

# The Line-Up in Spain

*Possession of the mines, the factories, the food supply, the railroads is decisive in civil war. Here's the story*

By John Sterling

**S**INCE the outbreak of the civil war in Spain two months ago the insurgents have been largely stalemated in their key positions. Barring foreign intervention, their trained military forces and Moorish mercenaries seem likely to succumb before the republican army in overalls.

The February elections were a decisive victory for the People's Front, even though the Rightist government then in power had indulged in numerous irregularities at the polls. Spurned by the electorate, the conspirators in the army hatched their plot, lining up all the anti-democratic forces within the nation and all the fascist powers on the continent: the Spanish Phalanx, monarchists of the Bourbon, Juanist, and Carlist factions, Jesuits and the party of Catholic Action, grandees, financiers, and industrialists, the agents of German, Italian, French, and Portuguese fascism, and a few English bankers who wanted "insurance against Communism." Their military uprising was set for July 26, but the dramatic incident of Calvo Sotelo's assassination, the elimination of a monarchist leader who was one of the staunchest supporters of the putsch, forced the hand of the army.

The rebel plan was extremely simple. General Franco, having assumed command in Morocco, was to rush troops across the Strait of Gibraltar, march through Andalusia, and strike at Madrid from the south. General Sanjurjo was to fly from Lisbon and lead the attack from the west. General Mola was to organize the reactionaries in Navarre and descend upon Madrid through the Guadarrama mountain passes on the north. General Goded was to abandon his post in the Balearic Islands, capture Barcelona, and then advance from the northeast. The capital would be encircled and taken by storm. All republican leaders were to be shot and a fascist dictatorship established.

The insurrectionists counted upon a surprise attack and upon the superior force of trained troops in the field against civilian republicans. After weeks of fighting their campaign has failed on almost all fronts, even though a preliminary analysis of the disposition of the fascist armies gives them certain obvious advantages.

The leaders of the revolt were division commanders in the Canaries, the Balearic Islands, and Morocco, whose soldiers were cut off from the mass of the people on the mainland. These men, ignorant of the social conflicts in Spain, were amenable to the exhortations and pressure of their superiors.

On the peninsula five of the eight military bases were immediately occupied by the rebels. Seville, with the largest concentration of troops in the south, even though it had a militant working class to defend it, could not withstand the combined onslaught of the Moors and the treachery of the soldiers in its own barracks. Saragossa, the seat of the military academies and the officers of the general staff, almost an impregnable fortress, was seized by the fascists. Burgos and Valladolid, small cities in a countryside peopled by a church-ridden peasantry, became the headquarters of the counter-revolution. Coruna, the military establishment of Galicia, isolated in the northeastern corner of Spain, was transformed into a reactionary stronghold.

But in the three great capitals, Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia, the fascist army officers who read pronunciamientos of rebellion to the soldiers in the barracks were surrounded by the workers' militia and in some cases shot down by their own men. In Madrid, the great administrative and financial metropolis of Spain; in Barcelona, the capital of the most industrialized province; and in Valencia, the center of the fruit trade, military garrisons remained loyal to the republic. As a result Madrid has all the gold of the Bank of Spain with which to purchase supplies, and the factories of Barcelona can work at top speed turning out tanks and airplanes.

It is naturally difficult to estimate the numerical strength of the rebels. Spain had a weak army, judged by contemporary European standards—only 200,000 men. Of these, 58,000 picked troops were stationed outside the peninsula, in Morocco and the islands. General Franco has been able to transport only some 20,000 men of the Foreign Legion and the native Moorish battalions because



of the loyalist naval successes in the strait and the vigilant air patrol of the Azafra government. The fascist generalissimo must retain men at their posts in North Africa because the nationalist Moors have been chafing under new tax levies and await a propitious moment for an uprising in their own right.

