

# **The PSOE's Regeneration of International Socialism During the War in Spain**

El PSOE y la regeneración del socialismo internacional durante la guerra en España

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## Resumen

This article addresses the unknown transnational practices of the leading party of the Republican government during the civil war of 1936-39, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE). Abandoned by liberal democracy and its international institutions, the PSOE broke diplomatic isolation by turning to its Labour and Socialist International (LSI) backchannel in an attempt to sway the policies of socialist parties, namely for the abrogation of non-intervention. Through this internationalist commitment, the PSOE revitalized a moribund network subjected to the appeasement and neutralist inclinations of its member sections. By shedding light on the PSOE's transnational practice with the LSI and its French, Belgian, and British affiliates this article makes a contribution to the Spanish historiography on the internationalization/transnationalization of the conflict, while joining hands with Spanish historians using a more local lens. Moreover, and ultimately, it positions itself in the debate on whether labour history is internationally or nationally rooted.

## Palabras clave

Palabras clave. Guerra civil española; Segunda República; socialismo internacional; IOS; internacionalismo; patriotismo; entreguerras; PSOE; solidaridad transnacional

## Abstract

Este artículo aborda las prácticas transnacionales desconocidas del principal partido del gobierno republicano durante la guerra civil de 1936 a 1939, el PSOE. Abandonado por la democracia liberal y sus instituciones internacionales, el PSOE rompió el aislamiento diplomático recurriendo a su Internacional obrera y socialista—IOS, en un intento de influir en las políticas de los partidos socialistas, especialmente en lo que concierne la no intervención. A través de este compromiso internacionalista, el PSOE revitalizó una red moribunda sometida al apaciguamiento y a las inclinaciones neutralistas de sus partidos. Al arrojar luz sobre la práctica transnacional del PSOE con la IOS y sus afiliados francés, belga y británica, este artículo contribuye a la historiografía española sobre la internacionalización/transnacionalización del conflicto, mientras extendía la mano a historiadores locales. En última instancia, se posiciona en el debate sobre si la historia obrera tiene raíces internacionales o nacionales.

## Keywords

Spanish Civil War; Second Republic; International socialism; Internationalism; LSI; patriotism; interwar; PSOE; transnational solidarity

## Introduction

The Spanish socialists led the *Frente popular* government for most of the civil war, while likewise benefitting from the largest solidarity campaign on behalf of their transnational network. As such, it is thus pertinent to explore this matter further<sup>1</sup>. The current article sheds light on the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) and its transnational relations with the Labour and Socialist International (LSI), as well as with socialist parties, a topic which tends to be overlooked by the historiography. The point is made that the PSOE's efforts to regenerate international socialism stemmed twofold from a survival struggle in the context of the failing of the liberal interwar international order, and from an internationalist doctrine according to which the faith of one socialist party was inter-related to the others'. The LSI was then headed by a reformist Belgian president, Louis de Brouckère, and the Austrian secretary general, Friedrich Adler, a former revolutionary. LSI's then critical sections were the Parti ouvrier belge (POB), the *Section française de l'Internationale socialiste* (SFIO) and the British Labour Party (LP), which are along the PSOE at the centre of this study.

## Historiographical Considerations

A study devoted to the PSOE's transnational relations has yet to be produced by an Iberian scholar. Classic works, for example Santos Juliá's, remain confined to the national sphere<sup>2</sup>. Works who do venture out, such as Marina Casanova's analysis of a spying saga at Madrid's Belgian embassy—the Borchgraeve affair—, remain on the diplomatic level. In their contextualization of the war in Spain with the broader decline of the Versailles Order, Víctor Fernández Soriano and Jorge Vargas Visús adopt a similar diplomatic outlook<sup>3</sup>. Literature who do mention the transnational sphere, such as Jorge Marco and

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1. The author is indebted to Joël Wickstrom-Arsenault, Jorge Vargas Visús and Brianne Mack, as well as *Hispania Nova*'s anonymous reviewers.

2. See Santos Juliá, *Los socialistas en la política española 1879-1982*. (Madrid: Taurus, 1997).

3. Marina Casanova, "Las relaciones diplomáticas hispano-belgas durante la Guerra Civil española: el caso del Barón de Borchgraeve", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Historia Contemporánea*, t.V., (1992): pp. 293-302. Víctor Fernández Soriano, "Bélgica y la Guerra Civil: el impacto del conflicto español en la política y la diplomacia de una pequeña potencia", *Cuadernos de historia contemporánea*, 29, (2007): pp. 219-233. Jorge

Maria Thomas', do not really engage it<sup>4</sup>. Joan Josep Torro Martínez does mention the socialist network in his local history of the Ontinyent hospital, insisting how local history is essential to an international one<sup>5</sup>.

On the trade union federation side, studies on the *Unión General de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras* (UGT) usually overlook relations with the IFTU<sup>6</sup>. An exception is Manuela Aroca Mohedano's article which provides examples up until 1936 of UGT's transnational relations with the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU)<sup>7</sup>.

Lastly, and back to the politicians' side, Aurelio Martí Bataller highlights the PSOE's patriotism, while referring to its transnational network. He seeks to reconcile both the national and international spheres of socialist action, invoking the concept of "internationalist patriotism," or the fraternity binding socialist parties from all nations<sup>8</sup>. In doing so, with Torro Martínez, he points toward a meta-synthesis of the local, national and transnational dimensions of Spanish labour studies<sup>9</sup>, but also ultimately falls short

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Vargas Visús, "El impacto de la Guerra Civil española en el Partido Obrero Belga", *Ayer*, 111, (2018): pp. 225–252.

4. A common habit amongst labour historians of merely evoking « transnationalism » rather than providing tangible examples of transnational practice. See Jorge Marco and Maria Thomas. "‘Mucho Malo for Fascisti’: Languages and Transnational Soldiers in the Spanish Civil War", *War & Society*, 38, no. 2 (2019): pp. 139–161. Jorge Marco. "Transnational Soldiers and Guerrilla Warfare from the Spanish Civil War to the Second World War", *War in History*, 27, no. 3 (2020): pp. 387–407.

5. Joan J. Torró Martínez, *Solidaritat en temps de guerra: Hospital Militar Internacional Ontinyent, 1937-1939*. (València: Institució Alfons el Magnànim-Centre Valencià d'Estudis i d'Investigació, 2023): p. 17.

6. See Père Gabriel, *Historia de la UGT. Un sindicalismo de Guerra 1936-1939*. (Siglo XXI: Madrid, 2011). David Ballester, "La UGT de Cataluña durante la Guerra Civil (1936-1939). ¿Un sindicat cara la guerra?", *Studia Historica. Historia Contemporánea*, 24, (2006): pp. 35-55.

7. Manuela Aroca Mohedano, "Internacionalistas entre la revolución y el fascismo: la Unión General de Trabajadores en el mundo (1919-1936)", *Hispania*, 78/259 (Madrid, 2018): 323-352.

