

If Franco Wins

If the foreign policy of the United States were really actuated by long-range considerations, there can be little doubt that the Administration, even at this late date, would be taking steps to lift the embargo on the shipment of munitions to republican Spain. And that conclusion does not depend on the secondary arguments frequently cited against the embargo.

Certainly it is of very dubious propriety, under international law, for this country to apply an arms embargo impartially against a friendly government and against those who seek to overthrow it by rebellion. The precedent is one which tends to encourage revolt against duly constituted authority and may rise to plague us in future. For our present Spanish policy is a direct intimation that if a fascist movement should try to overthrow a neighboring Latin-American government we would deny responsible authority there its clear-cut right to buy munitions here to put the rebellion down.

There is, further, the obvious inconsistency between the application of our neutrality policy in Spain and in the Sino-Japanese war. In the latter case American munitions are allowed to go freely to both sides, even though the Department of State points out that by application of moral pressure it has greatly curtailed shipments of aeronautical equipment to Japan. In this case there is no embargo, but policy operates to discourage American aid to the aggressor. In the Spanish case there is an embargo, and policy operates to the disadvantage of the government against which aggression is directed.

This tacit favoritism to Franco would be justified if the Administration were willing to recognize his regime as the legitimate government of Spain, or at least as a rebellious movement entitled by its success to a grant of belligerent rights. But as matters stand the only Spanish government accorded recognition by the United States is the one against which the rebellion is directed. And while we accord this government the right to speak for all of Spain we deny it the privileges which are properly inseparable from diplomatic recognition.

The reasons for this attempt to carry water on both shoulders are obvious. Feeling in this country with respect to the Spanish civil war runs very high. There are well-organized and powerful groups of American citizens supporting both sides. One faction regards Franco's rebellion as an essentially fascist movement, designed to destroy the democratic forces in Spain and to pave the way for the triumph of totalitarian doctrine in western Europe. The other faction regards Franco's rebellion as a holy war against the powers of darkness, with which the Spanish government recognized by the United States is identified because of real or alleged communist affiliations or sympathies.

Fearful of alienating either group of domestic partisans the Administration seeks to close its eyes to the tremendous implications of the Spanish struggle. Throughout the evolving crisis our official attitude has been consistently negative. We refuse to admit that Franco has any standing. And simultaneously we refuse to admit that the Spanish government has any rights.

As long as stalemate characterized the Spanish civil war this wholly negative policy could be continued. And as long as there were prospects of the rebellion being crushed our Spanish policy, while few would call it admirable, could at least be said to work. Since recognition has never been withdrawn from the republicans, victory by the republicans would cause no future difficulties.

Now, however, it begins to appear that the government will be defeated. And for that eventuality our diplomacy is wholly unprepared. Whether the ultimate triumph of Franco, which becomes steadily more probable, is morally desirable or undesirable as far as Spain is concerned is not the subject of present consideration. What should be examined, on a purely intellectual basis, is the effect of such a victory on vital American interests.

Whatever the nobility of the aspirations behind Franco's rebellion, and whatever the outrages and excesses to be attributed to the republicans, one fact is abundantly clear. Franco is deeply in debt to Mussolini and to Hitler. It would be childish to assume that those who have paid the piper are going to refrain from calling the tune. And one place where the pay-off must be anticipated is in Latin America.

The protracted civil war in Spain may have weakened, but certainly has not destroyed, the great influence of that country in the American republics which were once its colonies. The triumph of a strongly nationalistic, racially conscious revolutionary movement in Spain is bound to be followed by an assertive pan-Hispanic movement. When such a

movement has been made possible only by Italian and German assistance it is idle to suppose that it will not be directed in the Italian and German interest, both in the sphere of trade and that of political propaganda.

A victory for the Spanish republicans would undoubtedly create problems, but that eventuality now seems academic. A victory for Franco, on the other hand, has become probable, if not imminent. However admirable he may be as an individual, Gen. Franco is politically a fascist. Not once but many times he has publicly expressed his faith in the totalitarian ideology. The aid accorded him by Mussolini and Hitler is thoroughly logical. And a Franco victory would make a fascist springboard of the Iberian Peninsula, including Portugal as well as Spain, extending to the Azores, the Canary Islands and other potential air and submarine bases pointing toward South America.

The enormous importance attached by the Administration to the recent Lima Conference shows the keen awareness of the Department of State to the importance of Latin America in our foreign policy. The anxiety of most Americans to prevent a spread of totalitarian doctrine in the New World is unmistakable. What has not yet dawned on the general public is the enormous impetus to such indoctrination which will be given if Gen. Franco captures Barcelona and thereby sets the seal of doom upon the present Spanish republic.

This is not the problem of Great Britain and France. A westward fascist push operating from a Spain in fee to Rome and Berlin would worry these nations very little. There is no reason why Chamberlain and Daladier should fight this battle for us. It is a problem for the United States alone. It is a problem in which American policy must be decided in Washington, without reference to London and Paris.

That it is a problem of the first magnitude is recognized in all authoritative circles. One military expert, Maj. George Fielding Elliot, has gone so far as to assert that for the Azores to pass under Nazi or Fascist influence "would be a matter of such grave concern to this country that it is a question whether we ought not to resist it by force, should it appear imminent."

With a final victory by Franco this and other far-reaching developments affecting the New World would definitely appear imminent. Such a triumph on the part of the Berlin-Rome axis would, so far as this country is concerned, make the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia seem an affair of purely secondary importance.

There is undoubtedly cause for concern in the inability of many Americans to see that every mile which Franco gains in Catalonia brings fascism nearer to the New World, makes its immunity from totalitarian doctrines less secure.