

Spain's Government Girds for War

The recent cabinet changes have resulted in a considerable brightening of the outlook

By James Hawthorne

STREET-FIGHTING in Catalonia and a government crisis have dominated the May political picture in Spain. It may be hard, therefore, to realize that this month has marked a great consolidation of the popular forces' political front. In fact, you will not find a general understanding of this internal victory if you talk to "representative" men. But, as on November 7, 1936, when the government moved to Valencia, it is the average man in the street who is correct. And in the street there is a feeling of relief at the formation of a government based on the political parties. In offices and bureaus there is a great shaking of heads; on the street there is a new optimism. The doubters regard the all-political coalition as a rebuff to the trade unions; the common man sees it as a defeat for the politicians of Syndicalist tendency. And in the withdrawal of the Syndicalist-minded politicians he sees perspectives of early victory. The factory workers, the construction hands, the chauffeurs with whom I talked in the black days of early November, declared the fascists would never take Madrid. They were right then when "better-informed" men were wrong; and in my opinion their instinct has again led them to the truth. The outbreak of violence in Catalonia and the political crisis have finally prepared the way for that sweeping centralization of military, economic, and political control which will bring into play the government's tremendous advantages over the fascists, and thus open the final phase of the war.

What really took place in Catalonia and how did it precipitate matters? There were three days of street fighting in Barcelona, but preliminary maneuvers in the surrounding villages were reported fully a week earlier. Carabineers, an unpublished national news agency item stated, had arrived near the border "and had taken up magnificent positions." In the whole region an effort to set up the framework of a police system had been undertaken with a sense of realities: as a military occupation. It had to be so handled because a feeble internal policy had permitted the accumulation of a formidable arsenal in irresponsible hands far from the front; because roving "militia columns," which were in fact nothing more than bandit caravans, had been allowed to masquerade as legitimate Anarchist anti-fascist soldiers; because even during the most critical hours, the Trotskyite *Batalla* and uncontrolled Anarchist publications, unauthorized by the leading Anarcho-Syndicalist bodies, openly campaigned against the legitimate government in favor of a putsch. This situation, created

by a temporizing public-order policy, was one of undeclared war. When the police attempted to occupy certain public buildings, the illegally armed bodies could cynically pretend that this was a provocation and attempt to justify their putsch on that ground! Fighting occurred in many villages to which it became necessary to send public forces to establish the skeleton of public control. But it was in Barcelona itself that the attempted putsch took place.

In the capital the Trotskyite P.O.U.M. took open responsibility for the attempted rising against the government; in an effort to implicate the Anarchists, to drag them into the adventure, it operated through an autonomous Anarchist group, "the Friends of Durruti." The same elements who for months had been slandering the government as counter-revolutionary because, said they, it withheld arms from Aragon, the truly revolutionary front, now appeared in the streets with tanks, armored cars, artillery, machine-guns, rifles, and millions of rounds of ammunition. That these arms had been stolen from the front and reserved for an attempt against the government was obvious. To the proletariat of Catalonia, to honest Anarchists themselves, this aspect of the matter was disturbing. Could this be the work of anyone but fascists? The moment was grave. A call for volunteers for the Assault Guards was issued. In a few hours there were six thousand applicants. These men knew they were going

into battle under difficult conditions, where losses must be heavy. Clearly the proletariat of Barcelona was not merely unsympathetic to the uprising, but ready to fight it as another action of the "Fifth Column," as the rebel undercover agents are known. And it was the anti-fascists of Barcelona who restored order. By the time government reinforcements arrived, all was quiet. In Barcelona alone there were three thousand casualties with nine hundred dead. It was the putschists who suffered the bulk of the losses. Unhappily, there were undoubtedly some innocent, deceived men among those who went to the barricades. There were Anarchists who thought they were following organizational discipline, and heard too late their national committee's denunciation of the call to arms. And there were simple peasants newly recruited to the P.O.U.M. because they thought the bright-red flag with the hammer and sickle must be the Communist flag. But the rising was clearly fascist-inspired, and national indignation against the Trotskyite agents of Franco reached fever heat. The declaration of central control of public order in Catalonia and the appointment of General Pozas to head the "army of the east," the military forces of Catalonia and Aragon, were hailed as the long awaited co-ordination of the military forces of the whole peninsula into one flexible army.

