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WE WENT TO SPAIN



By A. F. HOWELLS

With Foreword by

Nettie Palmer

SPANISH RELIEF COMMITTEE

FREE
NOT TO BE SOLD
THREEPENCE

WHY WE WENT TO SPAIN

We left Australia for Spain in July, 1938, intending to offer our services as Ambulances' Drivers or Relief Workers to the Spanish Republican Government. Before we arrived in Europe the Spanish Government decided to withdraw all volunteers already in Spain. So our hopes of working there came to an end.

However, we decided not to return to Australia without at least visiting Spain and seeing all we could of what was going on there, so that on our return we could lecture and assist in raising more aid for the Spanish people.

Through the International Co-ordinating Committee for Aid to Spain in Paris we obtain Non-Intervention Visas from the British and French Governments which enabled us to spend two weeks in Northern Republican Spain.

We hope that the following story of our experiences while there will assist in gaining new support for the Spanish People in their heroic struggle against Fascism.

A. F. HOWELLS.

Melbourne.

WE WENT TO SPAIN

by
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With Section on Aid for Children

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FOREWORD

The case for Republican Spain has all along been so sound that instinctively one looks for a flaw in it. Could any cause have only right on its side? Was any nation ever wholly wronged? Yes. Republican Spain is such a cause, such a nation. Time, while adding to its burdens of pain, hunger and disaster, has also revealed its immense resources of courage and honour. Month by month what we hear about the people's Spain goes to build up our faith in human beings. That is one reason why this pamphlet, bearing its new witness to that courage and honour, is so welcome.

The Spanish Republic, gathering itself together after the elections of February, 1936, for what seemed likely to be a long, steady effort, excepted the military leaders' promises of loyalty. Busied, as a pacifist state, with constructive work, health, education, minimum land reforms—the government had no time for suspicions. At most it hoped that those they had put out of office would be placated by the moderation and gradualness of the changes introduced. But even this moderation failed with their opponents, who, determined as they were to rule and possess, made an armed rising against the Spanish people all over Spain simultaneously in July, 1936.

Everyone knows what happened after that. Although unarmed and unprepared, the people resisted, and in the chief parts of Spain were successful almost over night. More than that, the plans for greater and swifter reforms now seemed justified: "If they shot us down for teaching a hundred people to read, let's teach 10,000." Kindergartens, hospitals, co-operatives grew up at the same time as the new People's Army.

For this new army was needed, after all, and desperately. All was not over in July. Franco's army did not contain only the Spaniards he could induce to follow him. First he brought the Moors in great numbers, bullied and flattered across the Straits, some of them in German 'planes. After that, and with it, came not only German and Italian "Volunteers," sent formally by their governments, but also their military materials. The Republicans no longer fought against other men: it was a war against most powerful machines, machines "tested" on the Spanish people, its new army and civilian population.

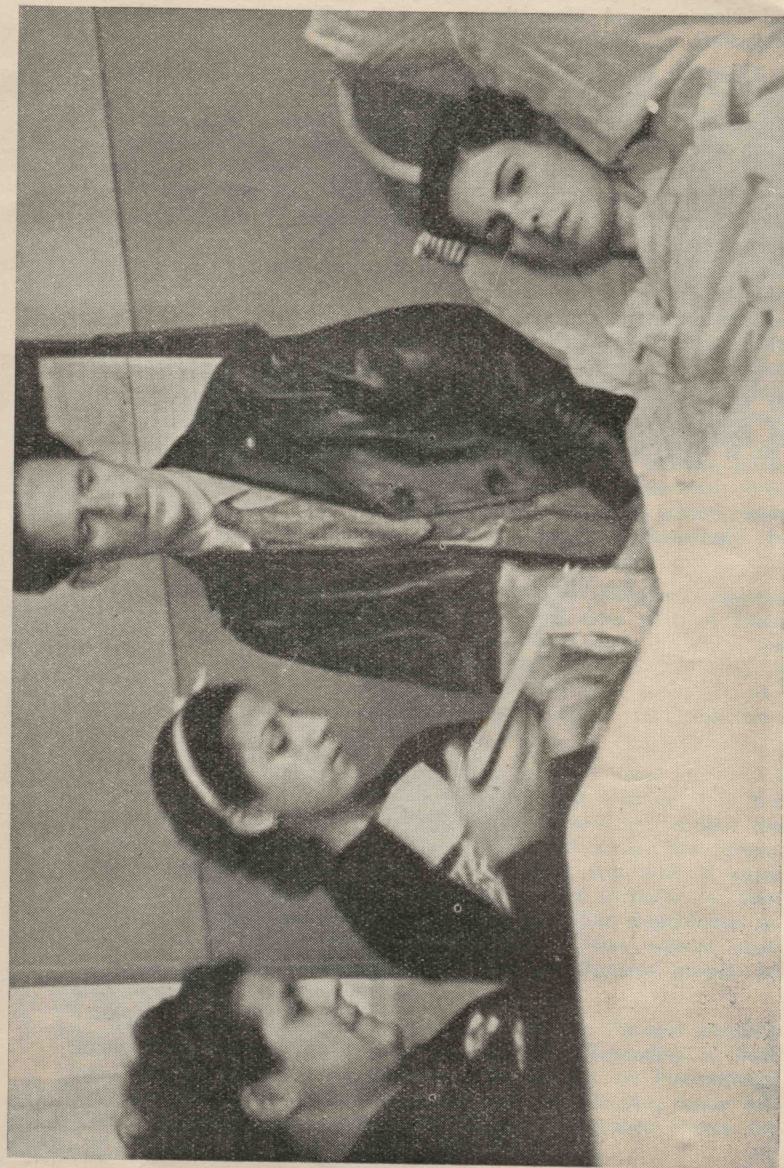
The writers of this pamphlet have seen the Spanish people's army at the front. They even witnessed the disbanding of their most famous helpers, those volunteers for liberty, the International Brigade. These worn but indomitable men were leaving Spain last October so that the conditions of Negrin's "Thirteen Points for

which Spain is Fighting" could be kept. "Spain for the Spaniards," said Negrin, "and after the war a complete amnesty with a plebiscite."

After the war! Meanwhile totalitarian war, and International invasion still threatens every home, every drifting or settled refugee, every starving child in Republican Spain. This pamphlet shows what this means, and this is our second reason for welcoming it. It means that in 14 days Barcelona suffered 12 air raids and the people stood firm: that in a great city everyone, every day, wakes hungry and remains so, everyone receives a share of whatever remains from food-ships that have not been sunk. It means that the children's colonies with their food and quiet are immensely valuable, and must be supported; but that they are far too few, so that in the present emergency the larger scheme for children's cities is needed—the scheme we are pledged to help.

We Australians should try to help ravaged Spain, believing that her fight is our own, needed just these two things: contact with the Spanish people's spirit and knowledge of their special needs. This is what our observers have brought home with them—Salud!

NETTIE PALMER.



Injured Factory Worker in Barcelona Hospital

Chapter One

WE ARRIVE IN SPAIN

On the morning of Thursday, October 13, 1938, we arrived by autobus at the little French town of Perthus on the Franco-Spanish frontier. Immediately the autobus stopped in Perthus a French policeman came up to us and said, "You are going to Spain?" We were. "Where is your passport?" We showed him our passport with its Non-Intervention visas. He pointed to an office further down the village street. "There is the passport control—you will go there."

We unloaded our baggage, which consisted of a few personal belongings and 80 kilos of food which we had bought in France to distribute among people we met in Spain, hired a porter with a small hand-truck to carry it for us and marched off down the street to the passport control.

Our passport duly examined and stamped by the French police, we set off down the road in the direction of the frontier, which is two or three hundred yards out of the village. We had not gone far before we were hailed by another French policeman. He, too, examined our passport and we passed over into no-man's land.

We came to a bridge, at the further end of which stood a group of Spanish soldiers. A stout wire rope was stretched across the middle of the road.

We carried with us a letter to Capitan A—, commander of the frontier guard. This letter had been given us by the Spanish consul in Perpignan. It was asking the Commandant to 'facilitate' our progress to Barcelona. We handed this letter to a likely looking soldier. He glanced at the address, then at us, nodded curtly, and disappeared into a small stone building. A minute or two later an officer appeared.

"Are you the two comrades from Australia?" the officer asked in perfect English.

"Yes," we replied, "we are from Australia."

"It is possible that we can arrange for you to travel to Barcelona in the Carabineros' coach," he said. "But first you must get your passport stamped here, and

then you must go to the Customs House, five or six kilometers down the road to pass the Customs. Wait here for half an hour and we will have a car to take you to the Customs."

