁷⁵ Broué points out that the refusal of these groups to co-operate with the Young Socialists opened the way to unification with the Communist youth.¹⁷⁶

Since any other partner for unification had obviously fallen away with the formation of the POUM, the FJS started to intensify the negotiations with the Young Communists. However, in principle, Carrillo and most of his comrades were against any moderation: »With the important exception of the social democratic youth federation, resistance to a broadening of the alliance to the right disintegrated in the following months.«¹⁷⁷ This position had been publicly announced in the pamphlet »Octubre – Segunda etapa«, a blueprint for *bolshevising* the PSOE:¹⁷⁸ »It is necessary to disarm the Communists, who are identified with the right wing of the Socialist Party in the evaluation of this question, presenting ourselves as the real Bolsheviks, who in contrast to the label of the Popular Antifascist Bloc keep up the alliance of the proletariat.«¹⁷⁹

Nonetheless, the position of the Young Socialists, as announced in »Octubre«, was not completely consistent in itself. While it seems to be logical that they also objected to the SYI's criticism of the Spanish Young Socialists' involvement in the October 1934 events, it seems rather unclear whether they would in the meantime prefer to leave the »dead organism« of the LSI and enter the Comintern and its youth branch. As they had shown its practical help through their subsidiary, International Red Aid¹⁸⁰, while in parallel the FJS objected to the Communists' line in favour of an alliance with the Republicans. However, the FJS leadership saw the Comintern as the best of two bad alternatives. It did not make the impression of being too enthusiastic about entering the Third International.¹⁸¹ Interestingly enough, the Young Socialists expressed themselves in favour of centralisation on the national level while rejecting the centralist approach of the Comintern on the international level.¹⁸² This purely voluntarist position did not have much to do with the realities of the international context.

Obviously, the Young Socialists had to modify their view during the autumn of 1935, since otherwise they would have remained completely isolated and the ideal

175 For the debate between Carrillo and Maurín see *Viñas*, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, pp. 24–26; *Polémica Maurín – Carrillo*, in *Víctor Alba* (ed.), *La revolución en la práctica. Documentos del POUM*, Madrid 1977, pp. 52–71. For the conflict between the POUM with Trotsky see *Juan Andrade*, *Notas sobre la guerra civil. Actuación del POUM*, Madrid 1986, pp. 27 f. *Pierre Broué*, *Quand Carrillo était gauchiste... Les Jeunesses Socialistes d'Espagne (1934–1936)*, in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, 1983, no. 16, pp. 17–53, here: pp. 42 f. and 52; *Paul Heywood*, *The Development of Marxist Theory in Spain and the Frente Popular*, in: *Alexander/Graham*, *The French and Spanish Popular Fronts*, pp. 116–130, here: p. 125; *Heywood*, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 168–170.

176 *Broué*, *Quand Carrillo était gauchiste...*, p. 52; *Heywood*, *The Development of Marxist Theory*, pp. 126 f.

177 *Horn*, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, p. 104.

178 *Bizcarrondo*, *Octubre del 34*, p. 50.

179 *Federación Nacional de Juventudes Socialistas*, *Octubre. Segunda etapa*, in: *Bizcarrondo*, *Octubre del 34*, p. 126.

180 *Bayerlein*, *El significado internacional*, pp. 34 f.

181 *Federación Nacional*, *Octubre. Segunda etapa*, pp. 128 and 131.

182 *Ibid.*, pp. 132–137.

of proletarian unity would have become unreachable. In addition, there seemed to be no alternative, because the FJS had condemned the Socialist Internationals and, in spite of some criticism, selected the Comintern as its new international haven. Thus, it willy-nilly had to swallow the new Communist strategy. It might well be, as Broué proposes, that the exile in the Soviet Union and presence during the VII. World Congress of the Comintern and the VI. World Congress of the CYI of one leading Young Socialist from Madrid, José Lain, indeed helped to change the views of his comrades in Spanish prisons and outside.¹⁸³ Meanwhile, in the autumn of 1935, the conflicts inside the PSOE intensified, rendering the party even less attractive to the FJS, the more so as the reformist wing would be victorious when Largo Caballero resigned during a dramatic meeting of the PSOE Executive in mid-December 1935 for reasons which seem difficult to understand.¹⁸⁴ Finally, the membership of the FJS was strongly in favour of unity with their Communist counterparts¹⁸⁵, leaving the leadership without choice if it wanted to stay in its position. On November 22, 1935, Carrillo wrote a letter to a political ally called »Margarita«, presumably the Socialist deputy Margarita Nelken¹⁸⁶, in which he characterised the position of the FJS in relation to the popular front and the unification with the Communist Youth:

»Referring here to the young Communists, I believe that we will continue to understand each other. It is to be hoped that they do not insist much on their position, to leave aside the political character of the youth organisation, and that they understand the necessity that, for the good of the revolution, the [FJS] continues to work within the party, until the realisation of the well-known orders, which has to be of interest to all of us.«

In this situation, he still confirmed Largo Caballero's determination to *bolsheviser* the PSOE and effusively praised the president of the party:

»The chief [el patrón] is in a magnificent mood, surpasses himself at every step in the same direction, without any vacillation like the youth. It is an extraordinary case. His maturity grows with each passing day. Those who live with him observe with enthusiasm how he shows a firmer and more resolute position day by day.«¹⁸⁷

Even at the beginning of December 1935, Carrillo was still insisting that negotiations between FJS and UJC were looking successful, with the Young Socialists deman-

183 Broué, Quand Carrillo était gauchiste..., pp. 44 f. This impression is confirmed by the discussion in the Comintern's Spanish commission on January 19, 1936, as documented in RGASPI, fond 495, register 20, file 269, p. 46.

