

SPAIN IN ARMS
1937

BY
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To

RALPH FOX, HANS BEIMLER, DE LA TORRIENTE-BRAU
and thousands of other heroes
who gave their lives in Spain for
the liberty of the world.

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INTRODUCTION

AN AMERICAN PARALLEL

The People's Front in Spain is not a Bolshevik revolution. Neither is it an anarchist regime. It is a mighty mass movement against fascism, which, because of armed intervention by foreign fascists, has become also a war for national freedom.

This mass movement, combining several social classes which feel the need of deep social changes but wish to make them legally, democratically, is, allowing for differences of country and historical background, strikingly similar in aim and composition to that mighty landslide of American voters which sent Roosevelt into power last November. In it are the two great federations of trade unions, the National Confederation of Labor (CNT, with anarcho-syndicalist tendencies) and the General Workers Union (UGT, with socialist-communist tendencies). They have bitterly fought each other yet they supported jointly the People's Front ticket, as the American Federation of Labor (A F of L) and the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) supported Roosevelt. In the Spanish People's Front is even the highly conservative Basque Catholic Party—compare the Southern Democrats. In it are great masses of farmers and small business men voting through both national and regional parties, like the Progressives, Farmer-Laborites, Epics and Commonwealth-Federations who voted for Roosevelt.

The program on which the People's Front was swept into office included: strict control of big business, moving gradually towards nationalization of some of the key industries; the dividing up of feudal estates by compulsory sale of unused land through the government to farmhands and peasants; respect for the small business man and farmer, and aid to them through government credits, so devised as to encourage steady growth towards cooperatives; freedom of speech for all parties; the freeing of the many thousands of political prisoners, and the encouragement of strong trade unions.

Although the election machinery was in the hands of a reactionary government, who in many places used armed troops to keep the progressive peasants away from the polls, the People's Front swept the country, in the February 1936 elections, winning 268 seats in the Cortes, or congress, against 139 for the right coalition and 48 for the center. Deputies being elected by local majorities in various types of

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combinations, no official figures exist for the popular vote: the most reliable estimate, given by *El Sol*, and accepted by the *Manchester Guardian*, estimates 4,540,000 votes for the People's Front candidates and 4,300,000 for all others. Large numbers of those who did not vote for the People's Front, moreover, today support it as the lawfully elected government attacked by armed rebellion and by foreign troops.

The cabinet which was formed by the victorious People's Front in Spain was at first composed, like Roosevelt's, of middle-class intellectuals from democratic parties; it contained not a single Socialist or Communist. A small block of the extreme left existed in the Cortes—16 Communists among 470 deputies—as the progressive bloc does in the American Congress. They had been elected not merely by Communist votes but by the block of the People's Front; were not our own progressives similarly elected?

If the economic pressures in America grew greater—they were infinitely greater in Spain—if starvation pressed upon farmhands, tenant-farmers and unemployed workers and the government had no means for relief, if Roosevelt then moved towards control of big business that the common people might live, and if armed revolt was then financed by the forces of reaction—did not the Liberty League once threaten—what would the line-up be?

The feudal landlords of our South would join the rebels; they lynch tenant-farmers now. They would buy fast airplanes and skilled pilots, and the tenant-farmers would go out against them with sticks, shotguns, and knives. The House of Morgan would lead the forces of Wall Street, as did Juan March in Spain; and Hearst would add the demagogic touch of fascism, the Gil Robles role. Al Smith would desert his one-time Democratic comrades, as Lerroux also did. And what of the General Staff of the U. S. Army? Wall Street guessed wrong when it tried to buy General Smedley Butler; would it guess wrong on them all? At a symposium on Spain held in February 1937 at the University of Chicago a First Lieutenant of the U. S. Army stated as a matter of course that if Roosevelt appointed "communistic men" to his cabinet, his "duty to the Constitution" would lead him to take up arms against Roosevelt. There are plenty who hold his view.

If nearly all army officers were traitors, and drew most of the army into a violent attempt to overthrow the government, and if many high civil officials were traitors to the elected government,

while the common people rose to defend it, does it require too much imagination to see what would happen then? The people would organize first through their trade-union and farm groups, since the upper machinery of defense would be gone. Roosevelt would arm the fighting workers of the A F of L and the CIO, meantime moving towards a new, unified People's Army. Big business, hopelessly outnumbered but unscrupulous and resourceful, would close down and wreck its factories, and the President would call on the unions to open them up. Does anyone in America doubt their answer? Does anyone doubt that some gangster elements in the unions—there are plenty of provocateurs now—would seize the occasion to wreak personal vengeance and discredit the government? The great rank and file would remain orderly, determined, valiant to defend their rights. And if Roosevelt then began to replace some of his worried intellectuals in the cabinet with direct representatives of the CIO and of trade unions, of the Epic and the Western farm bloc, this would be more or less like what happened in Spain.¹

What would be the first tasks of such a government? To get fighting unity at front and rear. Trade unions might press as hard as they liked against traitorous big business, but would have to go slow with the farmers and loyal small business men. To give a chance for life for the hungry farmhands and workers, while protecting the hard-pressed middle classes just above them—this would be the political problem, for which all loyal groups would be asked to sacrifice part of their desires. To organize, arm and train the citizen soldiers—this would be the military problem. Precisely these are the problems of Spain.

Some bitter attacks which are made upon the Spanish people we should not have to dread. The church in our land is long since disestablished; it is not the powerful fighting church of the Middle Ages, using its buildings for fortresses and powder magazines. Nor would America be so vulnerable to foreign nations as are the half-armed, half-literate Spaniards faced by German and Italian machines of death. Ours is a vaster land, protected by two oceans; and

¹ The same reactionaries who cried that Roosevelt represented Bolshevism now say this of the Spanish government, pointing out that the Communist Party supports it. But would not American Communists also hasten to defend any democratic government in Washington against an armed revolt of fascism?

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the American people have their hands on the world's best machines.

Not always was America thus independent; we too have had our difficult past. In our own Civil War a feudal landowning class rose against the legally elected government, and carried with it into rebellion many of the regular army, especially the officer class. The Southern rebels seized large sections of the rural areas, but the industrial cities of the North remained loyal, and the men of industrial towns and free farm areas rose up in a citizen militia. Where would our Union have been today if the ruling class of England—sympathetic as it was to the South—had poured forth its trained troops to help the rebels, as Hitler and Mussolini do today? And if the textile workers of Manchester had not struck to help us, risking their own starvation for the freedom of our States? No, that is wrong; our Union would have in the end still been victorious, but at infinitely greater cost. So will the Spanish people be victorious, even at the ghastly price that the fascist lands and the democratic lands of the world have united to impose.

And what of the early American colonies if there had been no Lafayette? No Kosciusko, Pulaski, Von Steuben, Hoffman, De Kalb? In 1776 hopelessly untrained and badly equipped colonists were fighting American Tories and thousands of British troops and Hessians; were fighting, too, Indians who had been subverted and turned loose against them—as today the Moors have been subverted and turned loose in Spain. Men fought barefoot in the snow at Valley Forge—they were fighting in tennis sandals in Guadarrama snows. To the American Revolution the democratic forces of the world sent forth devoted fighters, as today the volunteers of the International Brigades go to Spain. As De Kalb died fighting the British invaders at Camden, so Hans Beimler of Germany, De la Torriente-Brau of Cuba, Ralph Fox of England and thousands more will go down in the Spanish People's history as great international democrats who knew the duty which the democratic governments of the world betrayed.

Yes, the parallel is a close one; Spain has today a claim upon us because of our own past. And a greater claim because of our own future, the future of democracy against fascism, for which her poorly armed boys of farm and city heroically fight.

“Our turn today, yours tomorrow,” said La Pasionaria to me last September.

This book, written hastily in the midst of a lecture tour on the

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Spanish struggle, is an attempt to take my readers with me on the journey I made in late 1936 and early 1937 to Spain, and to note especially those things which seem to me important for our understanding both of Spain and of our own future.

CHAPTER I

OVER THE PYRENEES

(December 20, 1936)

The first impact of the Spanish coast is not war, but beauty, friendliness, freedom. This is my first day's surprise. I expected horror, or at least strain and depression. I find hospitality, comradeship, a sense of liberation. There are other things also, but these come later.

From the earth-bound darkness of the Toulouse airport, our ten-passenger Air France plane rises into a pitch-black sky. Swiftly as we rise the sky grows lighter. Thin lines of street-lamps etched on blackness drop behind us. Already the upper air is graying. A line of dusky red glows now on the eastern horizon. Swiftly approaching below us roll wave upon wave of snow peaks, cold, white, incredibly ghost-like and beautiful. It is dawn on the Pyrenees.

Two English-speaking passengers beside myself are going to Alicante—advised by the Spanish Embassy in Paris as the swiftest route to Valencia and Madrid. Senator Branting of Sweden is making a rapid trip to report for the World Committee against War and Fascism. The well-known British writer-scientist, J. B. S. Haldane, is giving his Christmas vacation to place his technical knowledge at the disposal of the Spanish Ministry of War—for the protection of civilian populations against gas-raids. He tells me his son is already at the front in the International Brigade, an English boy who almost at the outbreak of the war had placed his life at the disposal of the People's Front in Spain.

"I am one of those people with a foolish conscience about engagements," smiles Haldane to me. "I finished my last university lecture two hours before the boat-train left London. A month from now—if I get back—I'll again open my classes. This month I exchange the cultural front for the battle-front."

We circle down to Barcelona in the crisp air of early morning, alighting on a marshy flat near the sea. Some of our passengers step briefly into the customs-shed and are then whirled away in autos marked as belonging to the "Motor Services." The rest of us drink free coffee, contributed by the Air France Company, and pick up four different Barcelona newspapers also given free by their publishers. They are all of different parties, and differ rather markedly, showing that free speech reigns in Barcelona.

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South from Barcelona the air grows warmer. Beneath us the blue Mediterranean shines blindingly in the sunlight. The misty cliffs of Spain loom on our western horizon. We pass Valencia, barely seen in the distance. Then we rise over a hilly promontory whose scanty farms seem cut into a hundred tiny pieces. Then the circle of a bay, and Alicante!

After a short wait we are turned over to the Central Transport Services and wait again in a large room, partitioned with thin, fresh boards in which are cut several windows. Each has a neatly lettered placard: Gasoline, Garages, Assignment of Autos. People are arriving, going to these windows, receiving orders, and departing. To keep out visitors from the inner office a vivid poster of the battle-front with the slogan “No pasarán” (They shall not pass) has been stuck on the door. Not even war deprives the Spaniard of his sense of humor.

As we wait we study the placards on the wall. There is one on “Revolutionary Ethics,” from which we learn that “the evil heritage of capitalism in the habits of men requires a long and serious struggle.” It seems that many “who formerly lived quite modestly now like to parade in the public autos, driving like mad through the streets on private errands, while the people stare and say: ‘Behold the hero!’ What is more, they endanger the public through fast driving; they bring disrepute on the People’s Front.” Comrades are exhorted to use public autos only on serious public business and generally not to splurge or drive recklessly.

Everybody here is very friendly and cheerful. They smile in unrestrained welcome; they raise fists in the People’s Front salute and say: “Salud.” This has become the universal greeting, replacing “How do you do” and “Good-by.” They tell us the short delay is because they are looking for a chauffeur who speaks French, so that he can talk to us on the road. At last they find such a man, and we are off.

A well-made asphalt road through a beautiful sunny land of hills and orange groves—such is our three-hour ride by auto up the coast. As we leave Alicante our chauffeur calls our attention to a block of ruins, result of a sporadic bombing by rebel planes a short time before. Other cities may have suffered more, but Alicante is also in it, his gesture seems to say.

We stop for lunch at a wayside inn overlooking the sea. Olives, onions, tomatoes, tuna fish are only the hors d’oeuvres. They are

followed by a vegetable, then hot meat, then cold meat, then cheese and finally dessert of dates, oranges, peaches and peanuts. The cost is five pesetas apiece, which is twenty-five cents in the pesetas we bought in Paris, or fifty cents if you change your money in Spain. In any case, very cheap. Our host apologizes for the high prices, saying that his own meat is exhausted, and meat in the market is high and rising. We assure him the price is too low. This unusual exchange of courtesies is followed by hand-shaking all around, and "Salud" with raised fists. Our chauffeur assures us that tips would be an insult. Tips have been abolished "by the revolution."

What is this revolution of which he speaks? We have heard the word several times already on the lips of the common people, so we ask him what he means. He is a bit naive about it, but he clearly means the sense of power which the common people feel when they find themselves rising unitedly to defend their government. They have elected this government, representing all parties of the People's Front: Republicans, Socialists, Communists; even many Anarcho-Syndicalists voted, contrary to their usual custom. A cabinet, composed of Progressive Republicans, without a single Socialist or Communist minister, had begun in orderly fashion and rather slowly, to improve the people's condition. Then the rebels struck and the people rose and struck back, defending their government. After that, most of the large capitalists and landlords fled and all reforms moved much faster than before. The government gave land faster to the peasants; and the workers opened the closed factories and ran them. It is this sense of life in their own hands, of swiftly moving people's power, that makes them use the word "revolution."

"So now there is no unemployment," boasts the chauffeur. And when I ask how this happens, he answers simply: "Always there is work but formerly those who owned the work wouldn't give it. Now nobody prevents us and there is much for everyone to do."

Hour after hour along the road we note the vivid, free nature of the Spanish people. Groups of laughing girls wave orange branches at us, laden with golden fruit. Here an old peasant sits at a road corner as volunteer traffic man, holding up his hand to warn us of an approaching auto beyond the bend.

In every settlement squads of peasant boys are drilling, some with rifles, most without. They are all without uniforms; they wear the shabby clothing of farmer boys. But they have decorated these old clothes with arm-bands, badges or insignia-bearing caps as a

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sign of their allegiance. It is the rising of the common people of town and country to go to war. To defend their homes, their liberties, their government.

Senator Branting suddenly says to me: "Don't you see the red terror?" We all laugh. We have just passed a group of girls waving orange branches and crying: "Salud!" Then we grow serious, remembering what the world is saying about this Spanish coast. But never in any land have I met such open friendliness, such welcoming faces. "Is this just Spanish," I ask Branting, "or is it the revolution?"

"Both," he answers. "They were always a frank, hospitable people, friendly to those who showed themselves friendly. But now there is undoubtedly an additional sense of liberation, a feeling of their own united power."

What beauty of land, and what beautiful people! A few hundred miles to the west, we know, is war with its ugly horror. Yet beauty, freedom, friendliness are our first welcome along the coast of Spain.

CHAPTER II

VALENCIA ORGANIZES THE REAR

Valencia is a roaring town overcrowded with people—flooded from Madrid until its population has tripled. It is a city of gorgeous plazas, crooked streets and narrow alleys—deep canyons between high stone buildings. Dodging through these alleys you come suddenly upon rare beauty—a carved facade, an old palace, a market of flowers, oranges and nougat candy.

In the Plaza Castelar, the city's center, a mass meeting is going on in the central raised part of the square. Reports on current affairs under the Ministry of Public Instruction. Around the meeting roar streetcars and honking autos. The meeting fights back with equally noisy loudspeakers, striving more or less successfully to be heard.

Our chauffeur begins hunting for the various ministries to which we have letters. He doesn't know where they are. The government has been only seven weeks in Valencia, and no directories covering the change exist. One ministry can tell you the way to another and the traffic police are well informed. But their information struggles against the crooked streets and winding alleys.

