

THE WAR IN SPAIN

A WEEKLY SUMMARY

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HELP FOR FRANCO

DEBATES on foreign policy in the House of Commons on February 21st and 22nd, following the resignation of Mr. Anthony Eden, were notable and in many ways interesting. It seems a great pity, however, that some Members did not take advantage of an admirable opportunity to emphasise certain aspects of British interests which are inextricably interlocked with our relations with Dictators. On February 21st, Teruel was re-taken by a rebel force supported by a mass of Italian and German war material far greater than any that had hitherto appeared in Spain. To those who follow events closely, the sudden appearance at the front of such numbers of aeroplanes, including many types which had not shown themselves there before, was not unexpected. It was very well known in Barcelona (and presumably in the British Admiralty and Foreign Office) that, from the last week of December onwards, the numbers of ships carrying material to the rebels had considerably increased. The reason also was well known: at one moment the Republican Army had gained so many advantages that there was a danger of it "rolling up" Franco's forces on the Teruel front. Help—urgent help was necessary. It arrived, with the result that once more the rebel cause was saved; thanks, not to harassed little Franco, but to the timely and able assistance rendered by Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. Once more democratic Spain was thrown back on her own resources to cope with an enemy who depends upon what are virtually inexhaustible foreign sources of the most modern war materials and equipment. That is how "Non-Intervention" works to-day. It is true that Italian armies in units with staffs and well-conditioned mechanised columns do not arrive in rebel territory singing Fascist songs and shouting *Viva il Duce* as they did a year ago in Cádiz. But German "tourists" in civil clothing arrive at Northern ports and in Portugal, and proceed to join the immense staff of German technicians and administrators in rebel territory. According to a recent estimate made after careful investigation, Franco's land forces consist officially of:—

Italians 160,000 Four autonomous divisions and air force.

Germans 20,000 Instructors, pilots, anti-aircraft, wireless experts, espionage, etc.

Africans 50,000 Moroccans, Arabs, Ifnis, Lybians,

Legion 7,000 Remnants of the Tercio, or Foreign Legion.

TOTAL 237,000 Foreigners

To which add 213,000 Spaniards (65,000 Requetés, 45,000 Falangistas, 103,000 recruits).

Grand Total 450,000 men.

The Italian contribution in men and generals (13 of the latter) is fairly well known, though it was not thought to be as great as these figures indicate. It is open intervention. Indeed, Mussolini has been quite frank only in regard to its dimensions; he never hesitated to claim "*Italian Victories*" when the occasion demanded. This much is certain: that rebel Spain exists and fights, not by a Spanish insurgent army, but by the ability of German technicians and administrators, those great contingents of Italian troops and now, above all, by the weight of war materials arriving daily from Germany and Italy. Señor Vilaplana (whose book is mentioned elsewhere) informs us—and he should know, as he was a Franco Civil Servant—that the uninitiated usually make the mistake of over-rating the extent of Italian aid and underestimating the amount of assistance received from Germany. He goes further and says: "I can

testify that support from Germany has been the essential and fundamental factor in the war." It seems that Franco's German helpers are, in comparison with the Italians, unostentatious and efficient. It is admitted that units of the Italian army under their own officers are in complete occupation of a large stretch of territory. While the Italians (*à la D'Annunzio*) love display or "triumphal and heroic" entrances into Basque towns that had already surrendered, the Germans "both more practical and cautious, have cleverly managed to effect their military intervention and their appropriation of all the mineral wealth of the North behind a screen of diplomatic forms." While one sees Italians parading about everywhere, setting up a "Post" here and a "Command" there, placarding railway stations with the words *Corpo di Guardia* (military police), posting *carabinieri* at city gates to inspect passes and travel permits, the Germans behave with the utmost discretion. All German technicians not near the fighting line go about in mufti. Hotels, however, must give Germans preference over Spaniards when accommodation is in question! All this, needless to say, has produced the utmost resentment amongst the Spanish people—a people probably unequalled in the whole world for the kindness and courtesy which they normally extend to foreigners. One of the greatest of humiliations was when, on August 22nd, 1937, the Franco Official War Communiqué, speaking of the capture of Santander, said: "The Spanish column, operating on the right flank of the Legionaries . . ." and ended: "*Salamanca, Year II of Victory.*"

The *Spanish* column! There is an irony about this which might make us smile if the circumstances were not so tragic. But, more than that: British interests are at stake. Does anybody imagine that any agreement which a British Government can make with the Dictators will remove from Spain all those foreigners—all the Italians, including those who control the stations and entrances to towns and cities, and all those Germans in mufti? Franco could not get rid of them if he tried!

