

Across the Ebro

By Joseph North

BARCELONA, April 25 (By Cable).

THE Ebro is Spain's Mississippi River. In a land of dry river beds it swirls along angrily, eddying in a thousand bends. It is particularly deep this time of year due to melting snows of mountain country. That is no help to Mussolini, for the fascists must cross the river; and Father Ebro protects his Spanish children better than the stoutest fortress.

Two armies, two systems of thought, of life, face each other across the river. I was at the republican parapet in Tortosa this week and looked at the fascists across the stream. I heard some Italians yell across, "How do you like Italian cannon?" and the Spaniards reply, "Not bad, but tell us, what are Italian men like?" Discussions of this sort always close with bursts from machine guns.

I spent a full day near the banks of the Ebro with Modesto, commander of the armies' southern "agrupacion" of the east—that means the armies of Catalonia. Till his promotion he had been head of the Fifth Army Corps, the bravest of an army of brave men. Del Vayo singled this corps out for special mention in an address before the world press recently. It includes internationals. It helped Catalans put up the defense that headed off Aranda's march on Barcelona, bogging him down at Lerida and Balaguer.

Modesto talked tanks, plans, material. He also talked of infantry. He liked American tanks best, and French heavy artillery. But, he said, tanks will soon be as outmoded as dodos. The anti-tank gun has spelled its doom. He scoffed at the efficacy of the Italian whip-pet tanks, as did Antonio Cordon two weeks ago when I interviewed him at Lerida, before he was named head of the army of the land. Modesto grinned: "Tanks get outmoded, doughboys never." Of course, Modesto said, when the enemy lays down its heavy artillery on a narrow sector and rains three or four hundred tons of steel on a thousand-kilometer line per hour, it isn't comfortable. And then add the airplane, but still these aren't decisive. "Men tell the tale of war," he said, "not cannon. As soon as the rest of the world sends us enough cannon"—he looked at me, American, and at my colleague, French—"our vastly superior infantry will roll them back."

Modesto, like his men, is a son of the people, at work since the age of nine. He looks forty but is actually thirty-one. The best fighting direction comes from those who a few years ago were active trade-unionists, organizing the masses.

Modesto had military training in Africa, where he learned to hate the Monarchy. When he left the army he joined the U.G.T. "I used to fight for the united front within the trade-union movement," he said. "Today

we fight with guns for a united Spain." He showed me his wounds—a six-inch gash down his thigh, a shattered hand. He had a couple of hours off and wanted us to stay through supper. He showed me a picture of his wife, a Madrilenos, and their two kids. I showed him a picture of my family. "Guappas." He said that means handsome in Spanish. "America," he said, "is O. K." That's one American word all Spaniards know. He also liked the American tanks that can go sixty miles an hour. "If we are using tanks, I'd like to use American tanks." I told him, as I've been telling all Spaniards and internationals for the past month, that public opinion in America is for loyalist Spain, that Congress is beginning to reflect the popular will. He wanted to know if it is true that Roosevelt is friendly toward the Spanish people.

We ate supper by candlelight, because the electricity kept flickering off and on. My French colleague had found a copy of Dante in the Italian library of the mansion which once belonged to a rich Rovinial fascist, and was reading about the descent to Hell. "Like Tortosa." He said Modesto liked the way he read poetry. "Italian sounds nice. It's a

to make important advances, regaining towns the Italians must have in order to get to Puigcerda to close the pass to France. The legions of "pico y palo" (pick and shovel) are doing their work all along the roadways. I saw hundreds on my way down to Tortosa, marching with their humble yet vital weapons.

In the other regions of republican Spain, that is in all but the Catalanian area, General Miaja and Jesus Hernandez, newly appointed government commissar for that area, toured the southeastern coastal area, the Valencia-Segunto-Castellon area. Everywhere they went cheering crowds closed in on them, demanding speeches of Miaja. The soldier told them bluntly that he expects and knows they'll defend their territory as the Madrilenos defended the capital. He said that everywhere he went, order reigned, and there was complete endorsement of the reorganized government. Castellon mobilized all men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five for military service whether at the front or at the rearguard.