The hardest thing to find in Valencia, however, is not the government departments but a room. A room? No, a bed, a chair, any place to spend the night. Valencia is jammed; there are no places. Vainly the press department of the Ministry of State telephone for me; vainly I go from hotel to hotel. At last two American women, correspondents for *People's Press* and *Manchester Guardian*, take me in for the night; by the next noon the hotel has a vacancy and I seize it for myself and another American woman. I am free to turn my attention towards the town.

Valencia roars under our window. Our room juts out into the Plaza Castelar. We are surrounded on three sides by crowds, streetcars and autos. Scores of street booths hawk their wares, chiefly decorated caps and badges, whereby purchasers declare their allegiance to their trade union or party.

All the streets are gay with flags and banners. All kinds of flags. We make out chiefly the flag of the Republic, red, yellow and purple in three stripes. There is the red and black flag of the CNT, and many red flags. Most of the automobiles have flags; others have placards announcing the organization to which they belong. Some

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bear both the CNT and UGT which confuses us, until we learn that this expresses the hope that these great unions may join forces and become one. Already the situation has forced them to form joint committees for many purposes: all the big meeting-halls, for instance, are at their joint disposal.

Here and there are buildings marked: "This house prepared for an air-refuge. Capacity 510." Sandbags are heaped against the doors and windows. The busy life of the city seethes past them, talking, shopping, lunching, paying no attention.

Guards with rifles stand in the doors of all public buildings. Even of all the hotels. At first I go past them with hesitation, producing my passport and letters of introduction. They smile and say: "Salud, camarada," or else maintain a bored silence. Soon I learn to walk past them at all hours of day and night as if they were not there. They are ready to protect the building against attack; but the casual passer does not interest them.

There are other indications of Valencia's war condition. Nearly every shop window bears a sign showing some degree of government control. Some are *incautado*, "requisitioned": these belong to fascists who have fled; similar signs are on factories closed by absent owners and reopened by the state. Other places are marked *intervenido*, which means that the government has a representative controlling their books. Others are *controlado* or *apropiado* or *adquirido*, indicating various forms of relation between trade unions and owners, all the way from simple collective bargaining to some form of cooperation.

Night hits Valencia with darkness. All doorways and windows are closed. The streets are faintly lit till ten o'clock, then they go utterly black as protection against air-raids. The first black night I stay in my hotel, thinking the city's life is over. Afterwards I grow wiser. Offices, cafes, newspapers work busily at night. Only behind closed shutters.

At night Valencia is alive, but secretly. One walks through black streets, choosing the center to avoid collision. High up the jagged canyon of dark walls the stars shine sharply; seldom are they so clear from city streets. But down below is velvet blackness; one stumbles against autos standing unlit in the dark. Groping one finds a house-door and opens it, and emerges past its armed guards into sudden brilliance. Behind every shuttered door there are lights; the secret life of the city organizes itself.

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Soon I find my way about in this darkness. The newspaper *Verdad* has given me an appointment for eleven o'clock at night. I ask the hotel porter if somebody can go with me, lest I lose my way in the pitchy black of the streets. "Wait for our night-guards," he answers; "they come on at ten." He calls in one of them, a trim, smiling lad in bright blue suit with red buttons, who raises his fist and says: "Salud." He cheerfully agrees to take me to the offices of *Verdad* and back again. Thus I learn the uses of these extra guards and my way about the hidden city.

On Sunday the roar in the streets doubles. Thousands go to the bullfight—a benefit performance for the Red Cross; other thousands go to meetings. I am warned that the bullfight will be a mediocre one; but it is my only chance to see one, so I go. A great circle of seats is crowded with people. Every kind of uniform and half-uniform. Men are distinguished chiefly by their caps—green caps, blue caps, red-braided trench caps, gray caps, shiny brown caps, puffy tan velveteen caps.

The best of the fighters is a twenty-year-old girl, Vincenta Puig, raised on a bull farm. There is the third bull and she gets in squarely, though the impact of the death-throe knocks her over. In the roar of applause she leaps to her feet and runs around the arena just inside the parapet with her clenched fist uplifted in the People's Front salute. She wears a blue militia suit, pink stockings, black slippers, a little blue militia cap with a red star. The audience rains down caps upon her and she tosses them laughingly back. This is their mutual interchange of approval.

From the bullfight I go to various meetings. Half the theaters seem to be full of meetings; these buildings, like other meeting places, are now disposed of by joint committees of the CNT and UGT. In one of them the provincial organization of the UGT is holding a three-day session; speakers have come down from Madrid. In another meets the provincial society of *campesinos* (peasants), most of them in the flowing black cotton shirts which are almost a peasant uniform in Spain. All of these meetings are urging "respect for the small proprietor." This is the slogan of the day. One gathers that in many cases the small proprietor has not been entirely happy. Caught between the economic convulsion of war and the growing strength of the trade unions, faced with all kinds of demands from collective bargaining to profit-sharing, he has often felt himself threatened with ruin. Hence all the workers' parties, Social-

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ist, Communist, Anarchist, are urging upon their members the need of “respecting the small proprietor” in the interests of the common front and of winning the war.

To reconcile the demands of the various loyal elements, all hard-pressed by the war—such is the task of Valencia. Valencia is the government. It must organize the country. At any moment Valencia may become the front also. Far down the coast Cartagena has been bombed a dozen times from the air. Mirova, the *Tass* correspondent, urges me to go and see it—the wrecked city whose people hide in holes in cliffs. Nearer at Alicante are also ruins, and farther up the coast beyond Barcelona. Air-raids reach out beyond the lines of battle and Valencia must prepare for this. So Valencia also has its air-force which circles daily northward to storm the fascists at Teruel.

But Valencia is not yet war; it is roaring energy of a people who mobilize and organize war. Its streets are full of wounded soldiers; its buildings crowded with civilian refugees; its government offices assaulted by a thousand varying demands out of which must be organized a common program. It is vivid with ten thousand placards; it is loud with scores of propaganda meetings. It is full of argument and rumor. It is government welding great masses of people, in all stages of organization, in all varieties of uniform, with all kinds of flags and banners—into one unified war against fascism.

CHAPTER III

SOME SPANISH PEASANTS

The autobus out of Valencia was crowded with farm-wives bearing great market baskets of produce; they had been in the city market since dawn exchanging their wares. As we jolted along they laughed and merrily teased some boys from the village, young men in uniform or half-uniform, new-made defenders of their country's freedom. After an hour's ride we alighted with half the crowd near a crossroads and came on foot by a newly repaired road—"repaired by our committee" they proudly told me—to Borboto village.

I went to Borboto with Baeschlin, well-known architect and author of many books on the architecture of Spain. Swiss by nationality, he is married to a Catalan woman, and has long since adopted Spain as his second home. I met him at the League of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals and he at once extended the invitation.

"Won't you come out and visit 'my village'? I was spending the summer there when the civil war began. Since I am an educated man and an anti-fascist, the peasants asked me to become secretary and organize their village committee." Thousands of educated men of all parties have been thus commandeered.

Sun-dusted walls of stone, adobe and whitewash, typical of southern climes where there are few trees but much clay mud. Through occasional doors we caught glimpses of disorderly green gardens, from which arose the clack of hens. Around these gardens were open patios, where women worked at household tasks.

At the turn of the road we came to a large stone church whose altar and decorations had been removed. In the stone-paved nave a group of peasants sat at a lunch-board piled with chunks of bread and a central iron skillet of onions and potatoes fried in oil. The faces were dark, vivid, of all ages. This was the cooperative of *campesinos*, or peasants. They had met to divide the seed potatoes which the Valencia government had sent.

Near them on the stone floor were piled sacks of potatoes; close at hand was a scale. They had received that morning 20,000 kilograms of seed potatoes through their provincial cooperative of *campesinos*, financed by government credits. An equal amount was promised a few days later. For all of this they would pay after harvest.

A solid black-bearded man was chairman of the cooperative.

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There were 150 families in Borboto, he told me, of which 17 lived by working in Valencia while 133 tilled the soil. Land holdings ranged from half an acre to seven acres, the average being two or three acres. The cooperative had been formed some two months earlier, to get the credits and seed which the government promised. Of the farming families 132 had joined, but one had stayed out.

“For what reason?” I asked. The black-bearded chairman shrugged his shoulders: “Oh, he’s just crazy. He got drunk in Valencia and cursed the government and was arrested, and thought he was going to be shot. So we made up a delegation to go to town and get him. We explained that he wasn’t really a fascist but just a general sore-head so they paroled him to us and let him go. We see to it that he doesn’t communicate with anyone outside the village. This makes him mad.”

Besides the cooperative there was also the “village committee” formed under the stress of war conditions as a sort of village government. It was of this that Baeschlin was secretary. Its president was a handsome youth in his twenties with gentle, engaging smile.

“How did you get to be president?” I asked him. He laughed and made gestures blaming the others, especially Baeschlin. “He, and he, and he made me. It is a heavy responsibility. Nobody wants it.”

Baeschlin’s wife, a charming Catalan, interrupted. “No, for if ‘they’ should come, they will kill the president.”

“Sí, sí,” nodded the youth, making a gesture across his throat to indicate hanging. Then with a shrug, he turned to the work of loading potatoes. He was well aware that Franco’s tactics on entering any village were to kill all officials out of hand and then investigate the rest of the population.

In the sacristy of the church a desk and chairs indicated the office of the village committee. The high choir was gay with the banners of the Young Pioneers. Who had removed the altar and converted the church to these uses? Baeschlin said it had been done by the village committee itself, “for fear that outsiders would do worse.”

In the early days of the struggle uncontrolled gangs had gone out from Valencia, burning village churches. Who were these gangs? Well, some people blamed the Anarchists but personally he thought—nods of the peasants confirmed him—that they were fascist provocateurs trying to discredit the government. Perhaps it was different in different places. For a time it had been rather bad.

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Baeschlin himself had proposed to the villagers: "Why let the church be burnt by outsiders? Let us take out the altar and send the best pictures to Valencia and declare the building the office of our village committee; then we shall get some good of it and nobody else will touch it."

It was clear that there were conflicting views in Borboto village. Baeschlin admitted as much. Some folks, he said, would like only to hang him, while others, more hot-headed, thought he hadn't gone far enough. It was clear that government help in credits and seed potatoes was cementing the village. Two weeks previously the women of the *campesinos* had put up a ton of sausage as a free-will offering for the front. The chief complaint of the day was the lack of sugar; there had been none in Borboto for a month. But Baeschlin had been to the city that morning and secured 300 kilograms for the following day. This would be a month's supply at a fair ration.

In a hundred different forms the tale of Borboto village was repeated all over Spain. In some the control has been less intelligent. The first wave of organization came into the villages through the farmhands, who rapidly joined the powerful trade unions, either the CNT or the UGT. Backed by the armed force of these unions, they pushed the election of village committees which became with disconcerting speed the actual governments of the villages, handling such delicate problems as requisitions for the front. Even when these committees truly represented the majority of the population, their problem was not easy; in some cases, it seems, they were not representative.

The black-shirted peasant president of Enova village, for instance, forty miles in the hills from Valencia, told of his struggle with the village committee. There were 1,500 small peasant families in Enova, he said; he himself owned what might be called a typical holding, five acres planted to oranges, olives and rice. There were also in the village 500 farmhands, living miserably on day wages which were obtainable only part of the year.

These farmhands, he claimed, joined a union and got arms from Valencia and took foodstuffs and chattels from the land-owning peasants in the name of the common need. "If the government had not given us credits to market our oranges, we should all have perished."

I met scores of similar peasants in Valencia at the provincial congress of *campesinos*. All wore the flowing black cotton shirt of the Spanish peasant. All felt hard-hit by the dislocations of war and

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approved the new slogan of "respecting the small proprietor." All had joined the cooperative of *campesinos* for the sake of seed and credits, and were grateful for this government help.

The provincial organization of *campesinos* in Valencia is located in a requisitioned dwelling-house on a small market-square. Up its marble steps push peasants, men and women, asking for seed potatoes or offering food donations for the army. The secretary is Julio Mateu, a vivid, charming youth of peasant family with several years' experience in organizing for land reforms.

He told me that the provincial society of *campesinos* is only two months old, but already numbers 50,000 of Valencia's 70,000 peasant families. (In Catalonia cooperatives are older; in the rest of Spain still more recent.) The organization is not political, but a consumers' cooperative for buying and selling. It is the channel through which government aid reaches the peasant. It has distributed already 10,000 tons of fertilizer, 2,000 tons of imported seed potatoes and one million pesetas (roughly \$100,000) in credits.

"War conditions make the need for cooperation urgent," said Mateu. "The foreign middlemen who formerly financed the picking and sale of oranges fled the country; the seed potatoes formerly came from Burgos, which is now in enemy hands. No individual peasant can fight against such conditions. Only swift cooperative action, aided by government, can save us. The government has given money to finance the orange picking; it has imported many shiploads of potatoes from England and Scotland. In this lies our economic salvation."

He told me furthermore that the government was in process of bringing order into the village committees by legalizing them with definite, limited functions and definite responsibilities towards the provincial governments, and requiring that they be elected by all the citizens, instead of being rushed into office, as at first often happened, by the more active, organized extremists.

All these factors were stabilizing and strengthening the rear, said Mateu. Then when he learned that during the past months I had been in Moscow he asked eagerly where he could get books, pamphlets and pictures about collectivization.

"We are against forming premature collectives," he said firmly. "Some of the hot-heads formed them, and created considerable discontent. At present we advocate only consumers' cooperatives to help the peasants get seed and sell products. This is the first step in

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collective action; every peasant sees the need.

“But we who study the question know quite well that the only final solution of the agrarian problem is through more closely-knit collectives, able to buy modern equipment, organize large-scale farms with division of labor, and bring prosperity to the whole rural community. This must not be done through compulsion; it must come through choice, based on education on the subject. And the problem of backward agriculture of Spain presses urgently for solution and will not much longer wait.”



POSTERS APPEALING TO THE PEASANTS

CHAPTER IV

IN DEFENCE OF CULTURE

On the very same Sunday when half Valencia went to the bullfight for the benefit of the Red Cross, and the other half went to meetings which busily "respected the small proprietor," I saw advancing down the crowded street to the sound of a band a procession of children, gay with red caps, arm-bands and banners.

"What are they demonstrating for?" I wondered. Then I puzzled out the words upon their banners. They demanded "Christmas Toys for the Sons and Daughters of the Militiamen"!

Spain fights for her life, but the Spanish people have time to think of the children, Not only of bread and milk but also of toys. Sixty thousand children evacuated from besieged Madrid were awaiting Christmas far from their families in children's homes along the Mediterranean coast. Tens of thousands more were spending the holiday alone with mothers, thinking of fathers and older brothers at the front. So somebody thought: "We must give Christmas joy to all these children; they are all of them our big family."

There was a mild protest from some Anarchists that Christmas was a bourgeois festival, but the protest didn't last long. "No, it's a people's festival," said the Ministry of Education which sponsored the drive.

There was a tag-day; there were thousands of children going about with little boxes to collect funds. There were hundreds of booths where long lines of women waited to contribute their pennies to the Toy Fund. In a ten-day drive 500,000 pesetas (\$50,000 nominally but about twice that in buying power) was raised by popular subscription to give toys to "our children," the children of Madrid in their children's colonies, and the soldiers' children in their homes.

For the first time in Spanish history, children's books have appeared in huge editions, brightly illustrated books of stories from German and Russian authors. No Spanish author has yet had time to write for this suddenly enlarged audience of children, so the Ministry of Education translated children's stories from other lands. Editions of 300,000 copies of the first three children's story-books give evidence that for the first time Spain thinks in terms of mass production for the needs of Spanish children.

