

Will Madrid and Barcelona fall, like Santander, to Franco's Secret Army?

The Fifth Column

By FERNANDO FULANO

Translated from the *National Zeitung*,
Basel Liberal Daily

FROM the beginning of the Spanish conflict there has existed in almost all cities that mysterious *Quinta Columna* which celebrated its first victory in Santander. According to the plans of the Fascist leaders, all Spanish cities loyal to the Government should have fallen in the same manner as Santander.

The Fifth Column assumed its name as an honorary title. It aspired to be the fifth force, supplementing the four original armies of the rebellious generals in their fight against the Spanish Popular Front. The surprise attack against the Loyalists in Santander was carried out according to a pre-arranged plan. The manner in which the conspirators emerged from their hiding places at the approach of Franco's forces and immediately placed their shock troops at his disposal; how they utilized the confusion of the defenders to storm the prisons, free the Fascists, arm them and incorporate them into their ranks; how at one stroke they occupied the key points of the city,

disposing of the Popular Front leaders, overcoming the resistance of the militiamen and executing them in great numbers—all these events corresponded exactly with the procedure which has been generally adopted for the emergence of the Fifth Column.

The Fascists had planned to gain control of Madrid in the same manner, particularly from the beginning of November to the middle of March, while the capital was seriously threatened. In Valencia, in Barcelona and elsewhere, the Fifth Column has also been organized and prepared to act upon an instant's notice. Everywhere blacklists containing the names of Loyalists are kept ready—of men who are to be slain at the first sign of a victorious advance of the Nationalists. But the Loyalist counter-espionage has succeeded time and again in disrupting the elaborate network of the Fascist conspiracy which now covers the entire territory of Loyalist Spain. Great vigilance is required, for treachery within might easily become more

dangerous to the Spanish Republic than all the modern war equipment which the dictators have openly placed at the disposal of the so-called Nationalists.

The Fascist forces are secretly organized in the Loyalist districts on the basis of a triangular cell system. The local leader of the movement takes only two persons into his confidence at a time; each of these two only two others, etc., so that no single member shall ever know more fellow-conspirators than his superior and the two men to whom he gives orders. In theory, at least, this is true. In practice, however, such strict precaution is repugnant to the temperament and the social instincts of the Spaniard. Thus the government service sometimes succeeds without much difficulty in laying bare threads which lead deep into the labyrinth of the secret organization.

II

Toward the end of May the political police was particularly lucky. The Madrid fashion salon of a certain *couturier*, patronized particularly by aristocratic circles, seemed to do a conspicuous amount of business, considering the difficult times; but when the police decided to scrutinize the aristocratic customers a little more closely, the place was found abandoned. Only the sound of a flush toilet could be heard. There the *couturier's* brother was desperately attempting to dispose of documents. The salvage turned out to be anything but unpaid bills.

Overwhelming evidence of a far-flung secret organization was unearthed. Although the *couturier* did

his best to warn those compromised, very few escaped arrest. Among those arrested were several leading personalities of the Fascist *Falange*. The exposure of the fashion salon also led to the discovery of further interesting rendezvous. There were, for instance, several boarding houses. In one of them, located in a suburb of the city near the front, the guests were maintaining a constant news service by means of heliographs with the trenches of the Nationalists. Another boarding house had been transformed into a shop where arm-bands and badges with the Nationalist insignia were manufactured, as well as gigantic flags, posters and banners to decorate the streets of the capital as soon as power had been seized. In a third boarding house, a Mexican woman had established a regular espionage bureau. As a foreigner she had connections with foreign embassies and consulates which harbored numerous Nationalist protégés in addition to their own citizens.

Many diplomatic missions in Madrid have served as definite bases of operation for the Fifth Column. Not until June did the Government take firm steps to curb the scandalous partisanship of the Peruvian Consulate General and to enforce greater restraint upon the other diplomatic agencies which had been working all too openly against the Republic. More than five hundred Spaniards of both sexes had sought refuge in the two buildings of the Peruvian Consulate General. Almost without exception they were enemies of the Republic who shamelessly abused the right of asylum. They had at their disposal a radio station of great power and they used it for daily communications with the

enemy. For a considerable period of time the shelling of Madrid was directed from here.

Although at first sight the close collaboration between revolutionary extremists and the forces behind Franco seems strange, it is a well-known phenomenon in Spain. In Spain there were always underground lines between the revolution and reaction. The Anarchist movement of old enjoyed the patronage of highly placed members of the privileged class which dominated the State. In recent years these circles have repeatedly used the mercenaries of the rebellion, the so-called *pistoleros*, for attacks against the Republic. It was significant that in May, during the uprising of the Trotskiists and the Anarchists in Barcelona, Monarchist and Fascist flags and symbols appeared on many houses. But the followers of Franco had celebrated the triumph of their revolutionary friends prematurely.

In several minor attempts at revolt which have occurred during the war in the Republican hinterland, it was also not quite clear whether the extreme Right or the extreme Left was more deeply involved. The instigators of many attempts upon the lives of the leaders of the Popular Front have likewise remained unidentified. Again, the supplies of ammunition and explosives which were discovered at various places did not all come from the arsenals of the Fifth Column. They did in the case of the 750 bombs which were found in Madrid in June. But the 2,000 bombs which were at the same time discovered in the cellars of the main station at Barcelona had been stored there by the Trotskiist P.O.U.M. for its private purposes. At

any rate, the close relations between the Fascists and the Anarchist and Trotskiist organizations was apparent when it was revealed that innumerable Fascists carried membership cards of the C. N. T., P.O.U.M. or the F. A. I. when they were arrested.

