

WHY SPAIN NEVER DIED

By HOWARD FAST

ABOUT three years ago I wrote a piece that moved a Spanish vet, stationed somewhere in the south, to write to me; and in the course of telling me what he had liked about my writing, he mentioned the heart-breaking process he was going through. Held back from combat, called a Red, doing KP day in and day out, he recalled the time he had spent in a Spanish concentration camp—mentioning in passing that he had not lost heart then, but it seemed as if he would surely lose heart now.

But he didn't lose heart. Only a few days ago I read a death notice his comrades of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade had inserted in the papers, and there was his name along with others; no field given, no battle, no date, only the simple reminder that he had laid down his life in the struggle against fascism, perhaps in Europe, perhaps on some tiny pinprick of land in the limitless Pacific.

Staring at his name, I think I came as close to understanding the term *anti-fascist* as I ever will; I saw as close, because I don't know how there can be full understanding for us, seeing a piece here, a fragment there, the homelessness along with the heroic. Some day, the whole of it will be related to the unending stream of life, and then there will be a writer and a poet to make stories and songs of it, the way they should be made.

But it's hard to see a thing in the process. Not long ago a boy of sixteen, small for his age, delivered a package to my house. We got to talking, and in the course of things, as casually as you would mention the weather, he remarked that he too was an anti-fascist, giving me one of the nicest compliments I have ever had.

He pointed to a scar on his face; a spent bullet had done that, in the battle of the Karl Marx House, but he was only a baby then and hardly remembered it. When I asked him how he happened to be there, finding no accent in his speech to indicate it, he mentioned, still casually, that his father had been a Communist leader and city official in Vienna. After Hitler, they went on working against the Nazis, but when the Nazis took his father, his mother escaped with him to France and then to Scotland. His father died in a con-

centration camp. He was only twelve, he explained, when he really had to think and act for himself; and he pointed out, somewhat apologetically, that he had no right to call himself a real anti-fascist before then.

So there was another fragment, a boy alone, yet never lonely, landless, nationless, yet having all men as his brothers—beginning something, traveling a road that is marked plainly enough for him. And in a way, it is all a thing of beginnings, with the end still a promise and a hope.

I REMEMBER how well that was put to me by a small man who undertook to teach me Spanish in return for some English. He was a Spanish announcer who was known as the Major. The Major was very small, not more than five feet three inches, very lean, very straight in his military bearing. He was also a very great man, and the Spanish people knew his voice when they heard it on their radios.

You see, we were at peace with Spain; we had an ambassador at Franco's court, so the Major could say very little. But it did not matter; the people knew his voice. They remembered that his battalion had fought steadily and gloriously all through the war. When the end came, he led his battalion over the mountains into France, one of the last. They knew that

at the border he had stopped and climbed onto the top of a rock—he was such a small man—climbed up there and stood there with the bullets whistling around him, stood there until the fascists could hear him roar, in a voice like a lion.

Then he led his men into France, and they were disarmed and interned. Later, he and a comrade were removed from the south of France and shipped to a concentration camp in North Africa. And there they stayed, month after month, until that terrible black day when France fell.

He did not tell me the story in detail, because in detail he would have had to make much of himself, and a man does not make much of himself over so small a deed. It was sufficient to point out that he and his friend had planned their escape for months; they knew how to get through the wire and evade the guard. And the main airstrip was less than a mile from the enclosure, in plain sight. When the great bomber dropped down onto the airstrip, the Major and his friend did not know what it contained. It was enough for them to make out the Italian markings; only afterward they learned that the men in fascist uniform who got out of the plane were a special armistice commission, sent from Italy to receive the surrender of this French port. However, this was the moment, and they made the most of it.

They got through the wire, killed the fascist soldier who was guarding the plane, took off, and flew it to Gibraltar, where, somehow, they managed to land. A certificate, signed by the governor of the Rock, attests to the delivery of one slightly damaged Italian bomber, and acts as a receipt for the same.

I don't know where the Major is now, perhaps in Spain once again. The fragments are scattered worldwide, but some day, not too far off we hope, they will come together again. Madrid will dry her tears of sorrow, and from the ashes and broken stones, a hundred other cities will arise, with pride and with dignity.