“Even under the fire of civil war we began to transform culture and education. What was formerly a monopoly of the privileged classes now comes close to all the people/” said the Vice-Minister of Education, Wenceslas Rocés, to me.

“Feudal Spain under the monarchy was cursed with illiteracy. The first epoch of the Republic in 1932 and 1933 began a serious effort for education, opening 9,060 new primary schools in those two years. Yet even our most recent statistics show 30 per cent illiteracy throughout the country and 60 per cent in some parts, like Andalusia. Madrid still has 50,000 children not in school.

“Under the People’s Front government 10,000 new school teachers were employed and their wages were raised from 3,000 to 4,000 pesetas a year (\$400, buying power about \$800). Women are coming into the schools now, because the men are at the front. Fifteen years ago there were hardly any women teachers; now they are half and half.”

Rocés told me how a special Lyceum of secondary education had been created, to give swift two-year training to the brightest people from the working class, so that they might then enter the universities and higher technical schools. “We must create our own skilled leaders,” he said.

“But when the enemy came to the gates of Madrid we had to turn all our attention to the emergency of evacuating children, art treasures and our national treasure of scientists and artists. In two months 60,000 children were evacuated by the Ministry of Public Instruction, not counting the babies who were handled by the Ministry of Social Assistance. Some 10,000 of these found homes with friends or relatives but nearly 50,000 are cared for in seventy children’s colonies which we set up on the seashore.”

In a beautifully equipped “House of Culture” I called upon thirty scientists and artists who had been brought from Madrid by the Ministry of Education. Here was Victorio Macho, one of Spain’s leading sculptors; J. Moreno Villa, poet and painter; Professor Moles, a physicist known for his work on the atom; Professor del Rio-Ortega, one of the world’s famous histologists, and many others whose life and work had been threatened with disruption by the chaos of war and the actual shock of battle. The Valencia government took care to protect not only their lives from Madrid bombardments, but the far more fragile structure of their scientific and artistic labors; it supplies them not only with maintenance but also

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with studios and laboratories so that their work for mankind may continue undisturbed till such time as there shall again be publishers, purchasers and patrons.

Patrons for painters are to some extent already supplied by José Renau, chief of the section on Fine Arts in the Ministry of Education—himself as beautiful in middle age as a finely drawn painting. He told me how he had employed all the best artists on the task of making those posters which I saw by tens of thousands on Valencia streets. They were not common sign-painters' work; they were art, giving jobs to artists and good posters to the people.

"We also commission painters to paint scenes at the front," he added. "We are preserving these records for history."

Renau's chief boast is the saving of the art treasures of the Prado, when these were endangered by foreign bombers in the service of the rebels. "Hospitals and our national monuments of culture have been especially attacked," he told me, "on the theory that this will demoralize the population. The Prado, second only to the Louvre among European museums, was first surrounded by the fascist bombers with illuminating flares and then repeatedly bombed; the intent was clearly to destroy it. Eighteen bombs were also dropped on the National Library and others on the Academy of San Fernando, famous for its Goya paintings. The Duke of Alva's palace, containing a famous collection, was completely wrecked." One thousand of the most important paintings from the Prado—Rubens, Velasquez, El Greco, Goya and other masters—were brought by Renau's department to Valencia and stored in the great towers which since the fourteenth century have guarded the ancient city gates. "Even half-ton bombs cannot penetrate those towers," said Renau, "so the best of our art treasures are safe.

"Never before," he claimed, "has so large an art treasure been transported. Some of the paintings were of a size to require an entire auto truck for a single work of art. All of them were attended by motorized guards. And this was done at a time when transport was desperately needed for the front and for the evacuation of Madrid.

"The militiamen, especially the Fifth Regiment, helped us greatly. When the Duke of Alva's palace was in flames, many of them risked their lives to carry out the precious art works. Some of them are illiterate: none the less they prize the national treasure of art and culture."

During my visit to Valencia, an art exhibition was held of these

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paintings rescued from the Duke of Alva's palace, works that the common people never saw. Now the common folk of Valencia, students, workers, militiamen, turned out by tens of thousands to see them.

Spain fights for its life against foreign invaders. Valencia boils over with major problems of life and death—munitions, hospitals, food, peasant credits, ultimatums, organization of order. But the Spanish people give time to collect toys for their children, to increase schools, and to save the Prado pictures. For these are the value of life and the treasure of the people.



A CULTURAL TRUCK OF THE PEOPLE'S FRONT

CHAPTER V

INTERVIEWING VALENCIA

The most "American" person I met in Spain was not the staid American consul, whose chief function was to warn me away from Madrid, nor any of the dozen American correspondents, conscientiously covering the government offices and the front, but the Spanish Foreign Minister Julio Alvarez del Vayo. Swift, punctual, efficient, a former journalist whose sense of publicity values rivals that of Roosevelt, he has all the typical virtues we love to claim as American, and is certainly the most informal foreign minister in the world.

Del Vayo was compelled to cancel my first appointment because of a sudden press of emergency business. Instead of sending the postponement through a secretary, as most other officials of equal prominence would have done, he came breezily into the outer office to shake my hand.

"You know—this Koenigsberg cruiser—an unexpected ultimatum to the Basque government. They've telephoned me from Bilbao, and now I have to get in touch at once with the Minister of War, then phone to London and Paris and arrange the answer to the Koenigsberg before midnight.... So sorry.... Couldn't you drop in tomorrow morning for a real talk?" Could I? After he so informally admitted me to the whole process of diplomacy, and made his refusal more flattering than a whole hour interview!

Next morning the talk turned on some of the medical and technical help offered by American friends of Spanish democracy. He said: "You know America; are such and such things possible?" I ventured a suggestion which met with his approval. Swiftly he rose and walked to his desk.

"Do you mind waiting a minute while I write off a cable to our ambassador in Washington? I always like to do things as soon as I get the idea. If I wait till you have gone, others will come and there will be no chance. It will only take a minute to do it now." He wrote the cable, handed it to a messenger and continued the conversation. Again I had the flattering sense of sitting in on the process of government. "Do it now." "Open diplomacy openly arrived at." These two American slogans characterize Del Vayo.

Sharpest of all is the memory of the last time I saw him, that

early day in January when the cable flashed the word that President Roosevelt said no law existed preventing the shipment of arms to the recognized Spanish government. What did it mean, he asked me? Was the great democracy of the west really observing the international laws which the other democracies had flouted, and showing the courage to live up to its recognition of the Spanish Republic? Del Vayo was incredulously happy. Neither of us could dream the apparently friendly gesture was a prelude to a demand for “neutrality” legislation which should slap an open boycott in the face of the friendly people of Spain.

At the Communist Party headquarters on the Plaza Congregación I met Dolores Ibarruri, Communist Deputy from Asturias, daughter, wife and mother of miners. Not by intellect nor by education but by her tremendous depth of feeling she has become a great leader, more worshipped by wide masses than perhaps any other person in Spain. Passionate love for human beings, passionate indignation over the wrongs they suffer, burn in her with a pure intensity akin to genius. The workers of Spain call her “La Pasionaria,” the “passion flower,” in reference to this quality.

La Pasionaria is not intellectual; she does not feel at ease with intellectuals. She tolerates them if they are useful to the people, but she never really likes them. Her affection pours forth rather to the girl interpreter assisting in her interviews, to the messenger-boy arriving from some workers’ meeting, to the two youths who have just brought in a collection of money for medical supplies, to all the thousands of obscure folk who do the humdrum work for the cause of the working class. Each of them she sees as a beloved individual. She drops her arm tenderly around the girl stenographer’s shoulder, inquiring if she is tired. She greets the pale wounded youth from the front in a welcoming tone that makes him feel he has come suddenly home to his own mother. By gesture and tone she diffuses around her an atmosphere of deeply concerned love—love for plain, ordinary people.

In spite of La Pasionaria’s long experience with the brutalities of oppression—dating back through years of miners’ struggles in Asturias and including the terrible slaughter of the workers there in 1934—she cannot become accustomed to brutality. She cannot take for granted the bombing of hospitals, of women and children, which is so characteristic of General Franco’s method in his attack on Madrid.

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“We on our side will never bomb an open city,” she declared to me with deep feeling, “for we are human beings, not assassins; and for the many crimes of our enemies against us, we do not hold their wives and children guilty!”

The gentlest idealist I met in Valencia was Juan Garcia Oliver, Anarchist and Minister of Justice—what a job for an Anarchist! Sitting in the palace which not long since belonged to the Marquis of Malferit (“Where is the Marquis now?”... “I don’t know,” he replied with a wave of his hand) he told me the plans which grew up spontaneously during the months of struggle, plans for combining the various police forces—the civil guards, the assault guards, the security guards and the guards of the various organizations—into one body of Republican police.

Fourteen years of Oliver’s life have been spent in prison, the rest as professional agitator, supporting himself by work in textile mills or as waiter in restaurants. His passion is for prison reform. He dreams of a “prison city—which won’t be really a prison but a university of re-education, bigger, better than the Russians have done at Bolshevo.

“I have lived many years with those called criminals,” he told me. “Never yet have I seen a millionaire jailed for theft or a college president for murder. The criminals are the men who had no chance, the men displaced. They must be given a place, not a bad place, but a good place, where they will have a chance to marry and raise a family.” The Anarchist Minister of Justice grew eloquent over “building up the family sense of the one-time criminal.”

Even for fascist prisoners of war Oliver believes in humane treatment, though not by setting them free in a “prison city.” He told me of the labor camps for these prisoners of war. “What better use,” he said, “can we make of our destroyers than to force them to recreate the wealth they have destroyed? New roads, new buildings—let them build what they have broken. Now all our industries are forced to work for war—that is, for the devil! Let these destroyers repay their crimes by creative labor. Perhaps even they will be in the end redeemed.”

Oliver told me of the policy, now being drafted through his department, of legalizing the “village committees” and making them responsible, but with definite limitations of functions under provincial control. To my question how he, as an Anarchist, regarded the problems of the People’s Front, he answered:

“We find ourselves facing a movement which we do not ourselves create,” said Oliver. “To conserve the unity of the working class against fascism, we have said publicly that we renounce the fight for immediate realization of our ideals. However, in the interests of the morale of the workers, we cannot call them to fight merely to maintain the status quo. For the status quo contained many evil things, especially unemployment. The privileged classes, the millionaires, big proprietors, clergy, military took up arms against the people. They must be driven out. It would be a crime to give them back the privileges whereby they plundered us. The Church in Spain was not a spiritual power but a political power armed with property and privilege, which it used against Jews and Protestants and to suppress the people. The military was a caste of officers useless for defense but strong only in suppressing the masses. This privileged officer caste is finished; our new military schools train officers who are sons of the people.”

“In this you agree with all the other People’s Front parties,” I said. “But after the victory—will you then remain with the People’s Front?”

“If today we need the unity of many parties to win the war, we shall need it no less tomorrow for the rebuilding of Spain. It would be suicide for Spain and a crime against the anti-fascist forces of the world if after a victory won by the joint sacrifices of all, one party should make itself master.”

Federica Montseny, leading Anarchist theoretician, who holds the post of Minister of Health since the time when the Anarchists agreed to share the responsibilities of government, also supported this analysis. “We Anarchists are sincerely in the People’s Front,” she said, “first, to win the war and second, to rebuild Spain. We seek a new Spain in which all tendencies represented in the People’s Front may live.

“We think this is possible through a federal republic, allowing large autonomy for the internal development of every state. Barcelona will develop certain economic and social forms, Valencia and Madrid others. Economically we seek a combination of state with trade-union control in the large industries, which are already in the hands of the workers. We foresee the union of the two great federations of trade unions, the CNT and UGT, and the management of a growing socialized industry by councils representing them together with the state.

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“A real workers’ democracy in which all views, from anarchist to republican, can express themselves freely—this is what we desire. This demands a large amount of good will from all parties; it is not easy to attain. But to win the war we must attain it; and if we win the war, we deal a moral blow to world fascism. If we lose, then armed, triumphant fascism threatens all Europe.

“To save Spain from the iron heel of fascism, to save Europe and the world from the triumph of armed reaction, which threatens all the gains of civilization with war, we Anarchists also restrain our desires within the unity of the People’s Front. Durutti, our great Anarchist leader, slain on the Madrid battlefield, gave us the slogan: ‘Let us renounce everything—but victory’.”

CHAPTER VI

WHO COMMITS ATROCITIES?

When I asked Renau what his Department of Fine Arts had done to stop the burning of churches, he answered: “Those burnings took place in a moment of wild confusion when the fascist insurrection broke out; they were the work of irresponsible persons and occurred in the first heat of indignation over the treason of the high officials of the Church who were disclosed as being in the conspiracy to overthrow the government; practically all occurred in the first few days when there was as yet no Department of Fine Arts. But speaking for myself and as a Communist, I can tell you that the Communists of Valencia risked their lives to save the church buildings and works of art within them.

“Not that we blamed the people. The churches and monasteries were the chief depositories of munitions for the fascists. We found churches which during the past two years had made special camouflaged slits for guns, hidden by their stained glass windows. When fascist troops concealed in the churches fired on the people, it was natural for the people to turn against them. None the less, we Communists know that religion is a false issue in this struggle. The Catholics of the people have the same economic and political interests as the rest of those who suffer from fascism; we knew that many good Catholics voted for the People’s Front, and we didn’t want their feelings outraged. So we insisted the people’s cause should not be endangered by incendiary provocations that confuse the people and lead only to reaction; we went up against infuriated groups and against individuals who threatened us with hand grenades.”

When I asked Juan Garcia Oliver, the Anarchist Minister of Justice, whether it was true that atrocities had been done by Anarchists, he made the unanswerable reply:

“By backward, angry people. There are such people in all organizations—the fruit of our evil past.”

I asked the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, Elizabeth Deeble, an American woman who has lived in Spain ten years (“Not interested in politics, you know, but I dearly love the Spanish people, so of course I’ve got to hate that beast of a Franco who is worse than Alfonso and Primo de Rivera combined”)—how she answered

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the claim of Gil Robles, made in the Cortes in June 1936 and widely quoted today by foreign Catholics, about “251 churches burned,” even before the fascist revolt.

“Gil Robles has the clever demagogue’s way of mixing statistics,” she answered. “He includes without saying so the destruction of churches that took place at the beginning of the Republic, and especially in Malaga where there was horrible oppression by the landlords, with whom the Church was hand in glove. After the People’s Front was elected, and until the armed revolt, if there were a dozen cases of attacks on churches in all of Spain, I’d be surprised. There was certainly not a single prominent case.

“Remember that the Church from the beginning opposed the Republic, that the Church and the Catholic orders controlled a third of the total wealth of Spain, holding presidencies and vice-presidencies of big corporations and public utilities. Priests from their pulpits urged their congregations to vote for the reactionary candidates. Recall that till recently the catechism used in all Spanish churches contained the question: ‘What sin is committed by those who vote liberal?’ Answer: ‘Usually mortal sin.’

“Beginning with the Lerrox government, the reactionaries made a practice of using the churches for fortresses and powder magazines. Everybody in Spain knows that during this present struggle, the churches opened fire on the people when the latter had no thought of attacking the churches.

“I saw with my own eyes in Barcelona the taking of the huge Carmelite Convent—in regular battle with rebel soldiers who were entrenched there with their arms. Santa Monica also was taken like a fortress. The battle around it was terrific.

“Santa Maria del Mar was burned for the same reason; the people had to, for there was firing from it. As far as art is concerned, to me it is a pleasure to have the wood inside destroyed and the beautiful stone-work left.

