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What Spain Means to America

WHAT is taking place in Spain today is not something which we Americans can view as foreign and unimportant to us. For in Spain the great issue of our day, democracy or fascism, has come to a head. The dark forces of reaction, aided and abetted by the fascist governments of Italy, Germany and Portugal, are destroying cities, blowing up factories, uprooting what was built up by the Spanish people through centuries. The forces of democracy in Spain, if sufficiently aided by the workers and all progressives of the world, will defeat the fascist rebels, and thus deal a blow against the offensive of fascism all through the world.

That is why the reactionaries have carried on a campaign of lies about what is happening in Spain. That is why Hearst has outdone his notorious past in fabricating untruths about the heroic fight of the Spanish people for a better and more secure life under their democratically elected government.

The issue in Spain is very simple. Last February the people of Spain democratically voted in the present government by an overwhelming majority. They are trying to establish principles which we Americans hold dear, namely, separation of church from state; elimination of the stranglehold of a feudal aristocracy which was throttling the future development of Spain; the liberation of the peasants from semi-slave conditions; the granting of democratic rights to a population held in bondage by tyranny, superstition and illiteracy; the right of labor to enjoy higher living standards, collective bargaining.

These rights we Americans understand and cherish. We fought to free our country from the tyranny of the British crown in 1776. We fought for the separation of church from

state and the freedom of individual worship. We fought for the destruction of feudal hangovers which would have kept America in perpetual backwardness. We fought for democratic rights against the special privileges of the American Tories and the British aristocracy.

You will remember that, although the overwhelming majority of the American people in 1776 were for democracy, the Tories of that day did not allow them peacefully to solve their problems. They waged war against the American people, brought over foreign mercenaries in their ferocious attempt to keep America in chains.

At the polls the Spanish people voted for democracy, for an end of that tyranny which had kept Spain in economic and cultural darkness for centuries. Just as our Tories in 1776 refused to accept the mandate of the people, so did Franco and other generals, the nobility, the big monopoly capitalists, all those who realized that their special privileges would be curtailed under democracy, rise in armed insurrection against the democratically elected government.

Let me draw a parallel for you. Suppose here in America the people were to elect a government by an overwhelming majority. And then the reactionaries in the Liberty League, with the aid of generals and paid mercenaries, and with the active support of Hitler and Mussolini, tried to establish fascism here. That's what happened in Spain.

Our reactionaries understand the issue very clearly. When Hearst visited Italy and Germany last summer, he and his fascist friends came to an understanding about Spain. That is why the Hearst press, day in and day out, manufactures atrocity stories, weeps crocodile tears about the persecution of the clergy, tries to cover up the real issue in Spain by dragging out its shopworn Red herring. And that is why it is the duty of every American worker and every progressive to help the Spanish people defeat the fascist invasion. A defeat for Spanish democracy would embolden our own reactionaries to hatch fascist plots against our own democratic rights, and

we would be a step nearer to facing the kind of horrors the Spanish people are enduring today.

The American press has reported how the Spanish fascists openly receive munitions and airplanes from Germany and Italy, how German and Italian fascist aviators bomb and murder innocent people. General Franco, in return for munitions from Hitler and Mussolini, has promised them strategic territory on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic coasts. Thus, the fascists are selling the independence of Spain. This knowledge is beginning to break through the propaganda of the reactionaries. They try to cover up the fascist invasion as a crusade for God, a crusade, mind you, by Mohammedan mercenaries who murder innocent Christian men and women.

The truth is that the Spanish government was taking first steps towards separating church from state, an American tradition which is written into our Constitution. It is not true that the Catholic masses of Spain support the fascists. The majority of government supporters are Catholics.

There are members of the church hierarchy, big land-owners, who cruelly exploited the peasants on their vast holdings of land. It is these church land-owners, the upper hierarchy, who are fighting with the rebels and Mohammedan mercenaries against their own people. On the other hand, there are Catholic priests fighting shoulder to shoulder with their parishioners against the fascist rebels and their mercenary troops.

The reactionaries try to portray the Spanish Communists as people who are fighting for a socialist revolution right now. But the Spanish Communist Party has stated to the whole world that it is fighting loyally to save the republic and save democratic Spain.

Hearst and Landon raise the false issue of Communism in the United States elections, in the same way as the fascists raised that issue in Spain. We are justified in warning the American people that such propaganda here is also preparation to discredit the election results in November and prepare for an effort to change those results by undemocratic methods.

The Communists do not hide their aims. They want to win

the majority of the people for socialism everywhere. But now, when the majority of the people are not yet ready to take the socialist path, the Communists are in the forefront of the fight to preserve and extend democracy, so that the working class and all exploited people can learn and prepare for the revolutionary transition to socialism.

Spanish democracy has sent a delegation to our shores. Its members are, first, Isabel de Palencia, a noted artist, who on occasions represented the Spanish republic before the League of Nations; second is Marcelino Domingo, President of the Left-Republican Party, a well-known Spanish democrat and former Minister of Education; third is Father Luis Sarasola, a Catholic priest representing the loyal section of the Catholic church fighting on the side of the Spanish government.

Let us give these representatives of Spanish democracy a true American welcome. Just as Benjamin Franklin went to France to rally the French people in support of American democracy, so does Spanish democracy today send its representatives to the American people, appealing for our support against fascist tyranny. We cannot fail these fighters for democracy. We must give them great meetings of welcome and support, so that they can go back to Spain and tell the Spanish people that America hates fascism and will not permit it to destroy a friendly democratic nation.

All progressives and liberals, all trade unionists, all labor, must realize that their fate is a common one with that of Spain. We who believe in progress must come out openly in support of the Spanish people. We must expose the infamous blockade against the Spanish government as one which is helping the fascist insurrectionists. We must demand of our own government, whose so-called neutrality policy gives aid to the fascists and hampers the fight of the Spanish people, that it sell arms to this friendly democratic government which is fighting for its life.

I appeal to working class leaders and parties in the United States, to the trade unions, to progressives everywhere, to join us in united action to help save Spanish democracy. I appeal

to the Socialist Party, as well as to Right-wing Socialist leaders in New York, Connecticut and elsewhere, to work out an independent program of action against the Spanish fascists.

We must lift the unlawful blockade against the Spanish people and their democratic government. We must support the action of the Soviet Union in exposing the criminal actions of the fascist dictators. Men and women, old and young Americans, no matter what your political or religious beliefs, I appeal to all of you who believe in civilization and the further progress of humanity, I appeal to you to help the heroic Spanish men, women, and children and their government. Collect all the money possible in your organizations and among your friends to buy munitions, food and clothing for the defenders of Spanish democracy who are laying down their lives so that democracy will not perish from the earth. Send your donations to one of the committees working in contact with the Spanish government. Our call must be: The people for Spain—Spain for the people.

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