



# The conquest of red Spain

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# THE CONQUEST OF RED SPAIN

By

Major-General J. F. C. FULLER  
C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.



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“ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies. . . . And many shall follow their pernicious ways ; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

*2 Peter II, 1-2.*

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By  
MONTAGUE D. BELL

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
J. H. BELL

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## Foreword

This pamphlet has not been written for purposes of propaganda—a word I detest—but solely for enlightenment. For months I read of the Spanish Civil War in our Press, and, feeling certain that much was being suppressed, a few weeks ago I decided to visit Nationalist Spain. This I did, travelling nearly 2,000 miles behind and along General Franco's front.

Of my visit I can certainly say this : *That my experiences were a revelation of the power of the Press to suppress the truth.*

Here I have set down what I believe to be correct, and though I do not ask my readers to accept off-hand what I have written, I do ask them to weigh my words against what they read in their daily newspapers; because this Civil War *is not only a Spanish conflict, but a war of hidden forces.* In my last interview with General Franco he said to me : “ *I ask nothing of England ; I only want England to understand us. . . . The strength of Communism is not to be reckoned in numbers, but in its power of contagion—even you in England may one day discover that.*”

J. F. C. F.

June 1st, 1937.

# Foreword

The committee has not been a quiet one, but its work has been a steady one. It has been a steady one, and its work has been a steady one. It has been a steady one, and its work has been a steady one. It has been a steady one, and its work has been a steady one.

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## *The Lie Behind the War.*

IN this eleventh month of the Spanish Civil War, when steps are being taken by certain foreign governments to intervene with the intention of reducing it to a stalemate, it is necessary to understand what principles are at stake, and also what, so far, have been the losses and gains of the contending parties. It is essential that we should do so, for unless this war is fought to a finish, there can be no doubt whatsoever that it will be followed by another war as devastating as itself, and obviously it is to the interest not only of Spain, but of the entire world that, once the present conflict is at an end, a contented peace is established.

It might seem that, from what we have been told, this is quite unnecessary: Franco is a rebel and is progressing so slowly, if at all, that an eventual stalemate is a certainty. Therefore, surely, in the name of humanity, is not it right that this war be brought to a rapid end? Such things and many others we are told which appeal to kindly and ignorant people; yet these insinuations are "blue" lies—contortions and suppressions of the truth, and wicked ones at that, because the hidden reasons behind them have nothing whatsoever to do with humanity or the welfare of the Spanish people. Instead they are hinged upon international politics: the denying of Germany a friend on the Atlantic; Italy a friend on the Mediterranean; France a potential enemy south of the Pyrenees; Russia a weakening of the Franco-Soviet alliance, and England a straining of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet entente. Even if all these reasons were legitimate and of greater importance than a contented Spain,



surely it would be more honest openly to proclaim that Franco's defeat is imperative, not because Spain will benefit but because it will politically be advantageous to the Powers concerned. No, this is not done and will not be done, because, certainly in France and England, there are millions of fair-minded though inarticulate people who instinctively feel that the Nationalists are right, and that, in spite of difficulties, the chances are that they will win. They feel also that every gain made by them will be minimised, every setback exaggerated, and, as in the past so in the future, every issue will be confused by appealing to mass-emotionalism. So the lie will continue until Franco wins or it crushes him in its toils.

*The Right to Rebel.*

The roots of this Upas tree shot deep into the earth of the international world the moment General Franco raised his standard of revolt against the anarchy which was rendering law and order impossible. True, he rebelled, and with him millions of his countrymen, and in doing so he did no more than give life to the words of Abraham Lincoln. Once that great democrat said: "Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right—a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world. Nor is this right confined to cases in which the whole people of an existing government may choose to exercise it. Any portion of such a people, that can, may revolutionise and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit."

In other words, no true democracy is possible, or for that, any form of government based upon the ideal of freedom, unless what both Lincoln and Lord Bryce called the "sacred right of revolution" is acknowledged, or what John Locke called the "appeal to heaven."