184 Preston, The Coming of the Spanish Civil War, pp. 231–233.

185 This was pointed out by José Díaz during the meeting of the Comintern's Spanish commission on January 19, 1936, as documented in RGASPI, fond 495, register 20, file 269, pp. 50–52. See Graham, Socialist Youth in the JSU, p. 88.

186 On Margarita Nelken see Paul Preston, Doves of War. Four Women of Spain, London 2003, pp. 295–407.

187 A copy of the letter is to be found in RGASPI, fond 495, register 120, file 123, pp. 11 f. This indicates that Margarita Nelken, if she was the addressee, had already close ties with the Communists at that time.

ding only »that the organic unification is going to come in order to strengthen our bolshevising task [...] inside the Socialist Party«. ¹⁸⁸

After further heavy conflicts within the PSOE leadership resulting in Largo Caballero's resignation as president of the party in mid-December 1935, the way was finally free for the conclusion of the Popular Front electoral agreement of January 15, 1936. ¹⁸⁹ This, presumably, constituted the turning point in the evaluation of the PSOE by the Socialist Youth leadership. Tacitly, Carrillo and his comrades would give up the idea of *bolshevising* the party, gradually moving beyond the Socialist orbit. ¹⁹⁰ The PSOE to them also resembled a »dead organism«.

VII. Muscovite Reflexions on the International Situation

Related to this, the breakthrough on the level of the youth organisations from the point of view of the Communists was achieved as a consequence of the decisions of the VII. World Congress of the Comintern in August and the subsequent VI. World Congress of the CYI in September 1935. Concerning the youth movement, the Communists planned to give them more, at least formal, autonomy. Another essential point of the decisions was that the character of the youth organisations should change dramatically. The Communists took the rather voluntarist decision to make mass organisations out of their rather tiny and sectarian youth organisation, which had never developed any great momentum in attracting young people since its foundation in the 1920s. ¹⁹¹ The Communist Youth Leagues (CYL) were to become organisations with a broader focus on the everyday problems of young people and to embrace as many different groups as possible. The resolution of the CYI Congress on this topic states that the current situation of the »labouring youth« demands

»imperiously its unification of non-party, *real mass organisations of the youth, embracing in its ranks not only Communist, but also Socialist, as well as non-party, national-revolutionary,*

188 Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, p. 139.

189 For the highly complex process of forming the popular front in Spain see Juliá, *Orígenes del Frente Popular en España*, esp. pp. 134–149. Santos Juliá, *The Origins and the Nature of the Spanish Popular Front*, in: *Alexander/Graham, The French and Spanish Popular Fronts*, pp. 24–37; Paul Preston, *The Creation of the Popular Front in Spain*, in: *Graham/Preston, The Popular Front in Europe*, pp. 84–105.

190 Graham, *Socialism and War*, p. 33.

191 Part of the problem of the Communist youth leagues surely was that the Communist party membership was quite young on average and thus had little interest in a specific youth organisation. There exists a controversy on the character of the Communist parties as organisations dominated by young people. Even if some authors would emphasise that the party did not differ in age structure from its Social Democratic counterpart, others would correctly point out that the leading cadres of the Communist parties were on average younger than those of other parties. This is especially true if comparing the age structure of the Communist parties with bourgeois parties or parties existing today. For the first position see e.g. Klaus Michael Mallmann, *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik. Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionären Bewegung*, Darmstadt 1996, pp. 106–108. For the contrasting position see Hermann Weber, *Kommunismus in Deutschland 1918–1945*, Darmstadt 1983, p. 70.

*pacifistic, religious and other youths in order to build organisations [...] caring from day to day for the economic and cultural interests and rights of the labouring youth».*¹⁹²

The CYL were supposed to embody a popular front of the youth within one organisation.

Two Spaniards took part in the VI. World Congress of the CYI in late summer of 1935. They were Laín of the FJS, who seems to have gone into exile to the Soviet Union supported by the International Red Aid¹⁹³ after having had a leading role in the Madrid part of the October insurrection¹⁹⁴, and Medrano, Secretary-General of the UJC, who ironically had been acquitted in court of participation on the October insurrection.¹⁹⁵ He could therefore leave prison earlier than others and be elected as a member of the Executive Committee of the CYI (ECCYI).¹⁹⁶

The decisions taken in Moscow in late summer of 1935 and the consequences they had contained at least three contradictions. First, it posed a rather difficult task for the CYL to come to terms with their new strategy of attracting masses of young people defined as broadly as possible in their ideological outlook while they were nonetheless to »educate [the] members in the spirit of class struggle, of proletarian Internationalism, in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism«.¹⁹⁷ The second contradictory, even paradoxical, fact was that the Communist Youth made a complete turn towards the defence of the bourgeois state while the radicalised left wing of the Socialist youth organisations had adopted a revolutionary line.¹⁹⁸ The FJS was the best example for this, as it would only reluctantly accept the Popular Front as the means of obtaining amnesty for those in prison since October 1934¹⁹⁹, though others might be quoted. The third contradiction, which became a problem, was the unmasking of and hunt for 'Trotskyists'. In consequence, Communists tended to call anyone 'Trotskyist' or under 'Trotskyist' influence who articulated the slightest criticism in relation to their policies.²⁰⁰ All these obstacles brought a complete breakdown of any effort aimed at unifying youth organisations – except in Spain.

192 Text of the resolution adopted on the VI. World Congress of the Communist Youth International, Moscow 1935, see IISG, fond SJI, register 461, p. 41.

193 Bayerlein, *El significado internacional*, pp. 34 f.; *Elorza/Bizcarrondo*, *Queridos Camaradas*, p. 257; *Viñas*, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, p. 36.

194 *Souto Kustrín*, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, p. 114; *id.*, *Octubre de 1934 en Madrid*, pp. 1070 and 1079.

195 *Khavanov*, *Volei sil'ny*, p. 82.