III

Until the Valencia Government succeeded in purifying these revolutionary organizations outside the Popular Front, they had offered asylum to Fascist elements, among them numerous foreigners. Thus, under Trotskiist or Anarchist protection, members of the Fifth Column actually succeeded in getting a temporary foothold in important Government offices. They even penetrated the Secret Service of the War Ministry and the General Staff. A certain Veradini, one-time *pistolero* in the pay of the Monarchist organization, Renovación, succeeded in becoming a Divisional Chief-of-Staff and in placing a number of his former prison-mates in positions of high trust. It was not always easy for the political police to expose these disguised Fascists in the positions they had surreptitiously obtained. How their recent efforts to do so have succeeded remains questionable. Innumerable members of high society have subjected themselves to the strangest metamorphoses in order to serve the cause of Franco. In Valencia a center of the Fifth Column was raided. The chief of this group, the Marquis de San Vicente, admittedly an intimate friend of Franco, had long been sought because of his connection with a political murder. His credentials, issued by the Anarchists, were in the name of Alfredo Viegas, a

traveling salesman. The Marquis 'squealed' and it turned out that each of the thirty under arrest had an assumed identity. The so-called barber was an officer, the bookbinder was a minister, the midwife the wife of a banker, etc.

The Civil War has thrown a great number of Spaniards, especially among the contented middle class, from a placid existence into tragic masquerade, grotesque situation and adventurous intrigue. It is not only the fanaticism of a class struggling for its endangered privileges which serves as impetus, but also a misunderstood patriotism which views political opponents, whether bourgeois Republicans or workers, as nothing more than destroyers of the social order and enemies of the Church. In destroying these enemies every means is permissible and whoever falls a victim in the effort is regarded as a martyr to a holy cause. That is why the share of women in the underground work of the Fifth Column is so great; espionage remains their particular domain. The coöperation of women is of considerable significance for the success of moral and material sabotage, the weapons with which the strength of the Popular Front is to be sapped.

Thus far the greatest success of the Fifth Column has been in Santander, and for that there are several reasons. In Santander its secret machinations could more easily grow and succeed, since the city had for some time lost contact with the rest of Republican Spain and was to a large extent removed from the control and supervision of the central Government. Moreover, the Fifth Column in Santander received an enormous influx of

war-weary and favorably disposed refugees from Basque territory. The lack of food was an additional factor in wearing out the vigilance and resistance of the Republican population and in helping treachery to triumph in its own ranks.

How strong is the Fifth Column in Spain? The answer to this question is difficult, but the Column has as yet been unable to prepare other Loyalist cities for an assault comparable to that in Santander.

But Franco, as well as the Loyalist Government, must reckon with the Fifth Column. Actually it is the only army which still continues the Civil War, that is, the internal fight for control of the country. The Generalissimo himself with his Spanish troops has long since become the tool of foreign interests. To conduct the Civil War in the shadow of invading armies from abroad, without whose help Franco would long since have lost—therein lies the tragedy of the Fifth Column. When it opened the gates of Santander to the Nationalists, it opened them to the triumphant entry of Italian divisions. In the same way it will surrender a new portion of Spain's independence to foreigners with each position it wrests from the Popular Front. This shameful knowledge of standing under foreign rule has already led Spanish troops following Fascist colors to open insurrection. Behind the front, too, there is ferment wherever the national conscience has not yet been entirely stifled.

How much longer can Franco rely on the support of the patriotic Fifth Column? May it not turn against his alien-sponsored dictatorship?

A vivid tale of what is happening on
India's troubled Northwest frontier.

On the Border

By MULK RAJ ANAND

From the Left Review
London Marxist Monthly

SHE walked along the edge of a deserted millet field toward the molten lava of the copper-colored Swat hills, looking for a track where a herd of donkeys or goats might have passed. She had come out from the village in the scorching heat of the afternoon to collect animal dung to burn for fuel, as, apart from an occasional tangle of thorns or rough scrub, wood was difficult to get for the earthen oven in her hovel amid the cluster of mud huts on the plateau. She looked this side and that, but could not see a sign of man or beast in the waste land.

She stood for a moment on a promontory, and shading her eyes against the torrid glare of the sun with the inverted palm of her left hand while her right held the basket on her head, scanned the nearby hillsides for a bush, as she was sure that some donkey or goat would have strayed away from a herd, in spite of its driver, for a nibble among the thorns.

But there was no sign even of a blade of parched grass. Only the low

hills unfolded their protuberant bellies before her vision endlessly above the valley, blood-red and purple, and white where the misty haze of the earth arose to the even sky like a stifled, hot sigh.

She began to walk again as parts of her feet which touched the burning earth through the holes in the soles of her shoes chafed, the pads which she had made of those strips of papers the machine birds had dropped on the village in the morning having slipped out.

'He promised to bring back shoes for me,' she said to herself with a fuming heart, 'and now he has broken all his vows.' For so it seemed to her, since she hadn't heard even a breath or a word from his own mouth through any of the men who had come back from Peshawar, except the rumor that he had been put behind prison bars by the English Sarkar for listening to the talk of Khan Sahib, the brother of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan.

A hot breeze fanned her cheeks into