The Spanish press made much of the national conference to aid Spain, held in London. The London *Times* was quoted as saying, "It is impossible to forecast the final result of the Spanish war." The press here made much of that, for last week-end the European press had written Spain's death-warrant—"prematurely, as usual," the Spanish press said dryly.

The happenings in Asia get a big play here and the Spanish people rejoice in China's victories as though they were their own. And in a very real sense they are. The war has made the formerly insulated Andalusian or Castilian or Catalan internationally minded.

Intellectual Spain launched a manifesto reiterating its faith in victory, hailed events in China, and urged all progressives the world over to help the Spanish and Chinese people, "for the triumph of democratic principles is indispensable to the advancement of human culture." Finally, President LeBrun's welcome to the new Spanish Ambassador, expressing amity and admiration for loyalist Spain, touched the Spanish people. They knew that reverberations would be felt in Rome and Berlin immediately. Sunday in Barcelona was brilliant. The drums were beating. The Italians were in Valderrobres on the highway to the sea. Yes, it was not so long ago that the Spanish horizon was closed by snow-peaked Pyrenees; today the Spanish people feel that their nation is the center of the world. They are molding the future and they know it.



"Ah—Rebels!"

shame that Mussolini talks it." He said, "I want the book autographed for a Frenchman who got a piece of explosive bullet in his hand the other day when we were at the front lines at Tortosa." Modesto autographed it to "the hero in horn-rimmed spectacles." He asked us to come around soon again "with cannon and planes, please."

Actually, the military scene here is much improved. It is as Negrín said the other day: "If we resist we shall get arms." More arms are coming in but not enough human material although more men are entering the service, more fighters and more "fortificadores." For as Spain fortifies, it plans also to train. Reserves are a critical necessity when the Republic goes on the defensive.

Guerrilla warfare is spreading, particularly in the North where the Republic has begun

NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

Editors

THEODORE DRAPER, GRANVILLE HICKS, CROCKETT JOHNSON,
JOSHUA KUNITZ, A. B. MAGIL, HERMAN MICHELSON,
BRUCE MINTON, SAMUEL SILLEN.

Contributing Editors

ROBERT FORSYTHE, JOSEPH FREEMAN, MICHAEL GOLD,
HORACE GREGORY, ALFRED O'MALLEY, LOREN MILLER,
ISIDOR SCHNEIDER, MARGUERITE YOUNG.

Business and Circulation Manager
GEORGE WILLNER

Advertising Manager
ERIC BERNAY



Battle Lines Forming

THE lines are forming on President Roosevelt's recovery program. The coalition of tory Republicans and Democrats who defeated the Reorganization Bill are preparing for another kill. But since this is an election year, the strategy must be varied. First, a barrage is being laid down against the whole principle of federal spending. Behind this barrage plans are being made for a flank attack designed to amend all New Deal proposals in order to tie the hands of the administration in the allocation of funds and begin the shifting of the relief burden from the federal government to the states and communities. This is the aim of the bill introduced by Representative Bacon of New York, which while ostensibly providing the same W.P.A. appropriation that Roosevelt requested, \$1,250,000,000, would require the states to match one-third of this sum and would place the administration of the whole fund in the hands of the states.

On the other side the forces are also moving into position. The President's program has already evoked an unprecedented response from the labor movement. Union after union, A. F. of L. as well as C.I.O., has communicated its endorsement. Most encouraging of all is the fact that on this question, as on the new Wages and Hours Bill, the two wings of the labor movement have dropped their differences and adopted a common stand, with the A. F. of L., the C.I.O., the Railway Brotherhoods, and Labor's Non-Partisan League all officially giving their support to the program. Nor does labor stand alone. Despite the floods of anti-New Deal propaganda directed at the farmers and small-business people, it is significant that the National Farmers' Union, one of the three big farm organizations of the country, and many small-businessmen's groups have also declared their approval of the recovery program.