196 RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 250, p. 29.

197 IISG, fond SJI, register 461, p. 41.

198 A good impression can be gained by comparing the behaviour of the left-wing organisations within the SYI during its congress in Copenhagen in summer 1935, while in Moscow the Comintern was taking decisions running completely counter to those of the radicalised Young Socialists. Already in September 1934 this radicalisation had been observed by the Communist International. See A. Froumkine [*Frumkin*], *La crise dans les jeunesses socialistes*, in: *L'Internationale Communiste*, 1934, no. 18, pp. 1202–1213.

199 *Souto Kustrín*, *Entre el Parlamento y la calle*, p. 116.

200 For example, the Belgian and French Young Socialists were accused of Trotskyism although they tended to co-operate with the CYL in their countries. They criticised the Moscow Show Trials starting in the second half of 1936. RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 270, pp. 50–55. From the Communists' point of view, this was not entirely incorrect, as Horn shows in his analysis of the

After the end of the right-wing government in December 1935 and the February 1936 elections resulting in the victory of the Popular Front, which made possible the release of the prisoners of the October 1934 insurrection, the pace towards unification accelerated. In February and March, meetings were held in order to work out the details of the unification process. A part of these talks was carried out when a delegation of Communists and Socialists went to Moscow in order to meet with the leading functionaries of the CYI and the Comintern and to get an impression of the Socialist construction in the Soviet Union. The FJS leadership seemed to ignore that the result of the elections, also with regard to specific results of the Socialist candidates, pointed in the direction of further moderation rather than radicalisation. This could be seen, for instance, from the number of ballots cast for Besteiro, the Socialist candidate with the highest number of votes.²⁰¹

The Comintern actively intervened in the question of the unification of the two youth organisations. Already in October 1934, the Comintern leadership had helped to formulate a telegram to Spain's Young Communists in relation to the united front with the Young Socialists.²⁰² More than a year later, the Secretariat of the ECCI, i.e. the main decision-making body of the Comintern, discussed the unification of the two Spanish youth organisations.²⁰³

The immediate preparations for the delegation of Socialist and Communist youth functionaries to come to Moscow started in January 1936, when the Secretariat of the ECCYI, the body running the day-to-day work of the international Communist Youth, intensified the discussion concerning the unification of the two Spanish youth organisations. »Evaristo«, pseudonym of the UJC secretary-general, Medrano²⁰⁴, and a representative of the FJS were to be called to Moscow for discussion. The delegates of the PCE in Moscow were to be involved in the process as well.²⁰⁵ But the visit would not take place so soon.

On January 16, 1936, the arrival in Moscow of the secretary-general of the PCE, José Díaz, was marked by a meeting of the Spanish commission of the Romance secretariat of the ECCI, which was headed by Dmitri Manuil'skii. Victorio Codovilla and Ernő Gerő, the two advisors of the Comintern in Spain, had also arrived. Beyond general political questions, the organisational state of the PCE, the preparation of the electoral campaign and trade union questions, the commission touched upon the unification of the youth organisations. Other contributors were the ECCI secretary, Palmiro Togliatti, the secretary-general of the CYI, Raymond Guyot, the Bulgarian Comintern functionary, Stepanov, who would be in Spain with Togliatti during the

connection between the radicalised member organisations of the SYI, the so-called »Amicale de Toulouse«, the youth branch of the London Bureau and Trotskyist youth organisations. *Horn*, PhD Thesis, pp. 396–403.

201 Aviv/Aviv, *The Madrid Working-Class*, p. 241.

202 RGASPI, fond 495, register Ispaniya, envelop 5, p. 2, »Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr. 405 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI vom 3. X 1934«.

203 RGASPI, fond 495, register Ispaniya, envelop 6, p. 3, »Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr. 20 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des EKKI vom 29. und 30. Dezember 1935«.

204 *Pierre Broué*, *Histoire de l'Internationale Communiste 1919–1943*, Paris 1997, p. 902.

205 RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 256, p. 8.

Civil War, and a youth representative named »Diego«.²⁰⁶ In contrast to Elorza's and Bizcarrondo's argument²⁰⁷ that during this meeting Manuil'skii made clear the general line for this question the whole discussion leaves the impression that the participants were anything but puzzled about the aim of the Socialist Youth and the route to be followed in order to achieve unification.²⁰⁸ Manuil'skii pointed out that there obviously was the will on the Socialists' side to merge with the Communist Youth, to join the CYI on the one hand, but to stay with the PSOE in order to exert its *bolshevising* influence on the party on the other.²⁰⁹ Diaz made clear that the PCE was not completely in favour of the unification, at least not on the conditions of the Young Socialists. He argued that the Communists had hitherto only witnessed excessive demands and manoeuvres by the FJS leadership:

»[T]hey are ready to liquidate [...] the Communist Youth and to develop their organisation. [...] It is clear, that they want to remain young Socialists in order to play a role in the Socialist Party as the left wing. I think that one has to consider whether it is convenient for us to enter the Socialist Youth.«²¹⁰

That the Secretariat of the ECCI occupied itself with the unification of the Spanish youth organisations showed both the high political significance that the Comintern assigned to this question as well as the limited autonomy of the UJC.