A Carabinero escorted us across the frontier to the Spanish Passport Control where we again got our passport stamped. The official took particulars from our passport and wrote them carefully in a book. Then he smiled up at us benevolently and said, "Gracias Camaradas, Salud!"

As we had half an hour to wait we went and sat upon the parapet of the bridge and had a look around us. Nearby a number of Carabineros (Carabineros, by the way, are soldiers whose duties include guarding the frontiers) in olive green overalls were busy digging some sort of excavation. A smart young officer wandered over to them and stood looking on at their work for some minutes then, apparently not satisfied with it, he called a halt. Without a word he took a pick from one of the soldiers and set to work like a true navvy while the soldiers looked on with great interest, leaning on their picks and shovels and taking the opportunity to have a smoke. After he had given a good demonstration of the gentle art of pick-swinging the officer put down the tool with a gesture which plainly meant, "There you are, that's the way to do it." The soldiers cheered encouragingly and set to work again with great gusto. We wondered with amusement what sort of a figure a young lah-de-dah officer of the Guards would make swinging a pick!

At last a car arrived to take us to the Customs and we were soon speeding along the winding Pyrenees road at 60 miles an hour. At the side of the road, not far from the frontier, we saw the charred remains of two big lorries. Later we were to learn that such sights are tragically common in Spain. Good drivers are rare and those who are good drivers are so over-worked that they often go to sleep at the wheel, causing some terrible accidents. And cars and lorries are veritably worth their weight in gold!

The Customs House is a very modern building on the outskirts of an old village. An English inter-

preter takes charge of us. We first go to the police office, where our passports are again stamped. Then we are asked to declare our money, and a note of the sum we have with us is made in our passports. After this we are submitted to a search and then comes the Customs.

Our baggage and the cases containing food are opened and thoroughly searched. An inventory is made of the articles of food and we are asked to pay a small tax.

At last we are through. The Carabineros smile at us. We hand round cigarettes. "Gracias, Gracias!" Cigarettes are precious in Spain.

"The Carabineros' coach is waiting," says the interpreter. So we take our seats and are soon speeding in the direction of Barcelona. Our fellow passengers in the coach are mostly soldiers, but there are some civilians, including three or four women.

It is hard to express our first feeling at being in Spain—the country which, with its people, has occupied our minds more than any other thing for the past few years. We feel elated to be here, yet at the same time depressed because we are not here to work as we had hoped. The beautiful country that stretches away on either side of us is so reminiscent of many parts of our own country that it is really hard for us to believe that we are here at all—only the sight of the Carabineros in their olive-green uniforms reminds us that we really are in Spain.

We pass through the towns of Figueras and Gerona, both of which have been severely bombed from the air, and we get our first sight of the destruction wrought by Franco's German and Italian planes. We see great piles of debris—heaps of dust and broken bricks and splintered woodwork—remains of what were once workers' homes. Everywhere are to be seen the open mouths of tunnels leading down into the red earth. Over these a sign proclaims in large letters, "Refugio."

But people walk through the narrow streets, littered with wreckage, as though nothing ever happened here! On and on through the beautiful country we speed.

By the side of the road are rows of tall plane trees, and here and there is a huge wattle tree in full golden bloom to make us feel at home. There are large areas under cultivation and here are all kinds of vegetables growing. On the branches of trees and on the houses of the peasants, great red-gold bundles are hanging. This is corn hung up to ripen in the sun. Vineyards spread over the warm hillsides, the red and yellow autumn leaves making a gay scene. But there is tragedy in all this. These precious vegetables, these grapes—many will rot where they are while the people in the big cities of Republican Spain, in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia, would give anything for them. You see, there are insufficient motor trucks and very little petrol. There are trains but hardly any coal—and so this food must rot in the ground.

The ships that would bring more motor trucks and petrol and coal to Republican Spain are bombed and sunk by German and Italian planes piloted by German and Italian airmen, while 'Non-Intervention' prevents the Republican Government from getting adequate supplies of arms to protect them. One of the results of so-called 'Non-Intervention' is that of preventing the Spanish people from eating even the food grown in their own country!

At last, after three or four hours travelling we reach the outskirts of a great city—Barcelona.

The coach came to a stop in a little side street running off the wide and beautiful Paseo de Gracías. A fellow passenger in the coach who could speak a little English volunteered to guide us to the Hotel Majestic. So leaving the cases of food in the care of the Carabineros we set off with our guide down the Paseo de Gracías.

Before the war this famous thoroughfare was the favourite promenade of the well-to-do section of Barcelona's population. To-day it is interesting as the official and semi-official centre. Its finest buildings are either occupied by Government Ministries, or are the headquarters of the great union and political bodies, including the U.G.T., Socialist Party of Catalunya, Anar-

chists, Communist Party of Catalunya, and the headquarters of the Basque Militia in Catalunya.

The Paseo de Gracías is always bright with the many uniforms of the Spanish Republican Army, and stretched across from the trees which line the footways are huge propaganda banners which proclaim, 'Victory for the Army of the Ebro!' and the famous words of the defenders of Madrid, 'They Shall Not Pass!'

We said farewell to our friend, who had stopped outside a fine building which bore the legend, 'Hotel Majestic Inglaterra.' This hotel was once popular with the wealthy English visitors to Barcelona. Now it is a sort of semi-official hotel run by the Government to accommodate journalists, consular officials and people who work in the various humanitarian organizations.

The manager looked at us doubtfully when we asked for accommodation. First he hesitated, then he said, "There is no more accommodation here—I am sorry, but we are expecting the League of Nations Commission to-morrow. Perhaps if you tried the Ritz—" (The Ritz is the other semi-official hotel in Barcelona.) We explained that we had been advised to stay at the Hotel Majestic by Madame B— in Paris. The manager thought for a moment. "Oh, very well then—we can give you a room on the top floor."

So, after walking up six flights of stairs (the lifts do not work in Barcelona now because electricity must be conserved), we found ourselves in a large and comfortable room overlooking the Paseo de Gracías. And there, tired and hungry, we waited till dinner.

At 7.30 we were shown to a table in the hotel dining-room. The head waiter appeared and presented us with a most impressive looking gold-crested menu. Through our minds floated visions of all the good things that you expect to see on such a menu. There were four words neatly arranged in the middle of the card:—

Soup
Grilled Steak
Beans.

This first meal was a fair sample of all the other meals we had there. The soup was always warm water flavoured with meat essence; the steak was always very small and tough. Sometimes octopus or sardines took the place of the steak, and sometimes we had green figs for dessert.

After dinner we sat in the lounge of the hotel and wondered who and what the other guests were. They seemed an interesting crowd and we met many of them later. There were journalists who were representing English, French, American, Russian and a Hungarian paper; embassy officials; a few loud-voiced Americans whom we discovered were business men trying to do business with the Government; officers of the International Brigade who were waiting there until they should be sent out of Spain; and an American sculptor who was engaged in preparing an exhibition of heads of the leaders of Republican Spain. When this exhibition is completed it will be called, 'Why Franco Can't Win!'

We saw two Americans in earnest conversation over a bottle of wine. Both of them looked very interesting individuals. I asked a man with whom we had palled up, "Who are those two Americans?"

"Oh, the middle-aged cove is the American Ambassador, the young one is E—the representative of the 'American Daily Worker'—you know, the Communist paper—."

We went to bed and had visions of Stanley Melbourne Bruce having a friendly chat with Harry Pollitt over pint-pots in the 'Old Bull and Bush!'

Chapter Two THE BOMBARDMENTS

We were sitting at dinner in the Hotel Majestic. It was our second evening in Barcelona. We were half way through the anaemic soup when the lights flickered and went out. A dead quiet fell over the dining-room.

"What is wrong?" gasped M—.

I was trying to be calm although I knew I had the jitters.

"Perhaps it's a fuse blown—or something—" I said smugly, trying hard to stop my soup spoon from doing a St. Vitus' dance and throwing soup all over the tablecloth.

A waiter clad all in white loomed up at the table like a ghost.

"Why have the lights gone out?" asked M—, ignoring my fuse theory with great contempt.

The waiter lit a candle and looked at us as though horrified at our stupidity and ignorance. He pointed dramatically to the dome of the roof above us with a gaunt finger, "Aviacion!" he said.

Candles were lit all through the dining-room by this. The process of eating soup went on as before.

"We're in for it to-night," observed a journalist who sat at the next table to us. "Negrin is to make a speech to-night, and they always bomb when Negrin makes a speech—matter of fact, whenever there is anything on in Barcelona we get a special bombing—they bomb the opening of parliament and they bomb the closing of parliament. If there is to be a concert or a procession or a meeting—or any other damn thing, they bomb us. Last week we had a performance of the 'Taming of the Shrew' and they even bombed that—."

"Haw Haw! How awfully jolly," giggled a journalistic simpleton at the same table. "Damn good taste, what!"