8. Aurelio Martí Bataller, "Un internacionalismo patriota...", *op. cit.*, pp. 258, 273, 275. Aurelio Martí Bataller, "A la nación por la clase. La campaña electoral socialista de noviembre de 1933", *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea* 39, (2017): p. 254. Such attempt at reconciling internationalism and nationalism in labour studies is not new outside Spain. See Eric Hobsbawm, "Opening address: working class internationalism," eds. Fritz Van Holtoon and Marcel van der Linden, *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830–1940* (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

9. Regarding debates on the precedence of the national vs. the international spheres in labour studies, see Peter Ackers, "Workers of the World? A British Liberal-Pluralist Critique of Marcel van der Linden's Global Labour History," *IRSH*, 62, 2 (August 2017): pp. 253–269; and Marcel Van der Linden, "Ghostbusting or Real Pluralism? A Brief Response to Peter Ackers," *IRSH*, 62, 2 (August 2017): pp. 271–278.

in providing concrete examples of such practices. This is where the transnational labour historian steps in to complete the picture.<sup>10</sup>

### **Methodology and Concepts: Practice of Transnational Solidarity**

This article focuses on the actual practice of international socialism—debates, decision-making, policies and actions—in contrast with previous scholarship focused on the failure to achieve principles, great ideals and aspirations, such as collective security, disarmament, indivisible peace, labour unification, saving the Republic or preventing a continental war<sup>11</sup>. On the conceptual level, notions of internationalist sensibility, solidarity, and reciprocity are considered genuine and not just self-serving<sup>12</sup>. Such emphasis on the actual practice of internationalism and genuine solidarity allows for pinpointing interrelations between the PSOE, the LSI and its parties, as well as highlighting feats of solidarity regarding the transnational campaign for the *Frente popular* government—not just its shortcomings. This is achieved by lining up successive examples of transnational practice on behalf of the PSOE, which demonstrates its commitment to internationalism, to maintaining democracy, and to the defence of both progressive values abroad and at home. In turn, the decaying transnational network of the LSI was regenerated by the multiplication of joint meetings, advocating an offensive socialism, adopting resolutions which should be binding, and committing to political lobbying nationally and internationally. By doing so, the PSOE's efforts delayed the national withdrawal dynamic hindering the internationalist commitment of the LSI and its member parties.

### **The PSOE's regeneration of international socialism**

In the third week of July 1936, Spanish socialists were not yet part of the *Frente popular's* cabinet, despite constituting its main deputy block at the *Cortes* (the parliament). The PSOE reached out to its LSI network for politico-moral support, and soon received a

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10. Regarding some foreign contributions, see Helen Graham, *Socialism and War, The Spanish Socialist Party in Power and in Crisis*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991). Graham constantly refers to the Comintern, although her book is about the PSOE. Regarding the LSI, she writes on page 131 that it did nothing for the Republic, reflecting a common reductive outlook from Cold War era historians. More interesting for our post-Cold War era approach: Leonardo Rapone, *La socialdemocrazia europea tra le due guerre, Dall'organizzazione della pace alla resistenza al fascismo*. (Rome, Carocci, 1999). André Donneur, *L'Internationale socialiste*. (Paris, PUF, Coll. « Que sais-je », no 2101, 1983). Michel Dreyfus, *L'Europe des socialistes*. (Paris, Complexe, 1991). Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008). Regarding international trade unionism, see Geert Van Goethem, *The Amsterdam International, The World of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), 1913-1945*. (Burlington, Ashgate, 2006).

11. Regarding actual practices, see Talbot C. Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International politics, 1914–1960*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). For an outlook based on failures, see Amaro Del Rosal, *Los congresos obreros internacionales en el siglo XX*. (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1975).

12. Regarding self-servingness, see Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War...*, *op. cit.*

supporting telegram from the headquarters in Brussels's *Maison du peuple*<sup>13</sup>. As the procurement of weapons was not yet an issue—Madrid had signed an agreement with Paris the year before—this politico-moral backing was deemed satisfactory.

The LSI and its trade union counterpart, the IFTU, were planning at Brussels' *Maison du Peuple* a joint commemoration of the assassination of Jean Jaurès and the outbreak of the Great War. But the situation in Spain soon took precedence following the announcement that Léon Blum, the French socialist PM of the sister coalition *Front populaire*, was suspending the 1935 armament contract with Spain at the petition of his Radical coalition partners and British diplomacy who feared escalation. This was a direct infringement to both international law and the socialist duty of internationalist solidarity. Consequently, a condemnation of Blum's gesture was included in the final resolution at the request of the Spanish *rapporteur* Hilari Airlandis. The LSI-IFTU assembly next adopted a manifesto and established a global solidarity campaign launched on July 28th<sup>14</sup>. A first LSI delegation composed of President Louis de Brouckère and Pietro Nenni from the exiled *Partito Socialista Italiano* (PSI) then arrived in Madrid in early August to establish the International Solidarity Fund (ISF), the first relief initiative to arrive on the Spanish terrain.

In Paris, meanwhile, the PSOE's vice-president Luis Jiménez de Asúa and MP Fernando de los Ríos assumed control of the embassy, while establishing a commission for purchasing weapons directly from producers<sup>15</sup>. But their activities were further hindered after Blum opted to close the border for national and continental security concerns.

The LSI's sources paint a quite "rosy" account of Blum's decision: the uneasy situation which nearly led a teary-eyed Blum to resign, if not for Jimenez de Asúa and de los Rios who successfully convinced him to remain PM, this in order to prevent a more hostile government from taking over in France. The three agreed that legal acquisition of weapons could be delayed until the Republicans sorted out their internal disorganization, and until the French public opinion could be convinced to support the Republic openly<sup>16</sup>. In the interim, a non-intervention pact would bind concerned nations, especially Italy and Germany, while serving as a smokescreen for a more "relaxed non-intervention" carried on in the shadows, i.e. illegally providing armaments through a clan-

13. *Telegram to the Spanish Socialist Party*, 23/07/1936, National Museum of Labour History, LSI Papers, 151, 4/15/5. *Rapport du Secrétariat de l'IOS 1/1936—12/1936*, International Institute for Social History [hereafter, IISH], SAI, 485/31–40.

14. *À toutes les centrales nationales affiliées et amies. Objet : Espagne*, 04/08/1936, IISH, SAI, 19/5/5, Fonds international de solidarité.

15. Also see Pierre Salmon, "Une impuissante 'non-intervention' : les limites de la prohibition du trafic d'armes en France à destination de la guerre d'Espagne (1936-1939)," *Histoire@Politique*, no. 37, (2019). Pierre Salmon, "La gauche révolutionnaire contre l'Internationale communiste : une relecture de la contrebande d'armes franco-espagnole de la guerre civile (1936-1939)," *Mouvement social*, 275, no. 2, (2021): pp. 113–135.

16. *Fonds International de Solidarité pour l'Espagne, Rapport intérimaire arrêté le 4 septembre 1936*, IISH, SAI, 479/14-1. *Rapport du Secrétariat de l'IOS sur la période s'étendant du 1er janvier 1936 au 31 décembre 1936*, IISH, SAI, 485/31-40, p. 5. See also Michael Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*. (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 1994): p. 46.

destine scheme<sup>17</sup>. Consequently on August 8, Blum had non-intervention adopted by the French Assembly. The *Quai d'Orsay* along Whitehall then pressured other countries concerned—fascist powers and the USSR included—to adhere to non-intervention in order to maintain continental peace, or so it was thought.

