

Will Spain Repeat Ethiopia?

The foreign editor of "L'Humanite" discusses the international implications of the Spanish struggle

By Paul Nizan

AFTER Italy had conquered Ethiopia, an explanation was forthcoming from some foreign offices that this was the last time such an aggression could meet with success, for now the Powers were in a position to block other adventurers. No one imagined that the test would come so soon.

Little time passed after July 18 before it was known that the Spanish rebellion was no general's *pronunciamento*, but rather a new technique in international aggression. This was a fascist uprising, prepared from abroad by patient work of Nazi agents, with immediate support from Germany and Italy. The stakes in the struggle were Hitler's conquest of the raw materials of Spain and Morocco, and Mussolini's conquest of strategic positions in the Mediterranean.

For three months, the democratic powers strove to shut their eyes to what was happening, strove to convince themselves that this was merely a Spanish civil war. The governments of France and Great Britain hoped to convince their peoples of this as well. All they needed was a cooperative attitude by the fascist Powers, but this was too much to ask. The liberal states proposed neutrality in the form of the non-intervention pact of August 8, which France undertook to put into immediate effect in order to "rouse the sense of honor" of the fascist governments. Everybody signed, everybody met in London under the austere chairmanship of the Britisher, Lord Plymouth.

While the diplomats talked on and on in London, German and Italian airplanes, war materials, tank and air-raid specialists poured into Franco's camp. The diplomats still shut their eyes, until the Soviet Union denounced the tragic farce of "non-intervention" and undertook to support the Spanish republicans. At the same time a great movement was born in Europe when worker volunteers enlisted in the republican militia. It must be said that, despite the heroism of the republican fighters, Franco would unquestionably have won out if the international columns and Soviet aid had not equaled the efforts of the fascist powers.

When fascist intervention became too glaring for the diplomats to keep their eyes closed any longer, too glaring for them to continue their little game of tiddle-de-winks—when the arrival in Spain of Italian and German "volunteers" reached such a point that it could no longer be concealed—new steps were undertaken. At the beginning of December, a proposal was made to strengthen the control of neutrality, and, on December 26, France and Great Britain decided to send a strong protest

to Lisbon, Rome, and Berlin. The fascist foreign offices treated this move with extraordinary scorn, as if they had been assured in advance that the democratic states were capable of talking, but not of acting.

Hitler was vacationing—nothing could be done until he returned to Berlin. The Quai d'Orsay and London Foreign Office circulated optimistic rumors: the split between the Nazi extremists and the economic experts allied to the Reichswehr was growing sharper; Hitler was on the point of retreating; Hitler was finally to return to the community of nations. The various ministers of foreign affairs prepared to slaughter the fatted calf for the return of the Prodigal Son. It was even mooted about that London had astutely torn Rome away from Berlin and that Mussolini was about to drop the Spanish affair. There were several days of pleasant calm, such as invalids experience. But Hitler, in truth, did not move an inch.

Meanwhile, Nazi Foreign Minister von Neurath told the ambassadors that Hitler was

ready to sign anything, provided he was granted authorization to intervene against the eventual "bolshevization" of Spain. This was all-inclusive, for Berlin charges, for instance, that the French People's Front government is a government "in the tow of Moscow."

These declarations received immediate clarification by the piratical acts of the German cruisers *Koenigsberg* and *Admiral Scheer* on the Basque coast, as well as through the Nazi provocations at sea, obviously designed to lead to a state of war between the Reich and the Valencia government. Meanwhile, the Reichswehr divisions which had landed in Spain launched a mass attack on the Madrid front. At the same time—the very day that Rome signed the "gentlemen's agreement" with London, under conditions such as to lead one to ask whether these "gentlemen" were not "gentlemen of fortune"—4000 Italian soldiers landed at Cadiz, and it was learned several days later that they had been preceded by 6000 men.

The situation is frightfully clear: Rome



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"Naturally Roosevelt distrusts the Spanish People's Front government. As soon as it was voted in, it actually began living up to its election promises."

and Berlin have undertaken to conquer Spain under cover of defending Europe against "bolshivism." They will do whatever is needed for their success if London and Paris do not interfere. They think everything could be arranged easily. London is very willing to come to an accord with the fascist states to prevent the birth of a proletarian state in Spain. In France, in the very circles about M. Delbos, the Radical-Socialist Minister of Foreign Affairs, the high officials of the Quai d'Orsay long for the victory of the fascists. The *Temps* explains that the defense against "bolshivism" must precede everything.

There can be no doubt that the ideological "crusade" of Rome and Berlin against the revolution is finding enough accomplices in France and England to make its success possible. But, since this "crusade" shields the imperialist ambitions of Italy and Germany, an accord is not so easy. It is certain that the victory of Franco would have several disquieting results: first, German control of the raw materials of Spain, *i.e.*, the Rio Tinto copper ore, the mines of Tharsis, and the mineral deposits of Spanish Morocco; secondly, the establishment of German forces at Ceuta and also at the Canary Islands; thirdly, the control of Italy over the Balearics. In other words, Britain would face a threat to its lines of communication with its eastern Empire, and France would face German control over its lines of communication to North Africa, German threats to Morocco, and several Reichswehr divisions on the Pyrenees frontier. This eventually would mean the immobilization of two or three hundred thousand men in the Southwest of France for the defense of a frontier which hitherto did not exist from the military point of view.