“After retaliating against the churches from which they had been attacked, people went on to clean up others. I saw a lot of it happen. The odd thing was that it was done by ordinary working people. Not by a vicious lot. The church in the block below me was burned on the second day with enthusiasm by the people of the neighborhood. In many churches large sums of money were found, and these were turned over to the authorities by the people who found them. In some cases the initiative may have come from crim-

inal elements, and in some by fascist provocateurs. But the crowds I saw were just decent working people, who seemed to have suddenly concluded that their miracle-working images were enemies and to feel they were ridding themselves of oppressors.”

Besides the burning of the churches, the chief charge against the People’s Front government is that there have been unnecessary killings, mainly of priests and capitalists. I found this fact admitted and deplored by all responsible persons. They all said the tales of these excesses had been greatly exaggerated and that those which occurred had been due to the conditions of civil war, in which actual street fighting had gone on in every city, and in which there had been on the one hand large numbers of traitors, spies and concealed enemies, and on the other hand many outraged and intemperate people who had seen their friends and relatives killed beside them by priests and by fascists, and who were not too particular in hitting back.

“Some of the Anarchists went around at first with the idea that every rich man was a criminal,” said Elizabeth Deeble. “I don’t know that you could blame them when you saw what the rich men did. But this talk of hundreds killed per day is nonsense. I know, for I was in Barcelona at the time which was said to be the worst, and I went to the morgue. The only days any considerable number were killed was in the first two days of street fighting, when at least two hundred thousand men were under arms. There were more than a thousand killed in those days of fighting which was begun by the fascists, but otherwise—nonsense.”

The real atrocities in this war—wholesale, organized and intentional—have been committed not by the government side, but by the rebels. This every investigator confirms. A study published by the Foreign Policy Association on January 15, 1937 (*Spain: Civil War*, by Charles A. Thompson) says: “The government authorities frequently voiced disapproval of popular violence, but in many cases proved unable to curb it effectively. The Rebels, on their side... apparently made wholesale execution of opponents a definite policy.” As early as July 30 Colonel José Palacios, rebel commander of the north, declared: “I take no prisoners. Anybody other than uniformed soldiers of the Spanish Army caught by me carrying arms finds the death he deserves.”

The policy of the insurgents is thus described by Frank L. Kluckhohn, *New York Times* correspondent with Franco’s forces:

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“Insurgent troops kill the ringleaders of the Left forces as soon as they capture any town. Then they leave the place in peace for about a week, during which agents investigate. Finally they start rounding up all who supported the Loyalist cause or who are suspected of having done so. These persons are led to cemeteries, where they are shot in groups of about twenty for several days and nights.” He added that he had seen lists officially prepared of persons destined to “elimination” when Franco should take Madrid, and that these included prominent liberals, classed by Franco as “Communists.”

“Almost from the first hour of the uprising Franco began shooting groups of men in cold blood, shooting them down with machine guns,” cabled the *London Daily Herald's* correspondent from Malaga. “The insurgents frankly state that their policy is not to keep prisoners, but to shoot them, and that when villages resist they will take ‘reprisals,’ which means rape, murder, looting and house burning.”

Foreign correspondents are usually kept out of the way during the first, and worst, stage of these slaughters. But Jay Allen, of the *Chicago Tribune*, made his way into Badajoz after the massacre of its inhabitants and brought out the story. “Four thousand men and women have died in Badajoz,” he wrote. He told of seeing young peasants in blue blouses driven in from the country “fodder for tomorrow’s show, files of men, arms in air... At 4 o’clock in the morning they were turned into the bull-ring. There machine-guns awaited them.... Eighteen hundred men—there were women, too—were mowed down there in some twelve hours.” Allen also described what he called the “blackest thing of all”: that when hordes of men and women sought to escape over the Portuguese frontier, the Portuguese police—a supposedly neutral force—drove them back to the slaughter.

Endless testimony is available regarding the massacres which have marked every step of the rebel troops. The *Manchester Guardian* notes the 8,000 people killed in Seville: “Middle-class Republicans, freemasons, most schoolmasters, many chemists, a number of doctors... a clean sweep of everyone whom we in England would class as liberals.”

The rebel leaders make no attempt to deny or to curtail these atrocities; they boast of them as of a policy of terror. General Queipo de Llano regularly on his radio threatens murder and rape, naming the well-known women of Madrid he will give to “be cared

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for by a hundred Moors.” Moorish prisoners captured by Madrid forces have stated that the “expectation of the many women of Madrid” has been held out to them as inducement, and has played a considerable part in keeping up the spirit of these primitive troops. For both the Moors and the Foreign Legion loot and rape are offered as the normal incentives to battle.

The rebel policy of bombing women and children and hospitals has been especially marked in the attack on Madrid. It is taken for granted today by all residents of Spain, but it comes as a shock of surprise to men from the democratic lands accustomed to “civilized” rules of war. A British ambulance came to Spain proudly displaying a Red Cross banner, so stretched as to make it visible from the air. Their horrified Spanish friends told them: “This will only draw the bombs.”

“The callous cruelty and disregard for human life shown by the rebels is unprecedented in modern times,” concludes a study of Spain signed by seven Protestant clergymen and published by the Friends of Spanish Democracy. “In contrast the policy of the government has been humane and civilized.” The report notes the news sent by even the anti-government correspondent of the *New York Times*, William P. Carney: “Loyalist forces were urged today to respect the lives of prisoners, regardless of the actions of the rebels (August 13). “Yesterday’s insurgent air-raids on Madrid resulted in 125 dead, including 60 women and children—in raids that served no military purpose but merely overawed the populace. This is in contrast to the orders given by the Madrid Air Ministry that its air force must in no event bomb any rebel cities but merely rebel air-dromes and military positions, sparing innocent victims.” (October 31.)

Excesses on the government side have been sporadic; they have been committed by backward, outraged and irresponsible people—sometimes even by gangsters and provocateurs—and the authorities have tried to stop them and have often punished them. The brutality of the rebel side is consciously ordered by the men in authority; they flaunt it, they brag of it. Franco himself says boldly over the radio: “One bomb dropped on a hospital sometimes means more than a victory.”

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ANTI-FASCIST POSTERS

CHAPTER VII

HEROIC MADRID

The accepted way to go to Madrid is by auto. Because of the war the railway could not quite make it, and was supplemented by uncertain autobuses, all crowded with refugees. Auto transport also was hardly regular: Andre Malraux sent me in a large Hispano-Suiza, once luxurious, now badly battered, which was attached to his flying squadron and was going on business to Madrid.

Crisp autumn air, gorgeous sunny weather, a landscape like that of California. We dashed at sixty miles an hour along an excellent road. It is—or should be—about a seven-hour trip. But at every village guards stopped us to examine our papers; and at these points there were usually men who wanted to hitch-hike. We thus picked up a dashing aviator and carried him some hours on his way. Once our chauffeur stopped to pick up vegetables for some family in Madrid; often he stopped for repairs. We made Madrid after dark the second evening and were stopped thirty times by guards in the last thirty miles.¹

Dark, empty streets through which a few half-lit autos precariously sought their way under a sheltering fog. Empty hotels, as cold as a marble tomb at the north pole. There was no coal in Madrid. The best hotels, we learned later, were used as hospitals for wounded and warmed, more or less, by electric heaters. That first night I sought vainly by telephone for anyone who could answer, and finally went to bed to get warm.

With morning Madrid seemed at first surprisingly normal. Crowds passed along the streets; streetcars and subway were running. There was a rumbling of guns which sounded sometimes loud

¹ On the way out of Madrid we were stopped only five times in the same distance, and only at crossroads. In the interim General Miaja had issued a command that all armed bodies of separate organizations (CNT, UGT etc.) must come under the central military command or be disarmed. Clearly the excess of guards on the way in contained some enthusiastic volunteer groups who were just protecting Madrid on their own. By the time I came out, these had been sent to fronts where they were more needed... This is one example of the day-by-day growth of discipline.

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and sometimes distant. But the loud ones were our own artillery. And the others—well, the crowds took them so casually that it was some time before I realized that we were being shelled.

I made my way to the American Embassy, not for safety but to find someone speaking English who could tell me my way about. There I found them all—the American correspondents, from the *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune* to the *Daily Worker*. They were doing a valiant, conscientious job. The Embassy officials had left, the ambassador for France and the lesser staff for Valencia. The building was in charge of a Spanish clerk and an energetic American business man, who gave shelter, mattresses and blankets to all Americans and by strenuous visiting of Madrid markets maintained a cooperative dining-room at a cost of six pesetas—thirty to sixty cents—a day.

We correspondents were privileged characters: we could come and go at all hours of day and night. The rest of the residents were a mixed assembly, including Embassy guards, chauffeurs and their families, and a Porto Rican dairyman who had saved his cows from Franco's clutches and now housed them in Ambassador Bower's fine stables, where they ranked among the Embassy's most welcome guests. All these people were periodically worried by the threat from Washington to close the Embassy; they had literally nowhere else to go.

Day after day as I walked or drove through the streets of Madrid and its suburbs, admiration grew for this city of nearly a million population which is also a front line of war. The Madrid defense is one of the great epics of our generation, an epic of the valor and endurance that lies in plain, ordinary people, civilians, workers, women and children.

They will tell you now, as brave men admit the fears that are past, of their "week of panic." Franco had advanced stage by stage towards Madrid, and there seemed no strength to oppose him. His German and Italian airplanes ruled the sky. The Spanish government had been unable to secure any modern equipment; their green civilian volunteers were raked by machine-gunning from the air against which they were helpless. The government chose this moment to move to Valencia, a move urged a month earlier by several parties in the interests of better organization of the country. Done on November 4, with the news published and insufficiently explained November 6, it added to the feeling of confusion.

On November 6, the critical night, Franco's forces were within four hundred yards of Toledo bridge. Some say he could have walked in that night. His officers telephoned from the captured suburbs to Madrid cafes: "Tomorrow we order a meal." Telegrams of congratulation came addressed to Franco in the Madrid general post office. All the foreign military experts and correspondents had already surrendered Madrid. The Berlin, Rome—and London—press carried the news that it had fallen.

But the Madrid people had not surrendered. At this critical hour all parties and organizations rallied. The Ministry of Education carried on enormous propaganda meetings. The newspaper *El Socialista* campaigned in headlines: "Five thousand determined men can save Madrid." The famous Fifth Regiment called for four shock battalions. The Communist Party built special all-Communist detachments and sent them to hold Franco at Carabanchel.

Suddenly Madrid's morale was strengthened by the arrival of allies. Five thousand troops from Catalonia appeared in the streets. The first battalions of the famous International Brigade, volunteers of all nations, marched under command of General Kleber to strengthen the front. And the sky from which death had rained on half-armed men, was suddenly cleared by the arrival of "a mighty mechanized force"² of modern airplanes in the service of the People's Front government.

The sky thus cleared of the rain of death, hope grew in the people. The Communist troops entrenched at Carabanchel. Every inch thereafter won by Franco cost him disproportionate loss. The Catalans and the International Brigade, mixed with the Madrid forces, spread into the suburbs in a long battle-line. And behind the lines, the civilian population poured into the streets to strengthen barricades. These grew in a week from the first amateur structures to solid fortifications, shoulder-high walls of cobblestones cemented into place by a military plan.

In all Madrid's streets towards the rebel front I saw them—these walls of rock and cement, with well-made holes for rifles and machine-guns. They reached from the buildings to the car-tracks, leaving a narrow traffic space. They repeated at intervals down the main thoroughfares; they guarded entrance from every side-street and alley. Building these walls, and seeing how the people's forces

² Words of Caballero, end of October.

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held the enemy, the “week of panic” steadily passed into the growing conviction that Madrid, defended by its citizens, need not be taken. And the slogan began to pass from mouth to mouth of the defenders: “Madrid shall be the grave of fascism.”

To Madrid’s heroic defense Franco retorted by barbarous bombing of civilian areas for the purpose of creating panic. I visited a section in the north of Madrid near the edge of the city where a score of blocks of workers’ homes had been destroyed the previous week. The foreign bombers in Franco’s service had poured half-ton bombs all over this district about midday when the men were away at work. Four hundred bodies had already been found, chiefly women and children. Even a layman like myself could see the totally unmilitary character of this bombing, which was intended merely to kill and terrorize civilians. Everyone in Madrid tells you that the bombers attack especially the long lines of women waiting at food stores.

But Franco guessed wrong. His attacks on civilians, instead of causing panic, hardened the population, bringing steadily increasing recruits to the people’s battle-front. The defiant energy of the busy working people was my chief impression in Madrid. They resist even the necessary amount of evacuation which the government demands of them. They want to stay in their homes, which they feel sure cannot now be taken. They accept the bombing and shelling as merely one additional hazard—as New York accepts the flu.

Bombing from the air had grown infrequent at the time of my visit: the government planes had cleared the sky. Only an occasional attempt, like that which wrecked the workers’ homes in north Madrid the week before my arrival, was made by enemy bombers; they did not hover long but hastened away. Shelling from long-distance guns continued daily, sometimes more, sometimes less.

Madrid people have grown used to shelling. When a shell crashes into one street, the people in the next street go right on shopping or dining. Later they come around to inspect the damage. They gather in little groups near the ruin, expressing anger, not panic. Men appear with plaster and wallpaper to repair the lesser destruction.

On my first day in Madrid, for instance, the twenty-three-story telephone building, highest building in Spain, was hit for perhaps the tenth or twelfth time. Shells entered the sixth and seventh stories, just above the fifth floor where the correspondents wait in line

to telephone London or Paris. I arrived on the scene an hour afterwards. Ilsa, our intelligent and much-liked censor, was still a little nervous; she had been working on the fourth floor and the building shivered badly when the shell hit. But she took me upstairs to look at the damage, both of us ignoring the chance that the next shot might hit in the same place.

One of the shells had gone clean through the building, carrying with it broken plaster and wrecked water pipes. Another had exploded inside and gone down through the floor, setting fire to the woodwork. Partitions were knocked to pieces, and the floor was gutted with water from broken pipes and from fighting the flames. But carpenters and plumbers were already repairing the damage. Long lines of rubber tubing connected the broken pipes and prevented the water from spreading. A group of scrubwomen busily mopped up the water on the floor to keep it from seeping down to injure the building.

Soldiers of all times and all nations have shown valor, the valor of the fighter and destroyer. The capitalist world hailed the "epic" of the Alcazar, where a band of rebel soldiers shielded themselves in their holes by the women and children of the workers, to torture their enemy's aim. But the world of the future will remember rather Madrid's great epic, the day-by-day heroism of a million people, the enduring valor of the working people, who defend and restore and rebuild!

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAMOUS FIFTH REGIMENT

In the office of the Madrid building which is still called the headquarters of the Fifth Regiment, though the regiment itself is now in process of disbanding, there is a thrillingly significant sign: "Discipline is not servility, it is—Victory!" It is a slogan not easily accepted by the individualistic Spaniard. But the story behind that slogan is the story of how discipline came to Madrid, the tale of how organized force was created out of those early gangs of enthusiastic civilians who rushed to protect their government in July, 1936.

The story of the famous Fifth Regiment was told to me by Carlos Contreras, political commissar of the regiment, and the most helpful man I met in Madrid. He told it in snatches of talk in automobiles and at the fronts; he was visiting every front and he took me nearly everywhere. When he had to go to a dangerous spot where I could not follow, he found some other comrade to occupy my time. Like the famous Fifth Regiment, which he helped organize and which now he helps disband into the regular People's Army, Carlos' chief job was the filling of emergencies.