In Belgium, the governmental coalition of the technocrat PM Paul Van Zeeland regrouped socialists, liberals, and Catholics. As Belgium was also an important arms producer, the PSOE dispatched Antonio Bolaños and Antonio Huerta to serve as *acheteurs*, or weapons buyers<sup>18</sup>. But just like in France, the plan was obfuscated by another socialist, this time the Foreign Affairs' minister, a former left-winger turned careerist: Paul-Henri Spaak. As a result, Bolaños and Huerta established a relaxed Belgian non-intervention scheme along the POB's Walloon secretary Jean Delvigne and the local branch of the International Transport Federation<sup>19</sup>. For this, Delvigne, also an LSI executive member, received tacit endorsement from the POB's Bureau<sup>20</sup>.

In the UK, Clement Attlee's Labour Party (LP) constituted the official opposition at Westminster's Tory-led parliament. The LP was, for the most part, tributary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) of Walter Citrine, who also served as IFTU's president. Citrine abided namely by the Tory government's appeasement and non-intervention, thus having no intentions in establishing a relaxed non-intervention scheme. Along his fellow officer Ernest Bevin from the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), he privileged the national interest over the socialist internationalist principle<sup>21</sup>.

As most countries now complied with the arms embargo, the international Non-Intervention Committee (NIC) was established in London in the first week of September. Other than symbolizing the return of power politics at the expense of international law and collective security—values supposedly incarnated by the League of Nations (LN)—it did little else. Unsurprisingly, the NIC failed to convince the fascist powers to curtail their involvement with the Spanish Rebels, thus leading the USSR (then committed to collective security) to intervene on the republican side, while democracies remained idle. Liberal interwar internationalism was definitely ceding to revisionism, as the PSOE set out to ensure a firmer attitude on behalf of its socialist transnational network.

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17. Walter Schevenels, *Forty-Five Years: International Federation of Trade Unions*. (Bruxelles, IFTU Board of Trustees, 1956): p. 248. Also see Pierre Salmon, "Des armes pour l'Espagne": analyse d'une pratique transfrontalière en contexte d'illégalité (France, 1936-1939)" (Thèse doctorale, Université de Caen-Normandie, 2021).

18. Bolaños was a lieutenant-colonel and PSOE's deputy for Malaga, Huerta was a captain and PSOE's Guipuzcoa's delegate. See *Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général*, 4/8/1936, Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis [hereafter, AMSAB-ISG], Archief BWP, 1936-08-04\_bwp\_BU.pdf, pp. 1, 12.

19. Michel Vincineau, "La guerre civile espagnole, les exportations belges d'armes", *BTNG-RBHC*, 18, 1-2, (1987): pp. 81-123. Étienne Verhoyen, "Les achats d'armes de la Cagoule en Belgique: chronique d'un échec annoncé", ed. Elke Devroe, *Tegendraadse criminologie* (Antwerpen: Maklu, 2012): pp. 473-482. José Gotovitch, "La Belgique et la Guerre civile espagnole: un état des questions", *BTNG-RBHC* 14, 3-4, (1983): pp. 497-532.

20. *Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général*, 4/8/1936, AMSAB-ISG, Archief BWP, 1936-08-04\_bwp\_BU.pdf, pp. 1, 12.

21. Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-170.

## A legal obstacle to internationalist solidarity

In Republican Spain, the fall of Talavera led to the collapse of José Giral's cabinet in early September 1936, resulting in a more pluralist *Frente popular* government headed by the left-wing socialist Largo Caballero. It integrated the PSOE-UGT, left to centre Republicans, Basque and Catalan nationalists, communists, and eventually the anarchists from the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*. The national defence cabinets would be led throughout the war by the PSOE, backed by the LSI, which at that time was the first democratic transnational solidaritarian network.

Benefitting from a lull in the fighting, a second delegation from the LSI-IFTU arrived in Madrid in mid-September to consolidate the *Comité Español* of the ISF relief fund. The delegation comprised POB-LSI's Delvigne, LP-TUC's John Price, as well as IFTU's vice-secretary George Stolz. Understandably, the reception on behalf of PM Caballero and his Air and Navy Minister Indalecio Prieto was quite cold, as their priority remained obtaining heavy weapons. More conclusive talks ensued with Foreign Affairs Secretary Julio Álvarez Del Vayo, as well as with PSOE's and UGT's general secretaries Ramón Lamóneda and Pascual Tomás. An agreement was reached over the establishment of the *Comité Español* in exchange for promises of political lobbying to abrogate non-intervention and obtain weapons<sup>22</sup>.

Still in September 1936, Álvarez del Vayo made a poignant speech at the LN's Assembly in Geneva in an attempt to annul non-intervention, but only achieved the generalized indifference of delegations. The PSOE thus called for a joint LSI-IFTU meeting at Brussel's *Maison du Peuple*, ultimately an attempt to secure abrogation through the back-channel. At this meeting, UGT's Tomás declared to his fellow *rapporteurs*:

I am telling Léon Blum that his mistaken policy is an international danger. I am telling the Belgian comrades, which are facing fascism in the making, if we are crushed, danger will grow much more than if they help us more intensively. There is the Croix de Feu in France, the Rexists in Belgium; two enormous dangers which will keep increasing if Spanish fascism, supported by Germany, Italy and Portugal, triumphs<sup>23</sup>.

Unfortunately, this did little to sway the majority who insisted on further evidence regarding foreign intervention. This lack of solidarity brought the Spaniards to intervene directly at the national level, firstly in Great Britain.

In early October, the PSOE delegation assisted the LP's yearly Congress in Edinburgh. It comprised diplomats Isabel Oyarzábal de Palencia, the ambassadress to Stockholm, and Jimenez de Asúa, now a *chargé d'affaires* in Prague. The verbatim points out how they "swept the assembly off their feet" with their passionate speeches<sup>24</sup>. Conse-

22. *Rapport de la délégation en Espagne du 10 au 21 septembre 1936*, IISH, SAI, 2763a/118-127, 479/19-24, p. 2.

23. *Compte rendu réunion mixte du Conseil Général FSI et Comité exécutif IOS, 28/9/1936 à Paris*, IISH, SAI, 479/48-57, pp. 3-4.

24. *Report of meeting on 28/10/1936*, Modern Record Centre [hereafter, IEV], Archives of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Spanish Rebellion: General Documents 1936 (2), 292/946/15a/1 (xxvi), p. 26. Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War...*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.



quently, a non-interventionist resolution was rejected in favour of a subsequent asking for an enquiry on Germany and Italy's intervention in Spain, thereby securing the first step toward discrediting non-intervention.

The Belgian POB and *Commission syndicale* (CGTB) followed suit on October 25th, while an intervention proved necessary at the LSI's meeting the following day. There, the PSOE's *rapporteur* Alejandro Otero warned of the "historical responsibility befalling on advocates of non-intervention, if they refrain from adopting an offensive stance and thus preventing the outbreak of another world war"<sup>25</sup>. His efforts prevailed, as the LSI now opposed non-intervention formally.

The French SFIO, by contrast, dragged its feet, owing to Blum's championing non-intervention. To tackle this lack of solidarity, the PSOE's secretary general Lamonedá and his UGT counterpart Tomás called a joint LSI-IFTU meeting on December 4–5 at CGT's Parisian headquarters. In advance of asking for a binding resolution to be adopted, the Spaniards declared that "If the two Internationals were unable to give the Spanish people more concrete assistance, the Spanish Government would be crushed, and the problem passed to other countries"<sup>26</sup>. By virtue of further pressures from LSI's President de Brouckère and IFTU's vice-president Léon Jouhaux, the SFIO finally agreed to advocate for non-intervention at the French Assembly. Despite being non-binding, the resolution fostered an all-out commitment to the abrogation of non-intervention by the *Front populaire*, as well as applying embargo measures against the Rebels<sup>27</sup>. But while the LSI had succeeded in maintaining its pledge to annul non-intervention, further measures would be required to sway the rest of the movement.

