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Fighting for Liberty in Spain

The startling news from Spain, writes Gerald W. Johnson in the Baltimore Evening Sun, "is not the bombardment of this or that town, not the advance of this or that column, not even the eventual success of Government or rebels. It is simply that there are yet in Europe—and in sleepy, lethargic old Spain at that—millions of men and women who cherish liberty so highly that they cheerfully die in its defense.

The fact that the poor devils may be cherishing an illusion doesn't alter the case. They are fighting for their beliefs.

It seems to us that the most tragic aspect of the civil war in Spain is that, whichever side wins, liberty will probably be dead for a long time to come. A dictatorship, either of the right or the left, is in prospect: repression, proscriptions, execution or banishment for the leaders of the losing faction, no free press or free speech.

In Mr. Johnson's essay, it is only the leftists who are fighting for liberty. There is no suggestion that tens of thousands of rebels are doing the same thing, or believe they are. And the point of his essay is that the heroism of men who are willing to give up their lives for what they believe is right merits the admiration of the world. "The fact that the poor devils may be cherishing an illusion doesn't alter the fact." If that be true, then the rebels—the mass of them, even if it be conceded that the military clique, the villain in the piece, is utterly wicked—are just as worthy of admiration as their adversaries.

Anita Brenner has an article in the Nation on "Who's Who in Spain," in which she estimates that the proportion of the population on the Fascist (rebel) side "is probably 3 or 4 million of the total 24 million." Besides the "hired mercenaries," the "high-ranking officers of the regular army," "the civilian irregulars from the top and the dregs of Spanish society," there is, writes Miss Brenner, "the peasant element drawn mainly from the north, the only part of Spain where there is any considerable number of small, prosperous farmers. They are conservative, devoutly Catholic, and linked to the large land-owners, especially the wheat-growers, through financing and market organizations, particularly the Catholic farmers' cooperatives. The religious factor weighs very strongly with them."

Now, the small farmers and the other Spaniards who have espoused the rebel cause may be, in large part, the dupes of their priests, and it may be that they are being used for the selfish purposes of the Fascist chieftains with whom the priests are in alliance. But it is also possible that great numbers of lowly and untutored men in the other camp are being used for the selfish purposes of ambitious leaders. There is little reason to doubt that, as far as faith in their cause is concerned, the masses of the rebels are just as sincere as the masses of the leftists; that each force is defending itself, and attacking the other force, and committing barbarities, with the absolute conviction of righteousness. Indeed, the conviction of righteousness may be the best explanation of the barbarities. As Mr. Johnson remarks in his re-

view of a biography of Robespierre: "When a man knows beyond peradventure that he is right, he becomes capable of villainies that might appall a Fouché or a Talleyrand."

If either the leftists or the rebels are to win a complete victory in Spain, we should rather that it be the leftists. But our preference for them is without enthusiasm. Our choice is what we take to be the lesser of two evils.

Of course nobody knows just what sort of a government is coming for Spain, but the closest modern parallels to the situation there—the revolutions in Russia and Italy and Germany—indicate that it will not be a republican government with free elections, a free press, and free speech. The rebel leaders make no concealment of their intention to establish a dictatorship. And if the leftists win, the likelihood is that the extremists within their ranks will seize control of the country, just as the Bolsheviks seized control of Russia after the brief interval of Kerensky. In which event, liberty, as we understand liberty in America, will certainly not prevail in Spain.

Here are reports and comments upon the civil war in Spain, from both the right and the left point of views:

William T. Studdard, British journalist, who was in Madrid when the revolt began, writes from Marseilles for the New York Herald Tribune:

"Many persons abroad, apparently unacquainted with Spain and her politics, believe that the civil war is a fight between democracy and dictatorship. This is a great mistake, because whichever side wins the probability that democracy will survive in Spain is slim.

"The issues in the civil war are clear. The rebellion is a national movement of many classes—Right Republicans, Monarchists, Catholics, traditionalists and others—who have combined efforts to save Spain from the so-called People's Front government which is dominated by Red elements—Communists, Socialists, Syndicalists and Anarchists. The rebels want to save their country from the domination of Moscow and they regard the war as a fight to save Christianity.

"In Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and other territory controlled by the People's Front government, there has been a wanton destruction of churches, convents and monasteries, with their works of art from many centuries past. Priests and nuns have been murdered in cold blood.

"The Soviet star, hammer, and sickle are painted over the facades of other churches. Many churches have been seized by Marxists as headquarters for their organizations. Private houses and palaces also have been seized by radical groups.