Yet in the garrisons captured by the insurgents it may be said that the infantry of 80,000 men is to a large extent behind the

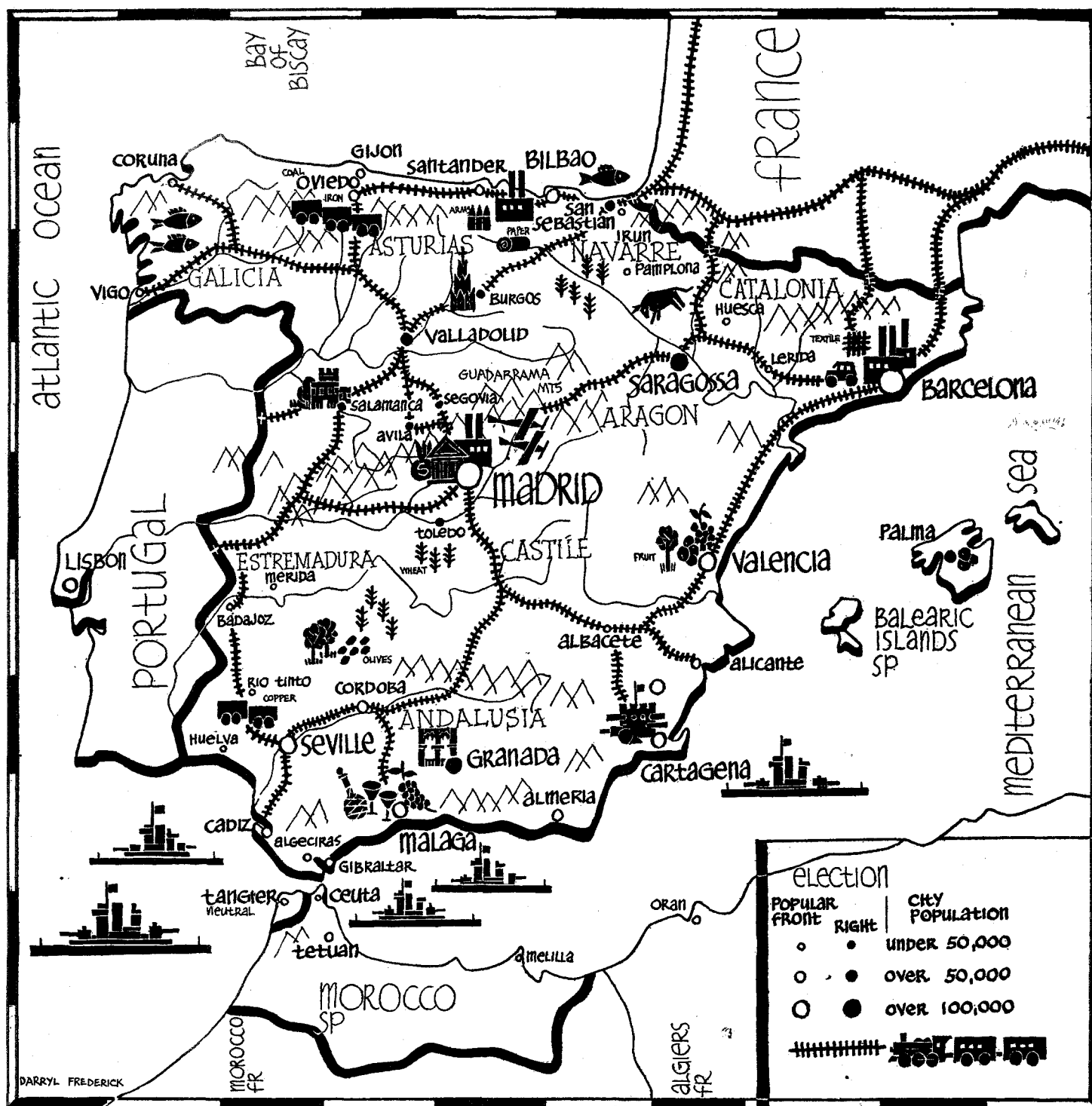
fascists, and their 15,000 machine guns and 100 tanks are a formidable power. The cavalry and artillery are likewise predominantly reactionary.