In mid-January 1937, PM Caballero and UGT's Tomás asked the LSI-IFTU for a multiparty conference outside of Spain, as well as for the creation of a socialist inter-parliamentary union. Although the all-in character of the first proposal was rejected by the Internationals, an agreement was reached regarding an event involving solely socialist ministerial delegations. The resulting LSI March 10-11 conference in London was no small feat on behalf of the Spaniards, with the last such conference dating back to 1933.

Upon their arrival to London, Manuel Cordero and Francisco Azorín were up for a surprise as they realized that the event was announced as an ISF relief rally. They consequently voiced their frustration regarding the philanthropic character of the event at a preliminary meeting, stating they would boycott public acts. Citrine explained that this was the only way to obtain a permit from the authorities due to non-intervention.

Nonetheless, behind closed doors at Westminster's central hall, the more political meetings involved 200 socialist ministers who listened to speeches regarding

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25. "La voz autentica de España : El PSOE se dirige a las dos Internacionales", *El Socialista*, 27 de octubre de 1936. "La Réunion des bureaux de l'IOS et de la FSI", *L'Humanité*, 27 de octubre de 1936. "Le mouvement ouvrier international et les événements d'Espagne", *Le Populaire*, 27 de octubre de 1936, p. 3.

26. *Report of Meeting of I.F.T.U. General Council and L.S.I. Bureau, Held in Paris on 4-5 December, 1936*, IISH, SCW/5/36, p. 1.

27. *Discours prononcé par Louis de Brouckère devant la réunion commune du Conseil Général de la FSI et l'Exécutif de l'IOS*, 6/12/1936, IISH, SAI, 2763c/41. *Les Internationales syndicales et socialistes pour l'Espagne, contre le ravitaillement des insurgés, contre la destruction de Madrid*, IISH, SAI, 483/1-2.

non-intervention, considered synchronizing the relaxed non-intervention schemes<sup>28</sup>, and debated the project for a socialist interparliamentary union. Cordero and Azorín condemned the “suicidal abstentionism” of the democracies which opened the way to fascism. Similar internationalist speeches were made by de Brouckère, Vandervelde, Jouhaux and Nenni<sup>29</sup>. Then came the killjoy Ernest Bevin of the TGWU: “We are willing to give you money. We are willing to give you food and medical supplies. But arms? No! Abandonment of the non-intervention policy? No! For any other policy would lead to a world war”<sup>30</sup>. In spite of Bevin’s non-interventionist plea backed by Citrine, the adopted resolution emphasized solidarity, denouncing the NIC and its naval control initiative of the Iberian coast. Of the five points presented by the Spanish delegation, three were adopted: 1) creation of a document on the origins and meaning of the struggle; 2) socialist parliamentarians reporting to the LSI the true intentions of their governments; 3) abrogation of non-intervention by national parliaments. Points four and five, regarding sending weapons and strike action, were rejected. A decision on the socialist interparliamentary union proposal, meanwhile, was postponed and ultimately abandoned, for Northern European delegates preferred intervening at the multiparty Inter-Parliamentary Union at The Hague. As exemplified by Azorín’s comments in *Adelante*, results were ultimately unsatisfactory for the Spanish delegation: “Despite our relentless efforts, the decisions taken did not correspond to our hopes. [...] However, our delegation succeeded in dissipating numerous hesitations, redress unjust errors spread worldwide by the capitalist press, even in the workers’ movement”<sup>31</sup>.

### **Mandatory Solidarity in the Summer of 1937**

Unsuspectedly, things started moving in the UK. Citrine and Bevin’s comments at the London conference were leaked in the workers’ press, resulting in a scandal on both sides of the Channel. Meanwhile in Spain, the Insurgents’ northern offensive involved exactions against Basque catholics, many of whom worked for British mining companies<sup>32</sup>. This affected greatly the originally pro-Insurgent catholic membership of the British TUC, as well as Citrine and Bevin who now had to further mark their solidarity with the Spanish Republic, pressing Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden to intervene on the grounds that their rank-and-file was losing patience<sup>33</sup>. If little or nothing came out of their meeting with Eden, it nonetheless marked the beginning of the TUC’s leadership veering toward a more active stance. Further events outside of the British Isles accelerated this conversion.

28. *Bureau du Parti 1937-1938*, 5/2/1937, Institut Émile Vandervelde [hereafter, IEV], p. 87.

29. Louis Levy, “Ce que fut la dernière journée de la conférence”, *Le Populaire*, 13 de marzo de 1937, p. 3.

30. *Memoria sobre la Conferencia internacional convocada en Londres*, Fundación Pablo Iglesias [hereafter, FPI], AH-74-1, pp. 3-4.

31. Francisco Azorín, “La politique du parti socialiste en relation avec les internationales ouvrières”, *Adelante*, IISH, SAI, 2763H/5-7.

32. Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War...*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

33. “Bevin blocks aid for Spain”, *The Daily Worker*, 12 de marzo de 1937, MRC, TUC, Spanish Rebellion, 292/946/22/6(i). *Deputation of Mr. Eden (report)*, March 22, 1937, MRC, TUC, Spanish Rebellion, 292/946/16a/52. Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139, 141.

On May 31st, the *Kriegsmarine* bombed Almeria as a reply to the harassment of a destroyer by Republican airplanes, while Italians stepped up submarine attacks. Berlin and Rome then stormed out of the NIC. At the LN, the Republican Álvarez del Vayo seized the moment by submitting a white book on foreign intervention, while delivering a speech which once again fell into the void. A LSI meeting was consequently held at the Swiss Socialist Party's headquarters in Geneva on June 16–17. The Spanish delegation was most numerous on this occasion, comprising of Azorín and Oyarzábal de Palencia, the two competing UGT secretary generals Pascual Tomás and José Rodríguez Vega<sup>34</sup>, and Salvador Vidal Rosell—head of the Catalan UGT section and Work Ministry. All insisted for a binding resolution, and to their utmost surprise, they received backing on that matter from British *rapporteurs* William Gillies and Arthur Hayday, respectively the LP's international secretary and vice-president, who asked for a document they could, in turn, submit to their National Council of Labour, or what would become known as the Azorín Plan.

At the same meeting occurred a major incident, occurred a major incident after president de Brouckère stunned the British and North European delegates in announcing that he had consented to exploratory talks with the Communists. Gillies and Hayday voiced their indignation. The president had never been keen on deliberation with the uneasy Cominternians, but was pressed into consideration at the behest of Spanish insistence. However, the counteraction proved the proverbial last straw for him, as he had grown irritated with the sections' narcissism and the delay in rejecting non-intervention, hence his sudden decision to submit his resignation, spurring secretary general Adler to follow suit<sup>35</sup>. Its leadership in jeopardy, the LSI was on the verge of collapsing, as a follow-up meeting was urgently held in Paris on June 24th.