"Red or red and black flags are to be seen waving over scores of buildings in Madrid. Outside many cafes and hotels are printed or chalked notices that the buildings are controlled by the Syndicalist or Socialist labor organizations.

"According to Premier Jose Giral Pereira, a weak-appearing pharmacist who is also Minister of the Navy, persons of Rightist sympathies have not been executed in Madrid on the wholesale scale that they were in Barcelona. Nevertheless, professional workers in Madrid, wives of Monarchists and Right-Wing Republicans, as well as similar credible sources, assert that more than 500 priests, Fascists and other members of the Right were taken from their Madrid homes in the middle of the night and slain in the Casa de Campo,

a large park on the outskirts of the capital, during the first three weeks of the civil war.

"President Manuel Azana's Left Republican party and the Republican Union party—the two parties on which the present Spanish government was formed—are the virtual slaves of the Marxists, who have saved the government so far by waging stubborn war with the Rightist forces on the various fronts.

"If the Madrid government should win the civil war, these Marxists groups would overrun the handful of bourgeois and Left Republicans and seize power. Even this would not bring peace because then, so it appears, the Syndicalist labor organization and other Marxist groups would fight each other for supremacy and Spain would be plunged into a state of anarchy unpleasant to contemplate."

From an editorial in the Nation:

"While the chanceries of London and Paris indulge in telephonic consultations and convince themselves by their much speaking that they are getting something done, the Spanish proletariat is making a heroic stand against the menace of renewed slavery. The Spanish masses are the best educated politically in the Western world. They know as well as the Hitlers and Mussolinis, the Baldwins and Blums, what is in the balance. If there is one thing more striking than another about this extraordinary war, it is the lack of individual heroes. The hero is the mass—the mass that mobilizes itself, arms itself, feeds itself, and hurls itself against the insurgents in a great, irresistible wave."

From Anita Brenner's article in the Nation:

"The struggle in Spain must be regarded in three ways: It is a major battle in the revolutionary march of the world; it is a deadly game of international politics; it is the climax of modern Spanish history. The decisive factors in each, however, are all facets of one thing, class war. Its outcome in Spain must affect the fate of millions in every country.

"In the press, this fact of class war, and its international character, is hidden behind an opaque screen of ignorance, misunderstanding, and downright lying. The Spanish people are gratuitously insulted every day in most of our newspapers. Time, for example, calls the women peasants and workers who are defending with their lives everything that life means to them, 'flat-footed mobsters.' Smug critics reprove them for shedding blood in their battle against reactionaries who actually talk of 'extinguishing the proletariat.' Hearst's Knickerbocker hits a new low in procuring atrocity stories to discredit the popular militia. As part of that process the Spanish people's army is made to appear as a great, formless, dangerous mob. The organizations conducting the defense are blurred; their disciplines and doctrines are lumped so as to make mob, Socialist, Communist, anarchist, massacre, all read as one work.

"The fact is simply this: Spain is being defended by worker and peasant committees 'sanctioned' by a republican front. Except where the rebels are in power, the government is the same combination of real power in the workers' committee, rubber-stamped by the Republicans. With the Asturias as precedent, we can be quite sure that an astonishing story will be told of how these committees organize and control the food-supply, prevent irresponsible violence, and maintain essential services.

"These workers' and peasants' committees are at the center of the Spanish resistance to fascism. They are responsible and disciplined. They know their own strength. Knowing they represent the great majority of the people, they know that the future belongs to them—so they guard and conserve as much as they can. While the fascists announce that they will take Madrid, 'reconquer' Spain, whatever the cost, the Workers' Alliances say over and over again, 'Let us be careful; let us not shoot until we have to, let us destroy as little as possible. Tomorrow Spain will be ours; and it is we who will have to rebuild.'"

Signals Parents from Plane

When William McGalliard, the airplane pilot, comes from his base at Danville, Va., to visit his parents here, he circles over their home on Rosemary lane. This is to signal his arrival. His father leaps into the automobile and dashes out to the airport to meet him.

Morning Glories Adorn Village

Morning glories—blue, rose, pink, white, purple—are blooming all over the village now. The most striking variety is the one known as heavenly blue. Of course, whoever wants to see them at their best should go on tour early in the morning.

Lanes in New Home

The J. C. Lanes have moved into their new home in Pritchard Field.

Studio Is Remodeled

The Wootten-Moulton studio is being remodeled.

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Homes For Sale

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The Urban T. Holmes house on Coolidge Road (off the Pittsboro Highway). Excellent condition. Six rooms. Steam heat. Lot 80x150.

Service Insurance & Realty Co.

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