These are stakes worth playing for. The question which comes up is this: will France and Great Britain understand that their national interests and their national security are linked to the maintenance in Spain of a democratic government? And in this case, will we see the strengthening of the solidarity of the democratic Powers to maintain peace against the fascist attempts at conquest?

Or will the French and the British bourgeoisie, placing class solidarity ahead of national interest, abandon all defense of democracy to collaborate with the Reich and Italy for the defeat of the Spanish republic?

Rome is openly counting on British complicity. In France, the bourgeois press is demanding that aid be sent to Franco, and a part of the "liberal" press advises the government to drop all interest in the outcome of the civil war in Spain.

That is why we must ask whether Spain will be a second Ethiopia. Such a situation would be one of extraordinary gravity, for the precedent which the fascist states are seeking to establish would have again borne fruit. Specifically, the Nazis would try the experiment again against Czechoslovakia, which is already threatened by definite preparations, notably the concentration of Nazi troops near its frontiers and by the secret treaty just con-

cluded between Germany and Austria. The new technique would be applied in the following way. A "domestic" uprising would break out in Czechoslovakia led by the German Sudetic Party headed by Konrad Henlein. This uprising would be supported at once by Berlin until Henlein's victory, and an *Anschluss* maneuver would attach Czechoslovakia to the Reich. Hitler would then be in a position to carry out his great task of the *Drang nach Osten*, *i.e.*, of the conquest of the Soviet Ukraine.

This is the stake. Peace will not be saved by permitting Germany and Italy to triumph in Spain. Each fascist victory does not put war farther off, but brings war nearer. The

criminal leniency with Italy over Ethiopia cannot be repeated with impunity. It has been said that a victorious Italy would be a satisfied Italy, ready to enter the ranks of the orderly Powers, *i.e.*, the powers friendly to the status quo, conservative like Great Britain and France. The expectations have been false, as the Spanish adventure has proven. Will the same lie be trotted out for Germany with the variation that Germany would no longer be dangerous if permitted to Nazify Spain?

Unfortunately, we can feel in the "democratic" countries the rising sentiment among the ruling classes that what is most important is the *international* solidarity of the bourgeoisie. This can finish everything. The essence of the Spanish events cannot be grasped if we do not see that the civil war is really not being waged between Spanish Reaction and the Spanish republic, but between the Spanish people and the workers who have rallied to their aid on one hand, and the international bourgeoisie on the other hand, led by its fascist advance guard.

Can we help thinking that the hour of the great decision is approaching?



"Heil, la España!"

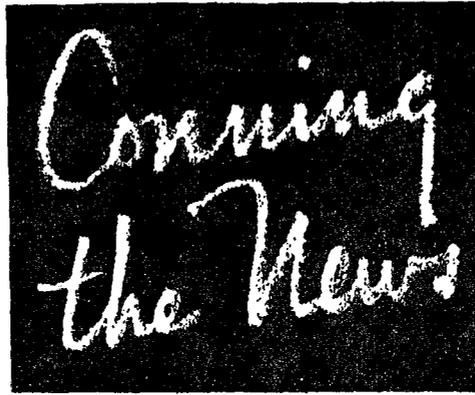
J. Wuyte

THE second week of the widespread strike against General Motors opened on a note of violence, proceeded to mediation and a truce, and wound up with a complete double-cross by the corporation. For the rioting, which resulted in injuries to fourteen strikers, William S. Knudsen, executive vice-president of General Motors, expressed regret and declared, "We are not going to encourage violence." Company officials pointed out that their guards had "not raised a hand" against the strikers. But Mr. Knudsen's regular guards had no need to attack the strikers, because, according to Homer Martin, president of the United Automobile Workers, "thugs were being shipped from Decatur, Ill., to serve in Flint" and "got into action on the evening of the same day they arrived," assisted by Flint police, who, Martin said, "violated the law and their oath of office by engaging in a private enterprise with company-hired thugs." What immediately led to the riot was the turning off of the heat and hot water in the plants occupied by the sit-down strikers, the carrying of clubs by the company guards, removal of a ladder used by the strikers in entering and leaving the building, and the attempt to bar outsiders from bringing food into the plant (see story p. 25).

Newly-elected Governor Murphy sent 2000 National Guardsmen into Flint, the largest mobilization in the state, for an industrial situation, since the copper strike of 1913. At the same time, he refused to permit the troops to aid the sheriff in serving John Doe warrants on the strikers and succeeded in arranging a preliminary "peace conference" even while the strikers remained in the Flint and Detroit plants.