The Spaniards were alarmed at the prospect of losing their transnational support, either through the LSI's collapse or its takeover by the less internationally inclined British, Dutch or Scandinavians. Now attached to the Republican embassy in Prague, Jiménez de Asúa sent a telegram to the PM Juan Negrín (who had replaced Caballero in May) stressing the need for the PSOE to maintain at all costs de Brouckère and Adler, considering especially the incapacity of the French SFIO: "The current state of French socialism prevents the support from the resigning members. The Spanish socialist party thus plays a decisive role in this crisis"<sup>36</sup>. The cryptogram referred to Blum's cabinet collapse on June 21, and to the growing split at the SFIO between Paul Faure's pacifists and Jean Zyromski's bellicists worsened by the Spanish crisis.

First on the agenda at Paris June 24th LSI meeting was Azorín's plan proposal which stated:

1. Pressure without delay [...] governments' members of the LN in order to help [...] the Republic to regain her political and territorial independence.
2. Press for the return of liberty of commerce, so the Spanish Government [...] is allowed acquiring the

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34. The UGT was then split between caballeristas (Tomás) and negrinistas (Rodríguez Vega).

35. De Brouckère to Adler, 18/06/1937, IISH, SAI, 3401.

36. Jiménez de Asúa au sous-secrétaire d'État (*cryptogramme*), 21/06/1937, FPI, AH-74-2, 24.

necessary means for the defence [...]. 3. Extend the solidary obligation toward our cause to all the militants and member organizations of the Internationals<sup>37</sup>.

The British delegates supported the adoption of Azorín's plan, as, moreover, it had been similarly adopted by their National Council. The French conversely proved reluctant, especially concerning binding solidarity. In Azorín's words: "The impression caused by the third point [...] was tremendous, especially in France where eminent comrades thought [...] that this meant they have to submit their high political charges to party discipline"<sup>38</sup>. Despite Blum's cabinet having collapsed early on, leaving the Radical Camille Chautemps assuming control of the *Front populaire*, Blum nevertheless remained vice-president, as his party still held important ministries. The meeting soon stalemated, the topic relegated to the back burner. It had come time to address the second point: the pending resignations of de Brouckère and Adler. Tumultuous talks burned the midnight oil long into the night before a motion was finally submitted by Spanish, French, Dutch, and Scandinavian *rapporteurs*, who rejected de Brouckère and Adler's resignations on the basis of their jeopardizing effects to the existence of the LSI. Thus, the settlement's offer: if the president and secretary general agreed to remain, but would similarly refrain from further talks with the Comintern, the Azorín plan would be adopted by the assembly. A sufficient proposal, the deal was sealed, much to the jubilation of Azorín and Cordero. Mandatory solidarity was passed, a first in the International's history. It remained to be seen whether the LSI's resolution could pass at the national level, as this escaped the LSI and PSOE's reach.

### **The Application of the Azorín's Resolution in the National Sphere**

In France, SFIO's June 1937 congress held in Marseille saw the warm welcoming of Lamonedá. In the debates, Blum was less keen on defending non-intervention since he no longer ruled the cabinet, hence the Azorín resolution was adopted fully. The SFIO's parliamentary group, in turn, received the mandate of pressing the French government for opening an embassy in Valencia and advocating the departure of foreign troops in Spain. Militants were instructed to carry on with the solidarity campaign, as well as reinforcing the embargo against the Rebels<sup>39</sup>. Even if all this sounded promising, little or nothing changed in the Parliament, where non-intervention carried on.

In Belgium, the full adoption of Azorín's plan by the General Council was prevented by Spaak, who denounced the "hotchpotch" of LSI's internationalism which "infringed on the national interest"<sup>40</sup>. Backed by POB's vice-president Henri De Man and CGTB's Corneille Mertens, he succeeded in rejecting Azorín's third point on mandatory solidarity. This did not, however, prevent the internationalists—such as Vandervelde, Senator Henri Rolin, or deputies Isabelle Blume and Max Buset— from publicly claiming their

37. *Circulaire "Propositions du PS espagnol"*, 24/06/1937, IISH, SAI, 3401. Also see FPI, AH-74-2, p. 35.

38. Francisco Azorín, "La politique du PS en relation avec les internationales ouvrières", *Adelante*, IISH, SAI, 2763H/5-7.

39. "Le Congrès National du PS s'est ouvert hier matin", *Le Populaire*, 11 de julio de 1937, p. 2.

40. *Bureau du Parti 1937-1938*, 16/07/1937, IEV, p. 251.

adhesion to Azorín's three points, causing embarrassment for Spaak at the Chancellery and ire at the party's Bureau<sup>41</sup>.

Still in Belgium, in the last week of July, the Antwerp Workers' Olympiads were dedicated to the Republicans, followed by an international propaganda week for Spain. In spite of all the efforts, however, the results incurred were far from adequate for Azorín who complained to Adler. Echoing his grievances, PSOE's mouthpiece, *El Socialista*, condemned the "purely platonic" action of the Internationals: "the meetings at London, Paris and Geneva did not have any practical impacts, as the national sections did not follow recommendations"<sup>42</sup>.

At the PSOE's National Committee in Valencia, Lamoneda reported how, at the last SFIO's Congress, his enthusiasm faded after overhearing prominent militants speculating on a mediated peace. He went on to condemn their "platonic" solidarity which contrasted with that of the "genuine" rank-and-file's. Huerta then insisted on the need to recalibrate the PSOE's international policy: "The attitude of the democracies pushes us on the defensive. Let us act with more energy at the LSI in order to force parties to abolish non-intervention"<sup>43</sup>. The National Committee's final resolution condemned the LN's and its members for their concessions to the fascist powers in the faint hope of saving the liberal order, advocating the energetic action of the proletariat and its Internationals in order to stop such a "suicidal madness"<sup>44</sup>.

In spite of these shortcomings, autumn 1937 looked promising. The Naval Conference at Nyon held on September 10-14 saw the French and British diplomacies condemning Italian submarine attacks in the Mediterranean, resulting in their cessation. In the transnational scene, the Spanish socialists called for a joint LSI-IFTU meeting on September 15-16 to plan a lobbying action at the LN's Assembly opening session, where PM Juan Negrín was scheduled to speak on September 18th, and the republican seat at the Council submitted to a renewal vote. At the Internationals' meeting, Caballero, now a UGT *rapporteur*, requested that the Internationals invoke Article 16 of the Covenant's Charter establishing Italy and Germany as aggressors. But this was steadfastly opposed by Citrine. It was decided instead to stick to the Republic's reinstatement of international rights as well as a withdrawal of foreign troops<sup>45</sup>.

On September 18, the PM Negrín delivered his speech to the half-full Assembly of the League. Meanwhile, the LSI-IFTU delegation lobbied Foreign Secretaries, namely France's Yvon Delbos and the UK's Anthony Eden. Then came the vote on the renewal of

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41. "Al regreso de Royan : Testimonio de Lamoneda sobre la actitud presente de los socialistas franceses", *El Socialista*, 15 de junio de 1938, 1. FPI, AH-74-13. Azorín to Adler. *La semana española en Europa*, IISH, SAI, 2763g/12. Francisco Azorín, "Informe sobre la semana española en Europa", 14 de agosto de 1937, FPI, AH-74-3, 12.

42. "En torno a la solidaridad internacional". *El Socialista*, 20 de noviembre de 1937, IISH, SAI, 2763H/5-7. Francisco Azorín, "La politique du parti socialiste", ... *op. cit.*

43. "Comité nacional del PS", *El Socialista*, 21 de julio de 1937.