In contrast, the air force, which is composed of new and more progressive elements, has remained faithful to the republic. Most of Spain's 1,600 airplanes fell into the hands of the loyalists, but in the rebel areas there were enough aristocratic sportsmen to pilot any planes they could obtain. German Junkers and Fokkers and Italian Capronis have been manned by trained foreign army officers who proffered their services at crucial moments and, in spite of all the neutrality pacts, have continued with other clandestine intervention.

The navy, composed of fifty-three units, has remained with the government, except for a few cruisers. When officers urged their men to join the rebel cause, the sailors imprisoned their superiors and took command of the ships. This loyalist navy has been able to interrupt the transport of Moroccan troops, a vital reserve of man-power for the fascists. It has also protected the long Mediterranean coastline from Barcelona to Malaga, thus providing a source of food supplies and preserving the all-important military and naval arsenal at Cartagena.

A NARROW strip along the northern coastline, from Irun to Oviedo, is second only to Catalonia as an industrial area. Here there are paper mills, textile factories, and iron works. Of the strategic cities in this district, San Sebastian was early recaptured by the government, and renewed attacks of Mola's troops have been repulsed. Bilbao, the center of the armaments industry, has not even been threatened by the rebels, while Asturian workers have beleaguered Oviedo, the heart of the coal-mining district. After a valiant defense by the People's Front, Irun fell before Mola's forces.

The rebels, entrenched in the cities of Andalusia which they have taken, cannot advance too far on the road to Madrid without leaving behind a civilian population prepared to rise against them in the rear and cut off their lines of communication. As they push their way through tiny villages, the peasants harass them with a continuous guerilla warfare, reviving scenes of Napoleon's peninsular campaign. These are the provinces where the large estates of the absentee nobles were being divided among their tenants. The capture of Badajoz, an isolated city in bleak Estremadura, has been the outstanding fascist



Darryl Frederick

victory. The slaughter of thousands of civilians must continue to be the fascist method of warfare if they mean to establish regular railroad contact between the northern and southern sectors of their armies.

To the north of Madrid, the rebels hold ancient cities with many historic associations but few inhabitants. Salamanca has its famous university. Avila has for centuries been known as the "city of the dead." Burgos is an old cathedral town. Peasants of Navarre, the Vendée of Spain, the only section of the country where the land is divided into small parcels, have remained under the domination of the church, and the priests have whipped up enthusiasm, as for a religious crusade. Though General Mola will be difficult to dislodge from his mountain fortresses, the much-heralded advance on the capital is beset with countless obstacles. The govern-

ment holds enough rocky passes to block his path long before he comes within cannon shot of Madrid.

AT THE MOMENT the friends of the Spanish republic may feel confident in an ultimate victory. The parties of the People's Front are maintaining firm unity of action both on the battlefield and in the organization of victory behind the lines. All attempts to sow dissension between the Anarchists and other Left groupings have failed miserably, and the anti-fascist committees have once again proved their practical ability to coördinate industries and supplies towards the one end of defeating the counter-revolution.

Saragossa is besieged by battalions of Catalan militiamen under the Syndicalist Durutti. The rebel barracks at Oviedo are being attacked by miners with the Socialist

Gonzalez Pena at their head. The Mangada column, defending Madrid in the Guadarrama mountains, has outstanding Communists in command. Government aviation squadrons are destroying the rebel morale by repeated bombings of their army headquarters in Ceuta, Seville, Granada, Cordoba, and Huesca. The republican militia is learning to use its weapons and is maintaining its discipline. Defections among the fascists are numerous; officers dare not trust their Moors.

