

2,000,000 Anarchists Fight For Revolution Says Spanish Leader

Through With Government Says Fiery Chief, Who Urges People On; People vs. Fascism; Sees Workers' Spain Arising Out Of Ruins Of Present Class War

Pierre Van Paassen interviewing Buenaventura Durruti

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Madrid, August. 5 (By air to Paris). Durruti, a syndicalist metal-worker, is the man who led the victorious bayonet-charge of the People's Militia on the stronghold of the Fascist rebels at San Rafael yesterday. Durruti was the first in the Hotel Colon in Barcelona, when that building which spewed death for thirty-six hours from two-hundred windows, fell before the onslaught of the well-nigh bare-handed libertarians. When a column is tired and ready to drop with exhaustion, Durruti goes to talk new courage into the men. When things go bad up Saragossa way, Durruti climbs aboard an aeroplane and drops down in the fields of Aragon to put himself at the head of the Catalonian partisans. Wherever you go it's Durruti and Durruti again, whom you hear spoken of as a wonder-man.

I met him to-day. He is a tall, swarthy fellow with a clean-shaven face, Moorish features, the son of a poor peasant, which is noticeable by his cracking, almost guttural dialect. He was lying on a cot in the hallway of the palace of the dukes of Medina Celi, above which floats the black and red flag of the Iberian Anarchist Federation. A rifle stood by his bedside. But, he was wide-awake.

Army Does Not Count

"No, we have not got them on the run yet," he said frankly at once, when I asked him how the chances stood for victory over the rebels. "They have Saragossa and O Pampeluna. That is where the arsenals are and the munition factories. We must take Saragossa, and after that we must turn south to face Franco, who will be coming up from Seville with his foreign legionnaires and Moroccans. In two, three weeks time we will probably be fighting the decisive battles."

"Two, three weeks?" I asked crestfallen.

"Yes, a month perhaps, this civil war will last at least all through the month of August. The masses are in arms. The army does not count any longer. There are two camps: civilians who fight for freedom and civilians who are rebels and Fascists. All the workers in Spain know that if fascism triumphs, it will be famine and slavery. But the Fascists also know what is in store for them when they are beaten. That is why the struggle is implacable and relentless. For us it is a question of crushing fascism, wiping it out and sweeping it away so that it can never rear its head again in Spain. We are determined to finish with fascism once and for all. Yes, and in spite of the government," he added grimly.

"Why do you say in spite of the government? Is not this government fighting the Fascist rebellion?" I asked with some amazement.

Government Did Not Fight

"No government in the world fights fascism to the death. When the bourgeoisie sees power slipping from its grasp, it has recourse to fascism to maintain itself. The Liberal government of Spain could have rendered the Fascist elements powerless long ago" went on Durruti. "Instead it temporized and compromised and dallied. Even now, at this moment, there are men in this government who want to go easy with the rebels. You never can tell you know," he laughed, "the present government might yet need these rebellious forces to crush the workers' movement."

"So you are looking for difficulties even after the present rebellion should be conquered?" I asked.

"A little resistance, yes," assented Durruti.

"On whose part?"

"The bourgeoisie, of course. The bourgeois class will not like it when we install the revolution." said Durruti.

"So you are going ahead with the revolution? Largo Caballero and Indalecio Prieto (two Socialist leaders) say that the Popular Front is only out to save the Republic and restore republican order."

Fighting For The Revolution

"That may be the view of those senores. We syndicalists, we are fighting for the revolution. We know what we want. To us it means nothing that there is a Soviet Union somewhere in the world, for the sake of whose peace and tranquility the workers of Germany and China were sacrificed to Fascist barbarism by Stalin. We want the revolution here in Spain, right now, not maybe after the next European war. We are giving Hitler and Mussolini far more worry to-day with our revolution than the whole of the Red Army of Russia. We are setting an example to the German and Italian working-class how to deal with fascism."

That was the man speaking, who represents a syndicalist organization of nearly two million members, without whose co-operation nothing can be done by the Republic even if it is victorious over the present military-fascist revolt. I has sought to learn his views, because it is essential to know what is going on in the minds of the Spanish workers, who are doing the fighting. Durruti showed that the situation might take a direction for which few are prepared. That Moscow has no influence to speak of on the Spanish proletariat is a well-known fact. The most respectably conservative State in Europe is not likely to appeal much to the libertarian sentiment in Spain.

"Do you expect any help from France or Britain now that Hitler and Mussolini have begun to assist the rebels?" I asked.

Know How To Live In Ruins

"I do not expect any help for a libertarian revolution from any government in the world," he said grimly. "Maybe the conflicting interests of the different imperialisms might have some influences on our struggle. That is quite well possible. Franco is doing his best to drag Europe into the quarrel. He will not hesitate to pitch Germany against us. But we expecty no help, not even from our own government in the final analysis," he said.

"Can you win alone?" I asked the burning question point-blank.

Durruti did not answer. He stroked his chin. His eyes glowed.

"You will be sitting on top of a pile of ruins even if you are victorious," I ventured to break his reverie.

"We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall," he said quietly. "We will know how to accomodate ourselves for a time. For, you must not forget, that we can also build these palaces and cities, here in Spain and in America and everywhere. We, the workers. We can build others to take their place. And better ones. We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts," he said in a hoarse whisper. And he added: That world is growing in this minute."

From the distance came the roll of the cannonade.

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