44. "Comité national du PS espagnol", *Documents et discussions : Supplément des Informations internationales*, 12 de agosto de 1938, IISH, SAI, 500/39-43, p. 90.

45. "Les Bureaux des internationales socialiste et syndicale ont tenu hier une réunion commune", *Le Populaire*, diecisiete de noviembre 1937, p. 3. "The LSI and the IFTU send a delegation to Geneva", *International Information*, 17 de noviembre de 1937, p. 367. Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War...*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

Spain's seat at the Council, which, in spite of all efforts, failed to pass<sup>46</sup>. To make matters worse, still in the diplomatic scene, the *Quai d'Orsay* and Whitehall convinced Rome and Berlin to return to the NIC in November<sup>47</sup>.

With their lobbying efforts going nowhere, the LSI and IFTU's awareness campaign was forced to start anew. France's brief reopening of the Pyrenean frontier was the only bright spot that late fall, as it allowed Soviet weapons to equip the new People's Army, who would earn its first tactical victory at Teruel at year's end. But to maintain the frontline, more arms were needed, hence the need to keep the border opened or abrogate non-intervention. Both not materializing, Teruel would be lost at the end of February 1938 as Rebels were about to swarm through Aragon.

Meanwhile, events were accelerating elsewhere on the continent. Following Eden's departure from Chamberlain's cabinet at Westminster, Germany absorbed Austria through Anschluss. In France, Blum regained the prime ministry of the *Front populaire* in mid-March, receiving Negrín at Fontainebleau and consequently reopening the Pyrenean border. Furthermore, Blum submitted to his Permanent Committee of Defence an ultimatum proposal to force the fascist powers out of Spain, which was unsurprisingly rejected by generals Maurice Gamelin and Philippe Pétain<sup>48</sup>.

In parallel, an important joint session of the LSI-IFTU unfolded at CGT's *Maison de la Mutualité* in Paris. The session, however, began on a bad note: the Belgian trade unionist Mertens openly praised non-intervention which had, accordingly, saved the peace. The Spanish *rapporteurs* Rodríguez Vega and González Peña rebuked him with a speech which earned them a standing ovation. Followed the adoption of the strongest resolution of the decade which stated, "In this tragic hour, the Internationals have more important things to do than again formulate the principles which have constantly inspired their policy and which were clearly verified by events. They call to action their affiliated organizations"<sup>49</sup>. Sharing the enthusiasm, *El Socialista* headlined "We must defend Austria and Czechoslovakia from Spain!", while its editorialist praised the two Spanish *rapporteurs* for stopping Mertens short and securing the adoption of a resolution "which reflected our party's views"<sup>50</sup>.

The spring thaw of 1938 could have been a turning point, if only it lasted: Blum's government collapse in April meant the end of the *Front populaire*. What followed was a Radical coalition headed by an ambivalent Édouard Daladier even more subservient to the Britons' appeasement. In Spain, the Republican zone was about to be partitioned at Vinaròs. Negrin thus resorted to sending his austro-socialist general Julius Deutsch as a

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46. *El Socialista*, 22 de septiembre 1937, p. 1. About the League, see David Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva. La Sociedad de Naciones, la Guerra de España y el fin de la paz mundial*. (Valencia, Tirant Humanidades, 2016).

47. *Aid for Spain*, 1938, IISH, SCW/6, p. 3.

48. Anne-Aurore Inquimbert, "Monsieur Blum... un roi de France ferait la guerre", *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, vol. 215, no 3, (2004): pp. 35-45. Michael Alpert, *A New International History...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155.

49. Léonardo Rapone, "La crisi finale dell'Internazionale Operaia et Socialista", *I socialisti e l'Europa* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1989), p. 54. *Projet de Résolution soumis par la commission des Résolutions, pour la session commune de l'IOS et de la FSI, Paris, les 15 et 16 mars 1938*, IISH, SAI, 3402.

50. "La reunión de Internacionales : A Austria y a Checoslovaquia hay que defenderlas desde España", *El Socialista*, 22 de marzo 1938.

last-ditch effort to press the British and French labour movements for weapons, for the abrogation of non-intervention, and for solidarity strike actions, all in vain<sup>51</sup>.

## **The PSOE's internationalist offensive in times of general withdrawal**

In spite of the sizable knockback, PSOE's leadership nevertheless carried on level-headed. The Pyrenean border had remained open until mid-June, thus allowing for the creation of a new mobile army which succeeded at defending Valencia, and now pushed back Franco's troops at the Ebro. Yet again, abolishing non-intervention was fundamental to sustain the thrust. Pressures thus renewed on socialist parties, notwithstanding their general retreat from international compromises which had begun.

Lamonedá returned to the SFIO's yearly congress in early June, this time with Cordeiro, Huerta, PSI's Nenni and LSI's de Brouckère. The SFIO's speeches were of utmost solidarity, with notable militant Jean Longuet and *Le Populaire's* director Bracke pointing out how the international movement had never been so united on a single topic, resulting in a multiplication of meetings and rallies<sup>52</sup>. The resolution on Spain, submitted by Blum, denounced terror bombings of open cities, while condemning PM Daladier's closing of the border due to British pressures. Elsewhere, in Copenhagen on July 25, the neutralist Oslo Block member states (Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg and Scandinavia) declared themselves no longer bound to the LN's sanction regime. Among the signatories were the Oslo-socialist parties which had already made similar declarations at the LSI meetings<sup>53</sup>.

Negrín condemned this stab in the back, as the republican army was, moreover, breaking through Franco's lines at the Ebro. Whereas at the PSOE's National Committee, Azorín deplored how socialist parties lost sight of the common internationalist good at the behest of nationalist interests. Huerta further opined on cutting off the retreat of panicking socialist parties, "[...] which are abandoning their internationalist compromises in favour of a neutralist dead end, thus preventing the creation of an antifascist block"<sup>54</sup>. The PSOE National Committee's final resolution consequently advocated defending the remnants of internationalism at the LSI, while resisting militarily until the imminent continental war broke out.

September of 1938 marked the beginning of the end for both the Spanish Republic and the liberal Versailles order. In Spain, non-intervention negated the resupplying of the Ebro Army, which struggled to hold the line as a result. In Central Europe, the second Sudetenland crisis began, leading to the Munich Pact which granted Czech borderlands to Germany to gain one more year of continental peace. Negrín and his

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51. *Report of joint meeting of IFTU and LSI representatives*, 14/04/1938, IISH, SCW/5.

52. Centre d'études, de documentation, d'information et d'action sociales, *SFIO, 15e congrès national à Royan 4-7/6/1938 : compte rendu sténographique*. (Paris : Librairie du Parti, 1938): pp. 196, 294. "Al regreso de Royan...", *op. cit.*

53. *LSI, Bureau and Executive committee meetings*, IISH, Labour Party Archives, pp. 28–29. "La conférence de Copenhague", *Le Temps*, 26 de julio de 1938.

54. "Comité Nacional del PSOE", *El Socialista*, 11 de agosto de 1938.

die-hard *jusqu'au-boutistes* now lost any chance of a stance reversal from democratic powers or a junction with a second World War. More worrying were Chamberlain's discussions with Mussolini regarding the ratification of the Anglo-Italian Pact, or a settlement over the Mediterranean involving a "Munich-like" solution for Spain. An alarmed Negrín took to the airwaves:

Today, following Czechoslovakia, Fascism's first task is strangling the 'Spanish conflict'. For this purpose, it will ask for the help received when appeasing its hunger for Czech people. But the Munich scenario must not be repeated with Spain! Once again, we ask for world proletarian solidarity to prevent another four powers' pact to be concluded this time against the Spanish people<sup>55</sup>.