Meanwhile, the policy of the British Government, since Mr. Eden left the Foreign Office, is to attempt to negotiate with Dictators, while the Dictators' men remain in Spain. The policy of Dictators is to sign anything, agree to anything, and then act as they please afterwards. Mr. Harold Nicolson, who was formerly a senior official in the Foreign Office, and who has a sense of diplomatic history, took the trouble to inform the House that there is *literally no important political treaty ever signed by Italy that she has not broken*. He gave chapter and verse for his statement. Mr. Eden had tried hard to preserve the rule of law and order, the League of Nations, and the sanctity of treaties. He resigned because he could not see a possibility of keeping to the simple rules of international decency. It was the breach of those rules and of international law, by preventing the elected Government of Spain from obtaining freely all the arms she could purchase abroad, in order to deal with a group of traitorous and unpatriotic mutineers, which has brought us to the present difficult phase of foreign affairs. Had such purchases been permitted in 1936, Britain would now be free from the nightmare caused by the Dictators in regard to Spain and the Mediterranean.

It has all worked out in one way: help for the Spanish rebels and their uneasy bedfellows. If British public opinion does not make itself heard, the new phase will work out as more help for Franco.

The Military Situation: Teruel

There seems to be unnecessary rejoicing amongst rebel supporters because Franco's troops, supported by unprecedented quantities of German and Italian material, succeeded in a military sense in doing, in precisely two months, what the Republican army did in just six days. That is to say, the rebels re-occupied Teruel—a town of very little military value from either point of view, but which was chosen by the Republicans as the terrain for an offensive calculated to draw Franco's troops from any heavy attacks which they might be planning elsewhere. The Republican move was a complete success, and even Franco's German friends and supporters made no secret of their belief that he was making one more profound tactical error by persisting in his costly attempts to re-take, for prestige purposes, this devastated little town. Yet, Franco was placed in a position of great difficulty. If he abandoned the Teruel struggle completely, the effect upon his few Spanish supporters in rebel Spain would have been disastrous. At the same time, to retake it he had to use up his best reserves, transport vast quantities of ammunition placed ready for attack in other sectors, while begging the Germans and Italians for further heavy supplies of every sort of war material. He has re-won Teruel at that cost, and the Republican army around Teruel is in the same very strong defensive position as it was before December 16th last. The dates are these: December 15th to 21st, 1937, Republicans attack and capture Teruel with comparatively few losses. December 21st to February 21st—heavy battle on Teruel front, focussing Franco's best men and material there, and with them ending almost as they started (minus their losses!) Hence, where is the "victory" for the rebels? The real victory was when the Republicans created the diversion. One feature in regard to recent fighting in Spain has attracted the attention of military observers: the reliability of Republican military communiqués, and the increasingly fantastic exaggeration of rebel claims. About Teruel a detailed and realistic statement was issued by the Government on February 22nd, of which the following extract is of interest: "The news of the evacuation of Teruel was issued a few minutes after the event, in accordance with the Government's policy of keeping the country informed of the progress of the war. The valour of the Republican troops could not withstand the massed German and Italian war material which the enemy was able to employ, thanks to the advantages afforded them by the policy of 'non-intervention.' This policy can now inscribe on its list of 'successes' the evacuation of Teruel. The existing disproportion of armaments, considerably accentuated of late by large and frequent shipments of artillery and aircraft from Germany and Italy, was realised by the Government. For this reason, the country was warned that unfavourable episodes might yet occur in the course of the struggle. At the same time, efforts were redoubled to re-establish equality of arms and to increase the strength of the Republican army. . . . The evacuation of Teruel is of only secondary military importance, and does not annul the effects or advantages of the capture of the city by the Republican army. Franco's offensive against Madrid was prevented and his forces had to relinquish the initiative and follow ours."

The War at Sea

LOYALIST FLEET:

- 2 Cruisers of 7,850 tons: *Libertad* and *Cervantes*.
- 1 Cruiser of 6,000 tons: *Méndez Núñez*.
- 12 Flotilla Leaders of 1,800 tons: *Ulloa*, *Churraca*, *Lepanto*, *Antequera*, *Sanchez*, *José Luis Díez*, *Valdés*, *Gravina*, *Miranda*, *Escano*, *Alcalá Galiano* and *Jorge Juan*.
- 2 Destroyers of 1,145 tons: *Olseido* and *Lazaga*.
- 7 Submarines (Type B and C).
- 5 Torpedo Boats of 350 tons.
- 2 Gunboats: *Laya* and *Tetuan*.