After an almost continuous eighteen-hour discussion, an armistice was reached. The strikers were to leave the plants before the following Monday, at which time conferences would begin for consideration of the union demands, including recognition of the U.A.W. as the sole bargaining agency for General Motors workers. In return for the withdrawal of the "sitdowners," Knudsen agreed not to resume production in any of the struck plants and not to remove machinery or dies for the purpose of starting production elsewhere. True to their word, union officials proceeded to evacuate the Cadillac and Fleetwood plants, in which their members had been stationed for nine days. To the tunes of "Solidarity Forever" and "Hinky Dinky Parlez-Vous" ("The boss is shaking at the knees, He's shaking in his B.V.D.'s. Hinky dinky parlez-vous"), the strikers paraded out of the factories, carrying banners calling for "Six Hours Work, Eight Hours Sleep, and Ten Hours Play" and "General Motors Today, Ford Tomorrow." The paraders were cheered in the streets, and Martin announced that of 100,000 membership application blanks printed two weeks ago, only 4000 were left.

BUT on at least three points, General Motors brazenly betrayed the terms of the armistice. Workers of the Cadillac plant



Covering the events of the week ending January 18

turned up at union headquarters with telegrams notifying them to report for work on the morning the conferences were to begin, and advising them, announced Martin, that "if they could not get into the plant gates, to come through the administration building." From Anderson, Ind., came reports that 150 police and special deputies were tearing down pickets' shacks and warning that no picketing, however peaceful, would be allowed. And blandly ignoring the fact that recognition of the U.A.W. as the sole agent for collective bargaining was to be one of the principal points of discussion at the forthcoming conferences, Knudsen cordially agreed to "bargain" with the Flint Alliance, an obvious company organization designed to break the strike. Knudsen's flagrant breach of faith resulted in an immediate decision to keep sit-down strikers in the two Fisher Body plants in Flint, which had not yet been vacated. Whereupon Mr. Knudsen refused to proceed with the conferences as planned.

The Flint Alliance action led to the filing of a complaint with the La Follette committee investigating violations of civil liberties. The demand of G. E. Boysen, head of the Alliance, for a collective bargaining conference, wired Martin, "is either directly inspired by General Motors or has been handled through strike-breaking detective agencies which would profit by violence." Martin demanded a public inquiry "into the background and financing of the Flint Alliance and similar law-and-order leagues and of their connection with General Motors."

The La Follette committee gave no indication of what action, if any, it might take in connection with General Motors, but it made considerable headway in clearing up the case of Joseph S. Gelders, southern representative of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners. For his work in defending Jack Barton, a Communist who had been railroaded to a chain gang under a statute later declared unconstitutional, Gelders had been kidnaped and severely flogged. Corroborating his story before the committee, Sergeant J. W. McClung of the Alabama State Police testified that all efforts to indict the assailants of Gelders had failed because they were employees of the Tennessee Coal, Iron, & Railroad Company. "You know, Senator,

the T.C.I. owns fifteen-sixteenths of the country around there," he explained.

LIKE the U.A.W., striking East Coast seamen did not overlook Congress as a logical aid in their fight. Early in the week a delegation called on Senator Copeland to propose changes in the Copeland Maritime Act, particularly the elimination of the discharge book, which seamen have reason to believe will be used in the formation of black-lists. Their complaints, according to one reporter, "were not taken very seriously by Senator Copeland," but in another congressional quarter they produced immediate results. Representative Sirovich (D., N. Y.) introduced into the House a resolution calling for a six-month suspension of the so-called "fink book" provision, to give Congress time to study the protests of the seamen and make whatever changes it then thought necessary. The measure, Sirovich thought, might hasten a settlement in the maritime strike, which continued in full force despite shipowners' announcements of an "immediate end." To lend weight to their protest against the discharge book, some two thousand seamen from Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Norfolk, and other eastern ports converged on Washington to picket the Commerce Department building and to present their protest to the Maritime Commission and to cabinet secretaries Perkins and Roper.

After the frenzy with which Congress drove through its "neutrality" bill against Spanish democracy in the first week of the session, it calmed down perceptibly and seemed for the most part to be marking time, waiting for the President's inaugural address. Nevertheless, several important bills were introduced which will be heard from later in the session. Following a series of six transport airplane crashes which took a toll of 29 lives in a five-week period, Senator McCarran (D., Nev.) proposed a measure to strip the Commerce Department of its powers over air transport and turn them over to the Interstate Commerce Commission. The move was regarded even in conservative circles as a well-earned slap at Secretary Roper's notoriously inept collection of politicians.

Another measure which will create a stir before it is disposed of, was Senator Norris's proposal to curb the injunctive power of lower federal courts. With special reference to district court injunctions which have been frustrating the T.V.A., Norris declared: "Congress does not have to wait for a constitutional amendment to prevent legal delays from circumventing the will of the people, although I will join with advocates of an amendment to make sure that Congress has the power to deal with these important matters." Norris would have Congress create a special court to deal only with suits involving constitutionality of federal laws, with quick trial and quick appeal to the Supreme Court made possible. Other significant bills included the extension of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and four related credit agencies, and that hardy peren-