He made a gesture of goodwill by announcing a unilateral withdrawal of the International Brigades overseen by the LNI, thereby seeking to expose the inequality of the situation, as his foreign and Spanish *Brigadistas* amounted to one third of the Italian contingent then totalling 30,000.

In the transnational sphere, the PSOE and LP *rapporteurs* did their utmost to flog the lethargic LSI and fellow sections out of their Munich Pact torpor. A meeting was finally held on October 17–18 in Paris, but was raucous at best as French and British delegations blamed each other for their governments' appeasement. Notwithstanding, Cordero and Azorín managed to secure not only a condemnation of the Munich Pact, but also a forewarning against its repetition on Spain through the ratification of the Anglo-Italian Pact<sup>56</sup>. Their efforts to resuscitate internationalism similarly led to two important diplomatic victories in France and in Belgium.

On November 2, the British PM Chamberlain had Westminster adopt the Anglo-Italian Agreement. Chamberlain then announced he would visit Paris in two weeks to make sure the French PM Daladier abided. Red lights went on in Barcelona, the now Republican capital, as UGT's secretary general Rodríguez Vega was dispatched to London and Paris to engage the labour movements. Consequently, the TUC warned Chamberlain there would be unrest if he carried on with his plan. Whereas in France, the CGT had already begun a general strike against Daladier's decrees suspending the 40-hour week. As such, when he arrived at the French capital on November 23, the British PM was greeted with massive protests. Concurrently, the LSI-IFTU held a counter summit at CGT's Parisian headquarters, where Rodríguez Vega secured the adoption of a resolution to advocate, "opposition with an invincible energy to any enforced settlement on the Spanish people"<sup>57</sup>. The pressures worked, as Daladier and Chamberlain stuck to the Non-Inter-

55. "Appel au prolétariat mondial", *Le Populaire*, 9 de octubre de 1938.

56. "Acuerdos de la IOS reunida en Bruselas", *El Socialista*, 21 de octubre 1938. *Projet de résolution, Pour la session de l'Exécutif de l'IOS, Bruxelles, les 18 et 19 octobre 1938*, IISH, SAI, 529/8.

57. *Rapport du Secrétariat de l'IOS sur la période s'étendant du 1er janvier 1937 au 31 décembre 1937*, IISH, SAI, 3402.



vention Pact's clause regarding a full withdrawal of foreign troops before any mediation could occur<sup>58</sup>.

This first diplomatic victory saw Rodríguez Vega, upon his return, declare that "Franco will keep a bitter memory of our visit to London and Paris." On its behalf, *El Socialista* sang praise, as it headlined "A resolute action from the Internationals would spell the collapse of fascist dictatorships!", while *La Vanguardia* curbed the enthusiasm by pointing out how CGT's general strike resulted from a national question (Daladier's decrees), and not an internationalist one (solidarity with Spain)<sup>59</sup>.

Next, to Brussels, where the socialist PM Spaak had been pressed by his liberal and catholic coalition partners to send a commercial delegate to Burgos, the capital of Nationalist Spain. Yet, his proposals were systematically rejected by his party, even though Spaak promised pulling out of the NIC in exchange. Vandervelde and his internationalist group argued that, on the one hand, Whitehall and the *Quai d'Orsay* would never let Belgium leave the NIC, while on the other, Franco's insistence for a *reconnaissance de jure* made it a legal impossibility since only one government per country could be acknowledged. A furious Spaak replied that the party's Bureau and "its LSI" had no rights to interfere with "his" foreign policy. The reply on behalf of the POB's internationalist group was a special congress in early December 1938, wherein Spaak and his governmental participation would be submitted to a vote of confidence.

Meanwhile, and still in Brussels, a major diplomatic incident was unfolding. As a result of Spaak's repeated stonewalling of the Republic's ambassador Mariano Ruiz-Funes, the latter was recalled by the reinstated Foreign Secretary Álvarez del Vayo, with Spaak recalling his own ambassador from Barcelona<sup>60</sup>. Diplomatic links were severed, and POB's secretary August De Block was mandated to re-establish them<sup>61</sup>. Diplomacy between the two countries became conducted solely through the socialists' transnational backchannel.

December 5 marked the Belgian socialist movement's special congress dedicated to Spaak. The PSOE's Lamonedá and Rafael Henche (the head of Madrid's Socialist Federation), in addition to the LSI's President de Brouckère, were called in as reinforcements. Spaak fought tooth and nail to justify governmental participation, evoking the folly of leaving the way open to fascists. This was rebuked by Vandervelde, Buset, and Rolin who knew the Belgian extreme right was losing steam. Not able to stop Spaak's governmental participation, the internationalist group succeeded, however, in having adopted a resolution stating the "absolute moral impossibility" of sending a delegate to Burgos<sup>62</sup>.

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58. *El Socialista*, 26 de diciembre de 1936. Michel Catala, "L'attitude de la France face à la Guerre d'Espagne : l'échec des négociations pour la reconnaissance du gouvernement franquiste en 1938", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 29, 3, (1993): pp. 260-261.

59. "Álvarez del Vayo informo en París de la posición de España que no puede ser otra que reclamar el cese de la intervención extranjera", *El Socialista*, 26 de noviembre 1938. "Nuevo ambiente favorable a España en el obrerismo internacional". *El Socialista*, 30 de noviembre de 1938.

60. "La actitud del gobierno Spaak motiva la llamada a España de nuestro embajador en Bélgica", *El Socialista*, 2 de diciembre de 1938.

61. *Bureau du Parti, 1937-1938*, 03/12/1938, IEV, pp. 834-835.

62. "La crisis belga", *El Socialista*, 6 de diciembre de 1938.

Lamoneda voiced to *El Socialista* his satisfaction with the POB's solidarity. He rejoiced at the second diplomatic victory in the span of a month, pointing out how this defined abroad the nature of their struggle, as well as highlighting their commitment to fight until victory<sup>63</sup>.

### **Opposing the Nationalization of the LSI**

In early 1939, the situation was desperate in the North-Eastern republican zone. As per the PSOE's request, Blum and Zyromski pressed the Radical PM Daladier to open the border one last time to allow the transfer of remaining Soviet weapons. Too little too late, as Catalonia was lost at the turn of February.

The Republican central zone spanning from Madrid to Valencia and Almeria kept, nevertheless, resisting. That is until Negrín, his *jusqu'aboutistes* centre-wing socialists and communist fell prey to a pacifist coup in March by Colonel Segismundo Casado, the commander of Madrid's military region.

Elsewhere on the continent, Mussolini invaded Albania while Hitler completed his conquest of Czechoslovakia. North European democracies progressed further toward neutralism in the hopes of avoiding the forthcoming onslaught. France, meanwhile, remained subdued to the British Tories' policy of appeasement. But while the SFIO was paralyzed, the situation differed for the British socialists who got their act together regarding anti-fascism, thanks to solidarity for Spain. Unlike the PSOE, however, the LP now considered obsolete the need for an International. Hence its decision to join hands with the Oslo-socialist group and establish a neo-reformist coalition to neutralize the LSI. There was little either the SFIO or the POB could do in opposition, as both were paralyzed between their neo-pacifist and internationalist-bellucist factions.