"We had to create an army and staff at once," thus he began the epic, "for most of the armed forces were with the rebels. We had at first just groups of comrades, old and young, men and women, many of whom did not even know how to use a rifle. We had no leaders, no central command, for the central command of the old army led the revolt against the Republic. We had only enthusiastic, determined people, seizing any weapons they could find, following any leaders that arose, rushing to any front which they heard it was necessary to seize from the enemy.

"In those days we took anyone who knew anything and made him an officer. Sometimes it was enough just to look into a face and see that the eyes were intelligent and determined, and say to the man: 'You are a captain. Organize and lead these men.'

"After two days we occupied the Salesian Convent—six hundred of us, of whom two hundred were Communists. We decided to organize and the War Department said: 'You will be the Fifth Battalion; already we have four other applications.'

"'No,' we said, 'we shall be the Fifth Regiment, for we shall get at least a thousand men.'

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“Well, those first four battalions remained on paper, but the fifth had six thousand men in less than ten days. During this time the government wrote us: ‘Comrades of the Fifth Battalion,’ and we answered back; ‘We of the Fifth Regiment.’ After we got six thousand men they admitted that we were a regiment.

“Those were the days when every trade union had its own group of fighters, all with fancy names. ‘The Red Lions,’ the ‘Suiciders,’ the ‘Phantoms,’ the ‘Desperados,’ the ‘Abyssinians,’ the ‘Tigers,’ the ‘Red Bullets,’ the ‘Crocodiles.’ Any group of ten men would find a leader and go to any front they chose. And this destroyed all possibility of discipline.

“We decided to create a special company which should give an example of discipline. We called it the ‘Steel Company’ and made stringent requirements. To join this company a man must know something of arms, must have good health and must be guaranteed by some group as a determined antifascist. For this company we established special slogans designed to create an iron unity. ‘Never leave a comrade, wounded or dead, in the hands of the enemy’ was one of these. ‘If my comrade advances or retreats without orders, I have the right to shoot him’ was another.

“How Madrid laughed at that. The Spaniard is such an individualist that nobody will accept such discipline, they said. Then our first Steel Company—mostly Communists and metal-workers—paraded through the city: it made a sensation. After that we created twenty-eight such companies of picked men, besides the ordinary muster of our regular Fifth Regiment militia.

“There were no food or hospital services in those days. All these things had to be built. Men grabbed guns and fought for days till they starved; then they fled hungry to the nearest village to get food. Even this curious anarchic defense stopped the fascists for the time. But naturally a wider organization had to be formed.

“There was first of all just the simple listing of men. Men died at the front and nobody knew who they were. A hero from somewhere or other, unidentified. We were the first to introduce cards of identity, and to know who was going where. Later this was taken up by everyone. We created nineteen barracks in Madrid for our members. Before we began to disband into the new People’s Army, we had listed in our ranks 40,000 men on the Madrid front and 60,000 in all Spain.

“Next came the problem of internal organization. Food, cloth-

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ing, families. These men were human beings; they had wives and children. Could they live on their pay? Were their families starving? We set up a commission to visit the families of our recruits. We set up our own commissary, because the food in those days was disorganized. We began to have one hot meal a day at the front.

“Next we had our organization of military training. We set up a recruiting section, in one week we got ten thousand! We drew in soldiers from the old army and even a few loyal captains and used them to train the others. At first men went to the front after three days’ instructions; even this was considered something. Later we were able to give them fifteen days, eight at the rear and seven just behind the lines, where they grew accustomed to the sound of guns. Still later we established schools, one at Madrid and one at Albacete, to train officers.

“Now we are in the third stage of organization. First, the spontaneous volunteers, second, the battalions and regiments organized by parties and trade unions; third, and last, the People’s Army and the unified command. There must not be Communist troops and Anarchist troops and Republican troops: there must be one army with uniform units, and with leaders chosen on a basis of military efficiency.

“So the famous Fifth Regiment is disbanding. It is passing into history. It is a tradition of honor, but it is ceasing to be a separate regiment. In this also we took the lead, transferring all that we had built—of armed forces, barracks, commissary, propaganda—into the new forces of the regular army. You will see some of our best battalions tomorrow—Lister’s men—now reorganized as the First Brigade of the People’s Army.”

When Carlos was rushing off to the Guadarrama front, he turned me over to Benigno, head of the Cultural-Propaganda Department, for which the Fifth has been famous.

Piles of posters were rolled against the wall near Benigno’s desk: the Fifth Regiment issues a noticeable part of the recruiting and propaganda posters around Madrid. In a nearby room the regiment photographer showed me his pictures of the front; they were recommended to me by everyone as Madrid’s best supply. A whole series of illustrated pamphlets, intelligible even to semi-literate people, showed by vivid drawings how to conduct oneself at the front, where to aim, how to take cover against machine-guns and air-raids.

“Each of our nineteen barracks has its social committee,” said

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Benigno. "These get out local wall newspapers and serve as distributing centers for all our central material. For instance, we have a motion picture and a drama service which goes to the various barracks.

Benigno showed me a copy of the regiment's newspaper: *The People's Militia*, issued daily in 35,000 copies. It was full of news and stories from the front, together with the latest instructions.

Besides the literature and information which the Fifth Regiment issues for its members, its Propaganda Department is concerned with two groups of outsiders—the civil population and the enemy. It builds up close relations with the civil population through exchange of speakers between the men at the front and the workers in factories. It fights against illiteracy by opening classes for reading and writing both among its own fighters and among the surrounding population. It appeals to the common soldiers in the enemy ranks, through loud-speakers, manifestos and rockets, urging them to desert Franco and come over to the People's Front.

"Here are some of our dodgers," said Benigno, handing me leaflets of thin, brightly colored paper, bearing inscriptions: "To the Moors," "To the Legionnaires," "To the Sons of Spain." "They are very thin, you see, so that hundreds can be packed into one rocket and shot far over the enemy lines. They are brightly colored so that they are easily visible. They are addressed differently to different groups: we shoot the kind which applies to the enemy opposite us. We are now awaiting a shipment of 5,000 rockets to do an extensive job of rocketeering."

Deserters from Franco's ranks come with considerable frequency to the headquarters of the Fifth Regiment as a result of their propaganda. Five of them called while I was there, and Benigno asked if I wished to question them. They had run across No Man's Land the previous afternoon at four o'clock, during the exchange of shell-fire.

Tea was brought in for all of us, including the deserters, who were quite willing to give an interview. They were all Spaniards, small in stature, dark, vivacious. Two of them had been members of the army in Morocco, the rest had been rounded up and forced to fight. "The reasons the officers gave us were a lot of boloney but of course we didn't dare say anything. Some people who said things were shot."

They claimed they had wanted to desert from the very begin-

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ning, but there was no chance. Nobody dared speak his discontent to another. It took many weeks before even these five had learned that they shared a common desire. How many others agreed with them they had no means of knowing, but they thought there were quite a few.

Not till the early part of December had they gone into action and gotten their first sight of the government lines. "They often spoke to us here, across six hundred yards, with megaphones, inviting us to come over. But we dared not answer a word. Our sergeant wanted us to answer with curses against their mothers and fathers, but we only said: 'What for?'"

Several times the five had tried to cross over. Once they saw a white flag in the government lines and four of them almost started, but they feared they would be shot from behind. At last they decided to try during the time when the big guns were exchanging shots. "This is the dangerous time," explained one of them, "when everybody puts his head down. But we figured it might be generally dangerous, but for us it wouldn't be so specially dangerous, for nobody would be looking.

"There was a white house between the lines, so we ran to this and got on the far side. Then we pulled out a torn white shirt and waved it and thus came over to the lines. It was easy then, for it happened that my own brother was in the lines as sergeant of a Socialist Youth battalion, and he rushed out and pulled me in. That was a big surprise; I was in Tetuán and he was in our home village, but here we met on the battle-line."

The editor of the *People's Militia*, who interviewed the five deserters with me, jotted down this amazing coincidence for a headline. "What do you want to do now?" he asked them in conclusion.

"Take us out and give us a machine-gun against Franco," was the prompt reply.

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CARLOS CONTRERAS

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RECRUITING POSTERS

(That on the left is one of the Fifth Regiment's posters)

Marroquíes:

Los generales son los que siempre han hecho daño a vuestro pueblo. Los españoles os consideramos como hermanos. Los generales han hecho traición al Gobierno de la Republica, y el traidor tendrá su castigo. Libraos vosotros de ese castigo. Los hombres de España os recibirán con cariño. Los marroquíes que han venido a nuestro lado viven contentos y felices. Nosotros no queremos matar: queremos vivir con los hermanos de Marruecos, sin guerras. Venid a nuestro lado. No luchéis con los traidores. Todo el pueblo español se ha preparado para luchar contra los que van contra la Republica. Y nuestro pueblo son muchos millones de hombres.

Los generales han matado a muchas mujeres vuestras y a muchos niños.

Legionarios:

Os están utilizado como carne de cañón en una aventura que, como veis, no lleva más que al fracaso. Os dijeron que entraríais en Madrid hace siete días. Y están cayendo cientos de los vuestros.

En Madrid está todo el pueblo, hombres, mujeres y niños, jóvenes y viejos, dispuestos a defender su suelo al precio de su vida.

Los generales traidores os tratan coma a bestias, os consideran como mercenarios. El pueblo os dará ocasión para rehacer vuestra vida si dejáis esa aventura. Los generales tratarán de huir al Extranjero. Ellos vienten desprecio a vuestras vidas; pero querrán salvar la suya.

Venid al lado del pueblo. Nosotros no fusilamos a los prisioneros. Fusilaremos a Franco y a Mola. Queremos la fraternidad entre los hombres.

Matad a vuestros jefes y venid a nuestro lado.

DODGERS WHICH LOYALIST FORCES DISTRIBUTE BY ROCKETS

CHAPTER IX

FRONT TRENCHES—NORTHWEST

Three days I visited front lines around Madrid with Carlos. He went every day to a different front, inspecting, organizing, carrying news to the forces, who hailed him informally with comradely greetings. The first day we ran into a shower of mortar bombs at Pozuelo. I knew that this northwest sector expected attack, for Franco had given up hope of direct assault on the street fortifications of Madrid and was trying instead to encircle the city, testing one part after another of a sixty-mile-long front.

As we drove out the Escorial road, the only signs of war were the trucks hurrying past us with supplies and the guards who stopped us at the turns of the road. But Carlos said: "The enemy is now on three sides of us. Some of his forces are between us and Madrid. The lines here bend back and forth; Pozuelo is a long peninsula jutting out into the enemy."

We were walking along the muddy street of a little ruined village to the steady rat-tat-tat of machine-guns on the slopes of the hill below. These, of course, were the guns of our own forces; they were so loud that it was difficult to talk. Suddenly I saw men running for cover, but I couldn't see why. A house on the hillside three hundred feet away began flaming; I heard an occasional thin whistle somewhere in the air. Then Carlos grabbed my arm.

"Get down into that gutter! Those are mortar bombs."

The gutter was uncomfortably damp and I couldn't see anything to hide from, but I got down. Other people were running behind walls. The street emptied magically except for four of us in the gutter. Beneath us on the hillside still sounded the machine-gun rat-tat-tat.

In fifteen minutes or so Carlos let us get out of the gutter. Meantime he had explained. "Mortar bombs go high in air and then come down, explode and scatter. They are not very direct in their aim. If one of them comes down where you are, no gutter will help. But the chances of that are small. It is fairly likely that one of them will land within a hundred feet or so, and scatter bits of iron in all directions. 'When that happens, it helps to be below the surface of the ground or protected by a wall.'"

The men at Pozuelo had no time for conversation; the exchange of firing kept them busy. Carlos finished his errands and took us

away. Next day on the Boadilla front there was more leisure. “We approached by peaceful-looking hills where peasants were ploughing and sheep were pastured in the sun. We were gradually approaching the top of a ridge.

“Don’t go to any place where you can see over,” said Carlos, “or the enemy can see you too.” The crest of the ridge, I saw, was roughly fortified. Beyond it, across the valley, was the enemy.

Just under the edge of the hilltop stood an ancient tower of stone—the castle of Villafranca, Carlos said a fort from the year 700. Inside we found an open fire, a pile of soldiers’ equipment, and a litter of newborn pups. “Born yesterday,” smiled the sergeant who rose to greet us. “The firing doesn’t seem to disturb them. But the castle is considerably older. And here”—he struck a cheerful pose, as of a host showing off his possessions—“is an authentic gramophone of the time of Don Quixote.” Again, as often, I marvelled at the Spanish sense of humor and of history, which survives at battlefronts, among untutored men.

Along the crest of the ridge soldiers were basking in the sunlight, drawing in warmth to resist the cold of the coming night in these hills. Some were cleaning their guns for the next attack; others showed us their trenches—rough ditches protected on the outer edge by sand-bags. I looked through the slit of a machine-gun emplacement and saw a smiling sunny valley beyond. Yet those sunny slopes were doomed to be strewn with corpses, in some not-far-distant attack.

A sign posted over a dugout read “Villa de los Intrepidus.” I went seven steps down and then ducked under the hill. Underground was a fine plate-glass mirror and a couple of coat-hangers, and bedding of several men laid out neatly on piles of straw.

“You’ve a fine house,” I said, “but the first rain will ruin it, running right down those steps to flood you out.”

“Rain comes in March,” they smiled in answer. “By March we’ll be in Seville.” But long before January ended, I heard of the heavy rains in Madrid, and even earlier of the desperate fighting on the slopes near Pozuelo and Boadilla, where Franco launched a main attack, drove forward and was again beaten back. And I knew that some of the boys who had talked to me so gaily were left on that valley and hill.

Some of them were Catalans from Barcelona, coming now to defend Madrid, once the hated capital of the oppressor, now the

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center of their common People's Front. I asked them for what they were fighting.

"For the cause of liberty and to snuff out fascism," said a nineteen-year-old peasant boy.

"They made me suffer as a miner at the age of eleven," said another. "But now begins good life for all workers." "All peoples in the world are listening," said another, "to what we do in Spain. It is very sure that we shall have the victory and we are glad, for this will help the whole world's fight for freedom."

Another said: "I have seen people in Barcelona and in Madrid who were hungry because they had no work. I have seen tillers of the soil who were hungry, while rich men kept the good land out of use. I think we fight for the good of all humanity, that all may work and eat."

Among them was a company of international fighters, who had enlisted in the early days in Barcelona, before the forming of the International Brigades. One of them was an older man, a German. "I came because I know what fascism is," he said. "I have lived three years in emigration. Spain took me in and gave me work, so I fight to protect my Spanish comrades from fascism. I should not wish these friends to know the bitterness of exile that I have known."

Two Italians sat on the edge of a trench moving bits of stone about on the soil. "We are planning a counter-offensive against Mussolini," they said.

All of this group was well informed and angry on the subject of foreign nations, and their knowledge and wrath was passed on to their simpler Catalan friends. It was not Germany and Italy alone that drew their wrath: they expected fascist nations to be foes. But the attitude of England and France was to them like a knife in the back from an expected friend.

"It is a mock to democracy and to international law, what they have done," a French boy from Barcelona said to me. "Yet Blum calls himself a Socialist. What he does is the death of socialism and of democracy! Can they not see that on this Madrid front we also defend France?"

"The reactionaries know it well enough," said a Belgian, "and the democrats don't care. If it were not for the indirect help the democratic governments thus give the fascists, we could long ago have finished them. But these big countries do it with impunity, disregarding the lives of thousands of men. Now there will be a long

hard war and heavy cost to all of us before we finish.” Never once did they doubt that they would finish, however long the war and hard the cost.