We finished dinner and went out into the lounge. It was quite dark there. Cigarette ends glimmered. There was a buzz of excited conversation about the expected speech of Dr. Negrin.

"I hear he's going to resign—."

"Bosh!"

"He talked about resigning in his last speech—."

"Yes, if the Cabinet had no confidence in him! But there's nothing in it, I tell you—. His position's stronger than ever—."

Buzz, buzz, buzz—.

"I say, did you hear the rumour? — Negrin's resigning!"

"That a fact? Oh, I say, I must get the strength of this—."

"Negrin's—."

Suddenly there came a long drawn-out wail. Then another—and another. Dark figures got up from where they were sitting in the lounge and hurried out into the street. We followed. Everybody stood in a group outside the hotel staring at the sky. Negrin was completely forgotten for the moment.

Barcelona was pitch dark, and deadly quiet, except for the shrill piping of police whistles.

Then! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! We heard the dull thud of the bombs only half a mile away.

Anti-aircraft guns situated on the roofs of the tall buildings sent their shells crashing through the still night. Searchlights streaked across the sky in all directions. Between the firing of the anti-aircraft guns could be heard the high-pitched whirr of the engines of the little chaser planes up after the raiders.

There is a burst of excitement among the group in the street.

"Look! Look!"

A plane can be distinctly seen in the ray of a searchlight. "Is it one of ours or one of theirs?" everybody is asking. The plane dives, and loops, and ducks like a fish in a net, and finally disappears into the darkness.

"This is terrible—too terrible!" says a man near us. He is the concierge of the hotel. "How can anybody think that this is right? Human beings were not made to destroy and be destroyed like this. Why can't we be content with the good and beautiful things in life? The other day I was listening to my little girl—she's fourteen—play the piano. 'Moonlight Sonata' she was playing, and I was thinking how beautiful that was when the planes came over—dropping their awful bombs—!"

The last searchlight flickered out. The harsh clang of an ambulance bell sounded further down the Paseo de Gracias. Everybody moved back into the darkened rooms of the hotel—wondering probably how many poor devils had been mutilated this time.

Negrin gave his speech that night; and did not resign.

That was our first experience of an air raid in Barcelona. We were to experience many more before we left Spain. Twelve in one week—four in one night!

Earlier on that same day we had visited the badly-bombed areas in and around Barcelona. Nobody who has not seen can hope to appreciate the frightful damage which has been done by Franco's German and Italian airmen. In Barcelona most of the bombings have been of the Port and the crowded working-class areas. But in practically every section of the city there has been some bombing. In March of this year, 1938, there were 23 raids on one section of the centre of the city. Whole blocks of buildings were demolished and 834 people were killed and 1279 injured.

At the Port of Barcelona the destruction is enormous. Great heaps of tangled iron, shattered glass and broken bricks and stone are all that remain of many buildings. And hardly a building stands but shows a gaping bomb hole in the roof. On the roadways one sees great holes and twisted tram lines.

But work at the Port still goes on. It must—or the people would starve.

Franco had said often enough that his planes only bomb 'Military Objectives.' And 'Military Objective' is the excuse for constantly bombing Barcelona's port. But go through Barcelona's crowded working-class district and see the havoc wrought upon the poor homes of the workers; go into the country and see the results of the merciless bombings of open villages and small towns; see the schools, the market places, the hospitals, that have been bombed. Are these military objectives? Mothers and their infants, school children and aged folk, homes of poor workers—Franco bombs them all because he hopes by so doing to demoralize the people. In the brute minds of his friends this does constitute a military objective. In the minds of all decent people it constitutes a reason why Fascism should be stamped from the face of the earth.

It would be impossible, in the space we have at our disposal, to give full particulars of the Fascist bombardments of open towns in Republican Spain. But the

few figures which follow will show how intense these inhuman bombings have been.

From the beginning of January to the end of July, 1938, there were 609 Fascist bombardments of towns in Republican Spain. Of these Barcelona received 75, Valencia 48, Madrid 35. The remaining 451 bombardments were of villages and small open towns.

Unfortunately we have not been able to obtain official figures of the number of people killed and injured in air raids on towns in the whole of Republican Spain. But the following figures for Barcelona alone will give some idea of the frightful waste of life. This is an estimate of only 53 air raids on Barcelona proper during the first half of 1938:—

Killed, 2116.

Injured, 5830.

Of these victims, half the killed were children and 583 were women! 'Military Objectives!'

The same 53 raids were also responsible for the destruction of 1253 buildings.

People have asked us, "What effect do these bombardments have on the people of Spain?" As far as we could see, or discover in conversation with people who live there, the effect is to make the people more and more determined to resist to the last breath! This inhuman war from the air against women and children has taught them to believe in the words of "La Pasionaria," famous Spanish woman and Communist, "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees!" They know too well that those who are responsible for these frightful bombings would not shrink from oppressing them even more than they were oppressed before.

Therefore the moral of the people is high. You will hear them walking in the Paseo de Gracías during an air raid, laughing, and even whistling. Not that they are callous. They know that where the bombs are dropping there lie dead and wounded comrades—maybe their very own friends, or members of their family (and there is hardly a person in Barcelona who has not already lost some dear one). They laugh because they are really brave and are determined

to win this war and retain their new-found freedom and democracy.

In recent months excellent work has been carried out by the Government in providing refuges for the population. When the first raids began on Barcelona there was very little protection. In February, 1938, there was only 47,100 square metres of refuge space. By the end of August this had been increased to 122,250 square metres. And to-day it is much more. In the early days anti-aircraft guns were few and were inefficiently handled. To-day the Fascist planes are finding it increasingly difficult to escape the anti-aircraft guns and the little chaser planes, and they seldom succeed in getting any further than the Port. If the Government were allowed to procure more arms from abroad it would not be long before the Fascists would find it impossible to raid Barcelona at all. But 'Non-Intervention' prevents the Government from getting more anti-aircraft guns or chaser planes to defend its people.

Chapter Three

MEN MUST WORK—AND WOMEN, TOO

In Barcelona there is an organization known as "The Anti-Fascist Women's Auxiliary of the Ministry of Defence." One of the tasks of this committee is to correspond with the men at the Front and to supply the little comforts and necessities these men are in need of. Another task is the distribution of special food and comforts to the workers in war factories, especially those factories which have been bombarded by Franco's planes.

All the work of the Committee is done by voluntary labour. Ironically enough the headquarters of the committee is in the magnificent building which before the war housed the Italian Embassy.

To this committee we donated the food we had brought into Spain with us, so that it could be given to the workers in some factory.

One afternoon a certain member of the committee, Madame S—, came to see us. "This afternoon," she

said, "some members of our committee are going to visit a factory which was bombed recently, for the purpose of making a distribution of food. We are also going to the hospital to visit the workers who were injured in the bombing. We would like you to come with us, as the workers, both in the factory and the hospital will be cheered to meet friends from so far away as Australia."

Unfortunately M— was unable to accept this invitation. But I accompanied Madame S— and the other members of the committee. It was one of the happiest, while yet the saddest experience of my life.

We visited the injured in the hospital first, taking them some milk and chocolate (precious luxuries in Barcelona). There were ten of them there, four men and six girls. Eight others had been killed or had died of wounds since the bombing. Some of those we visited were terribly injured. In the hospital that afternoon three pictures were indelibly printed upon my mind.

A small room. Two beds—upon each a young girl. One is sixteen, and beautiful as only Spanish girls can be. Her name is Carmen. She is badly injured. Bits of bomb have penetrated her lungs and stomach. We stand beside her bed. Madame S— is speaking, "Comrade, this is a friend all the way from Australia—." The frail little thing looks at me. She lifts her head slightly from the pillow. She raises her hand and her fist is closed so tight in the Anti-Fascist salute that the knuckles show blue-white. "Salud—Comarada!" she whispers . . . The lump in my throat was nearly choking me when we left that little room. Two days later Carmen was dead.

We are in a long ward, standing beside the bed of a young man of twenty-two. His young wife is there, and his aged mother, who wears a black peasant shawl over her head. This young man has had his right arm and leg blown off . . . The old mother and the wife are sobbing—and the women of the committee cry softly. Somebody beside me touches my arm. It is a man from the same factory who is visiting his fellow-workers. He whispers to me. "Comrade—

when you return to your country you will tell them about this? Our only crime is that we are workers."

We are at the bedside of another man. He is badly injured, too, but he takes my hand in a mighty grip and cries, "Salud." And he goes on to tell me that he and his comrades will work and fight to the very end. Before we leave we give him a supply of milk and biscuits and chocolates, as we have done all the others. But his wife, who has been sitting quietly by his bedside, jumps to her feet and cries, "No! No! It is not right—we have money to pay—." And she tries to make us take a crumpled ten-peseta note. And we know that the action of this woman is not instigated by pride.