While the central zone collapsed in Spain, the neo-reformist group went on the offensive at the LSI on March 26, 1939, preventing Adler and de Brouckère from issuing a solidarity declaration for the Spanish Republicans who still resisted. Although, they were able to express themselves in the May Day manifesto, which went as follows: "Fascists feared that the Republic would become a bastion of liberty in Europe. Plutocrats feared that it [...] would become a bastion of progress [...] That is how the Spanish land, reddened by blood, became the most formidable class battle of our era"<sup>64</sup>. The radical tone of the manifesto only reinforced the neo-reformist urge to mute the International.

In spite of the military defeat, the exiled Spanish *rapporteurs* stubbornly carried the internationalist flame, this time through Lamoneda and González Peña's report read at a meeting in Brussels in mid-May. How surprising it did not express resentment, pointing out instead the obvious shortcomings in international socialist solidarity, especially concerning the abrogation of non-intervention. In spite of this, Lamoneda and González Peña remained faithful to the LSI, declaring: "And if the results, especially in the polit-

63. "En pocos días hemos ganados dos batallas de importancia en el frente internacional", *El Socialista*, 7 de diciembre de 1938.

64. Adler, 17/03/1939, IISH, SAI, 24/5/8. *Circulaire*, 08/04/1939, IISH, SAI, 3404. *Pour le Premier mai 1939 : Aux travailleurs de tous les pays !* 07/04/1939, IISH, SAI, 3404.

ical sphere, did not satisfy our expectations, we remain nonetheless convinced of your good will. We [...] will hold the line until the final victory"<sup>65</sup>. In a later correspondence, Lamonedá expressed his pain along fellow exiles regarding the "nationalization" of the movement. He further pleaded for the adoption of an active wartime policy sympathetic to the Allies, while imploring neutrals to commit themselves.<sup>66</sup> The British did not bother replying, while the Belgians and the French were too divided to do so. It was instead the Swedish social-democratic SAP who formulated the clearest reply, stressing how Marx's conception of "country-less workers destined to internationalism" had become irrelevant following governmental participation of socialist parties. Accordingly, it was necessary to review the relation between the old internationalist principle and the national interest<sup>67</sup>. The debate was cut short by the outbreak of the continental war in September 1939.

The last time a Spanish *rapporteur* was heard at the LSI was during a confidential meeting held in London in February 1940. Cordero complained about the absence of declarations following six months of war and insisted on a proactive wartime policy, this in order to avoid an implosion of the International as had happened during the First World War. History had other intentions, however, to repeat itself.

France was defeated in the summer of 1940 as the remnant PSOE leadership crossed to Mexico, where the exiled Republican government was established. Aspirations to establish a Third Republic in Spain once fascism was defeated ran high. As too did the hopes for a revived Socialist International taking part into Europe's democratic reconstruction. Fate, however, would prove somewhat different.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

Successive examples of transnational practice have demonstrated how committed the PSOE was to internationalism, and not just to national defence. Revealing such internationalist practice constitutes a historiographical contribution to the internationalization/transnationalization aspects of the war in Spain, while joining hands with Spanish historians using a more local lens.

Recent publications, such as by Martí Bataller, have kept a nation-based lens without discarding the transnational sphere. Yet, concrete examples of transnational practice remain to be provided, thus the point of this article which has reconstructed the PSOE's efforts at the LSI, presenting its struggle as universal, further advocating an offensive socialism in addition to internationalist values such as collective security and the indivisible character of peace. The PSOE's efforts temporarily curbed the national withdrawal

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65. *Rapport du PSOE, pour la session de l'exécutif de l'IOS, 14 et 15 mai 1939*, IISH, SAI, 3404. *Informe al Bureau de la IOS, 05/1939*. FPI, AH-74-9, pp. 11-14.

66. *Lamonedá à Adler*, 16 de agosto de 1939, IISH, SAI, 3405.

67. Leonardo Rapone, "La crisi finale dell'Internazionale...", *op.cit.*, p. 90.

68. Regarding PSOE's exile, see Ramón Villares, *Exilio republicano y pluralismo nacional. España, 1936-1982*. (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2021). Juan Andrade Blanco, "El pensamiento socialista en el exilio (1939-1976): Un análisis de la producción intelectual en el PSOE a la luz de los conflictos políticos y culturales del largo ciclo de postguerra", *Revista de estudios políticos*, no. 185 (2019): 105-37.

of socialist parties and their LSI forum, regenerating a moribund network by multiplying solidarity actions, meetings, and resolutions.

There are a number of ways this regeneration was achieved. From the civil war's inception, PSOE envoys secured alternate weapons sources from France and Belgium in what became known as "relaxed non-intervention", but were no match for the fascist powers' own brand of relaxed non-intervention toward the Rebels. Fortunately, the USSR chose to intervene, and by doing so contributed to the military parity on the frontlines, that is until non-intervention, as it was thought, would be abrogated. In the meantime, the diplomatic chokehold suffered by the Republicans rendered the use of the backchannel of international socialism necessary. At the LSI, Spanish *rapporteurs* secured the adoption of a solidaritarian position regarding the abrogation of non-intervention, while insisting that national sections act accordingly at their national parliaments, while defending the legitimate character of the Republic.

There were, furthermore, attempts at increasing the involvement of the movement, in particular through international conferences, an interparliamentary union project, rendering solidarity mandatory, and an LSI congress to review overdue policies. In the summer of 1938, Spanish militants did their utmost to cut off the retreat to fellow socialist parties who feared a continental escalation. Whereas in the fall, two important diplomatic victories were obtained through the backchannel: preventing the implementation of the Anglo-Italian Pact, and blocking the recognition of Burgos, capital of the Nationalist zone. Once defeated, Spaniards remained staunch internationalists by resisting the drive to depoliticize the LSI. Ultimately, as the Second World War began, they pushed for the adoption of a belligerent policy by the International, but to no avail. The Wehrmacht swarmed West, while those who could cross the Atlantic.

Obviously, the PSOE's involvement was much more than patriotism. Its internationalist commitment derived from a class-based doctrine—workers' internationalism—spanning beyond national boundaries. This best explains how its *rapporteurs*, on the one hand, defended their Republic, while on the other, inscribed its defence in the broader antifascist struggle at the LSI. Also notable is how they remained aware of the International's limits. Indeed, the LSI lacked a coercive apparatus other than moral influence (Article 3 of its charter). It thus relied on the benevolence of its national parties, commitment to which was wearing thin by the late 1930s. Hence, the Spaniards' awareness of the real problem: the incapability or unwillingness of the parties to apply resolutions in their national spheres, something usually out of reach for the LSI's president, the secretary general, and the PSOE's *rapporteurs*. As such, non-intervention could never be abrogated, nor the LSI saved, as the garrotted Republic laid lifeless.

Understanding the attachment to internationalist values can be hard to grasp for the historian of nationalism, just like patriotism can be for the international/transnational historian. But this does not mean that one should be discarded for the other. Rather, to achieve a more complete picture, both elements are necessarily required, as long as the lens remains focused on concrete practices, interrelations, debates or policy making, and not just on failed principles, ideals, aspirations and outcomes.

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