NAVAL STRENGTH AT FRANCO'S DISPOSAL:

- 2 Cruisers of 10,000 tons: *Canarias* and *Baleares*.
- 1 Cruiser of 7,850 tons: *Almirante Cervera*.
- 1 Destroyer of 1,145 tons: *Velasco*.
- 3 Gunboats and 2 Minelayers (1,200 tons): *Jupiter* and *Marte*.

Also "acquired" from Italy since "Non-Intervention": four Italian Flotilla Leaders, two of which, the *Aquilla* and *Falco*, now renamed *Velasco-Ceuta* and *Velasco-Melilla*, fly Franco's flag; and two others, names unknown. Two Italian submarines, with rebel crews and flag—the *Mola* and *Sanjuro*—have been assigned to the rebel naval base at Soller (Majorca). Also other naval units, names unknown, have changed hands—several strange ships escorted the U.S.A. tanker *Nantucket Chief* to Palma. The transfer of these naval units from Italy to Franco was one of the most cynical and flagrant acts of intervention. How many more units will change hands? Is an Italian signature to a pact worth anything? Not, if we are to judge by these facts.

The work of the Government fleet is entirely defensive, protecting ports and escorting ships to loyalist territory. The work of Franco's navy comes under the head of piracy. It shoots and steams off as quickly as possible; and it does not much mind what flag it insults. *It is quite incapable of effective blockade of the Government coast, unless strongly reinforced.* Belligerent rights would merely give it the right of search but, as it already does its best to prevent ships from reaching loyalist Spain, belligerent rights, without a bigger navy (which Franco expects to obtain from Italy) would not greatly alter the situation.

First Plans

In the Penguin Library book MUSSOLINI'S ROMAN EMPIRE (see next issue) there are published at least two documents of great importance in the history of the war in Spain. Readers will recall that pro-rebel propagandists are wont to assert that the Franco rebellion had as its principal object the "salvation" of Spain from Bolshevism and Third International influence; that Moscow had planned intervention before July, 1936, and that, when the military rebellion began, it was to nip in the bud a "Communist Plot." The first document to which we would call attention is the draft of a Memorandum dated March 31st, 1934, giving the terms reached between representatives of Spanish reactionary parties and Mussolini, providing for the latter's active intervention in Spanish affairs. Here is the full text: "The undersigned, Lieut.-General Emilio Barrera, Don Rafael Olazabal and Don—(illegible) Lizarro, Representing the Traditionalist Communion, and Don Antonio Goicoechea, as chief of Renovación Española, hereby confirm the meeting held at 4 p.m. to-day, March 31st, 1934, with the chief of the Italian Government, Signor Mussolini, and with Signor Italo Balbo. The President, after receiving detailed replies to his many questions concerning the present political situation in Spain, and the aspirations of the Army and of the Monarchist parties, stated as follows: (1) That he is willing to lend material assistance to the parties opposed to the present Spanish régime, for the purpose of overthrowing it and establishing a regency to prepare for the complete restoration of the monarchy (Signor Mussolini repeated this statement three times in order that it might be entirely clear). (2) That to prove his good intentions, he is willing to let us have immediately 20,000 rifles, 20,000 hand grenades, 200 machine guns and, in cash, 1,500,000 pesetas. (3) That such aid will be in the nature of *initial assistance, and will be supplemented by more substantial help if and when circumstances make it necessary.* (Our italics—Ed.) It was resolved that a delegation be named to receive the above-mentioned goods and funds, and that the said delegation be headed by Don Rafael Olazabal, who will take charge of transporting them to Spain; that he will thereafter be assisted by the rest of the delegation, Count de Rodezno and Don Antonio Goicoechea, in making distribution of the material and monies. It was further resolved that the material and funds will be divided in three equal parts, and each of the three members of the delegation shall arrange for the distribution of one-third, after it shall have been transported to Spain."