As we left that hospital I understood far better why the workers in factories throughout Republican Spain are so proudly called 'The Heroes of Production.'

We arrived at the factory. It was an aluminium factory where plates, pannikins and water-bottles for the troops were being made. The workers who were not injured, or not badly so, were still carrying on as though nothing had happened. Although the factory was directly hit four times, none of the machinery was badly damaged. In the roof were the gaping bomb holes and upon the floor beneath them piles of debris. The lathes were whirring away merrily and the men and women working at them sang and whistled and called jokes at each other. One felt that what had happened here a week before was only a bad dream.

I watched two women working at a lathe—doing a job which I once did myself in a canister factory in Sydney—polishing the finished articles prior to their being sent out. Almost above their heads was a huge bomb hole in the roof. Sunshine poured through the bomb hole and spilled into a great amber pool upon the floor. The two women were very proud of the fine polish they put on the pannikins and held them up to catch the reflection of the blue sky through the hole. "Muybien!" they cried.

We decided to hold a meeting in the factory. The manager went round and told the workers to stop work, and they formed a big ring in the centre of the

factory. I was asked to speak to the meeting, which I did through an interpreter. I told them that I would return to Australia and do all I could to gain more support from Australians for the people of Spain—whose fight was not only their own fight, but the fight of the people of the whole world against Fascism.

Then a worker of the factory, a member of the United Committee of the two great unions, i.e., U.G.T. and C.N.T., addressed the meeting.

"To-day," he said, "is to us in this factory a day of mourning for those of our fellow workers who are dead, and on this day we can say finally and definitely that we will stand firmly at our posts until the victory of the people of Spain is complete. And the victory of the people of Spain will be complete because two years of war have taught us the value of unity—a unity that is cemented with blood and is indestructible!"

It is the feeling expressed by this worker that makes it possible for work to progress smoothly and efficiently all over Republican Spain. It is because all have this feeling that men and women risk death and mutilation by working in the war factories, and unloading the ships in Barcelona Port.

Democracy in Spain would have been completely dead long before to-day if it were not for this determination born of unity.

Chapter Four LIFE GOES ON

Naturally the war has disorganized most of the common amenities of life in Spain, particularly those relying upon water supply and electricity.

Among the first things that we noticed in Barcelona was the scarcity, and sometimes the total absence of electric trams; the fact that the lifts in the large buildings do not work; that shops and offices are deprived of electric light during the day and must rely upon candle light in the late afternoons; the temporary suspension of picture theatre programmes, and the lack of water in taps and cisterns during the day.

Electric trams are seen at infrequent intervals in the mornings and evenings, and when they are running large queues of people can be seen waiting to board them at the various stops. Owing to their scarcity as many people crowd on to them as possible. They pack inside like sardines, and hang in clusters outside like bees that are swarming. Watching the people who travel by trams gave us a wonderful insight into the nonchalant character of the Spanish people. Sometimes after waiting with amazing patience for over an hour they will just board a tram when the electricity is cut off, and instead of being irritated at this they will shrug resignedly, crack a joke, and set out to walk to their destination.

The organization of trams, buses and other services and some industries, has been taken over by the C.N.T.—a great industrial union. This has relieved the Government of quite a lot of responsibility, giving it greater freedom to deal with more important organization.

In Barcelona, particularly in the older sections of the city, are many ancient water fountains, from which the barest trickle of water runs continuously. At these fountains crowds of women and children congregate early in the mornings with collections of utensils of various shapes and sizes and wait patiently to collect their water supply for the day. Of course, many of them have always had to do this because in the poorer parts of the city water has never been laid on to the houses, but to-day, even in the modern houses and buildings the water supply is very often cut off because the pumping stations have no electricity supply.

From the Port of Barcelona to the beautiful square of the Place Catalunya in the centre of the city, runs a fine tree-lined thoroughfare called the Ramblas. The Ramblas is the pulse of life in Barcelona. Day and night it is packed with picturesque crowds. Soldiers in many types of uniforms, sailors from the fleet, air-men, workers in overalls, occasional beggars, street pedlars, old women in long black shawls, beautiful girls, and noisy youngsters. Some are out to sell, many are out to buy, but most are just promenading. Down

the centre of the Ramblas are many bookstalls. (We have never seen so many bookstalls anywhere as in Barcelona). In these bookstalls can be purchased any sort of literature—romances, political treatises, adventure stories, and religious, philosophic and scientific books. Australians will remember the cheap "Buffalo Bills" and "Deadwood Dicks" which used to be so popular with Australian youth. Even these tales of blood and thunder have a place in the Ramblas bookstalls. But by far the most popular books are those



Funeral for Basque Officer

dealing with left politics, and illustrated weeklies and picture magazines dealing with the war and life in the army.

On either side of the Ramblas, and in the narrow side streets running from it, are shops of all descriptions, with the exception of food shops. (There are no food shops in Barcelona because there is no food to

sell.) There are clothing shops where quite good clothes can be bought at reasonable prices. (The Government has made it illegal to charge high prices, so most of the prices are fixed.) The clothing sold is very light, alright for summer wear but useless for the winter. There are stationery shops, and occasional arts and crafts shops where beautiful glassware, Toledo work and many other objects of typical Spanish craftsmanship can be bought. There are tobacco shops which do not sell tobacco! (There is no tobacco in Spain, but these shops sell cigarettes made from a substitute which, as far as I can make out, is a sort of senna leaf.) There are postcard and stamp shops, shops which sell badges and colours to the soldiers for their uniforms; jewellery shops where the 'jewels' are glass, and the only metal tin. There is even a big cheap store like Coles which still seems to do a flourishing business, although its stocks are somewhat limited—as indeed are the stocks of all the shops in Barcelona.

Many people still think that religion has been crushed and religious people are being persecuted in Republican Spain. It will interest them to know that one of the first sights we saw in Barcelona was the funeral of a Captain of the Basque Militia. It was a large funeral and at its head walked the Catholic priests, wearing surplices and carrying the Host. This sight gave us rather a surprise, because we, too, had come to believe that there were no priests left in Barcelona and that religious ceremony of any kind had ceased. Yet here was a military leader and we were told, a 'Hero of the People,' being given a Catholic funeral! (See illustration.)

Most of the churches in Barcelona are closed because the Vicar General refuses to open them, but the main Catholic church (not the Cathedral) is open, and services take place there daily. The church authorities, however, do not encourage strangers to attend these services because they fear that fascist agents and provocateurs may get in for the purpose of deliberately provoking trouble!

Miss D. L. Collins, a Catholic surgeon, and one of

last year's Hunterian Professors at the Royal College of Surgeons, recently published an account of a visit to Barcelona in the English Catholic weekly, "The Tablet." Miss Collins visited Barcelona just previous to the time we were there. Among other things she says: "There are approximately 3000 Roman Catholic priests in Barcelona and their ministrations are available to all." She also says that Mass is held in many private houses with the cognizance of the Republican Government. She mentions also a Government decree under which priests who are called up for service under conscription are allowed to go into non-combatant services. Any reader wishing to verify this may do so by procuring a copy of the "Tablet" of October 15, 1938.

The beautiful old Gothic Cathedral of Barcelona—one of the finest and oldest Gothic churches in Europe—was bombed just before we arrived in Spain. We wanted to visit this Cathedral, but before we could enter we had to get permission from the chief custodian. The precincts of the cathedral are guarded day and night by soldiers in the picturesque uniform of the Catalan army. Inside we saw the result of the recent bombing, and in contrast to this we witnessed the work being done there by the Catalan Government to buttress the walls and foundations so that they will be better able to withstand future bombardments by the Italian airmen.

(At the time of writing this we learn from the press that the historic section of Barcelona, where the Cathedral is situated, has again been subjected to a frightful bombing in which a great number of buildings have been destroyed and over 50 people killed and many more injured.)

It is quite true that in the early days of the war Anarchists did destroy Catholic churches. But they did so not only because the church had become to them a symbol of oppression, and because they had been used as storehouses for weapons by the Fascists, but because they were used as veritable fortresses against the people. And who, knowing the facts, can blame the people for what they did then? But let anybody in Barcelona to-day interfere with church property and

it would not be long before they saw the inside of a gaol.

In one of Barcelona's busiest streets may be seen the "Bible House." This is the Barcelona headquarters of the Biblique of Geneva and the British and Foreign Bible Society. Here different kinds of Bibles and religious books are displayed for sale. Since the beginning of the war the doors of the Bible House have never been closed. Copies of the Gospels with the Spanish Republican colours—red, yellow and purple—on the cover have been prepared by the British and Foreign Bible Society and these are sold as gifts for soldiers at the Front.