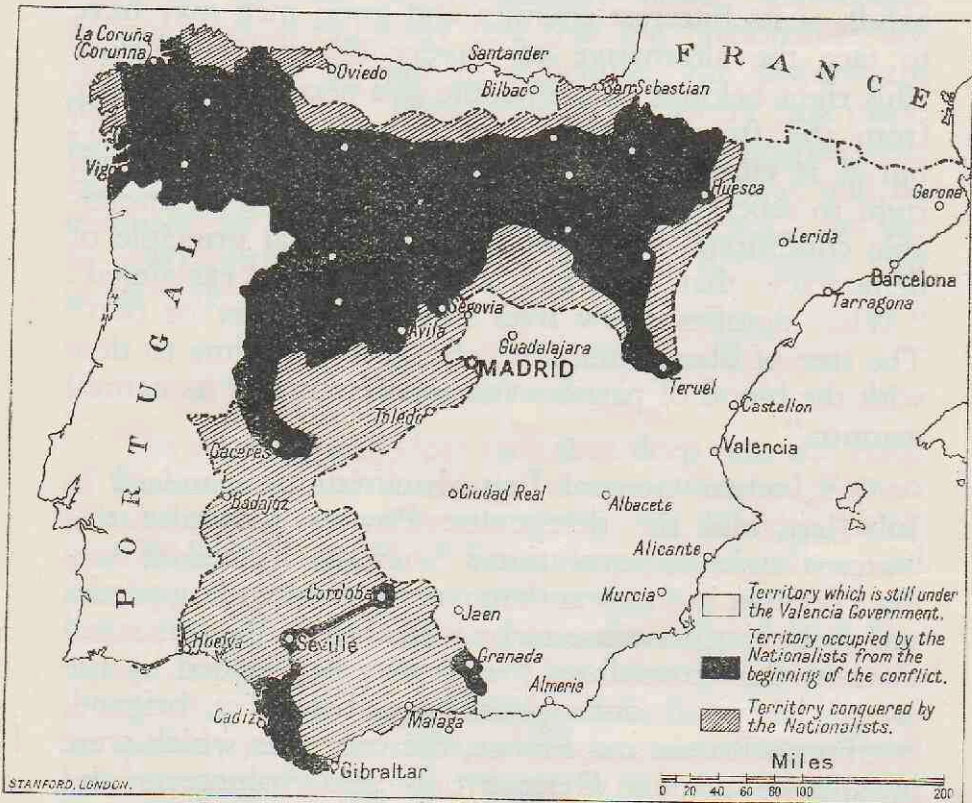
This is, as S. C. Vestal, an American writer, has said: "a fundamental natural right of the people of a state which does not exist in virtue of the constitution, where constitutional government prevails, but in spite of the constitution. It is a disorder for the cure of greater disorders, for the law may become a weapon in the hands of its bitterest enemies and good men may have to face the alternative of slavery or civil confusion. This right belongs to the people as a necessary inference from the freedom and independence of the nation; but it is entirely outside the pale of the law." This right to rebel, against what are considered to be intolerable conditions, is so much a fundamental principle of democracy that Thomas Jefferson once exclaimed: "What signifies a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants; it was its natural manure."

Yet, when General Franco raised his standard in July last, did the democratic Powers recognise this "sacred right of revolution?" No! Instead of saying: Because in this war there are two contending parties each believing its cause to be just, therefore let us stand clear of this turmoil so that it may be decided by the sword, they at once proclaimed Franco a brigand. Forthwith Russia and France, the countries which were in alliance against Germany, poured volunteers and munitions into Red Spain; whereupon Germany and Italy supported the Nationalists, and Great Britain, by refusing to grant Franco the rights of a belligerent, sided with France and Russia. No sooner was Madrid threatened than non-intervention became the Anglo-Franco-Soviet slogan, and now that non-intervention has been put into force, as it has not brought the Nationalists to their knees, and because Bilbao is in desperate straits, the same Powers which a few months back were urging non-intervention are now agitating for the opposite, on the plea that, as Franco cannot win, it is only humane to bring the war to a rapid ending.

## The Conquest of Red Spain

### *Nationalist Gains and Losses.*

That many have been misled by this propaganda is true, because they have not troubled to examine the gains and losses of the Nationalists and Reds: these I will now turn to.