When Manuil'skii asked what would happen if the merger did not take place, Codovilla gave the answer: »In my opinion, the danger is indeed the danger of Trotskyism.«²¹¹ And when Manuil'skii wanted to know if the young Socialists really had accepted the whole programme of the Comintern for youth organisations, including its subordination to Stalin's leadership, Codovilla, the Comintern's main expert on Spain, could not give him a clear answer.²¹² Wisely, Manuil'skii tried to turn the discussion in a different direction:

»If we concentrate all our efforts on the question of procedure, this will not be advantageous for us, the more, since, anyway, their organisation is much larger than ours. [...] It will be politically necessary to succeed in drafting a declaration on the programme of the CYI [...], then on the Soviet Union, then on Stalin, then the recognition of the decisions of the VI. Congress [of the CYI] on the broad organisation and, finally, on relations with the CYI. [...] Naturally, after some internal fights, the political victory will be ours and, for them, it will be the victory of the organisation.«²¹³

Togliatti also agreed that the Young Socialists should make clear whether they wanted to join the CYI or not, and that anything else would be intolerable. Diaz did not

206 This was the pseudonym of the Austrian Young Communist Fritz Glaubauf. *Broué, Histoire de l'Internationale Communiste*, p. 1005.

207 *Elorza/Bizcarrondo, Queridos Camaradas*, p. 274.

208 RGASPI, fond 495, register 20, file 269, pp. 45–76.

209 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

210 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–52, quotation: p. 52.

211 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

212 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

213 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

believe that they would agree to these conditions.²¹⁴ Manuil'skii therefore proposed that the Communists should demand agreement on the political points that he had already mentioned and, as a compromise, the new organisation could become only a ›sympathising‹ member of the CYI while the Communists inside the organisation should maintain their relations with the PCE.²¹⁵ But he himself remained unsure whether this was the right path to follow:

»If this is a manoeuvre of theirs, if they want to betray us, if they want to drag us into the into the Socialist Youth and afterwards perhaps turn right, as Ercoli has indicated; is our youth capable in this sense of breaking up, of reinforcing their positions within the ranks of this Socialist Youth?«²¹⁶

The point was finally left without a clear-cut proposal for a decision.²¹⁷ In this context, it is worth citing Horn's earlier remark on broader developments to the effect that this »is a rare example of confusion tearing at the edges of a seemingly monolithic party. [It constitutes] a rare snapshot of a communist party in motion.«²¹⁸ A few days later, the Secretariat of the ECCI itself discussed the question and now it took an important decision: »To regard it as necessary that the CYI already at this point should address a letter to the Socialist Youth organisation of Spain and that a delegation of the Communist and the Socialist youth in Spain will be invited [to Moscow] after the parliamentary elections.«²¹⁹

At the beginning of February, following the directive of the ECCI Secretariat, the ECCYI Secretariat drafted a letter to the Spanish organisations, the contents of which had to be confirmed by the Secretariat of the ECCI.²²⁰ The letter obviously included the invitation of the FJS to Moscow. On February 17, 1936, Carrillo left prison; within less than a month he would be in Moscow for the first time in his life.

On March 3, about one week before the Spanish delegations were to arrive, the Secretariat of the ECCYI met again in order to arrange the negotiations. All secretaries were required to prepare for the delegation's visit. The talks were to be led by Massie, Michal Wolf and Torres. Two secretaries were directly responsible for the reception of the delegates.²²¹ One, the Russian Frumkin, had already occupied himself with the development of the Socialist youth organisations for several years.²²² Frumkin would become a victim of the Terror in mid-1937, since, as would be announced at a session of the Secretariat, he had not shown sufficient *alertness*, in spite of his mother²²³, his sister, and his brother-in-law having been exposed

214 Ibid., p. 63.

215 Ibid., pp. 67 f.

216 Ibid., p. 69.

217 Ibid., p. 74.

218 Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism*, pp. 34 f.

219 RGASPI, fond 495, register Ispaniya, envelop 6, p. 4, »Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr. 25 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des EKKI vom 21. Januar 1936«.

220 Ibid., p. 37.

221 Ibid., p. 49.

222 See e.g. *Froumkine*, *La crise dans les jeunesses socialistes*.

223 *Broué*, *Histoire de l'Internationale Communiste*, p. 1000.

as *enemies of the people*.²²⁴ The Secretariat came together again two days before the arrival of the delegation and confirmed Frumkin's and Ferri's proposals for its reception²²⁵, which turned out to be impressive, as Carrillo remembered nearly six decades later.²²⁶

Before the delegation arrived in Moscow, a draft resolution dealing with »new tasks of the Communist youth movement« was circulated amongst the members of the Secretariat. In the text, it was emphasised that the parties had to follow the decisions of the two World Congresses of the previous summer. Demands were made on the youth leagues to broaden their range, including sport and cultural activities, and to merge with other, especially Socialist, youth organisations. As if in answer to Diaz' reservation about the merger of the two Spanish youth organisations, the text says:

»The change in character of the youth leagues does not mean in any sense the liquidation of the [Communist youth leagues], but, on the contrary, its bold enlargement. This change is not an end in itself, but the most important precondition for strongly enlarging and establishing the Communist influence among the younger generation.«²²⁷

Obviously, some resistance against the change of line was still to be overcome. This can be seen as another sign of the sectarianism which continued to plague the PCE, the fear of losing influence over even a miniscule group of people and, as the Moscow leadership would probably have put it, the lack of dialectical thinking.

The joint Spanish Socialist-Communist youth delegation presumably arrived in Moscow on March 10, 1936. Its members were Carrillo, Federico Melchor and Laín²²⁸ for the FJS, and Evaristo²²⁹ and Felipe Arconada for the UJC. A major part of their visit was dedicated to an information tour.²³⁰

In his biography of Carrillo, Fernando Claudín explains that during the Moscow talks, the leader of the Young Socialists had the opportunity to meet such figures as Georgi Dimitrov, secretary-general of the ECCI, Dmitri Manuil'skii, Aleksandr Kosarev, leader of the Komsomol, and a number of other leading functionaries of the CYI.²³¹ Carrillo himself also gave an account of the delegation to Moscow in March 1936, confirming Claudín's statements. Carrillo, the only surviving witness of the Moscow meetings between the Spanish Communists and Socialists with the CYI, mentions in his »Memorias« that he was very impressed by Vasilii Chemodanov, the representative of the Komsomol in the ECCYI, while Kosarev, the secretary-gene-

224 RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 294, p. 39.

225 Ibid., file 256, p. 65.

226 »In Moscow we had a fraternal reception [...].« *Santiago Carrillo*, *Memorias*, Barcelona 1994, p. 149.