Then the Major's words will be engraved on more than one splendid monument: "We will come back."



Pen sketch by Joseph Hirsch

An editorial on aid to the Spanish democrats appears on page 19.

MATTER OF FACT . . . by LEWIS MERRILL

MR. MEANY AS CANUTE

THE British Trade Union Congress very firmly and promptly rejected the speech of George Meany, fraternal delegate to the British meeting from the AFL. His efforts to undermine the growing world unity of labor by attacking the new World Federation of Trade Unions because of the participation of the Soviet trade unions earned a rebuke from Sir Walter Citrine, general secretary of the TUC—a rebuke unprecedented in the long history of relations between these two organizations. The British Trade Union meeting was responding to a powerful rank-and-file sentiment not only for unity on a world scale but unity here in America.

Historic changes rarely usher themselves in with the dramatic announcement of the atomic bomb whose significance no one could escape. But a new and significant change is taking place in the American labor movement of enormous meaning to the fight of the American people for peace and prosperity. George Meany, in his speech to the BTUC, was simply extending his campaign to head off the consequences of this change. In doing so he speaks for the entire hierarchy of the AFL.

Unwittingly, the large monopoly employers who contrived the present reconversion crisis precipitated the American labor movement into a new and important stage in its development—a stage for which its wartime experience has prepared it.

Before the emergence of the CIO the trade union movement never looked upon itself as the guardian of the national interest or the custodian of the fundamental rights of both the organized and unorganized workers, or as the only force which could integrate other groups and classes in broad support of the aims of the nation. In the days when "pure and simple trade-unionism" held sway, such ideas were grounds for instant expulsion from the AFL. But labor during the war has learned to act in a new way. It will not forget its lesson in the peace. On the contrary, it is fighting to give such ideas their fullest expression.

It is argued that the AFL leadership, still true to its tradition, does not accept responsibility for doing more than protecting the job interests of a section of the skilled workers, and that American labor is therefore hopelessly divided. There is, of course, a world of difference between the strategy of the AFL and CIO, though frequently their objectives and program are almost identical. The main difference between the CIO and the AFL in this respect is that the CIO believes in using all means that can influence national policy and national events. And whether the AFL leadership likes it or not, and though the AFL may lag far behind the CIO, they are propelled in the same direction as the CIO because of the very changes in the relation of

forces in the nation which the CIO's strategy and tactics, its initiative and leadership bring about.

THIS is the first national economic crisis in which labor is not submitting to the dictates of the employer. Labor refuses supinely to accept a lowered standard of living and it is fully conscious that its fight for wage increases is not just for wage increases or for itself alone, but is a fight being waged for the entire people. This is one fight where labor will make full use of all its weapons, especially its political action weapon. In this crisis labor will not permit the unemployed to drift away, but will become their champion and bulwark in firm unity. In fact the keynote of labor's struggle in this period, which registered in the British Trade Union Congress, is its struggle for unity. It is at the same time a struggle for new ways and means to compound the unity of the organized workers with all other sections of the people prepared to fight against poverty and fascism. It is a fight which brings labor smack up against the firmly entrenched monopolists. But the quickened activity of the labor movement, which is registering in every trade union, should give these employers pause in their plot against labor and the people.

It is true that despite the new activity of the workers they are still groping toward maximum unity and have not yet settled on the main means to contrive it. But that they will, is every day becoming more certain.

Labor's past reliance on maintaining its unity solely through the insistent compulsion of the economic struggle is being supplanted. Now its broad activities on behalf of its membership, through its political action work and civic activities, help millions to think through the problems of the day in a new way. The result is a kind of unity which does not dissolve with partial victories or crack with the first reverses. It is the kind of unity that paves the way for the whole people to travel.

LABOR has been a little out of trim, but it is certainly catching up on its road work. Its training reverberations make a lot of people uncomfortable, and many a union leader is toppling as a consequence. But labor will be in there fighting and will be able to use plenty of footwork. The stakes in the impending political and economic struggles are vast. Labor knows this very well indeed. It's a new kind of fight, and labor is going to fight it out in a new way,

(Continued on page 31)



Edith Glaser