From the beginning of the war up till February, 1937, 259 Bibles, 294 New Testaments, and 3488 separate books were sold in Barcelona—this was an increase of 250 copies on the number sold in the corresponding number of months prior to the Fascist revolt.

In postcard shops one sees many religious postcards exposed for sale and a shopkeeper told me that a great number of these are sold. I have seen soldiers buying them to send to their wives or mothers.

These facts must be very disappointing for those who want to believe that Republican Spain persecutes religion.

There are not many ways for finding pleasure or recreation left for the people in Republican Spain. All sport is suspended. Cafe life goes on during the daytime, and people sit at the outdoor cafes and drink substitutes for coffee and chocolate. There are cinemas when there is electric current. And there are plays, concerts and the opera.

The Liceo is one of the largest and most magnificent opera houses in the world. Since the war its management has been taken over by the Catalan Government, and nearly every night there is an opera, a concert or a play shown there. The price of admittance to the Opera is from two to 20 pesetas—a peseta is worth a little over a penny! In the stalls and in the Loges where once sat the wealthy seniors and senioritas of Catalunya, the workers, soldiers and sailors of the Republic sit with their wives and girl friends. At the

close of each performance audience and players stand, clenched fist raised in the anti-fascist salute, and sing the Spanish Republican Hymn with an enthusiasm that nearly takes the roof off.

At a concert we once attended in the Barcelona Theatre a crowd of soldiers came in half-way through the performance. They were from the Ebro Front. Spontaneously the audience sprang to their feet and sang the Internationale. The youthful leader of the soldiers was led to the stage, where he made a speech. Then some children who had taken part in the concert came on to the stage and made speeches. This went on for close on an hour before the programme was resumed.

The dress of the people in Barcelona is well worth mention here. We thought that after two years of war the people would be very poorly dressed, and it came as a surprise to find that a very great number of people wore clothes quite as smart as the average comfortably-off person in Paris. Particularly does this apply to the women. Their clothes are cheap, but pretty and well tailored.

Many of the soldiers wear smart tailored uniforms—others only have khaki or olive-green dungarees.

One of the most noticeable things about Spanish women is that they do not wear hats. They never did. They prefer to have their hair beautifully dressed and when they wear anything it is the traditional head-dress—the mantilla, or shawl. There is a funny story attached to this. Recently a Fascist newspaper in Franco's Spain urged the women there not to 'imitate the scandalous fashion of the Reds by going without hats.' To set a good example, some of the fashionable ladies—supporters of Franco, of course, introduced a new fashion in hats. The hats they wore were modelled on the lines of the caps worn by the Italian soldiers. Naturally their example was not followed by the rest of the women in Franco's Spain who preferred to be hatless, even though it was a 'Red practice,' than to ape their unwelcome guests, the Italians.

The first day we were in Barcelona M— wondered why everybody stared at her when we walked in the

streets—it did not dawn on either of us for a long time that it was because she wore a hat. This was a social error which, had we been in Spain in the early days of the war, would have more than likely landed us into trouble. For in those first days hats had been condemned by the Anarcho-Syndicalists as 'Symbols of bourgeois arrogance.' Fortunately they are simply a joke to-day.

Chapter Five

FOOD

For the purpose of distributing food to the people of Barcelona, and of Republican Spain generally, there is in operation a rationing system organized by municipal councils in towns and villages. There is also a system of co-operatives which distributes food (necessarily in small quantities) to over 6,000,000 members.

In the cities and the towns Peoples' Restaurants have been established. A person wishing to eat at these restaurants must have a 'Work Certificate' to say that he or she is a bona fide worker. A soldier at the door of the restaurant examines the work certificate and the holder is allowed to pass into the restaurant, where he is given quite a reasonable meal at a fairly low cost. For the average worker who eats regularly in one of these restaurants, meals cost one-third of his wages. Of course, these restaurants always have big queues waiting to get in, but more are being opened and if the supply of food can be kept up and increased these queues will in time disappear. In Barcelona alone there are already enough restaurants to cater for 100,000 workers.

Ironically enough there are people in Barcelona to-day who can claim that they are better fed now despite the food shortage than they were before the Popular Front Government came to power. Under the Government rationing and the co-operative systems everybody is assured of some food now, whereas before when unemployment was rife and food was dear, many poor people in Barcelona died of starvation.

But because there is nobody actually without food it

does not mean that there is not a grave shortage of food. Many of the necessities are either entirely lacking or extremely scarce. For example, there is little or no milk, sugar, flour, olive oil (which latter is most important to the Spanish diet), coffee, meat or fish. In fact, the only foodstuffs which seemed to be at all plentiful when we were in Barcelona were rice, Mexican beans, and a sort of Spanish pea. And at times there is even a great shortage in these three items. What little meat and fish there is is given to the soldiers, the children in the schools and colonies, and to the workers who dine at the restaurants. Milk, when there is any, is given to the children, but there is never enough to go round. Only the very young ones get it at all regularly.

The peasants in the country are far better off than the people in the cities, because they can grow vegetables on their land. And they have fruit and maize and nuts, etc. In fact, it can be said truthfully that most of the peasants in Republican Spain are better off than they have ever been. They own their land now and they can enjoy the fruits of it. Before the war those who owned any land at all paid enormous taxes to the State and the Church. Now they pay very little in taxes. But before the war most of them owned nothing and what they grew went to the big landowners, while they lived in a state of semi-starvation.

We were told that the food shortage was worse in Barcelona than anywhere else in Republican Spain. One of the main reasons for this is the large number of refugees—there are 2,000,000—in Catalunya who have to be fed.

Republican planes do not bomb Franco's ports and sink ships carrying food. He has control of the biggest, and with the exception of Valencia, the richest parts of Spain. Galicia, for instance, which is in Franco's hands, used to supply the whole of Spain with fish. And there is Portugal, whose Government supports Franco, to see that the Fascists in Spain don't go short of food, even though the Portuguese people do. And although Franco controls the largest territory he

has the smallest population to support. Including his Germans, Italians, Moors and Foreign Legionaries there are about 12,000,000 in Franco's Spain, while in Republican territory there are over 13,000,000.

So they have banquets in Franco's Spain for people like Lady Chamberlain and Mr. Pirow. The peasants and the workers there do not attend these banquets of course—they pay for them with their labour and their taxes, and continue to exist as they did before, in a state of semi-starvation.

We have not been to Franco's Spain, but we spent a week on a ship with a Spaniard who lived in Seville until less than six months ago. This man was a business man, and was far from being sympathetic to the Republican Government, but he told us that the conditions of the people in Franco's Spain were far worse than they had ever been. The Army chiefs and the Fascist leaders lived on the fat of the land—the people had nothing. So bad had things become that this man was leaving Spain for the first time in his life and going to live in England.

So, the really grand thing about Republican Spain is that the Government, with the aid of the unions and the co-operatives have been able to organize efficient food relief for the people in face of the terrific shortage. What could they do if they were assured of an efficient food supply. And what would be the consequences? Victory for the Government would be doubly assured. The Fascists realize this. That is why they bomb every foodship which tries to enter a Republican harbour.

Chapter Six

WE VISIT THE FRONT

We had received a pass from the Ministry of Defence to visit the front lines, and now the problem was: how to get there? Transport is always a problem in Republican Spain. Of course, there are plenty of military transports passing to and fro between Barcelona and the Front, but although you are allowed to do most things, you cannot travel on a military trans-

port — even though your pass says, 'The Military Authorities request that no impediment be put in the way of the bearers.'

After some days' delay we received information to the effect that arrangements could be made for us to be transported to the headquarters of the Ebro Army Commissariat, which is some 50 or 60 kilometers behind the lines, in the truck which takes the daily papers from Barcelona to the troops. The comrades at the Commissariat, we were assured, would see that we got through to the front lines.

"O.K., that will do us," we said. "When do we leave?"

We were told that the truck leaves Barcelona at 7 a.m. every morning. So at 7 a.m. the following morning we were waiting patiently in a Barcelona side street for the paper truck. And at 9, 10, 11 a.m., we were still waiting—but not so patiently. During the night there had been four severe air raids in Barcelona and the printing of the newspapers had been held up in consequence. But at last the truck arrived and we scrambled over the back and found seats upon the bundles of newspapers and pamphlets inside. The truck had a canvas cover and we felt like early pioneers about to cross the plains in a covered wagon.

Soon we were motoring along the Tarragona road at a cool 80 kilometers per hour, slowing down occasionally to a bare 70 in order to negotiate sharp bends and narrow village streets!