227 RGASPI, fond 495, register 20, file 895, pp. 39–45, quotation: p. 41.

228 *Fernando Claudín*, *Santiago Carrillo*. *Crónica de un secretario general*, Barcelona 1983, p. 36.

229 Evaristo was the pseudonym for Trifón Medrano, secretary-general of the UJC indicated in *Broué*, *Histoire de l'Internationale Communiste*, p. 902.

230 *Carrillo*, *Memorias*, pp. 149–156, and *Claudín*, *Santiago Carrillo*, pp. 35–39, more than anything else talk about the touristic and emotional side of the visit to Moscow.

231 *Claudín*, *Santiago Carrillo*, pp. 35–39. On p. 36 Fernando Claudín states that he himself did not take part in the delegation.

ral of the Komsomol, is not depicted positively: »He seemed vain to me and as if he wanted to imitate Stalin [...].« Neither of these Komsomol functionaries would survive the following years.²³² Claudín and Carrillo himself imply that the leader of the Spanish Young Socialists was very impressed by the meetings, the atmosphere in Moscow and the parties that were given. But both only tell a part of the story. It confirmed his impression of the Socialist construction in the Soviet Union, its significant growth rates in a stark contrast to a Spain hit by the Great Depression, although as the great famine in Ukraine and other regions of the country had shown that the Soviet Union had not completely isolated itself from the capitalist world, as the leadership had decided to continue and even increase imports of Western machinery while the terms of trade for Soviet export goods, such as grain for instance, had deteriorated.²³³

In the Moscow archives, there exists a record of a speech made by Evaristo, presumably in front of members of the Secretariat without the Spanish Young Socialists being present. Although Carrillo notes in his memoirs that »the meetings were long but during the sessions no important differences emerged«²³⁴, Evaristo cited some problematic points concerning the unification. He implied that the two organisations could not agree on a name.²³⁵ He stated that the FJS had initially been reluctant to accept the necessity of work amongst the Catholic youth, but that this question had meanwhile been resolved. In addition, Evaristo emphasised that some leading Socialists had contacts with Trotskyists.²³⁶ He indicated that the Socialists were not willing to give up their position towards the PSOE, since they irrefutably played an important role in the radicalisation of the party. Thus, Evaristo stated, the Young Communists »want to help in the fight within the Socialist Party [...] and the trade unions against reformist and centrist elements«. As a solution, he proposed helping to continue the Young Socialists' work within the PSOE on the one hand while preventing the dissolution of the UJC on the other.²³⁷ In general, the FJS had also accepted the task of youth education in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism.²³⁸ But, obviously, there existed a direct contradiction between the two organisations concerning the adherence to one of the youth internationals. While the FJS had decided to join the CYI, Evaristo declared his point of view: »We fully discussed this question in order to convince them to work within the SYI, to put pressure on the SYI, that they would agree to proposals of the CYI [...].«²³⁹ Another problem

232 Carrillo, *Memorias*, p. 151.

233 See e.g. Hesse/Köster/Plumpe, *Die Große Depression*, pp. 162–175; Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR (1917–1991)*, Harmondsworth 1992, pp. 176–181, 196 and 231. For the link between Soviet industrialisation, foreign trade, food shortages and famine, politics and the evolving Stalinist system in parallel to the onset of the Great Depression see Michal Reiman, *Die Geburt des Stalinismus. Die UdSSR am Vorabend der »zweiten Revolution«*, Frankfurt am Main 1979; Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System. Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*, London 1985, pp. 91–120 and 142–177.

234 Carrillo, *Memorias*, p. 150.

235 RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 259, pp. 1 f.

236 Ibid., p. 3.

237 Ibid., pp. 4 f.

238 Ibid., p. 9.

239 Ibid., pp. 5 and 9.

worrying Evaristo were inevitably the contacts with the Trotskyists. He maintained that the Trotskyists found support in several local organisations of the FJS. One has to bear in mind that the term »Trotskyists« by that time was already being used by the Communists rather arbitrarily in order to smear adversaries with the label of their self-defined worst enemies. »Some comrades from the FJS say that it was a manoeuvre when they supported the Trotskyists. [...] Carrillo in particular has declared that he agrees absolutely and is ready to fight with us [against the Trotskyists]. He has even already started to write some articles.«²⁴⁰

Evaristo's account of relations between the youth organisations shows that in general both sides had a clear interest in unifying. Nonetheless, although Carrillo later maintained the opposite, there existed a certain degree of dissent in some areas. Moreover, and probably more importantly, the Communists obviously feared that the connection with the »Trotskyists« or even the activity of »Trotskyists« within the FJS might be an obstacle to future co-operation. Indeed, in a later conversation, Carrillo admitted that within the Communist Youth League there existed some resistance from »a sectarian group« to unification with the Socialist Youth.²⁴¹