If the reactionary powers of Europe are kept in check and the delivery of aircraft and munitions to the rebels is stopped, the government of the People's Front, strengthened by the new Left cabinet, will defeat the insurgents in this historic struggle between fascism and democracy. Once more the heroism and self-sacrifice of republicans will triumph in the *levée en masse* against a hired soldiery.



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## The Challenge and the Answer

A STRIKING feature of the last presidential campaign was the formation of the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford. That was news. It was also history, for it was one of the first organized attempts of American professionals to take part in the struggle against all that is evil and reactionary in our life.

"There is only one issue in the present election," the League said in *Culture and the Crisis*, its open letter to the intellectual workers of America. "Call it hard times, unemployment, the farm problem, the world crisis, or call it simply hunger . . . the issue is the same."

What drew many intellectuals to the Communist Party in 1932 was the realization that the economic crisis crushed the professional groups as ruthlessly as it did the workers and farmers; and that the Communist Party offered "the only practicable solution of the crisis."

In the present election campaign the issue is still "hard times, unemployment, the farm problem, the world crisis or . . . simply hunger"; but this issue is now part of another issue which includes and transcends it. And again it is the Communist Party which has stated the issue most clearly. Out of the economic crisis of capitalism, out of the inability of Wall Street to solve the problems of hunger and unemployment, there have arisen the alternatives: progress or reaction, democracy or fascism.

Can anyone with a grain of common sense look at the American scene today without realizing the danger which threatens the people? Can anyone but a blockhead ignore the meaning of Hearst, the Liberty League, the Black Legion, the open-shop drive? Do we dare close our eyes to the organized attempt of reactionary big business to foist upon this country some form of Hitlerism?

This year, as distinguished from 1932, professional men and women are by and large politically awake. Suffering has matured them; study has enlightened them; action has steeled them. Much more than in previous periods of our history they will take part in the election campaign, aware that their fate is inseparable from the fate of the people.

BUT SPECIFIC CHOICES have still to be made. The most enlightened Americans have already recognized—and as the campaign goes on they see it all the more clearly—that *Lemke means Landon and Landon means Hearst*. These are three heads of the same monster.

Members of the various professions recognize this and think that Roosevelt can be relied upon to defeat the reactionaries. But is it not a fact that the more Roosevelt has been readily supported from the Left, the more he has felt



William Sanderson

that the concessions he must make are to the Right? Is it not obvious that the progressive forces of this country must create a strong political organization, an independent force, before they can even begin to stop Roosevelt from surrendering their rights and liberties to the extreme reaction?

In this situation, the position of the Socialist Party is very unfortunate. It has refused coöperation with other progressive groups, and is moving into an abstract and doctrinaire sectarianism, away from the main currents of American life.

IN THIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN, as in that of 1932, many professional men and women feel that it is the Communist Party which "offers the only practicable solution of the crisis." A number of them, therefore, with Rockwell Kent, internationally known artist and writer, as their chairman, have formed a Committee of Professional Groups for Browder and Ford. They believe that the issues of the present campaign are "democracy versus fascism, peace versus war," and that the Communist candidates have stated the main issues most clearly and have offered the best solutions.

The NEW MASSES salutes the newly organized Committee of Professional Groups for Browder and Ford. It seems to us that the Communist Party and its candidates are seeking primarily to unite the greatest number of those who work with hand or brain around a program which would create a better life for the majority of the American people. It urges jobs and a living wage for all; it seeks unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, and social security for all; its program for the youth is the most realistic and the most comprehensive in the field; its farm plank boldly demands that farmers be freed of oppressive debts, unbearable tax burdens, and foreclosures; it urges that social and labor legislation be financed and the budget balanced by taxing the rich; it insists upon the defense and extension of democratic rights and civil liberties, and upon limiting the autocratic powers of the Supreme Court; it demands full rights for the Negro people; and its program for peace seeks the organization of genuinely effective collective security.

On this basis, the Committee of Professional Groups for Browder and Ford should have no difficulty uniting large numbers of professional men and women who are anxious to take their stand on the burning issues of the day.