This document appears in a rough draft, is written on the notepaper of the Hotel Quirinal, Rome, and is dated March 31st, 1934. Now this intrigue took place, one must note, when a reaction against the Republic had taken a partial grip after the election of 1933, and while Gil Robles was planning and preparing entrenchments and gun-emplacements in the Guadarrama mountains with a view to assisting a military rebellion when the right moment for it should arrive. The reactionaries knew even then that they had little popular sympathy, and were making ready to use force. The second document is perhaps more interesting, for it completely gives the lie to the story of a "Communist Plot" being prepared. It is a copy of an Order issued to officers of senior rank by the rebel General Franco, of which copies have fallen into Government hands. The full text is given in Koestler's *Spanish Testament*, but here are extracts: "One of the most important tasks, if victory is to be assured, is the undermining of the morale of the enemy troops. *The enemy has neither sufficient troops nor arms to resist*" (our italics). This last sentence is very important, as it reveals the fact that Franco did not believe he was faced with any important opposition—i.e. he did not believe in a "Communist Plot" or, even if it existed, in its possible efficacy! "The Communist Plot" story originates, first, from rumours deliberately spread by the reactionaries in order to justify their sabotage and rebellion, and secondly from a very crude forgery—a roneo'd document—prepared by them and "planted." The "Communist Plot" story falls utterly to pieces if we bear these facts in mind, and also the simple truth that only 16 Communist Deputies were returned in the Popular Front Election of February, 1936. The Communist Party in the whole of Spain is estimated at that moment not to have numbered more than at most 50,000 members. As we know now, the Spanish Communist Party was very moderate in its views, since it subscribed to the Popular Front

Programme. That Programme tends to be overlooked now in the turmoil of war but, as it is a complete answer to those who assert that Spain was on the verge of "Bolshevism," "Anarchism," in a state of chaos and without a constructive idea, we give here the salient terms from it. Far from being a roaring revolutionary programme, examination shows that it is a very moderate one—it does not go as far as many measures already in force in democratic capitalist countries. It was merely a programme to lift Spain out of feudalism and place her on a par with France, England, the United States and other modern civilised countries. It was the programme which the liberal democratic Government of Spain was attempting, in the face of the utmost provocation and sabotage from the reactionaries, to put into force when the rebel generals and their friends attacked the constitutional régime in July, 1936.

The Programme of the Popular Front

As indispensable measures of public peace, the Preamble says, the united parties of Republicans, Socialists, Trade Unionists, Communists and Syndicalists agree to the following: To grant a general amnesty to political offenders charged after November, 1933. To re-instate Civil Servants and Municipal Employees who had been discharged from their posts for political opinions by the reactionaries. To give reparation to victims of political repression and their families. To re-establish fully constitutional government and to reassert the Law of Constitutional Guarantees (equivalent to the English *Habeas Corpus*, which prevents imprisonment without a trial). To revise all law, national and municipal, in accordance with the Constitution, with authority in the Constitution, and with full regard for the liberty of the subject and to protect him from all arbitrary power. To revise and reorganise the system of prisons and imprisonment, in order to prevent the abuse of law. To restrict military law and privileges to purely military offences. To investigate abuses of law and violence on the part of officials. To reorganise the police in order to ensure its loyalty to a constitutional régime. To revise the general standards of discipline amongst officers with the same end in view. No nationalisation of land and its free transfer to the peasantry, but the reduction of tithes, the suppression of usury, the lowering of abusive rents, the intensification of agricultural credits, the revaluation of land products, the elimination of parasitical middlemen, and the promotion of increased agricultural export trade. To organise instruction in agriculture and provide expert technical help and advice. To undertake schemes for cultivation, the development of pastures and irrigation. To abolish oppressive leases, revise all evictions already effected, and institute new leases with the object of ensuring security of tenure with moderation of rent and the elimination of vicious sub-letting by people unwilling to work the land. To indemnify from lessors those tenants who effect reasonable, useful or necessary improvements on property, and to give tenants legal power to buy land which has been satisfactorily cultivated by them during a period to be fixed. To encourage co-operation and collective working by peasants where they wish it. To help settle peasants and their families and provide them with financial and technical help. To cancel the law which resolved return and payment of estates of the nobility. In regard to industry, the following provisions were proposed: revision of laws to protect industry, revision of Customs tariffs, regulation of markets with State help, and the initiation of laws to prevent vicious speculation. To create institutes of technical research. To protect the small trader and merchant. To increase the activity of key industries by a general plan of public works on an economic and remunerative basis. To institute housing and health schemes with a view to creating employment for all without the necessity for an unemployment pay scheme—i.e. a general national reconstructive scheme. No nationalisation of banking, but revision and improvement, special attention to be paid to poor people's savings banks, and the protection of peoples' savings generally. To revise taxation both direct and indirect on progressive principles. To revise fiscal and social administration. To control rural wages with a view to assuring a living wage to the humblest peasant, and protecting him from oppressive exploitation. The complete reorganisation of the educational system, its development and expansion, so that the blight of illiteracy may vanish from Spain. To pursue a foreign policy based upon adherence to the principles and methods of the League of Nations. In the Popular Front Programme appear the following significant words: "The Republic, as conceived by the Republican Party, is not a Republic directed on social or economic class grounds, but a régime of democratic liberty impelled by reasons of public interest and social progress."