The first joint session of the whole Spanish group with the Secretariat took place on March 11, 1936. The ECCYI secretary Massie opened the session by indicating that »the example of our Spanish comrades is one of the important factors, which would also help the achievement of unification in other countries.«²⁴² For the CYI, it was obviously clear that the unification had to take place, ignoring all possible obstacles. The Spanish example was to be only the first one of a number of other unifications to come. He summarised the points of agreement between the two organisations: the right decisions of the 1935 Moscow Congresses, the necessity to build up a broad mass organisation for the majority of the youth in order to educate them in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, the recognition of the example of the Soviet Union in achieving socialism.²⁴³ He also indicated that the FJS wanted to become a member of the CYI. Carrillo answered this speech, stating »that the Second International and the SYI are living corpses«.²⁴⁴ He expressed optimism concerning the forthcoming unification and the task of attracting peasant youths into the new organisation. He also stated the necessity of remaining in close relations with the PSOE and within the SYI for a certain time, but nonetheless wanted the united organisation to become at least a »sympathising member« of the CYI. He maintained the cost of dissolving the UJC would be very low for the Communists, because the new organisation would have at least 100,000 members within a few months²⁴⁵ – a figure which turned out to be much higher in reality. Carrillo finally expressed his decision to fight any leftist deviation within the new organisation.²⁴⁶ Chemodanov, the representative of the Komsomol in the Secretariat, responded to

240 Ibid., pp. 16 f.

241 Interview with Santiago Carrillo in Madrid, April 28, 1998.

242 RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 260, p. 74.

243 Ibid., pp. 76 f.

244 Ibid., p. 79.

245 Ibid., p. 81.

246 Ibid., p. 82.

Carrillo by emphasising the necessity of continuing the work within the PSOE.²⁴⁷ He demanded a certain caution concerning unification, his aim being to attract more young people than just those within the FJS and the UJC. He defined the object of a popular front of youth, which would be broader than the two youth organisations taken alone.²⁴⁸ Then the session was cut short as a meeting was about to take place with Manuil'skii.²⁴⁹

The meeting dedicated to working out the details for unification was scheduled for March 13, 1936. Carrillo summarised the position of the Spanish delegations who had a meeting before coming together with the Secretariat. He said that the new organisation had to be independent of the PCE in order to be able to work within the Socialist movement. The Spaniards had reached the point of view that the new organisation nonetheless had to become a sympathising member of the CYI immediately. »It is certain that the continuing existence of the name ›Socialist Youth‹ has only one purpose, to preserve influence within the [Socialist] Party.« On the one hand, the Communists within the united youth organisation were to have the freedom of remaining with the PCE, which was not supposed to be made public for political reasons.²⁵⁰ On the other hand, »nor can we avoid the necessity of joining the [Communist] party at some point«. This was a new position articulated by the FJS leadership. Previously, the idea had been to remain a part of the Socialist movement. This idea obviously had been given up as a consequence of the permanent conflict inside the PSOE, which had brought a major defeat with the resignation of Largo Caballero.

Chemodanov, who seemed rather dissatisfied with the discussion, emphasised the necessity of paying attention to political developments in Spain, which meant that it would not be enough just to preserve the old name. »The question of the connection with the party, the connection to the struggle going on within the Socialist party, may not be ignored at any moment.« In addition he demanded, once again, a broader approach than that of simply unifying Communists and Socialists.²⁵¹ At the end of the meeting, they decided to create a commission to formulate a final declaration.²⁵² On March 15, the Secretariat met again with the Spanish delegations in order to discuss the draft declaration.²⁵³

The events in Moscow show that relations between the two Spanish youth organisations were more uneasy than Carrillo concedes. Evaristo, in his meeting with the secretaries of the ECCYI, touched upon the vital questions of ›Trotskyism‹, of the adherence to the international bodies of CYI or SYI, and of the existence of the UJC. The Communists wanted the merger, but they did not want to have ›Trotskyists‹ disturbing their political strategy. One of the aims to be achieved by the fusion of FJS and UJC was obviously to extend Communist influence into the Socialist organisations in order to further the cause of proletarian unity but also in order

247 Ibid., pp. 83–86.

248 Ibid., p. 92.

249 RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 256, p. 69.

250 Ibid., file 261, pp. 40 f.

251 Ibid., pp. 46 f.

252 Ibid., p. 50.

253 RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 256, p. 77.

to receive information on the processes inside the SYI (and maybe the LSI) and to influence them.²⁵⁴ Evaristo, as the Secretary-General of the UJC, was interested in remaining in control of the processes within the new organisation, expressed by his sorrow that the UJC would just disappear. The Socialists had obviously changed their perspective on their own position within the Spanish labour movement, as the organisational centre of the revolutionary left with a certain degree of influence. They seemed to be undecided what to do. On the one hand, they saw that the past two years had not brought any improvement for their position within the Socialist Party, the more so since the leadership had been relinquished by the *Caballerista* left, but on the other hand, they nonetheless wanted to conserve their political influence within the Socialist movement. This meant that the future organisation had to retain its Socialist name. There existed, however, a contradiction between the FJS leaders' perspective on the Spanish situation and their outlook on the international arena. The FJS wanted to leave the SYI because to them it did not seem worth any further effort to try and move it in a more radical direction, the more so since, at this point, the left opposition within the SYI had already started to disintegrate.²⁵⁵

VIII. Back in Spain

After the delegation had left Moscow, the joint declaration was published in Spain towards the end of March. The declaration set out the central tasks of the new organisation to be formed by the FJS and the UJC. It cites the decisions of the CYI Congress and defines the struggle for the everyday interests of young people, the attraction of broad masses of labouring youth as well as the defence of »freedom against reaction, fascism and an imperialist war [...], and the victory for socialism«. The new organisation was to become a »sympathising member« of the CYI while maintaining »friendly relations with [...] the left of the SYI«. Its duty was to fight for the »revolutionary unity of the Spanish proletariat« while defeating the »secessionist elements of the right and of Trotskyism«. Concerning the immediate and technical problems of the unification process, the declaration announced that a national congress of unification would decide all further details. Nonetheless, the united organisation was to be formed »on the basis of the FJS«, in order to maintain good relations with the PSOE.²⁵⁶

Up to this point, the FJS was able to push through the main features of the unification process, as they had planned in the past. It was agreed that unification could only take place with the Communists joining the FJS. It was also clarified that relations with the Socialist movement should not be severed. But the newly formed organisation was to become only a »sympathising member« of the CYI.