We were not the only passengers in the truck. There were four soldiers and a civilian. Three of the soldiers slept, stretched out on top of the bundles of papers, while the fourth crouched in a corner and ate his breakfast—a bit of maize bread three or four inches thick, in the middle of which nestled the tiniest sardine I have ever seen. He ate all round the sardine first, leaving that precious tit-bit till the last. With the civilian we carried on a desultory conversation, mostly in monosyllables, grunts and gestures. You can say quite a lot in that way in Spain, especially if you know a few good Spanish cuss words to throw in occasionally. It's certainly like Australia in that respect.

At about 1 p.m. we reached Tarragona, a beautiful seacoast town which, up till that time, had been bombed over 60 times and had lost 13 per cent. of its population. Since then it has been bombed many more times. On November 7 it was bombed and thirty houses and the civil hospital were destroyed. The International Commission for Investigation into Bombing of Open Towns has protested to Franco and has asked that Tarragona and its population of 41,000 be spared from further raids. What Franco's answer will be is easy to anticipate!

At Tarragona a great part of the load of papers was taken out of the truck and we set off again inland. For two hours the truck jolted over the rocky mountain roads, and we bounced about with the papers all over the floor. We sped down steep grades at breath-taking rate, and the wind lifted loose papers from the truck and scattered them over the countryside. Soldiers and peasants rushed eagerly to pick them up. At last we swerved off the road into a narrow lane, and jolted over cobble stones to come to a stop with screeching brakes in a beautiful old world courtyard.

We had reached the Commissariat at last. This organization has the task of looking after the social and political life of the army. There is no organization equivalent to it in the British Army—it is an idea which the Spaniards have stolen from the Soviet Red Army.

Feeling that every bone in our bodies must be broken, we got out of the truck and looked around us. We were in the central courtyard of a grand building which might have been some Grandee's country house, but which had been, in reality, a country hotel before the war. In the courtyard were beautiful acacia trees and flowering wattles to remind us of Australia.

We showed our pass to the most official-looking person in sight, and he led us to the office of a young lieutenant who asked us a few questions in French and then told us to wait while he got in touch with the Commandante.

After we had been sitting in the office for ten minutes or so an orderly appeared. He looked for all

the world like a younger brother of Sancho Panza, and by the amiable way in which he kept beckoning to us we imagined some sinister plot was afoot. But the officer smiled reassuringly and told us that dinner was served. As we had had nothing to eat but a few biscuits since the previous day, this was most welcome news. We followed the orderly out into a large room in which was a table laid for two.

The orderly placed before us a large dish of rice and meat, with tomato, onion and olive oil, and as we ate he talked to us in Catalan. All our efforts to explain that we did not understand were futile. Each time we said, "No Comprendo," he shrugged, and rattled away all the faster. The Spanish are like that, they just will not admit defeat.

As soon as we had finished our meal a soldier came and escorted us to the office of the Commandante.

A tall aesthetic-looking Spaniard stood ceremoniously behind a desk. As we entered he bowed with typical Spanish dignity (the Spaniards still retain the traditional ceremonies though most of them are consciously opposed to ceremony!).

"Salud, Camaradas!"

"Salud, Camarada. Do you speak English?"

"No." But he indicates another young officer, who says, "I understand English a leetle—yes!"

We learn that arrangements are being made to take us to the Front in a Commissariat car, and our English-speaking friend is to come with us as interpreter. We thanked the Commandante and departed with many "Saluds." The young officer went in search of a car. After about ten or fifteen minutes he returned to say that there would be no car available for half an hour or more. So we filled in the time asking this chap questions and trying to understand the replies he gave in broken English.

At last a car arrived. And what a car! There was no doubt that it had been through the mill—it should have long since been decorated for distinguished service and pensioned off. But even the oldest cars, like the oldest soldiers, are too valuable to pension off in Republican Spain. Our interpreter friend looked

the car over ruefully. He groaned and shook his head. The driver of the car had switched off the engine and was already asleep. These drivers veritably live at the wheel and have to seize every moment when the car is not actually in use to snatch a sleep.

"We cannot go to the Ebro in this car," said the interpreter. "The roads are too bad, and it is 80 kilometers—this would never get us there!" He went off to take up the matter with the Commandante. When he returned it was to inform us that it was impossible to get another car, but the Commandante had suggested that we go to Lerida on the Segre Front, as it was nearer and the roads were better. Perhaps we could get to the Ebro some other night (our pass was available for 15 days) so the arrangement suited us. We got into the car, woke the unfortunate driver, and rattled off in the direction of Lerida.

The country through which we passed was rocky and poor, and the houses of the peasants and the villages were poorer than any we had hitherto seen. But there were vines growing in terraced gardens along the rocky hillsides, and groves of olive trees.

At nightfall we reached a fair-sized town and came to a stop in the courtyard of a rambling old house. This was the Divisional Headquarters.

"Come, comrades," said our guide. "We must report to the Commandante of the Division."

The Divisional Commander proved to be a jolly looking, elderly man—the first elderly officer we had seen to date in Spain. The interpreter introduced us as "Australianos." The Commandante looked at us with undisguised suspicion. "Italianos!" he ejaculated.

"No, no, camarada — estan Australianos Antifascistas!"

"Oh, muy bien!" The old chap beamed on us. He handed round a packet of cigarettes while we all had a good laugh over his mistake.

So we wanted to go into the front lines to-night! The senora, too? Si, that would be possible. He would send a Divisional officer with us to see that we got through all right. He sent a message out for an officer who could speak English.

We waited five or ten minutes and then a tousled-headed lieutenant who looked as though he had just got out of bed, appeared. He was sorry—he could not speak English, but if German, Italian, French, Russian, etc., etc., would do—! The Commandante dismissed him with a curt gesture and sent for an officer who could speak nothing but Spanish. A very young, very dashing fellow arrived, was approved with a nod by the Commandante, and we went back to the car and set off again upon our journey. It was quite dark by this. About a mile out of the town we turned off the road on to a rough side track, and for about an hour we bumped around, occasionally getting lost and finding ourselves in the middle of some olive grove. I had heard about a carload of Republican officers who had got lost and were captured ten miles behind the enemy lines before they knew anything about it—so I was thankful that there was at least a river between us and the Fascist lines. The interpreter and I improved the dismal journey by whistling the Spanish Republican Hymn and the Internationale in turns.

At last the interpreter cried, "Ha, comrades—we are now under the eyes of the enemy—!" He said it in such a cheerful way that one would have thought we were going to visit bosom pals whom we had not seen for ages.

The headlights of the car were full on. Was not this dangerous? we ventured to ask.

"In the daytime we could not drive here—they have the artillery on us pronto—phist! In the night—eet is not so dangerous, no!"

Phut, phut, phut! Close by a machine gun started. Instantly the lights of the car were switched off. We drove a few hundred yards in the pitch dark, and then came to a stop.

"We are only 1½ kilometers from the front lines—if we came here in the daylight—" The sound of those machine guns made the rest of the sentence unnecessary.

Leaving the car we stumbled over the rough terrain. There was a sort of connecting trench, but we did not walk in it. "It is only for daytime," explained our friend.

After what seemed an eternity of wandering around in the dark we entered a deep trench leading into an underground tunnel. A sentry stood at the entrance to the tunnel. The officer gave the password. "Pass, Camaradas." The sentry stood aside and we entered the tunnel. In dugouts in the sides of the tunnel tired soldiers were sleeping. We passed then quickly by. At the end of the tunnel we climbed a steep flight of steps and found ourselves in a round observation tower. From here the enemy lines are constantly under observation. The post was a fine example of modern military engineering. The comrades in charge were very proud of it. "Look at this, comrades—and this!" They showed us a modern Czechoslovak range-finder.

"What sort of gun is that?" asked M—. The comrades laughed uproariously.

Straight in front of us, about half a mile distant, a few lights glimmered. "Those lights are in our lines," said the interpreter. "We will go there now." We said good-bye to the comrades in the observation post and stumbled out into the dark again. The machine-gun fire from both sides was becoming brisk.

We got into the car and started off in the direction of the lights. Leaving the rough track we suddenly came out on to an asphalt road.

"This was the road to Madrid!"

A few hundred yards down the road an armed guard appeared and blocked our progress. We showed our papers and passed on. Another hundred yards and we were stopped again. This time we were ordered out of the car. The road was completely barricaded. We would have to walk the rest of the way.

On the side of the road was a guard house. The officer disappeared in there to re-appear in a few minutes with two soldiers armed with automatic rifles. This was to be our escort into the trenches.