“What message do you want me to take to America?” I asked them.

“Tell them,” said a youth with the red-tasseled militia cap of Catalonia, “that if they don’t fight their oppressors they’ll be all their lives exploited. Tell them”—here he sent a grin at Carlos and the brigade commander who was with us—“that if they want good things to eat at Christmas such as we have, they also must fight as we do.”

“Did you have good things to eat at Christmas?” I asked them, puzzled at his meaning.

The youth puffed out his chest and made a grandiloquent gesture. “Magnifico!” he said. Then he laughed and hit his commander on the back, saying: “I think I must give her a good impression, what!”

Carlos explained: “This bunch is the only one that got no Christmas. It was a bad bit of organization. The presents from Catalonia went to another place where most of the Catalans are. And the presents from nearby went to men all around them. But this little bunch of Catalans—they were forgotten men! This is their way of protesting. Of course we’ll see that they get something now. But it won’t quite be Christmas!”... Such was the spirit of these front-line fighters, making the loss of Christmas cheer into that ironic boast.

Most of all on this northwest front I remember a Catalan boy of nineteen years, who was uneducated and yet so wise. When I repeated to him my question as to what message I should take from him to America, he began to thank me for the help the Mexican government had given.

Carlos began to explain to him that I came from a big, strong country north of Mexico. Others tried to tell him what sort of a land the United States was, but they grew a bit confused on this, for the role of the United States in this whole conflict was certainly far from clear.

The nineteen-year-old Catalan boy cut through their dilemma, brushing aside their irrelevant doubts.

“Wherever you are, you’ll have to fight fascism. You help us now; we’ll help you then.”

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THE AUTHOR AMONG MEN OF THE NORTHWEST FRONT
(In the corner of the lower picture is shown the Catalan boy
referred to at the end of the chapter.)

CHAPTER X

FRONT TRENCHES—LISTER'S BRIGADE

"You mustn't miss the Lister brigade," said Carlos. "The whole Fifth Regiment is proud of them."

On the way to the Villaverde front south of Madrid, he explained this. "These were the first battalions that we gave from our ranks to form the new Spanish People's Army. You are seeing Brigade Number One of the new unified army, under the unified command. It is a 'mixed brigade,' so-called because it is formed by mixing a few of the old, experienced officers with our recruits. It is no longer organized under a political party or trade union, as were the earlier forces. Its battalions are of uniform size, with commanders appointed for military skill and without regard to party. Instead of the 'Dawn Battalion,' the 'Victory Battalion,' the 'José Diaz Battalion,' there are simply battalions one to six, forming Brigade Number One of the unified army. They have given up their proud distinctive names for the prouder anonymity of numbers."

Lister himself, with a vivid dark face above a leather jacket which fastened with zippers down the front, is Galician by nationality and stone-mason by trade. He told me he had learned to shoot a year before the war began and had studied war manuals "because I thought the people would some day have to defend themselves against the militarists." He entered the ranks of the citizens' militia as a private at the beginning of the war and rose steadily and rapidly till he became commander of the famous Fifth. He told me this with a smile, making a vivid gesture by raising his hand from knee to shoulder to show how fast he rose. But he modestly refrained from telling me how of his own choice he gave up the command of 60,000 men to command the three or four thousand of the First Brigade.

He spoke instead of the political significance of this first brigade of the new Spanish Army, and of how the men strove to make it a model in every way—in discipline, comradeship, education and the proper care of the men. He called my attention especially to the fact that one of his six battalions is composed entirely of Galicians, that oppressed nationality in northwest Spain who speak a different language and have always considered Madrid their oppressor.

"Galicians fight to defend Madrid," he said proudly. "That is the unity of our front."

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A positive blast of comradeship and welcoming laughter met us as we approached the trenches, an amazing shock to a civilian who had expected only horror, exhaustion and lice in the front lines. Even the friendliness and good spirit of the fighters I had seen on the northwest front had not prepared me for the tremendous confidence and comradeship of Lister's men.

We passed first the camouflaged barbershop, a truck with three barber chairs and three barbers and a waiting line of men. Next to it the shower-bath truck, also camouflaged, which made the rounds of the front lines whenever they could connect it by rubber tubing with Madrid's water-mains.

"We like to keep clean," said Lister. "We disinfect the dug-outs every day."

At the foot of a barren hillside we came to the trench entrance. Beside it stood a challenging sign hand-lettered on a board: "Comrades, the liberty of the world lies in Madrid! Forward to Victory!" Such was the view of the war that was held by Lister's men.

They knew quite well—everyone in Madrid knows it—the significance of their defense of Madrid for Spain. They knew it was not merely the protection of the capital city, but that it gained time for the People's Front to organize an army out of raw citizen recruits. They knew they fought for their own liberty and the liberty of their country. They knew all this—and more. With fascist hordes from beyond Spain's borders coming in force to break the democracy of Spain, these Spaniards made of their breasts a wall against international fascism.

Meantime they had done a job of superlatively fine camping, arranging for a good life even in the front lines. Every turn of the trench as it followed the hillcrest was lettered with some street name. "Calle de Mejico," "Calle de la Bastilla," "Calle Nosotros" indicated their approval of Mexico and the French Revolution. "Puerta del Sol," lettered at the crossing of two trenches, was ironic reference to Madrid's most splendid square.

Similarly every dugout bore a name affectionately chosen by its inhabitants. "Hotel Moscow," "Hotel Madrid," "Hotel Morocco" stood over underground holes, each of which sheltered from ten to a dozen men. Nor were these holes without comfort. Their inhabitants had walled them with panel-board and furnished them with old leather sofas, mattresses and cushions, brought from a score of buildings which had been wrecked by the enemy's bombardment.

FRONT TRENCHES—LISTER'S BRIGADE

Lister's men knew they could fight better if they had a good night's sleep.

The most amazing achievement of the brigade was its underground school, a dugout fitted with regular school-desks brought from a ruined schoolhouse. It accommodated at one time twenty-four men. I stooped to enter its enclosure, and could not stand upright even after entering. But there was adequate head-room for people seated at desks. There was adequate light, also; it came through a long slit in the earth which admitted a view across three feet of trench and then through rifle-openings towards the enemy lines.

An eighteen-year-old under-sergeant, who himself had learned first from war and then from the school, told us its program of teaching—all the ordinary subjects of the grammar grades, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography—and explained that an evening class in the same dugout turned soldiers into non-commissioned officers. Another bright-eyed youth, who at twenty-two had become captain of a machine-gun detachment, confirmed him. Their dark eyes shone with happiness; they were full of laughter and energy. For them and for many other of these sons of the Spanish peasantry and working class, it was the first schooling they had ever known. They explained that there is much time in the trenches spent simply in waiting, and that they were getting an education while they waited. It was very plain that they expected to be victorious, and to survive in an educated Spain.

In a machine-gun emplacement at a corner of the front lines, Lister picked up a big, rusty megaphone and handed it to me with a smile. "Propaganda for the Moors," he said. "We call to them across No Man's Land, urging them to come over and quit fighting. They can take their choice—megaphone or machine-gun. We can use either."

In a tiny little dugout near the entrance to the trench—the neatest dugout of all—seventeen-year-old Antonita, in blue overalls, brown sweater, coral ear-rings under dark, smoothly combed, curly hair, held down the job of "political delegate" to a company. She had a desk made of a board shoved into the wall of earth; it was piled with notebooks, sharpened pencils, paper. Her task was to propagandize sanitation and school.

Antonita told me that she made the rounds of the dugouts twice daily—always accompanied by the captain, she assured me, as if in

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regard for the proprieties—reported on sanitation and order, supplied needed disinfectants, distributed daily newspapers to chosen men who read aloud to the others, wrote letters home for boys who couldn't write, chased into town on errands for the fighters, seeing their families and bringing back messages and even changes of clothing, and supplied Madrid factories with speakers from the front. She considered herself too young for the job and only hoped the war would end soon and allow her to go to school and get married. She had no ambitions whatever for a military career, but thought it was “everybody's duty now.”

I talked to dozens of these youths in Lister's trenches. They were vivid, laughing, full of confident energy. A short distance behind the front line a squad of anti-tank fighters was drilling. Their canvas belts stuffed with bright red hand-grenades added the only touch of a uniform, since all these fighters still wore only their own old clothes.

“We were terribly afraid of tanks at first,” they told me. “But we studied the Soviet film *We Are from Kronstadt* and saw how the workers of Leningrad fought the tanks.” Following the technique learned from this picture (which had been repeatedly shown by the Fifth Regiment's Propaganda Department), one of the young citizen-soldiers had accounted for four tanks in succession, slipping up under them and hurling into them hand-grenades.

A short distance behind the lines I dined with Lister and his staff of six or seven men and one woman, the wife of a battalion commander who served also as Lister's typist. The fare was thick, satisfying lentil soup, an omelette consisting chiefly of potatoes held together by a little egg, plentiful chicory salad with rather rancid olive oil, good cheese, some coffee and very excellent bread. There was wine for all, but Lister drank only water flavored with a slight licorice taste.

“The men get the same ration except for the tablecloth,” said Lister. “It is a bit short on meat and animal fats, and may get shorter in the future. ‘Whatever we have it will be the same for all.’”

No less than fifteen Madrid newspapers were delivered to the office of Lister's brigade, which keeps itself well informed on the world. I picked up the sixteen-page illustrated *Crónica* containing a “Review of the Week,” pictures on “The Night before Christmas in the Trenches,” articles on the organization of the food supply, on “Real Conditions in Barcelona,” on “The Delegation to the

Constitutional Congress of the USSR," and even on "King Edward's Romance."

Most of the other newspapers were dailies limited to four pages because of the paper shortage. There was the Left Republican *Política*, telling that "The fascists in Franco's territory assassinate thirty priests," and that "Food in enemy lines is scarce." There was the Communist *Mundo Obrero*, with eight inches bare white where the censor had deleted an article, and following this "Iron Unity! Our only enemy is Fascism!" The Republican *El Sol* shouted across eight columns "Our Victory Consolidates from Day to Day." *Informaciones*, formerly fascist but now enforcedly Republican, announced that "Discipline Will Win the War." There were Syndicalist papers, and more Republican papers, and right and left Socialist papers, and a paper of the United Socialist-Communist Youth, and papers of the Ministry of War and the Commissary Department and the little *Militia Popular*, the daily of the Fifth Regiment. I was amazed to find so many: it indicated the extent to which the life of Madrid, as a modern city, kept gallantly on.

Leaving the dinner table and his office, Lister drove next to a radio station to broadcast a speech. "Attention, attention... to all Spain! Fifty-six days Madrid holds out," he said, "against the forces of international fascism. They want to make of Spain a colony of fascist imperialism and a grave of living men. We won't consent... We will never consent." He stressed discipline, united command, other questions of the day. His words came like bullets. He ended: "Against international imperialism! Against international fascism! Comrades, fighting comrades, we fight for democratic liberties, we, the first mixed brigade of the People's Army of Spain... *No pasaran! Pasaremos!*—They shall not pass! We shall pass!"

Tea was served. Lister's eyes shone with surprise when he saw the special pudding, prepared as a surprise by the students of the military class. It was mixed of every possible ingredient and labelled "Lister Pudding," in allusion to the "mixed brigades" of all classes and parties which made up the new People's Army. They slapped their commander on the back; they laughed and jested.

Lister and his men went off to their various tasks and I went back to Madrid. But I was not surprised three weeks later when the drive of the People's Army southwards took the Cerro do los Angeles in the first important advance of the Madrid forces, to know that it was done by Lister's men, who received a special telegram of

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congratulation from Largo Caballero. For the sharpest single memory of all my weeks in Spain is that group of disciplined men with their school in the front-line trenches who fought for the “liberty of the world.”

CHAPTER XI

THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES

Thousands of men from all lands have seen the significance of the Spanish struggle in the same terms as Lister's men described it. Some have come to Spain to take part in the anti-fascist war. On every front and in every city I met them—mechanics, surgeons, aviators, engineers, military men—who have brought their skill and their lives to the battle for "the liberty of the world."

"I would rather die while stopping fascism in Spain than wait until it comes to Britain," said members of an English-speaking company. And a Czech beside him added: "I knew my duty and did it."

It was while I was hunting a room on that first day in Valencia that I met the first of these international fighters. I turned despondently away from the desk in Hotel Victoria to encounter a tall, military form in a long, black, rainproof slicker, with a vaguely familiar face. "You don't know me," he smiled, and as I still hesitated, he snatched the transforming military cap from the long, brown lock that curled aslant his high forehead. And I shouted: "Andre Malraux!"

Famous French writer, now turned aviator, Malraux was jolted out of his Paris study early last August by the crashing in French Morocco of an Italian airplane destined for the Spanish rebels. Investigation showed that both plane and pilot had a few days before been part of the Italian air-force, and this made plain to the world the help that Mussolini was giving the Spanish fascists. Then while British and French governments hesitated and finally moved towards the farce of "non-intervention," Malraux left his writing for the battle-front, to organize fighters of the air.

In the orange groves of an old chateau I visited his squadron. Sitting in a dining-room whose windows gave on a California landscape—brown and green, with low, white adobe buildings and a backdrop of mountains—Malraux pointed out the nationalities and political parties seated at the table, to show how truly international and inter-party it was. "French, French, Belgian, Czech, Italian," he told them off, and then: "Communist, Socialist, Republican, Communist, Anarchist."

In the first few months of the war, when the Spanish government, which never had had a modern air-force, found itself prevent-

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ed from acquiring one by blockade enforced in the name of neutrality, the Malraux squadron brought in almost the only modern planes the People's Front possessed. These were pitifully few and far outnumbered by the steady shipments of German and Italian planes that reached the fascists. Bernier, a lithe Belgian youth who acted as political commissar of the squadron, told me of those terrible weeks when plane after plane, meeting overwhelming numbers of the enemy, was shot down.

“Till at last we got down to one bomber, and that came back all shot up. Then for the last fortnight of October, the fascists were masters of the sky. There was no one to oppose them as they machine-gunned our forces on the earth. Then suddenly, when we were in the very depths of despair, there came that ‘mighty, mechanized air-force’ that Caballero spoke of. Twenty-five new pursuit planes in a single week took the enemy by surprise. Today the government’s aviation can more than hold its own with the rebels. Today our Malraux squadron is only a tiny fraction of the whole. It has, however, its political importance, in showing the solidarity of men from many nations.”

Malraux himself was fighting almost daily when I saw him, making one and sometimes two flights a day. The other members of the brigade protested, saying that if Malraux should be killed at the present stage of organization, the air squadron might go to pieces. Malraux told me he wished to break down the old tradition of the aloofness of officers from combat. “Besides,” he smiled, “it is easier to fight than to wait. The hardest moment of all is when the plane returns bringing in wounded. We run out to hail its return; not at first do we know that any have been injured. Then the door opens and they bring out wounded comrades. This, not the moment of battle, is the most dreaded in our squadron.”

One of the many flyers who gave their lives in the fight against fascism was Viezzoli, an Italian pilot who was five years imprisoned by the fascists. When at last he escaped from Italy and came to join the Malraux squadron, he was out of practice as pilot and took the post of bomber. Three Italian Fiats in the service of the rebels at once attacked the plane on which he worked. Viezzoli stepped into the place of a friend who was shot; a moment later he also fell in the unequal fight. Malraux told me that the men who brought his body back said that as he died he was smiling, “happy at last, after five years of helpless imprisonment, to have come to grips with Italian fascism.”

THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES

During the months when Malraux was organizing his air squadron, a very much larger and more important international help was taking form. It began with the spontaneous volunteering of German and Italian anti-fascist exiles. Many were already in Barcelona, which had given them hospitality and work. Others hastened thither from various lands of their exile and offered themselves to the people's militia. Soon volunteers from the democratic lands began to join them. Then, under the leadership of Andre Marti and the military generalship of General Kleber, the inflow of volunteers took organized form in the now famous International Brigades.

Never in any land in any group of people have I met such a combination of political intelligence and militant energy as I found in these International Brigades. Vividly I remember the evening in the Grand Hotel in Albacete, where many of these volunteers foregathered for coffee and cakes. A babel of all the European tongues arose from the crowded tables. Suddenly I heard English and moved towards the group that spoke it.

Hospitably they drew me down to their table and we began to exchange the news of the world. The conversation ranged with a high degree of intelligence from the strike in Seattle against Hearst's *Post-Intelligencer* to the recent meeting of the League of Nations. There was a railwayman from Vancouver, a trade-union organizer from Australia, a bus-driver from London who because of his fine World War record had become an officer here. But all of them said: "You must see Ralph Fox. He's our political commissar; he can tell you everything."

It was the first time I had met him, this talented British writer— young, quiet, eager, with the clear eyes of a man whose path is surer than his own life. Although he was leaving for the front the following morning, he gave his last hours to tell me about the Brigades. All his fervour was veiled by a decent British reticence; all his enthusiasm disciplined to conscientious choices. Every word and act in that whole evening was the distilled essence of careful, intelligent comradeship. He began by discussing the stories that were current abroad about the International Brigades.

"Try to dispel the idea that we are a foreign legion of mercenary adventurers such as exist on Franco's side. Nor are we, as others say, a Communist army. We are a real People's Front army from all the world. Inside our ranks there is freedom of organization for every political party except the fascist. We are doing the job that should

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have been done by our democratic governments, of whose retreat before fascism we are very much ashamed. We are important to Spain not because of our numbers, but because we show to the people of Spain that they are not abandoned, that fighters for freedom still exist throughout the world.

“We are also important because we bring special skills and World War experience to the Spanish people who have had no major war for a hundred years. At first we were only a few and scattered; then there became enough to form a brigade. Now there are several brigades, but we do not form them entirely of foreigners. We put battalions of Spaniards alongside battalions of foreigners, so that our military experience can be shared.

“Every nation is represented here. The anti-fascist Germans came first; they got the heaviest tasks and biggest casualties. Today the largest number are French and Belgians, with Germans and Italians next. Last week a transport brought 1,500 men of twenty nationalities. We want only convinced anti-fascists, serious men preferably with military experience. No drunks or adventurers need apply. All such we try to clean out before they get here.

“If they can’t send men,” he added, “let them send materials. Ground cloths, the rubber kind, not canvas; tea, any strong kind; cigarettes, any kind but French. Books, light literature, good biographies, something to read in English. Woolen socks, knit gloves and scarves. And pocket flashlights by the thousand, strong leather straps and maybe a dozen fifes or flutes.” Thus methodically he listed things, asking in the end for “ten prismatic compasses.”

Every moment was filled with this careful, unhurried planning; every motion was spent on the good of the brigade. Only once did he mention the chances of battle and this was incidental to his argument that the soldier’s wage of three pesetas a day and ten when in the lines was quite enough.

“You can’t spend any money at the front and so you come back with ten or fifteen dollars and only a day or two to blow it all in. For nobody would be foolish enough to go back to the lines with any money.” The veiled meaning in that casually elusive sentence haunted me through the night and made me seek him out next morning for one more reticent good-by. Ten days later I learned that he had been killed in battle in a courageous assault on the Cordova front.

The world-wide struggle against fascism breaks down many

ancient national barriers. In Madrid I met Hans and Dumont, who in the World War fought opposite each other at Verdun and again at the second battle of the Marne, Hans as a member of the German general staff, and Dumont commanding a battalion of French shock troops. Both of them today fight side by side for the People's Front in Spain; both are commanders in the International Brigades. Their political commissar is an Italian, Nicoletti, who asked me to tell America of their needs.

"The Spanish people share with us all they have," he told me. "They gave us Christmas presents as to their own people. But the economic situation here is grave and will grow graver. Already there is no butter; oil and all fats are scarce. If France and England continue on their present lines, Spain may be exposed to real famine. Are there not somewhere in rich America people who can take patronage over our various battalions; America also has all the nationalities even as we have: Germans, Italians, Jugoslavs, Poles, Hungarians. They went to America looking for freedom. Couldn't they take patronage over the men of their own tongue who are fighting here for freedom, so that we need not be a burden on the impoverished Spain we came to help?"

"What do you need?" I asked him, remembering the list Ralph Fox had given,

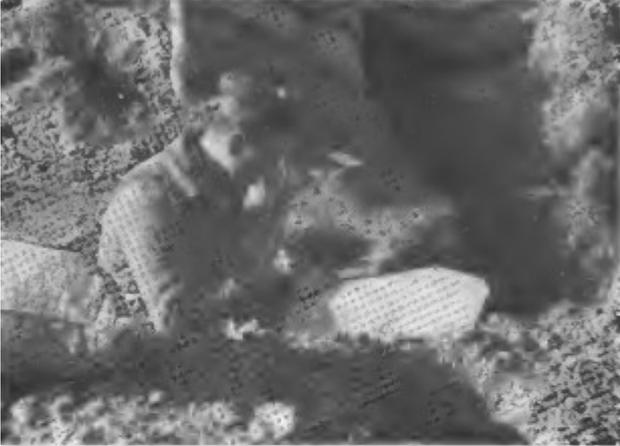
"Eight lives were saved in the past few days by the field-operating ambulance that recently came from Paris," he answered. "Eight lives—lives of our brave comrades—that was a good gift. Many still die for lack of good transport and because we have no means of quick operation. We have information that Italy and Germany are sending lots of gas, and we have no anti-gas ambulance. Even first-aid packages do not exist for everyone, and anesthetics are scarce. And couldn't someone send us a few tons of that coffee that Brazil burns up for lack of a market. There's nothing that men want more than a cup of coffee after a cold night on the ground.

"We have the right to appeal," he said, "to all progressive people who love the cause for which we die. For what we are doing is done for all of them, not only for Spain. We are a handful here, holding the front-line against fascism, which threatens the whole world."

So I must pass on the appeal as he made it, giving to those who wish a chance to share. For when history records the retreat of the democratic governments before the whirlwind of fascism, it will

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also record the rise in every land of men who heard the call of international democracy, and fought for it on the battle-front in Spain.



AMONG THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHTERS

CHAPTER XII

BARCELONA EXPERIMENTS

“Madrid makes wars; Barcelona makes revolutions. This is a sort of division of labor that runs through a century of Spanish history.”

Miravittles, whose cheerful wit handed me this epigram, is a Minister of Propaganda with a keen sense of humor. As a Catalan separatist he was seven times arrested, though his twenty-nine years make him still reasonably young. “I began my career at the age of fifteen, by throwing a bomb at a king. It didn’t explode; they never do!” he said.

“But I’m not a separatist now,” he smiled. “Separatism is only, to borrow Lenin’s phrase, an ‘infantile malady’ of Catalonianism. My present idea is a federal union of all the Iberian Republics—of course with Barcelona as the capital!” His charming style removed the sting from what is really the Barcelona idea.

“Is Barcelona Spain’s chief strength or Spain’s chief problem?” I asked of the wisest man I met in Catalonia.

“They are not mutually exclusive. It might be both,” he answered.

Yes, it is both. Catalonia is the chief industrial center, and modern industry is the energizer of progress for both the capitalist and the socialist revolutions. But Catalonia is also a difficult problem because century-long conflicts between an oppressed and an oppressor nation have bred separatism into the very bones of the Catalan.

“WE beat OUR fascists in two days and began our social reorganization!” This is the typical boast of Barcelona. They will add, to complete the proud picture: “And we’ve taken thousands of fighters from our Aragon front and sent them to help Madrid.” Put in those terms, it means that the Catalan feels himself a willing and useful ally, but he can hardly feel in his bones that Madrid is “his” city. The Catalan isn’t to blame for this. It was done to him by history.

For more than a century the thrusts of democratic progress began in Catalonia and were defeated by the rest of Spain. These thrusts had rise in the growing industries of Barcelona, but since that industry was in part colonial and dependent, it never grew quite strong enough to overthrow the feudal lords. When the first Constitutional Assembly was called in 1812 in Cadiz, its president was a

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Catalan and so was its leading theoretician. In 1841 a Spanish re- gent abdicated under pressure from Barcelona, but again reaction asserted itself. A new insurrection in 1873 formed the first Spanish Republic with a Catalan as president, but once again feudalism rallied and the monarchy came back. These were only the chief episodes of a century-long struggle related to me by Miravittles. “Was it any wonder,” he concluded, “that Catalans lost confidence in the state, that their middle classes turned to separatism and their working class to anarchism?”

The Catalonian trade unions also look back to a full century of struggle, since they first organized to fight for higher wages and shorter hours in 1835. The anarchist trend came later, when the many attempts to achieve a democratic state had been defeated. Repeated and bloody suppressions were imposed by the ruling class of Spain and Catalonia on the Barcelona workers. After the World War, especially, the stupidity of Barcelona capitalists who speculated wildly in German marks, brought a perpendicular drop in the economic life of Catalonia. Wages were slashed, workers resisted, and the rulers replied with a reign of terror. Between 1920 and 1923, according to Miravittles—himself neither worker nor Anarchist but a member of the middle-class Esquerra Party—more than 3,000 workers were killed in the streets of Barcelona, mostly by assassination by police gangsters. Among the important leaders thus slaughtered was the cripple Layret, who stood helpless while the assassin poured eleven shots into his body.

Such was the heritage of Barcelona’s workers. Such were the memories that nerved them last July to cross open squares against machine-guns, seizing them with bare hands. The fascist revolt was put down speedily in Barcelona. Most of the larger corporation heads, hoping for and expecting a fascist victory, closed their factories and fled. But the economic life of Catalonia must proceed; the factories had to be opened. The workers of Barcelona opened them and organized them, and began to run them for the winning of the war. They ran them in the name of their shop committees and trade unions, not in the name of any government. For they had no trust in any kind of state.

This was the beginning of a series of experiments, some of which have been rather costly. In every factory the workers raised their own wages, expecting to get them either from government subsidy or from increased prices. Ninety million pesetas were taken

from state funds to make good these increases. Each union was a law to itself and strove to increase its power. The transport-workers' union, for instance, seized the fruit and food markets and raised the prices on food until there was a buyers' strike. Such is the respect given by syndicalist philosophy to the sovereignty of each trade-union group that even the Central Committee of the National Confederation of Labor has no authority to give orders to its constituent unions.¹ Every separate village committee was supreme in its village, and not infrequently refused to send food to Barcelona on the terms the city unions proposed.

None the less Barcelona continued to function through the energy, common sense and organizing will of its workers. "We are always going bankrupt," said Miravittles, "yet somehow we still keep on." An American mechanic, working in one of the big plants in Barcelona and acquainted with conditions in others, told me production is "just about as good" as it was under former owners. At first, he said, the more backward workers considered that the plant belonged only to the workers in it, and that they might run it as they chose. But now the trend is toward a wider unit of control—at present the industry. This is being pushed now by the leaders in both the big federations of trade unions—the General Workers Union (UGT) with its socialist-communist tendencies and the National Confederation of Labor (CNT) with its anarcho-syndicalist tendencies.

Three major political groups exist in Catalonia. The Esquerra is a middle-class progressive party with a strong Catalonian nationalist tendency. The Anarchists, of course, are not a "party"; they express themselves in government through the anarcho-syndicalist trade unions, which have always been the strongest force of organized labor in Catalonia, and still control nearly all the transport workers, most of the building workers and a majority of the metal workers. The third group consists of the united socialist forces. Till 1931 there was practically no Marxist movement in Catalonia; it began only after the Republic and remained feeble until last July. The Communists and several Socialist parties united in a single party, the United Socialists of Catalonia, affiliated with the Communist

¹ Any more than the American Federation of Labor can give orders to the separate craft unions, which are supreme. The jurisdictional disputes, which in the A F of L affect only small groups in the community, in Catalonia affected the whole of life.

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International. Since then they have been growing rapidly, especially among those groups that were formerly unorganized—office workers, civil servants, peasants—but also winning some sections of the basic industries to their advocacy of centralized control through a socialized state.

The government of Catalonia is unique in its formation; it is composed of representatives not primarily of parties but of trade unions. When I arrived there the council had just been reorganized, eliminating the POUM.² This organization, more or less confusedly Trotskyist in character, had, though rather small in numbers, gained a seat in the council through the support given them at the time by some sections of the trade unions under anarchist influence. While sitting in the People's Front government, the POUM had, however, continued to attack the government violently, denouncing the whole program of the People's Front, demanding what they called a union of "the revolutionary workers" against "all the bourgeois," calling also for the soldiers to turn against the People's Front, and continuously attacking the USSR, which the Spanish people already regarded as their chief friend. Through these disruptive tactics it had lost ground among the people and antagonized even its former allies. In the new council, of eleven members, there were three representatives of the Esquerra (as a party); four of the CNT; three of the UGT and one of the Union of *Rabassaires* (Tenant-Farmers). The president is a member of the Esquerra, Luis Companys, a lawyer who because of his long devoted labor for the workers in their struggles has won the devotion of all their groups. He is deeply and passionately loved by the masses; they exhaust his high-strung nervous frame by their many demands.

I came to see Companys through many arches and colonnades of the most beautiful old monastery I have ever seen. One secretary passed me to the next; I was conducted ceremoniously over an ancient stone bridge past a carved stone bench where two guards sat in picturesque red and black. Thus to the silence of a soft velvet-carpeted room and a slight man with tense nerves and burning eyes.

"No formal interview, please. No notes. He is too tired for that. He is leaving early tomorrow for a few days in a fishing village to catch up on his work." Thus the secretary.

² Partido obrero de unificación marxista, or Workers' Party of Marxist Unification.

BARCELONA EXPERIMENTS

Companys is a progressive democrat in politics; he expressed tremendous admiration for Roosevelt. "We are fervent believers in democracy," he told me with passion. He was cold to the idea that Barcelona might be undergoing a social revolution. "Social change, yes, deep social changes; but through democracy, not through violence." But the most revealing moment came when I asked him about the churches. Barcelona, of course, is known as the center of the anti-clerical fight, where more than anywhere else there was destruction of church property.

Companys gave at first the expected answers, pointing out that the Spanish Church had fought against the people, that the fascist rebels had systematically used the churches as depositories of munitions, and had fired from them with machine-guns against the government forces. It was no wonder, he said, that at this the people felt a passionate bitterness which led to destruction of church buildings. Then he added with deep feeling the words which gave me a key to his character.

"We are not against the religious instinct, nor against the forms of its expression in any cult. When this passionate bitterness at the traitorous clergy dies down... We are *men!* And in all men's hearts is a yearning towards the infinite." It was said with terrific sincerity, with deep, vibrant passion. Said thus, in the halls of government, it made evident that the very head of government—in "red, anarchist, church-destroying Barcelona"—is a fervently religious man.