254 In the following years, the JSU indeed channelled internal information from the SYI to the Comintern. There exist a number of internal documents in the Comintern archive, which presumably were transferred to Moscow via Spain.

255 See Horn, PhD Thesis, p. 403.

256 See the text of the declaration in: Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, pp. 145–146. It was originally published in *Mundo Obrero*, March 26, 1936.

Clearly the Communists, for their part, had three essential objectives, which partially differed from those of their Socialist counterparts. First, they wanted to achieve unification at any price, thus abandoning their objections to giving up their own organisation. Obviously, the change of attitude was partly motivated by the decisions of the most recent World Congresses, which had given up the older sectarian approach. The main point, however, had been emphasised by Carrillo in Moscow. The CYI could probably gain a lot by giving up the UJC since it could be used as an example for further moves towards the merging of youth organisations in other countries such as France and Belgium. Second, the CYI accordingly had an intense interest in the new organisation remaining a member of the SYI in order to influence the latter's development from within, as had become obvious in Moscow. Third, as Communists worldwide were worried about 'Trotskyism', so they were in Spain, where the POUM represented one of the bigger organisations of left-wing Communist oppositionists and was labelled »Trotskyite« despite having broken with Trotsky in 1935.²⁵⁷ The UJC and the CYI made sure that the new organisation would see the struggle with 'Trotskyism' in any form, in this case the POUM, as one of its main tasks. In addition, a National Committee of Unification was formed with Hernández Zancajo, Carrillo and Melchor from the FJS, and Medrano, Vidal, Arconada representing the UJC.²⁵⁸

But the process was not as straightforward as it might seem. As the leaderships of the two youth organisations were stepping forward, opposition against unification within the FJS was already making itself heard. In November 1935, the Madrid leadership demanded a purge of the organisation and a motion to join the Comintern was supported by a majority, but there was dissent. In January 1936, a group of Asturian Young Socialists imprisoned in Oviedo sent a letter to the FJS Executive speaking out in favour of a coalition with the Republicans and against the idea of *bolshevising* the Socialist movement.²⁵⁹ Segundo Serrano Poncela, member of the Executive Committee, published an article in the FJS newspaper »Renovación« denouncing the unification based on the CYI's 1935 decisions: »As one can see, the contents are clear. A Youth without party, without programme, without concrete objectives, completely undialectical, comprising everything from the petty bourgeois liberal of spiritualist philosophical content up to the stubborn Marxist [...].«²⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Gerö informed Dimitrov that a secret left-wing faction had been formed, which was operating against unification. He emphasised once again the danger of 'Trotskyism' within the Socialist youth movement.²⁶¹

257 Leon Trotsky, *The Spanish Revolution (1931–1939)*, New York 1973, pp. 209, 211, 218, 246, 251, 259 and 265–267.

258 Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, p. 57.

259 *Souto Kustrín*, *Taking the Street*, p. 147; Heywood, *Marxism and the Failure of Organised Socialism in Spain*, pp. 159 f.

260 Viñas, *La formación de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*, p. 142.

261 Rossiiskaya akademiya nauk et al. (eds.), *Komintern i grazhdanskaya voina v Ispanii*, Moscow 2001, pp. 109 f.

IX. The Comintern Intervenes Again

One of the main questions that remained before the publication of the declaration was the name of the future joint organisation, which stayed unresolved even as late as mid-July 1936. On July 13, the Secretariat of the ECCYI met in order to discuss the latest developments in Spain. One of the topics on the agenda was the name of the Spanish organisation. The Secretariat favoured the name »Association of the Labouring Youth«.²⁶² But this decision was only taken after the Secretariat of the ECCI had already discussed the issue two days earlier. It had been decided to inform the Spanish Communists that they should insist on the name »Association of the Labouring Youth of Spain«.²⁶³ During this session, Dimitrov and Manuil'skii advised the CYI concerning the issue of unification. Dimitrov adopted the position that the Spanish Communists should insist on this name.²⁶⁴ Carrillo later explained that this proposal for a new name of the unified youth organisation was never made known to him.²⁶⁵ Obviously, the question of the new name for the joint youth organisation was not solved in the eyes of the Comintern, but with the outbreak of the Civil War a few days later – a development which the »General Staff of World Revolution« had not foreseen – this question fell victim to the »normative force of the factual«.

Dimitrov also advised caution with the entrance of the new organisation into the CYI: »Indeed, we cannot call a congress in order to decide to let them join [the CYI].« He indicated that any further split in PSOE would be dangerous for further cooperation of the two parties within the Popular Front: »A split within the [Socialist] Party exists and this does not help.«²⁶⁶ He described the tactics to be adopted by the Communists: »We have to agree to the unification with the youth league of Spain as a sympathising member if this question threatens a split at the Congress.«²⁶⁷

The Secretariat of the ECCI therefore decided to »recommend that the Spanish Communists should support the movement in the direction of the entry of the united youth association into the CYI«. But in case resistance to entry into the CYI was too strong, threatening to provoke new splits, the Communists should agree that the new youth organisation should »only temporarily join the CYI as a sympathising member«.²⁶⁸ A similar position was also adopted by the Young Communists.²⁶⁹

It remained unclear how the Spanish would decide the question of adherence to either youth international. But the Comintern and its youth branch did not want to risk any rift within the newly unified organisation given the highly volatile situa-

262 The minutes of the decisions of the Secretariat read as follows: »Beschlossen: [...] a) Die Linie auf die Vereinigung der KJV- und SJ-Organisation unter dem Namen »Verband der jungen Werktätigen« zu unterstützen.« RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 257, p. 51.