Now there will be a unified command. Now there will be an end to independent fronts. Now there will be a war industry. These were the popular reactions. And these steps waited on a firm drive by the government to liquidate the Trotskyite and autonomous Anarchist bodies which still maintained their right to arms, still denied the right of the central government to lay down the norms of public order, of war industry, and for the army. But nothing happened. Minister of the Interior Angel Galarza temporized, and Premier Largo Caballero upheld him. With the few days' delay thus obtained, the Anarcho-Syndicalist press in general took a bolder tone and, while "regretting" the "unfortunate" events in Catalonia, declined to denounce them as an intolerable attempt on the legitimate government. The C.N.T. (the Anarchist-dominated National Confederation of Labor) had pursued an equivocal policy throughout, evidently torn by internal dissension. Had the government moved swiftly on the heels of the attempted rising, popular indignation would have given it such powerful support that no one would have dared to challenge it. But it chose to yield to the surly elements in the ranks of the Anarcho-Syndi-



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calists; the latter were thereby strengthened against more moderate elements within the C.N.T. itself. The whole Anarcho-Syndicalist press began to reflect their new boldness. The rising, it seemed, was not a rising at all. There had been a clash of forces representing two distinct ideologies; but nevertheless it was quite a different thing from a putsch.

At this point the Communists intervened. All this ideological claptrap couldn't form a barricade to protect the government against another such stab in the back. *The arms had remained in the hands of the enemies of the government.* The Communist Party demanded two things: (1) that the government ruthlessly exterminate the fascists, Trotskyists, and "uncontrollables" who had prepared and were still preparing attacks upon it; that it clean up the rear-guard, collect the arms stolen from the front, and establish revolutionary order conducive to serious prosecution of the war; (2) that the C.N.T. either unequivocally denounce as traitors the men who had risen in arms against the government, had hoarded arms for that purpose and built up an atmosphere conducive to attacks on the government by a counter-revolutionary campaign, or else resign from the government. The C.N.T. responded with a renewed attack on the Communist Party on the familiar and meaningless old theme of "proselytism." The government did nothing, except that the General Workers' Union group holding the dominating posts in it, joined in the attack on the Communists. The Republican and Socialist parties ranged themselves on the side of the Communists and the political issue was drawn; the Largo Caballero government fell because it was incapable of decisive action.

THE NEW government was formed quietly, and instantly went to work. There would, as a matter of course, be a great deal of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The exclusion (self-exclusion) of the trade unions, it was argued, had weakened the people's front. The government, said trade-union bureaucrats, was born dead. But the government would stand or fall, everyone really understood, by its success or failure in carrying out its specific mission. It had been formed as a government of action, a government of protest against ten months' delay in solving a series of major war problems in which time was an important factor. The central general staff still consisted of lukewarm generals (with a few new men since the fall of Málaga). No general staff actually controlling all armed forces and military operations in all parts of Spain had been created. No central plan of operations had ever been drawn up. The war industries had not been nationalized, and industry in general had not been organized for war purposes. These were the tasks with which the Negrin cabinet had to wrestle, and was expected to resolve some of them in a matter of days. The preliminary program of the Negrin government was convincingly businesslike. The small cabinet acted as a supreme war council, the ministers jointly considering all war plans

and assuring a single national plan of operations. A single general staff was quickly created. The war, air, and navy ministries were merged into one defense ministry, and Defense Minister Prieto's previous capable performance in the air ministry gave strong assurances for the future of the defense department.

Thus a government of firm decision and unification was formed at a moment when the fascist rear-guard was at its weakest. Centralization could quickly turn the government's numbers and will-to-victory into decisive offensive operations. The significance of the Negrin cabinet penetrated the army, the popular organizations, the trade unions, the youth bodies, and women's committees. Telegrams of loyalty and congratulation poured in. There was also a rush to get on the bandwagon.

The new government was represented as

being more "moderate" than the preceding one. Actually, the term "moderate" was misused, substituted for the word "responsible." The new government was, in fact, dedicated to a more vigorous policy than its predecessor, but it was made up of elements definitely committed to the program of a parliamentary democratic republic. The presence of the C.N.T. in the previous government had put a doubtful coloring on the government's aim. Officially the republic had remained the measure of the common aspirations of the people's front, but in the C.N.T. press there were often attacks on advocates of the democratic republic, attacks which labeled the latter "counter-revolutionary." Abroad, this could scarcely inspire confidence. On the home front, there is every reason to expect that the cabinet change will be productive of a more vigorous national unity on the basis of relentless persecution of the war.



"I thought up another fine 'incident' last night."

John Mackey

An Open Letter to Catholics

A communicant of the Roman church says that property interests have prejudiced the hierarchy's social views

By Peter McGuire

AS a practising Catholic, whose work keeps him close to the Catholic masses in this country, I must protest against any confusion of "a reality so vast and enduring as the church" with a handful of individuals on the top social layers whose attitudes are obviously being shaped by a complicated system of forces, among which the economic holds a major position. Catholics, of course, are not a special class of beings who remain untouched by the economic and social realities around them. However sound their intentions or their virtue, it still remains indubitably true that the pervasive social atmosphere influences their religious convictions to a degree which often sucks the marrow out of them.