From the above summary, it will be clear that the principles on which the Popular Front Government attempted to work were not in the least extreme. They would have resulted in a new Spain—a Spain unhampered by the parasites who did not work, who created nothing, and whose only interest was to live by the efforts of others.

Then and Now

It is interesting to recall that, over 100 years ago, Spain was as much in the news as she is to-day—and for reasons not dissimilar. There was then the old struggle between *Liberalism* and *Absolutism*, as to-day. And there was the intervention *on behalf of reaction* by foreign reactionary powers, represented by the "Holy Alliance" (Austria, Prussia, Russia), and activated by the then reactionary France. To-day, the foreign reactionaries who are intervening in Spain are Portugal, Germany and Italy. Modern democratic France is sympathetic to modern democratic Spain, represented by the Government. Here is a short statement of the situation just over a century ago:—On his restoration after the Peninsular War, Ferdinand VII swore to govern according to the Liberal Constitution of 1812, but soon he reverted to a reactionary and even terrorist policy, violating the Constitution in all its principles. In 1820 there was a revolt, which resulted in the King being forced by his Ministers, supported by the people, into taking *another* oath to abide by the Constitution. He broke his promise again and this time was placed in semi-captivity by a provisional Government which was determined to restore Constitutional Government. The "Holy Alliance" powers and France, fearing that "revolutionary" feeling might be popularised by events in Spain, decided to intervene with the object of restoring Ferdinand to absolute rule. In 1823 a French army invaded Spain, and succeeded in accomplishing its purpose. The following was the Manifesto of the King of Spain to the nation on the occasion of the French invasion (Seville, April 23rd, 1823. Actually issued by the Provisional Government in the name of the King):—

"Believe me, Spaniards, the Constitution of itself is not the real motive, either of the haughty and ambitious intimations, or of the iniquitous war which is directed against us. . . . Their [the invader's] real motive is that Spain should ever be chained to the car of their pride and power; that it should nominally be a Kingdom, but really a province appertaining to another Empire, in order that we may only live and move for them and for their advantage."

Then there was the following Memorial of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the *Cortes* (April 24th, 1823): "The attitude of the English Government is at present neutral, and it would appear that it is disposed to be a passive spectator in this contest. But how long will it continue so? Can it be indifferent in a war in which interests of such magnitude are involved? Or can it long withstand the solicitations of a considerable part of the English nation which is anxious for the liberty of the Peninsula? Cabinets are not nations. Spain has friends in all those who reflect and who have not renounced sentiments of honour and justice. All eyes are fixed on a great country which but yesterday was an insignificant appendage of Europe; all look upon it in some measure as the Arbiter of the destinies of Nations, on the point of solving the greatest problem which can be offered to the intellect of Man." Intervention was in full swing! Here is a translation of the Memorial of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Spanish Diplomats Abroad, May 27th, 1823: "Europe at the sight of these horrors [committed by the invaders] is silent and assenting. The weak powers tremble and those denominated Great Powers either favour the [reactionary] French Cabinet by approving its pernicious doctrines, or rely upon the superiority of force which preserves them from their effects. Perhaps the nations which deprecate in theory these strange maxims—but which forbear to impede their dangerous application—will repent, though late, of the enormous error they have committed. The successful repetition of such acts of excessive power will seem to sanction their justice; feeble barriers will be broken down which have hitherto prevented the destruction of the independence of nations and the balance of power; notions of public morality will be effaced and the light of civilization will be extinguished by the breath of barbarism. The Spanish Government, placed at the head of a generous nation, to support not only its own cause but the cause of mankind in general, although torn by foreign intrigues, will either triumph over its perfidious enemies or fall with glory and honour. *It does solemnly protest, in the face of the world, against the monstrous right of intervention of one power in the domestic concerns of another.*" The Government of loyalist Spain to-day protests in the same way against intervention by the Fascintern, which seems to have taken the place of the "Holy Alliance." Fundamentally, the struggle is the same: Despotism and Absolutism are again attempting to suppress human progress and evolution. Spain is in the vanguard of resistance.