263 Ibid., register 18, file 1099, p. 35.

264 Ibid., p. 48.

265 Interview with Santiago Carrillo in Madrid, April 28, 1998.

266 RGASPI, fond 495, register 18, file 1099, pp. 46 f. In this context, p. 47, Dimitrov said: »Caballero is a great dreamer and sectarian.«

267 Ibid., p. 48.

268 Ibid., p. 35.

269 RGASPI, fond 533, register 4, file 257, pp. 51 f.

tion within the FJS, the PSOE and Spain as a whole. Accordingly, they were probably reluctant to start a new discussion over the name of the joint youth league, which they had themselves proposed. To have done so might have prevented any advance towards the proposed unification of PSOE and PCE. The decisions of the Comintern and its youth branch discussed here show how the Communists acted in the period running up to the Civil War. They were obviously not very sure of their own position in the political landscape of the Spanish Republic. The PCE had consequently to act cautiously in order to promote the cause of unification of the labour movement in Spain and internationally. But more importantly, it shows the way the Comintern acted before the beginning of the intensive hunt for ›Trotskyists‹, before the show trials and the Terror in the Soviet Union. At this point, the Communist approach to other parts of the labour movement, to groups of a divergent political position, if they could be won over as allies, was still more flexible and cautious than it would be after August 1936.

X. The JSU in the Civil War

The future development of the unfolding Civil War, however, prevented any formal decisions on the name, on adherence to any of the international Socialist or Communist organisations, or on unification as a whole. Within less than one week after the latest Moscow decisions had been taken, the rebel generals attempted their abortive *pronunciamento*, which, in turn, unleashed the Spanish Civil War. The formal national congress of unification, announced at the end of March, would never take place.

In January 1937, when the merger was already a fact, the JSU would under that name hold its first national congress in Valencia as a member of the SYI. This congress saw the participation of a representative of the SYI, the Austrian Ernst Papanek, as well as the secretary-general of the CYI, Raymond Guyot.

By this time, the JSU under Carrillo's leadership had moved away from the old form of youth organisation represented by the FJS and the UJC. Its membership had grown sixfold, which meant it had more members than PSOE and PCE taken together²⁷⁰, and these new members knew nothing about the old debates, taking the existence of the JSU as a given fact. The JSU articulated their interests in the polarised situation of an armed class struggle and tried to give them organisation and orientation, albeit under the heading of Marxism-Leninism. The organisation seemed to be extremely successful at this time, but it remained the only case of a united Socialist and Communist youth before the Second World War. However, the JSU soon started to disintegrate²⁷¹ and it would virtually fall apart with the end of the Civil War. This perhaps was, towards the end of the given crisis situation, the reverse side of the historical contingency favouring working-class unity.

270 Preston, *The Last Stalinist*, p. 67.

271 For the formation of an opposition against Carrillo and the new course of the JSU see Graham, *Socialism and War*, pp. 31, 69–74, 114–117 and 223–231; *id.*, *The Socialist Youth in the JSU*; *Monterrubio*, *Las J.S.U. y el P.S.O.E. en la guerra civil*.

XI. The Formation of the JSU – a Stalinist Coup?

It would most probably be wrong to assume that the unification and the subsequent shift of the JSU from the PSOE to the PCE was the final aim of a Stalinist masterplan. There are several important factors that speak against a sell-out of the Socialist youth organisation to the PCE as well as of Carrillo setting out on a straight path towards Communism from 1934 onwards, even if he himself tries to give the impression in his »Memorias«. The situation in Spain as well as on the international level was much too volatile and complex for such an approach.

The idea of unification was born out of the polarised political situation in Spain of the 1930s. It was a conclusion also drawn from the fatal defeats of the German and Austrian labour movements and the »extreme fragmentation« of the Spanish. The concept of unification of the revolutionary Spanish left, as the Young Socialists saw it, implied the entry of Spain's diverse left groups into the PSOE while getting rid of the party's reformist wing. But this strategy was not acceptable to most of the groups until mid-1935. The situation only started to change when the Communists modified their line as a consequence of their World Congresses in the summer of 1935. The Spanish Communists reluctantly started to give in to demands to dissolve the UJC. This was finally achieved through the Moscow talks of March 1936. In this sense, the influence exerted by the Comintern was vital. The Young Socialists under Carrillo's leadership also agreed to curb their own radical objectives. The unified organisation was supposed to keep its Socialist label, to work inside the PSOE and therefore also to remain within the SYI. The strategy worked out by the Communists was more consistent than that of the FJS, which had sought to abandon the SYI and to enter the CYI immediately while remaining connected to the PSOE. The defeat of the left in December 1935 caused some of the FJS leaders who had been members of the PSOE slowly to change their minds and move over to the other side.

Under the conditions of the contingent historical situation, it seems to be understandable that a group of young radicals in the FJS, acting at the centre of the armed class struggle in the wake of the Spanish Civil War, felt themselves drawn to the Communist Party, which showed a high degree of unity in ideological and organisational matters, and firm determination in a moment of mortal danger for the labour movement. Likewise, it seems consistent that they gradually moved away from the PSOE, a party which, in stark contrast to the Communists, was mired in bitter internal conflicts which were never to be resolved. This specific strength of the Communists was displayed when the rebels started their siege of Madrid in November 1936. While the government led by Largo Caballero took refuge in Valencia, the Communists stayed and organised the defence of the capital. This was the moment when Carrillo and others changed their party affiliation to the PCE.²⁷² In short, it is scarcely surprising that these young radicals of the FJS should have joined an international Communist movement which attracted so many on the left all over the world, many of whom were significantly more experienced than the leaders of Spain's Socialist Youth, a rather marginal youth organisation within the international political firmament of the left in the 1930s. In any case,

272 Preston, *The Last Stalinist*, pp. 68–72.

with the contingent formation of that organisation, Spain once again confirmed its *Sonderweg* in relation to the European mainstream.