So off went the 'Australian comrades' to see how the 'Spanish comrades' defend the front lines of democracy. And by the chatter and the laughter, you'd have thought that we were going on a picnic! Down the middle of the road we walked. On one side was a high railway embankment, on the other a walled ceme-

tery. On the other side of the railway embankment machine guns crackled away merrily—the lines are over there, and they are somewhere in front, too. The officer and our escort were making enough noise to make Franco grit his teeth in Burgos. In my supreme ignorance I thought, "If they can kick up a row like that and we don't get wiped off the face of the earth, then it must be safe for me to have a smoke." So I carefully lit a cigarette.

"Caramba!"

"No cigarillo—out, pronto!"

Feeling very silly I put out the cigarette while the interpreter explained, "One little light and—phist! The fascists are less than two hundred metres away!" I replied that judging by the noise we made it was a wonder it wasn't "Phist!" long ago. A few days later in Barcelona a friend, Major S—, explained when I told him of this experience that one of the sins of Spanish soldiers is to be over-careful in one direction and to make up for it by being over-careless in another direction. It could not be helped—it was an old Spanish custom!

The railway embankment disappeared and a row of houses took its place. We were now in part of the town of Lerida. On the other side of the row of houses was the river Segre, and on the other side of the river was the rest of Lerida and the Fascist lines. On the enemy side the black bulk of a huge building loomed up in the darkness, dominating everything around. This was Lerida Cathedral—to-day it is a Fascist fortress. From its high tower machine guns completely command the road in the daytime. Nothing could live on the road under the fire of those guns.

Beside us, between us and the houses, was a deep communication trench. We crossed this trench by a plank bridge and entered one of the houses. It was a weird feeling entering that house. It was full of soldiers: laughing, talking, reading and playing cards. The front windows facing the river were barricaded so that no light was visible to the enemy; but we wondered why these houses, right in the front line as they are, continue to exist. We were told that there

had been no major offensive here since Lerida became the front line. If the Fascists were to launch a big offensive here (which they have done since we were there), these houses would be reduced to debris in very few minutes. So the soldiers were still using the houses for social activity, etc., in the evenings. Of course, they did not live in them, but in well constructed dug-outs which we saw later.

While we were in the house we heard the voice of a radio announcer blaring forth from a loud speaker. The soldiers began to jeer. There was a loud burst of firing from our side as though in defiance of the speaker. For we were listening to the latest blah from Burgos. Every night the Fascists broadcast to the Republican troops in the front lines.

The announcer called upon the workers and soldiers of Republican Spain to surrender. "Surrender and there will be a complete amnesty!" Loud laughter and jeers from the soldiers. "Last night our planes again successfully bombed military objectives in Barcelona!" (At six o'clock that morning we witnessed from the balcony of our hotel the terrific bombardment of the heavily populated working-class district near the port of Barcelona by Italian planes. The aviators had taken advantage of the cloudy weather to shut off the engines of their planes and glide in over the city. They killed 21 and injured 67.)

We went down into the front line trench which runs along between the houses and the river.

Sometime later we were standing on a platform in the trench looking over the parapet into the enemy lines. "Ssh—do not talk—the enemy can hear plainly over there!" A faint glow of light showed occasionally in the trench opposite—but there was no sound from there. Despite their warning to us the soldiers talked incessantly in no subdued tones, occasionally hissing "Ssh!" and ducking at some real or imagined sound from the other side. And so it goes on—. And this story must come to a close with the following picture.

A small but cosy dugout in the front line trench. Two young soldiers who share the dugout are entertaining us. Neither can be much older than 17 years.

One has red ruby lips like a girl. On the walls of the dugout are pictures—gleaned from a motion picture magazine—of Clark Gable, Shirley Temple, Paul Robeson, and other film stars. Our hosts are very proud of these pictures. But they point out that they are not there because they are movie stars, but because they are friends of Republican Spain, and have sent aid to Spanish children.

Those two boys in that dugout were the front line fighters for democracy and peace. And they fight on and have faith to win because they believe that comrades all over the world are helping them by sending food and aid to the women and children!

Chapter Seven

CHILDREN

Before the war, less than half the children were receiving education. The Conservative Government had whittled away the 57 million pesetas spent by the 1931 Republican Government on education to three million. The present Government, while fighting for its life, in 1937 spent 142 millions. Ten thousand new schools have been opened by the Government since the beginning of the war, including secondary ones, which Franco has been closing.

We set out one morning to visit a school in Barcelona and found it closed. Further down the street we heard the usual noise of children at play and discovered another school in an old Monastery building.

The principal was pleased to show us the school. "What happened to the monks?" I asked. She shrugged her shoulders. She was a good Catholic and did not approve of what had happened to churches and priests in the early days of the war. Her fluency prevented us from asking her if she did not agree that churches and clerics were attacked only after they had been used in the attack on the people. The change at any rate meant that 400 more children were receiving free education and a midday meal.

She ran the school on the same lines as she had run her small private school before the war—somewhat



Dinner Time in Children's Restaurant

on the lines recently adopted by the Victorian State schools—giving scope for self-expression, and including cultural subjects.

Many children had started school there at the age of eleven, or with little previous schooling, but were extremely quick at making up for lost time. We were struck by the high standard of handwriting and the artistic and imaginative illustrations to their work. The kindergarten had decorated their own walls with the story of their everyday life, and a remarkable central drawing of a circus had been carried out by a child of eleven, who had had no previous education.

It was strange to see no trace of any instruction being given about current events. Geography lessons showed Spain divided into provinces, and not into Government and rebel territory, and with no mention of Italian and German control of certain areas. The Catalan spirit has, and still does hate all regimentation, and I suspect that every school in Barcelona varies according to the tastes and theories of its principal.

I considered this one good, but when I told the Directress of Education that this was the only one I had seen, she shrugged her shoulders and arranged for me to visit Escola del Mar next morning.

This is Barcelona's model school, and early this year it was bombed and totally destroyed—many of its pupils were killed.

We drove up the hill at the back of Barcelona to its new home, in a lovely villa surrounded by gardens.

As our interpreter listened to the man who has created this school, I had an opportunity to watch his dreamy, patient eyes and whimsical mouth.

"What system is your school run on?" I asked.

"It reflects no system, but life as I and my staff have thought it should be. We aim at development for the child through social activity."

The school, he explained, centres around a library, built up and entirely controlled by the children themselves. All the school life is carried on in social groups. They decide upon a theme or project and go to the staff

for advice in carrying it out. A great deal of time goes to music and games: free, popular, classical and intellectual (such as chess). The children have a theatre peculiarly their own. They work out a story and the words for it arise as they act it. These and the stories written and illustrated by the children, are printed and bound by them. The idea being that children are their own "best authors."

Old pupils remain closely linked with the school, though many now are at the Front. Many wept when they heard their school had been destroyed. They and their friends contributed the beginnings of a new library and many works of art to replace what was destroyed.

It was inspiring to see such an educational ideal standing the test of 17 years of practice. It was more inspiring to see it impervious to material destruction—rising indestructible from the havoc of war!

And had not two and a half years of war against overwhelming odds left the spirit of the Spanish people equally indestructible?

To us, it seemed so.

COLONIES

To-day many organizations, some supported from abroad, are solving the problem of refugee children and war orphans. For instance, *Asistencia Infantil* has organized ideal homes for 3000 children. At *Torrentbo*, more than 200 Asturian children live in villas in a glorious valley. An Australian girl, Miss Esme Odgers, is in charge of this colony, and thirty of the children are supported by Australians.

The children, after their experiences in the Asturias, where their homes fell before German bombardment, live in a sort of paradise. The central house, where they eat, belonged to a wealthy widow who, when the revolt went against Franco, left in such a hurry that her treasures of glass and ceramic are still there for the children to admire. (Here as elsewhere, care is taken to preserve the art treasures.)

The regime is very benevolent and the *Senor* in

charge strolls about with his arm around the little ones, and the children make a terrific din without anyone caring.

The day we visited this colony the children had a Fiesta planned in our honour. It was to take place out under the trees, but the skies were determined to play Fascist and prevent the performance with downpours of rain; whereat these young Republicans showed the spirit of their heroic Asturian fathers, and after many resolute charges with chairs in and out of the school buildings, they got through most of their items out of doors.

These charming children were 'only workers' children, but who could say that they made less use of their home than the widow? Or, would wish to send them back to cultural starvation under Franco?

I saw three other colonies run by Assistencia Infantil. Not only were these lovely homes kept beautifully, but they were fitted up as gaily and tastefully as materials available allowed to suit the tastes of children—light walls, gay curtains and bedspreads—no stiffness or ugliness anywhere—an atmosphere of benevolence and freedom for spontaneity—homes not Homes.

At a place called Mataro we visited another colony for Basque boys run by the Municipality, helped by the Friends' Organization.