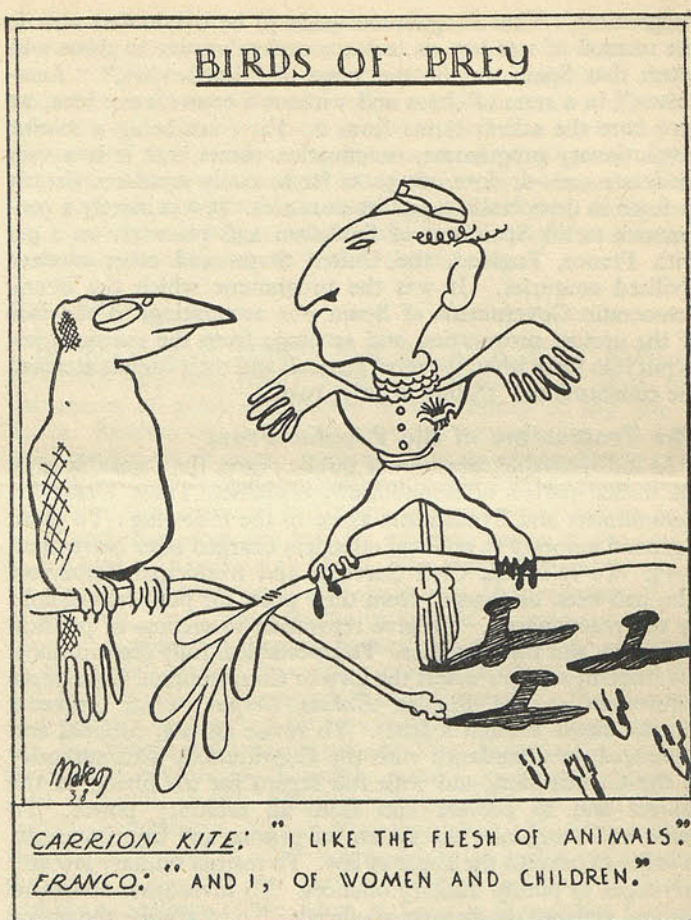
"Burgos Justice"

This is the English title of Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana's book *Doy Fe*. The English translation—an excellent one—is by W. Horsfall Carter, and it is published by Constable (price 7s. 6d.). The author is a professional lawyer who, from 1928 onwards, was a member of that branch of the Spanish Judiciary

for which there is no equivalent in England, but might be described as the service of independent magistrates. They are experts in law and legal procedure, form a branch of the permanent State service, and are mostly non-political persons. "On November 27th, 1935," he writes, "I arrived in Burgos as Commissioner of Justice. On June 30th, 1937, having worked uninterruptedly throughout the whole period (half under Republican and half under Nationalist jurisdiction) I left the country and came to France, still Dean and President of the College of Judicial Commissioners and Assessor to the Industrial Tribunal of Burgos—posts that I still occupy at the moment of writing these lines, since there has been no public announcement of my removal, nor have the Nationalist authorities appointed anyone to take my place." Señor Vilaplana's departure was quite voluntary and with a safe conduct which he could have used to return to a good post with an assured future. He chose to sacrifice his career, and he has written an account of what he saw in the course of his duties under the rebel régime. He makes no pretensions to be a fine writer, and his narrative is a straightforward statement of facts. But what facts! They are so damning that rebel supporters have done their utmost, while the translation was in preparation, to sully the author's good name, hoping thereby to spoil the book's chance of success or even to stop its publication altogether. These attacks took the form, in one instance, of a series of allegations by a Peer of the Realm who, under Parliamentary privilege, made a statement in the House of Lords of a nature which caused the publishers to enquire through their solicitors whether the noble Lord possessed any evidence in support. His Lordship replied that he could not discuss outside Parliament the particular matters which he had conceived it to be his duty to raise in the Upper House. The publishers have thereupon set out the allegations and Señor Vilaplana's replies, in which the absurdity of the rumours is demonstrated in a completely convincing manner. One charge against him is that he left Spain without paying his hotel bill. To this he says "Yes, it is true": and for the very good reason that, when he was ready to leave, he did not wish to draw the attention of everybody to the moment of his departure by paying his hotel bill on a day of the month different from that on which he usually paid it. He just left as quietly as possible. The mere fact that the propagation of such rumours should be thought necessary is in itself sufficient to make one read the book. Then we realise what an important document it is: by far the best and fullest account of life in Franco's Spain, packed with first-hand observation and side-lights on rebel mentality. Part I deals with Burgos before the rebellion, the night of July 17th, 1936, the first "Blue Shirts," how the rebels "cleaned up" the community, Mola's arrival in Burgos, the terrible shootings and burials (of which he had to take account in his judicial capacity—no second-hand stories here), the Burgos jail, and the shooting of the poet-musician José Antonio: the last as grim as anything in literature. Part II gets away from such events and deals with the personalities in the rebellion—especially Franco and Queipo de Llana, and some of the latter's broadcasts—the "system" of Government, the law, confiscation of property, the Church (the author is a Catholic), the army, the people and, finally, "The Foreign Invaders." It is as if a lawyer with the training and ability of a London Stipendiary Magistrate gave an account of such things. There is no attempt to be effective by mere tricks of writing: just a plain statement. It is a terrifying book, and should shake the confidence of every supporter of Franco in this country.