To Companys, progressive democrat in politics, falls the complicated task of combining various tendencies of the People's Front in Barcelona, and of inducing this passionately nationalist folk to fight on behalf of their ancient enemy, Madrid. He demands order and discipline from a people who for two generations have resolutely hated the old Spanish state. Yet in demanding this he only expresses the need which is deeply felt among the wide masses and among the responsible leaders of all parties—the need of a fighting unity to beat fascism.

In Catalonia more than elsewhere it has been difficult to achieve this unity; there are so many complex conflicts of the past to live down. Yet it is being achieved, under pressure of the present conflict and the common need. Catalan forces went forth, some in the Carlos Marx regiment organized by the United Socialists, and some under the command of the famous Anarchist, Durutti, to fight for the defense of Madrid; his death on that front and the tremen-

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dous funeral that followed in Barcelona drove deep into the souls of hundreds of thousands of Catalans the knowledge that Madrid of the People's Front is now their own.

Step by step the welding of united programs follows this deep, inner realization. Last October the two great federations of trade unions adopted a united program: for a social program with due respect for the rights of the small proprietor; for municipalization of land; for nationalization of banks; for recompense to foreign capital for requisitioned properties. There are still tendencies towards separatism in Catalonia; there are still groups that raise demands for separate army, separate finance, separate monopoly of foreign trade. There are still trade-union leaders who fight to maintain their own separate forces. But the forces moving towards unity grow always stronger. People of all groups predicted to me that the two great federations of workers would become, in the not too distant future, one body; that the tendency towards a wider base of social control would grow beyond the factory, beyond the industry, beyond even Catalonia; and that any individual leaders who held out against this great need of the people for unity and discipline, will be thrust aside by their own followers. According to the speed and the extent of this process, Catalonia will become the strength of Spain.

"Will this happen fast enough to prevent the marching in of the fascists?" I asked of a well-informed foreign observer, who had seen the revolutionary movements of many lands.

"It is not happening fast enough to prevent much waste motion, much suffering, much cost in life. But it will happen fast enough to prevent the victory of fascism. The workers now live better than before in Barcelona; that is one fact. The tenant-farmers got relief from rents; they own their land; and all the farmers are relieved from heavy taxes. That is a second fact. These two classes have gained something which they will fight for. Through every form of organization, with or against every leader, they will press towards the unity they need for fighting. I cannot imagine any power in Europe strong enough to turn the clock back now in Barcelona."



PLEAS FOR DISCIPLINE AND UNITY

CHAPTER XIII

WHITHER SPAIN? WHITHER EUROPE?

The question "Whither Spain" would be relatively simple if it were only Spain. The officers' armed treason was beaten in its first week by the rising of the people, and the press of the world admitted the Spanish government victorious—one need only refer to the *London Times* and the *New York Times* at the end of last July. The government had won in all main centers of population—Barcelona, Madrid, the Basque steel region; *it had won*. The fortified strongholds held by the rebels were expected soon to fall. But with Franco's clear failure Hitler and Mussolini came to his rescue, with arms, officers, and eventually troops in increasing numbers. So the question became: "Whither Europe?"

Documents unearthed in the raid on German Nazi centers in Barcelona and later in Madrid¹ make it plain that the connecting network between German Nazi agents and the reactionary Spanish generals existed long before the revolt. The connection was, moreover, soon made evident to all the world who were willing to see. There was the incident, already referred to, of the Italian airplane which on its way to Franco landed through misadventure in French Morocco in early August: investigation showed that both machine and pilot had been part of the regular Italian air-force only a few days before. "By the first of August," says an investigation of the Foreign Policy Association² "the Insurgents were reported to be receiving effective aid from Italy and Germany in the form of bombing planes, artillery and other supplies." The "rebels were handicapped by small numbers"; in other words, they hadn't the people. But they "had the advantage in aircraft, tanks, artillery, modern machine-guns and war machinery of all sorts. At the start of the revolt, they were credited with 20 to 30 planes, but by October they had been strengthened by 100 Italian and German aircraft, and

¹ *La "Non-Intervention" dans les Affaires d'Espagne: Documents publics par le Gouvernement de la République Espagnole.* (White Book distributed by Spanish Delegation to League of Nations at Geneva during League Assembly, October 1, 1936.)

² Vera Micheles Dean: *European Diplomacy in the Spanish Crisis.* Foreign Policy Reports, December 1, 1936.

40 Italian tanks. Foreign correspondents with the rebel army reported that its backbone was now composed of Italian, German and Moorish troops. Italian officers in national uniforms were to be seen at many points along insurgent lines.”³ Italian forces were in undisputed possession of Majorca, the largest of the Balearic Islands, which commands the approach to Barcelona, Marseilles and the Straits of Gibraltar.

The Spanish conflict censed to be a civil war; it became an armed invasion by the fascist powers of Europe against the Spanish people. As early as mid-August of 1936 this fact was evident when the frontier guards of Portugal turned back the fleeing civilians of Badajoz to be slaughtered by their enemies. Month by month intervention increased and became more shameless, till in February 1937 Italian newspapers celebrated the fall of Malaga as an Italian victory, and the *New York Times* correspondent following the rebel armies reported that the troops that took it were “15,000 Italians, several thousand Germans, a detachment of Moors and the Foreign Legion.”

The cynical atrocities of this invasion carry one back to the Dark Ages. Insurgent leaders brag of their butchery and openly incite to loot and rape. “For our final victory,” says Queipo de Llano over his radio, “three of four million Spaniards must die. If they do not die on the field of battle, I promise on my honor that they will be shot by our legionaries and our Moroccan troops.” In every town and village taken the insurgents have made good this boast on the bodies of men and women and children. A Moroccan commander rallied his mercenaries with the pronouncement: “Forward to the storming of Madrid! In a week we shall set you free and you can do anything you like. In Madrid there is everything. If you like a thing and want it, we shall close our eyes.”⁴

Against such forces the Spanish people fight for their national independence and for the liberty of the world. They are a people poor, and only partly literate, badly armed and inexperienced in war. But they know what freedom is, and they intend to hold it. And they know they stand in the front-line against dark forces that threaten to engulf all Europe.

³ *New York Times*, October 23 and 1936, summarized by *Foreign Policy Reports*, January 15, 1937.

⁴ See *The Nation*, February 10, 1937.

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“Better to die standing than to live kneeling,” cried Dolores Ibarruri, and her words re-echo through all Spain.

In all my journey to Alicante, Valencia, Albacete, Barcelona, rural villages, and the front-lines of Madrid, I did not meet a single Spaniard who admitted the possibility of Franco’s coming to power. The tremendous confidence of the people struck me like a battering ram in all those days in Spain. They had taken power and freedom in their hands and they intended to hold them as long as they held life.

Only one question they raised about the issues of battle. “Can we beat Franco soon enough to prevent a European war?” This is the real question. They answered it in various words, yet with the same meaning.

“If there had been no foreign help,” they said, “we had him beaten last July. Then Spain would have been at peace, and no source of war to Europe.... If we had been allowed by the democratic lands to arm when the fascists armed the rebels, we should have beaten them by Christmas.... But now... If twenty thousand Italians and Germans come, we shall beat them... if forty thousand come, we shall also beat them, but more slowly.... If a hundred thousand come, that’s already an army of occupation. France can’t stand for that, nor can England. Short of a permanent army of occupation, Franco cannot survive on Spanish territory; and an army of occupation means European war.”⁵

Those are the clear alternatives, and they see them clearly. But the governments of the capitalist democracies do not choose to see. They cover their heads before the whirlwind of fascism; they naively hope that they can buy off or placate it. “Let it work its will of murder and rape among the Spanish people, so that it may leave our land alone.” This is the confused fear in the minds of millions of people, as they rush into non-intervention pacts or neutrality laws to keep aloof from the Spanish conflict, hoping that they at least may be saved. And behind the scenes the reactionary forces, who know quite well that to hold “aloof from Spain” means to aid her invaders, cynically exploit this panic of the people, delivering them bound into the hands of the fascists who set the stage for world war.

⁵ *Foreign Policy Reports*, January 15, also says that if a military-fascist dictatorship wins, it must rely on foreign troops and financial aid.

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England and France are divided personalities. The common people instinctively sympathize with the Spanish people's fight, but they are confused by appeals to religion and their will is paralyzed by the reactionaries, who play upon their dread of war. Even the ruling class in these countries is divided: its national interests are on one side and its class interests on the other. A German-Italian conquest of Spain endangers both France and the British Empire, but they think it does not endanger the rule of British capitalists over British workers as does a victory by the People's Front. So the class interests have proved paramount. The rulers of Britain feel safer in the old diplomatic game of force and fraud—even if the hand it holds be unfavorable—than in any common people's "new deal." By bringing pressure on France, which more than anything fears isolation in the face of an armed Germany,⁶ the British ruling class enforced a blockade against the Spanish government by the neutral nations, and covered by diplomatic evasions and delays the shipments made by the fascist lands to the rebels.

The British ruling class thus helped the rebels in a way Hitler or Mussolini could not. They did it piously and cheaply, as befits the supreme traders of the world. But why did the people of America follow? What powers behind the scenes played through the press on their hunger for peace and their ignorance of the issues of the conflict? Is the America of Roosevelt, like the America of Wilson, doomed to follow blindly the lead of Tory Britain into the international shambles by that same old slogan of "keeping out of war?"

England and France brought pressure also on the Soviet Union, but the Bolsheviks used their brains. No one who has been in the USSR for the past six months, as I have, doubts that the heart and will of the Soviet people and their government are completely with the people of Spain. No one who has carefully followed their policy doubts that from the first moment they asked but one question: "What is the most effective way to help? What will most assist the victory of the Spanish people and undermine this international enemy which threatens the world with war?"

⁶ By informing Blum that if France sold arms to the Spanish government and thereby got into trouble with Germany, England would not consider this "unprovoked aggression," i.e. would not be bound to come to the aid of France. This has been France's chief dread ever since Versailles.

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Sharply and clearly they saw the situation. The fascists of the world were attacking the Spanish people. The peoples of the democratic lands were confused. Their press was giving them tales of red atrocities and lauding the rebels as defenders of the Church. The governments of England and France proposed a pact of non-intervention, inviting all Europe to join. Was it a smoke-screen behind which to aid the fascists, or was it sincerely designed? What matter?

“Only the People’s Front of the world can help the People’s Front of Spain to final victory against fascism”... This Moscow saw. And alone against all governments, the Soviet Union began to organize that People’s Front of the world.

Her first act was to protest against the non-intervention agreement as a slight to the legitimate government of Spain. Her next act was to agree to sign it, on condition that Germany, Italy and Portugal also did. Portugal, the wide-open channel for arms whom the British authors of the pact had omitted; The Soviet Union secured her entrance as the price of her own. Then from her post in the Non-Intervention Committee she steadily exposed to the world how the fascist lands broke the agreement. She concentrated the eyes of the world on these breaches, until they were clear to all. Meantime she poured into Spain shipload on shipload of food and clothing for women and children—twelve million dollars’ worth of gifts—till every port of Loyalist Spain was full of demonstrations for the Russians and the common people throughout the land were saying: “The Germans send bombs to destroy us but the Russians send us bread.”

Under these tactics the People’s Front of the world rallied. Anti-fascist fighters poured into Spain. The liberal and labor press began to demand some action from their governments to check the fascists. Did the Russians hope that France would act, or England? If so, in this they failed. But when at last the Soviet Union announced in early October that since other countries were breaking the pact to help the rebels, she would no longer “be more bound than the other nations,” her statement met with acceptance and even approbation from such significant groups as are represented by the *Manchester Guardian*, *News Chronicle* and *London Daily Herald*. The forces of Europe crystallized, with the liberals and labor groups largely anti-fascist. And when Soviet help came to Spain, it was as leading the international help from the People’s Front of the world.

WHITHER SPAIN? WHITHER EUROPE?

Whither Spain? And whither Europe? The answer lies not alone on the Madrid battle-front and not alone in Rome, Berlin or Moscow. It lies in England, in France, in America, in the struggle of world-wide forces which are crystallized by the war in Spain. "Spain," says Marcelino Domingo, "has become a universal conscience." Already the struggle begun in Spain has come to affect all countries.

This is the battle that widens across the world: Fascism, and against it the People's Front. In Spain the People's Front is militant and conscious. In France it holds power under both international and internal pressures. In other lands it is only taking form. If the People's Front of the world could decide swiftly, it would scrap the farcical neutrality laws and allow the Spanish government to buy what arms they needed; and the People's Front in Spain would win. This is the first alternative, if the People's Front of the world should act.

What would this mean for Spain and for Europe? The Spaniards of every party have answered me for the People's Front of their country. A democratic republic of a type new in history, with big landlords eliminated, big business nationalized, and with workers, peasants, and small enterprisers moving towards increasing socialization, through mutual concessions and unhindered by large-scale private capital. For Europe it would begin the overthrow on an international scale of those dark forces which drag humanity towards war and backward to the Middle Ages. Fascism dare not attack the democratic forces of the world if these act jointly. Even a few determined moves by France or Britain (as in the case of Morocco) bring swift retreat by Germany and Italy. It is the cynical "neutrality" of the democratic lands, confused and panicked from within by their own fascists, which hands the world over to fascism, one country at a time.

What is the other alternative, if the People's Front of the world delays, worried and disorganized by shrewd reactionaries into holding aloof from Spain? Even now reaction lifts its hand in America, in the name of patriotism and neutrality, to strike down those who would offer any gifts at all to democracy fighting for its life in Madrid. If reaction thus succeeds in all the capitalist democracies, there will follow steady penetration of Spain by more and more foreign fascist armies—have the fascists yet kept a single promise?—till the Spanish people are forced to the caves and hills. Till, fighting from village to village, from valley to valley, all Spain becomes a white-

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hot furnace of torment, out of which war flames to Europe.

The American press encourages the feeling: "Let them get it over quickly, whoever wins." They mean, of course, let Franco win with his foreign troops. They encourage the American people to believe that this, however bad for Spain, would mean peace for Europe. But if Spain can be held down—which I doubt—under the heel of the foreign invader, all Europe knows that Czecho-Slovakia comes next. The appetite of fascism grows by what it feeds on. Czecho-Slovakia, with three and a half million Germans within its borders—how easy to stage a revolt there against "the oppressions of Prague," and send out Hitler's troops to rescue their fellow-Aryans. The Czechs know this and are worried. They have said to me: "We have no Francos in our army; we've taken care of that. We figure we could stand off the whole armed might of Germany—for about one week. After that it is up to France and the Soviet Union, or Czecho-Slovakia will cease to exist." And the Belgians told me, when I visited Brussels last September: "Our own fascists are increasing; we fear we shall be next after Spain." And France—with fascism triumphant on three borders—Italy, Germany, Spain—France too would face both civil and foreign war with fascism, inspired both from within and from without her borders.

So I come back to the words which Marcelino Domingo said to me six months ago in Paris, and which every month since then has underlined:

"Spain is the front trench of a battle-line which crosses all frontiers into all the democratic lands. If the democratic forces in Spain should be destroyed, it is not Spain alone that will be destroyed, but universal democracy will suffer a blow, and the democratic lands of the world will face a war in which already they will have lost the first battle."

It may be the Spanish people will save their freedom without us, without you, without me. It may be the liberty of Spain, if not of the world, can be won without us, by those half-literate, determined boys I saw in the trenches of Madrid. Or it may be they will fight on against ever-increasing waves of foreign fascists, till Europe flames up in war. But how easy we make it for fascism to pick us off one by one, while the others remain "neutral," distorting neutrality to mean what it never meant before. Only the People's Front of the world can finally end fascism. If it acted now, it could stop even the threat of war. But the longer we wait, the harder it will be, and the bloodier.