As we drew up at a large white farmhouse the boys swarmed around the car and all tried to shake hands with us at once. On the Piazza in front their supper of porridge and bread was being dished out, and after we'd seen over the home, which was plain and clean and rather full of beds, the boys left their supper to roar their 'Saluds' and cheers. Even the cynical journalist who was with us was moved to murmur that they were "jolly kids."

Mataro is a town full of churches and convents, now being very useful as homes for refugees, hospitals and canteens. One canteen in a convent is presided over by one of the ex-nuns. (The ex-nuns are said to be doing wonderful social service in Government Spain.) The children of refugees and some of the local

children are given three meals a day here. We tasted the cocoa and biscuits they were having for tea.

As we entered the cold corridors of a nearby monastery, crowds of refugee children billeted there with their parents were making up for centuries of monastic silence. We visited the families who were lucky enough to have private rooms, and saw them preparing their soup from the vegetables they had been able to collect around the countryside. Everywhere the extreme cleanliness of the people and their children, without the aid of soap, struck us. The women were pleased to be visited and insisted that we should sit down. They also bullied their babies into saying "Salud!" and giving the Anti-Fascist salute.

We must mention an exhibition of children's drawings from Barcelona schools, representing their ideas of life before, during, and after the war. War meant air raids to nearly all of them. Shops full of food coloured their ideas of before the war—let us hope that after the war shops are not only full of food, but that these children have a fair claim on it. And that their fathers come home from the Front to a new and better life, as the children picture, and not to mass executions by a victorious Franco.

By colonies, canteens and restaurants many refugee children are adequately cared for—but far more were still outside these schemes.

January, 1939, will see the first Children's City opened—for this is the Government scheme to deal with child refugees in a mass way.

Each city, divided into pavilions, will house 1000 children. Australia was allotted one pavilion to provide for at the cost of £700. Several hundred pounds have still to be raised. Here children will be fed and educated in places away from the vicinity of likely bombardments.

The scheme, it is thought, will have a tremendous moral effect on the whole population as well as benefit 1000 children.

By foreign friends filling more and more food ships for Spain, thousands of Spanish refugee children suffer-

ing want and living in terror of bombardment, can be helped.

Readers, can you help them?

Chapter Eight

FIESTA AND FAREWELL

The morning before we left Spain I received an invitation to attend a "Great Fiesta" in honour of the International Brigaders leaving Spain.

Naturally I jumped at the opportunity of attending this historic event. "Where is the Fiesta being held?" I enquired.

"Oh, nobody knows that—. But it's somewhere near the front. You can go in the autobus with the press representatives and photographers," was the reply.

It may sound funny that nobody should know where such an event was to take place. But in Spain if such events as these were advertised to the world they would almost surely be bombed by Franco's Italian and German airmen.

Our autobus was timed to leave Barcelona at 9.30 a.m. It was a rickety old bus which had seen better days and looked as if it might fall to pieces at any moment. As punctuality is the exception rather than the rule in Barcelona, it was nearly 11 a.m. before we rumbled off in search of the illusive Fiesta.

After experiencing one breakdown, a blow-out, two minor collisions, and running into a ditch, we arrived at the Fiesta at 3 p.m.—only three hours late, which isn't too bad for Spain.

What a sight met our eyes! It was being held in the grounds of a lovely old country house. In a large courtyard were gathered four thousand Internationals. Flag-draped balconies on two sides of the courtyard were packed with more Brigaders, and on another balcony, which all in the courtyard stood facing, stood Dr. Negrin, Andre Marty, General Modesto, Commander-in-Chief of the Ebro Army, and many other famous leaders of the fight in Spain.

Dr. Negrin, who had been speaking, ceased as we arrived. The mighty applause which arose from the

tightly packed ranks was worth coming 7000 miles to hear; one felt that it contained the ultimate death-knell of Fascism the world over. Then a brass band began to play the peculiarly exhilarating Spanish National Anthem. This was greeted by a sea of clenched fists and shouts of "Viva Espana!"

And then, greater than all, came the "International." Four thousand voices singing in many tongues this mighty hymn of the common people of the earth.

After this the Fiesta began in real earnest. The band played popular tunes and the Brigaders danced and sang. Some danced with their comrades, some with the pretty Spanish girls who had come to see them off. It was a grand and gay sight.

Particularly noticeable among the Internationals were the Garabaldi Battalion with their red bandanas.

These Italians were very popular—and everybody was particularly sorry to see them leave Spain, for they cannot go back to their homes—they and their German and Austrian comrades have sacrificed their all in this great fight.

But to hear them singing "Avanti Popolo," one would think that the nightmare of Fascism was already a remote memory.

At 5 p.m. we had a feast which consisted mostly of rice. Then more singing and dancing till late in the evening, when the various battalions of the brigade marched to their barracks to collect their few belongings in readiness to leave for Barcelona.

As we were leaving in our rickety old bus we passed the American boys—the Abraham Lincoln battalion—marching down the road. They were led by a six-foot worker with a typical drill sergeant vocabulary. In their ranks were a number of negro boys—it was great to see them. They were singing the old American songs of freedom to the strains of a mouth organ—.

"Salud, comrades," we shouted.

"Salud!"

The Brigaders had declared that in leaving Spain they were not abandoning the fight, but only changing the battle front. Those whose countries were democracies were going home to continue the struggle there.

We shared their resolve and told Madame Constanca so when we went to say good-bye in her Barcelona office.

Madame Constanca de la Mora, Sub-Secretary of Propaganda, who had given us every help she could in seeing all we most wished to see, was a most striking person. With her fine physique, fresh, well-groomed appearance, and her gracious but vigorous manner, she typified the women of Spain at war—who refuse to be crushed by sorrow and the grim struggle they are waging.

"You will tell the Australians," she said, "that we are fighting for the democracy they take for granted; and that by fighting for ourselves we are protecting their freedom. You have seen that our people are determined and united. We can win—but we must have food."

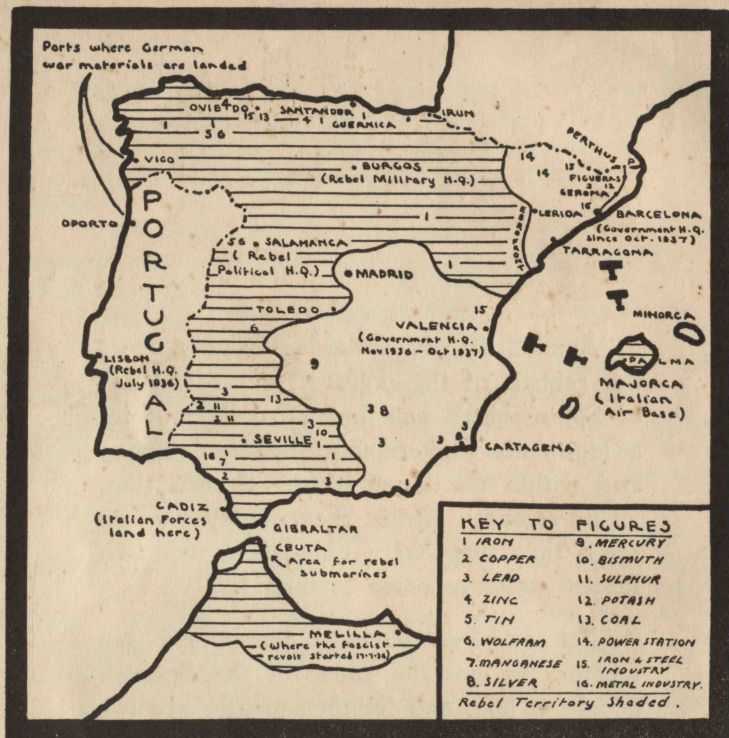
As we left Spain our minds were full of thoughts of how we could bring the Australian people to an understanding and appreciation of the struggle of the Spanish people.

We hope that this book may be one way of bringing home to the Australian people a struggle that may seem far away and unconnected with their lives—of making them feel that they must help.

"A minority of Spaniards rebelled against the rebirth of the political and social life of Spain which was being carried out by a legitimate Government, by legal means and within the terms of the Constitution. Their strength within the country was so small that they were obliged to ask two fascist states to come to their aid.

"Let all free men in the world see whether or not the cause of the Spanish people is just, and let them act in accordance with the dictates of their conscience."

Doctor Negrin,
Prime Minister of Republican Spain
April 9th, 1938.



Please send donations of money, milk, other food-stuffs, soap, etc., to one of the following addresses:

MR. P. THORNE, NAT. SECRETARY,
SPANISH RELIEF COMMITTEE,
ROOM 816, DAKING HOUSE,
RAWSON PLACE,
SYDNEY.

MISS H. BAILLIE,
SEC., SPANISH RELIEF COMMITTEE,
5th FLOOR, KURRAJONG HOUSE,
MELBOURNE.

Come and discuss with us
other ways of helping.