Behind the struggle over the spending and lending proposals lie deeper issues. Walter Lippmann, in the New York *Her-*

ald Tribune of April 21, calls on Congress to refuse to vote any kind of a spending program until President Roosevelt has made concessions on the tax question, has capitulated to the utilities, and yielded to the demands of big business for emasculation of the Wagner Labor Relations Act. Lippmann thus demonstrates that the reactionaries are fully aware of the implications of Roosevelt's efforts to relieve suffering and stem the economic crisis, and are determined to stop him if they can. Progressives may well learn a similar wisdom in the present emergency. Carping criticism of the inadequacy of the recovery program—and that it is inadequate is certainly true—can only serve to weaken and confuse the progressives in face of the concerted drive of Wall Street's congressional coalition. That drive is intended not merely to undermine the recovery program, but to prepare the way for a reactionary victory in the elections.

Unity on May Day

MORE than ever, May Day in 1938 expresses the need for unity in the struggle to preserve democracy against reaction. Unity of the anti-fascist nations throughout the world; unity of the American labor movement; unity among workers, farmers, progressives, middle-class people who would prevent war; political unity in support of President Roosevelt's recovery program and a democratic front in the elections. May Day has always been dedicated to the solidarity of those who hate oppression, to those who would make a better world. May Day in 1938 is a mobilization in preparation for the crucial struggles that confront progressives everywhere.

There is much to celebrate—the heroism of the Spanish people, the Chinese nation's resistance to invasion, the swift progress of Socialism in the Soviet Union and the uprooting of Trotskyist wreckers and spies. There is much to guard against—the war drive of Germany, Italy, and Japan, the pro-fascist policy of the British Tories, the strengthening of the rightist enemies of the People's Front in France, the coalition of reactionaries in our own nation.

May Day is more than a celebration of victories and progress, more than a commemoration of the past. It is a pledge for the future, a pledge for concerted action against war, a pledge of aid to the oppressed of the world, a pledge of winning unity of labor and its allies on the economic, political, and cultural fronts. In New York, more than one thousand delegates representing over 750,000 people in 622 trade unions, mass organizations, and peace societies plan to march on April 30. In all sections of

the country, unions new to May Day demonstrations have voted participation. The Socialist Party in a number of large cities has declared its adherence. May Day in 1938 is the answer to reaction—the answer of unified resistance and augmented strength.

Professor Keeney Wins

THERE was no question of Professor Philip O. Keeney's qualifications when he was dismissed last year from his teaching and librarian position at the University of Montana. Admittedly, Professor Keeney had fallen into the more serious sin of resisting orders censoring the library, and had offended the university authorities by organizing the Teachers' Union.

The State Board of Education approved his dismissal. The board pointed out that Professor Keeney need only give up his union work and all would be forgiven. But not only did the professor refuse to retreat, but he appealed to and won the support of the Teachers' Union, the League of American Writers, and the American Civil Liberties Union. All of which only proved embarrassing to the college authorities and showed that Keeney was a troublemaker.

Recently, the district court of Montana ordered Keeney reinstated. The university will appeal the judgment. But the decision has already vindicated Professor Keeney. More than that, it has shown what can be accomplished even against a board of education, a president of a state university, and the governor of the state combined, by the concerted action of progressive labor groups and their allies fighting in defense of cultural traditions and academic freedom.

Socialist Party Convention

IT is doubtful whether the convention of any established political party could have attracted so little attention as did that of the Socialist Party, held in Kenosha, Wis., April 21-23. Four years ago, when the Socialist Party at its Detroit convention emerged from the post-war doldrums and showed signs of becoming a constructive factor in American political life, the event rated considerable space in both the capitalist and labor press. This year it will probably be news to most of our readers—or the readers of any other publication—that what was once *the* party of the American working class has just held its national convention.

The decline of the Socialist Party is highly instructive. After striking out toward the left and ridding itself of the reactionary Red-baiting Old Guard that had been in the saddle since the war, the Socialist Party