

Para Loujo

"SPAIN AND ITS PROBLEMS"

by The Rt. Hon. Viscount Templewood, G.C.S.I., C.B.E. 133

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ANNOUNCER:

This is the BBC Third Programme. This evening Lord Templewood, who as Sir Samuel Hoare, was Ambassador in Spain from 1940 - 1945, is discussing "Spain and its Problems". Lord Templewood

LORD TEMPLEWOOD:

Violent controversies have blazed over Spain for many years. Fears, hopes, loyalties and hatreds have been profoundly stirred. How foolhardy then for me to put my hand back into the fire, when once I had pulled it out at the end of my Spanish mission.

And yet I cannot resist. The strange charm of Spain is not to be exorcised. Its spell persists. When I think of the woods and rivers of Biscaya and Navarre, the historic cities and blue bays of Catalonia, the orange blossom of Valencia, the olive groves of Andalucia, and the skies and plains of Castille, "triste y espaciosa" in the words of Fray Luis de Leon; when I remember the long roll of famous Spanish men and women, Hadrian, Trajan, St. Dominio, St. Theresa, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Velasquez, Goya, and the great discoverers of the Siglo de Oro, I am irresistibly drawn back into the toils of this enchanting land.

I cannot bear to think that a country so beautiful and a people so talented should remain isolated from the world of western Europe. We need Spain and Spain needs us.

What a tragedy that the survival of a military dictatorship alone prevents our two peoples joining together in the crusade for the moral and economic recovery of Europe!

Spain has greatly suffered. Sometimes, her troubles have been due to the exaggerated individualism of the people - almost every Spaniard has a streak of anarchism in his composition. More often, they have been the result of misgovernment and the mistaken policy of looking back to central Europe rather than forward to the Atlantic and the West. Whether this be so or not, the fact remains that the Spanish people have tried every conceivable form of government from the extreme right to the extreme left, and have found them all wanting except the liberal regime that immediately followed the restoration of Alfonso XII in 1874. In the nineteenth Century there were thirteen separate constitutions.

In the twenty-five years of the reign of Isabella II there were no less than eighteen military coups d'etat. During the period of the Republic between 1931 and 1936, there were thirty-three different ministries, and for nine months out of every ten the liberties of the written constitution were suspended in the interests of public safety

What wonder that these upheavals have left in Spanish minds a profound feeling of doubt and disillusion about all forms of government? What wonder that they have strengthened the inherent difficulty of finding a free and stable government for the future? Worse still, the Franco dictatorship, by suppressing freedom of discussion and preventing the development of political experience,

has made it almost impossible for satisfactory preparations to be made for a new regime.

Spain is in fact suffering from one of the most serious evils of a dictatorship - the elimination of political experience. Have we not seen in Italy and Germany how difficult it is to find men of experience and ability to carry on the task of government after a long period of dictatorship? When we consider the Spanish future we must take this fact into constant account. Equally also its two reactions, first, that the longer the Franco regime continues, the more difficult it will be to find a competent government to take its place, and second, that we shall need to show the most sympathetic patience with the Spanish people if, after their long exclusion from constitutional liberties, they make mistakes when once again they govern themselves. As things are, their future looks very black. Franco is well entrenched. It is increasingly difficult to destroy a totalitarian machine. Give a Fuhrer, or a Duce, or a Caudillo, the police, the Army, the press and the prisons, and there is little or no chance for the ordinary citizen to have any real influence in his country. In Spain, there are two additional weapons in Franco's hand, the fear of a civil war and the horror of communism. Franco and the Falange are, of course, making the most of their opportunity. You will see that I still speak of the Falange, for although it is no longer the fashion for its members to parade in the streets in blue shirt, it is still the Falangistas who are holding the key posts in the internal administration of the country.

The official propaganda is on three lines. First, Franco stands between Spain and another civil war. When Franco adopts this pose, I cannot help remembering what the most despicable of Spanish Kings, Ferdinand VII, said in simpler language: "Spain is a bottle of beer. I am the cork. If they take away the cork, the bottle will bubble over."

I am myself convinced that the longer Franco remains in power, the more certain in the future is a civil war, with all its European complications and consequences. Franco's regime stereotypes Spanish divisions. It prevents the reconciliation of former enemies. In creating the dilemma of Fascism or Communism, it forces extreme positions upon the people, and ruthlessly eliminates the moderate opinion that is so urgently needed to keep the country steady and peaceful.

Franco, therefore, is provoking and not preventing another civil war. He is stimulating and not stopping communism. No-one would be more sorry to see him go than many communists, foreign and Spanish, who clearly realise how invaluable he is to them in preventing the evolution of a central anti-communist bloc.