Franco's Assassins at Work

Señor Vilaplana tells what a Carthusian brother recounted to him in regard to the executions which took place near the monastery: "Several armed men came up to the monastery with a few prisoners. . . . The patrol leader explained that he had come to get a padre to confess the men. . . . The brother saw no objection to this, only stipulating that the poor unfortunates should ask to be confessed of their own free will; also that he should not be called upon to witness the execution. The first to fall was Captain Ojeda . . . , an officer in the reserve. . . . A grave was dug before the victims' eyes, and they were given to understand that they could confess and receive absolution. Some were willing to do so, but the captain resolutely refused. 'If you let the padre confess you,' they said, 'we'll spare your life.' For a moment the Captain hesitated, and meanwhile the monk insisted that the promise must be kept should the soldier decide to confess. The leader of the band, however, explained that they only said that to raise false hopes in the Captain's mind, whereupon the brother refused to have anything to do with such a farce."



The author gives an amusing sidelight on the band of place-seekers destined for jobs in Madrid who are sitting in Burgos waiting for the capital to be taken. Several times the whole lot of them set out from Burgos for Madrid . . . alas, only to return and eat their heads off in disappointment! And that grim circular dated August 18th, 1937, from a rebel sanitary authority—text given in full—dealing with the burial of *any dead bodies found abandoned outside the town*. And the mass Communion given to 2,600 prisoners who had been rehearsed in how to join in the service—wretches with shaven heads and whose fate was already sealed—compelled to do this in the presence of smartly-dressed women, officials, dignitaries, etc., who had been invited to witness this enforced act of repentance and expiation.

This book should send a note of horror and indignation throughout the English-speaking world. Those of our readers who have any difficulty in obtaining it can have it by return for 7s. 6d. (post free) by writing to United Editorial, Ltd., 11, Great Turnstile, London, W.C.1.

Portugal

It is common knowledge that the quasi-Fascist Dictatorship of Salazar helped the Spanish rebels from the beginning of the rebellion—even before, as Portuguese ports were used to supply Franco with material which had been landed there before July 17th, 1936. Portugal is a military and economic vassal of England, and had England at any moment wished to say "no," it is certain that Portugal would not have helped the Spanish reactionaries. The position now is that the Berlin-Rome "axis" dominates the Mediterranean and Britain's life line. We must either bargain with the Dictators or abandon that route and find another. England is already contemplating another route to the East *via* the Cape of Good Hope, and hence she must be strong enough to control the new one: which means that she must at least know all about what is going on in Portugal, if necessary have the use of Lisbon, and have some strong places on the West Coast of Africa. A strong "British Military Mission" is now in Portugal preparing the ground; and plans are being worked out to provide British naval bases on the new sea route to India. Of course, the real danger to British interests would be a Franco victory, for that would mean an alliance of Germany-Italy-Franco-Portugal; and such a combination could thwart Great Britain at every turn. In the event of war, it might prove fatal. As regards intervention in Spanish affairs, Portugal is at this moment a base for the supply of at least half of the German material reaching the rebels. It needs only the everyday observation of a casual tourist to see that.