The molding power of capitalist society on religion is naturally greatest among those people whose interests are bound by a thousand threads to its preservation. Which of us is not familiar with those people who have provided us with a false image of religiosity more hateful to many Catholics than atheism itself. I do well to quote from the article called "A Catholic Looks at Spain," by Señor Semprún Gurrea, member of the Spanish Conservative Party. "People 'of the right class,' those who live in a certain degree of comfort or expect to do so . . . all these seem . . . the most generally given to religious exteriorization, almost as if one should call them the born defenders of religion. That means that economic preoccupations, preoccupations with well-being and exterior order . . . coincide in important social groups with religious manifestation." These people, Señor Gurrea points out, "have welded together so many sentiments, inspirations, preoccupations and conventionalisms, that, faced with any attack on the existent regime of property, they cry out that religion is attacked; and, vice versa, they think they are defending religion when they are defending their property."

Even Catholics of unquestioned sincerity, who are allied in their material social interests with the bourgeoisie, are being drawn, often despite their better feelings, into sharp opposition to the welfare of the multitudes. Their capitalist entanglements are infecting them with a fear of the people. They are too closely confined to their bourgeois city to appreciate the magnificence of a labor movement that is widening everywhere the circle of human solidarity. Indeed, they distrust it and misinterpret it with lofty ignorance. Far removed from the blood and dirt of the struggle, they peer forth at the world through the eyes of their bourgeois fellows and perceive pure decay.

A growing number of Catholics are becoming apprehensive over the reactionary influence of these people, an influence all the more pernicious because of the interweaving of property interests, class prejudices, and religion. Above all, they fear that religion is being used, even by sincere Catholics, to strengthen Reaction.

THE attachment of these protesting Catholics to the moral and material interests of the people has aroused them to a vigorous stand against an opportunism which, in effect, would entirely negate the role of the church in the moral and social life of men by strengthening the forces of universal destruction. Their loyalty to the people springs from a recognition that only a proletariat hungering after justice can sweep away all that is befouling and polluting the temporal sources of moral life. They recognize, too, that great stores of spiritual energy are being released in the expanding solidarity of the people.

Señor Gurrea is speaking in the name of a great number of Catholics when he says: "I have chosen the people, humiliated, forgotten, brutalized and unknown. . . . I choose the people because I see in them . . . the most living resemblance of the dolorous humanity of Christ. . . . I have chosen them also because after long contacts with all classes of society and politics, I have reached the conclusion

that it is almost exclusively the people from whom the powerful source of any life now surviving . . . can spring."

In justice to the church and millions of Catholics, we must pay heed to the words of Don Luigi Sturzo, Catholic priest who struggled heroically against Italian fascism in its early days. He tells in his *Italy and Fascism*, published in 1926, that it is true the churches and the "Catholic church in France, Spain, and Italy are favorable to conservative reaction and to nationalist currents. From a superficial examination, it would seem that they are whenever the word 'church' is taken to indicate only the upper hierarchies which are chiefly in touch with the wealthy and aristocratic classes." This unfortunate identification is due "to the fact that the great part of religious journalism tends, almost unconsciously and for reasons not strictly political, towards conservatism and reaction."

Thanks to a conspiracy of silence broken here and there by a few lonely voices, it will come as a surprise to many non-Catholics to be told that Catholic doctrine proclaims "the common right of mankind to the use of the goods of this earth." Father Virgil Michel, writer on social subjects, is brave enough to state this basic proposition. Furthermore, he tells us that "the institution of private ownership is only a means for the better realization of this principle." Obviously those forms of property which obstruct the realization of the basic principle must be socially controlled. Pius XI intimates this in his encyclical on labor and, in general, Catholic teachings maintain that "private ownership is a convention of human reason."

The working masses, Catholics included, would seize upon such teaching with avidity. Yet we dare not bring it to them, we dread to "stir up class against class," says the *Catholic World* of September 1936. But, it hastens to add, "Jesus Christ had no such phobia."

Actually Catholics in powerful social groups palm off their own reactionary views as Catholic social doctrine. Thus even when they know that man's right to a proper, human existence is a fundamental right, especially when the means are at hand for such an existence, and that man "holds the right of providing for the life of his body prior to the formation of any state," to quote Leo XIII, they still condemn every attempt on the part of the workers to better their conditions as a violation of "law and order." This cowardice accounts for the fact that in the United States "there is very little of a concrete and practical



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