Secondly, Franco is claiming that whatever Mr. Bevin may say, he is on very good terms with the British Government, and that neither we nor the Americans really wish to see him go, as we need his military help in the war that is about to begin between us and Russia. You and I may smile at the naive effrontery of this claim. It is a repetition of what he wrote in an amazing letter to Mr. Churchill in October, 1944. I should have hoped that the very stiff answer that he then received would have finally disposed of the idea that we required his assistance. But whether or not he really believes that we need him, he finds it very useful to spread the idea in Spanish minds.

Moreover, we ourselves sometimes, and no doubt unintentionally, give him useful material for his propaganda. Only recently, for example, at the moment when he was meditating on his so-called Law of Succession, and presumably thinking of his eventual

retirement, we made a Trade Agreement with him, that whilst it was undoubtedly helpful to both countries, was ill-timed, and gave him the impression that he was more firmly established than ever.

The unfortunate intervention of the United Nations ought to have made us more careful. The United Nations, as you will remember, threatened him and then the member States did nothing except withdraw the Allied Ambassadors from Madrid. Of all futilities, the worst is to withdraw an Ambassador when relations with a government are unsatisfactory. It is just then that he is most needed. Diplomatic action of this kind is only justifiable when a definite decision has been taken to follow it up with concrete action. In this case, there has been no further action, and Franco has had himself acclaimed the victorious champion of Spain against foreign threats.

The success of this propaganda makes it incumbent upon the Americans and ourselves to convince the Spanish people that, so far from desiring Franco's friendship, we wish to see the end of his regime as quickly as possible.

How, then, can we make our position clearer than it is today? How can we help the Spanish people to extricate themselves from the impasse in which they have drifted? How can we facilitate the return of Spain into the comity of western peoples?

My answer is that we and the Americans must not let things remain as they are. Spanish problems are becoming more and not less difficult and dangerous. An eventual civil war is growing more and not less likely. The centre parties in Spain, monarchist and republican, will be eliminated if the present drift continues. As long as the Franco regime persists, there will be no liberty of opinion in Spain, no effective preparation for a new government, no reconciliation of the vendettas of the Civil War. And all the while, the embers will be glowing beneath the surface, ready to burst into a new conflagration.

Can we and the Americans do anything to avert the danger? I purposely say "we and the Americans", for the United Nations, the Russians and the French are all for one reason or another compromised in the minds of most Spaniards, and Franco, whatever he may say, has a shrewd conception of the importance of Anglo-American power. We and the Americans, therefore, should once again take counsel together on Spanish affairs. We should, in particular, take into account the new facts in the situation, the fact, for instance, that the United Nations' threats, unaccompanied by action, have strengthened Franco; the fact that Franco's so-called Law of Succession has shown that he intends, if possible, to remain in power for the rest of his life; the fact that the central forces of the monarchy and the republic seem very near to forming a coalition of the centre for an alternative government. These are all new facts, and in my view they call for an active and not a passive Anglo-American policy. The objective should be the replacement of the Franco regime by a constitutional government, approved by the Spanish people. The steps to achieve it must, of course, be most carefully considered.

Should they involve economic pressure upon Franco? An embargo on the import of oil, rubber and cotton into Spain would, I am convinced, bring down the Franco regime in a few weeks or months. The very threat, indeed, might turn the army against him on the ground that our intention was clear proof of Anglo-American hostility to his regime. I admit, however, that economic sanctions in time of peace raise many dangerous problems, and it may be that the British and American Governments are not at present prepared to adopt them. I will only say that, if the American Government presses for an embargo, the British Government should be ready to

take its full part in it, and that in any case neither Government should exclude the future possibility of an embargo, even though it may not be advisable at the present time.

Short of an embargo, what further action is practicable? Let me make some tentative suggestions. Firstly, let the two Governments once again disabuse the Spanish people and the Spanish Army of the belief that we wish to keep Franco in power. This they can do in a campaign of official communications, the radio and the press. Secondly, let them give more active encouragement to the moderates inside and outside Spain by definitely pledging Anglo-American support for any constitutional government that is based on an expression of the people's will by referendum or other suitable method, on a policy of reconciliation and a programme of vigorous reform.

Thirdly, let them take whatever steps are in their power to convince Franco himself that he is doing his country permanent harm by remaining in power, and by isolating it from the rest of the world. Franco, whatever his critics may think to the contrary is regarded by many Spaniards as a patriot who, according to his lights, wishes to do well for his country. Let our two Governments point out to him that it is his duty to retire in his country's interest to make way for a constitutional regime that will bring Spaniards together and restore Spain to its rightful place in the world.

These suggestions do not pretend to be complete. There may be other and better ways of assisting a change. The essential need, however, is for the British and American Governments to consider the hard facts of the present position, and to adopt an active policy for avoiding future trouble at one of the strategic points of the European continent.

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