What was the position in July last? Though throughout Spain the majority of the people were firmly nationalist, they were in no way organised for action. There was no deeply concerted plot or plan, it was increasing misrule culminating in the assassination of Calvo Sotelo which drove them into revolt. Then, when the rebellion occurred, what do we see? Franco firmly established in Morocco, Seville rapidly mastered by General Queipo de Llano, and Pamplona in the hands of General Mola. Though morally the bulk of the people were on the Nationalist side, physically control

was in Red hands. In spite of the fact that General Franco was in no way prepared, before August was out the area he controlled (see map) covered rather more than a quarter of Spain. Since then—that is, within nine months of the opening of the war—he has doubled this area (see map), the population of which is over twelve and a half millions compared to a little over nine millions in the territories still under Red control.

Considering that at the opening of the conflict, outside Morocco, nothing was certain; that the Army was in a state of disintegration; the Navy largely red; that Franco was cut off from Spain by the sea, and that the hideous campaign of terror had dislocated the entire country, when the history of this war is written it will be seen how remarkable have been his successes and how overwhelming the losses of his red opponents, who not only were in control of the government, but of the entire administration, finances and resources of Spain. When compared to the American Civil War his progress has so far been phenomenal, the sole reverse being his repulse last March at Guadalajara, which was magnified by the hostile international Press into an overwhelming disaster in order to prove that the Reds were winning the war. Yet, when we turn to them, what do we see? That within less than a year they have lost half of Spain, that though they fight staunchly enough behind bricks and mortar, except for their gain at Guadalajara, they have never attempted an offensive operation, and this in spite of the fact that the larger part of the Nationalist front is not entrenched. Though victories are reported, in every case they have proved to be either inventions or petty skirmishes exaggerated into battles. For instance, a short time back a decisive Red victory was reported at the small town, almost village, of Santuario de la Virgen de la Cabeza, *which was held by a handful of Civil Guards and their wives!* Except for their counter-attack at Guadalajara, the initiative has never been theirs. This fact, above all others, goes to prove how successful Franco has been as a general and as an administrator.

*Red Strategy and Tactics.*

Why, then, have the Reds failed, seeing that on the outbreak of the rebellion they were not only in power, but also controlled all the resources of Spain? The reasons are embedded in their philosophy and in the strategy and tactics developed from it. Had their philosophy been sane—that is, had it aimed at eliminating the causes of discontent in Spain instead of exploiting their effects—nothing could have saved the Nationalist cause from disaster. But being intellectually undisciplined, their philosophy was inhibited by a suicidal tendency, and directly the revolt opened, instead of their intellectuals taking command, they capitulated to the rabble. Arms were handed out to the denizens of the underworld, and the “East Ends” of the cities went roaring red.

The technique adopted was purely Soviet, which is based on two well known factors: (1) The unlimited credulity of the masses, and (2) the restricted self-assurance of the average individual. This is clearly explained by Herr Hitler in *Mein Kampf* when he says: “The credibility of a falsehood depends on its enormity. The masses, the crowds of simplicity of soul, fall victims much less easily to the petty falsehood, such as they themselves are guilty of on occasions, than to the great lie which would cover them with shame. They cannot believe that others could possibly be guilty of such cynical and deliberate untruth.” In other words: whilst lies which normal individuals are capable of telling leave the masses cold, lies they are incapable of telling instantaneously turn them white hot. Therefore the old technique of exaggeration and suppression of news is replaced by the new technique of colossal mendacity—the more outrageous the lie the more rapidly is it gulped down. This technique lends itself to a further refinement, for under the stimulus of mass-emotionalism it enables the most atrocious deeds to be carried out and instantaneously foisted upon the moral shoulders of the enemy.

So far this technique has consistently been applied by the Valencia Government. Once moral chaos was established in February, 1936, physical chaos in the form of church burnings and assassinations followed. Then, directly General Franco raised his standard, the Russian-trained Communists, in order to gain control, at once established a terror and simultaneously broadcast to the outer world that the atrocities *they had committed* were perpetrated by Franco. This enabled them to go on with their butcheries and turn world public opinion against their opponents. So far the most noted example of this is the alleged bombing of the town of Guernica, which sent France, England and the U.S.A. into hysterics. Whether this town was bombed or not is outside the question, because it was in every way a legitimate air target. But what is undoubted is that it was not destroyed by air bombardment, but instead was burned down by order of the Basque Government which, as it set it on fire, attributed its total destruction to Franco's inhumanity. From the point of view of the new propaganda of mendacity, this was an extremely skilful piece of work; but by this propaganda alone the war will never be won, and to explain this I will now return to the Nationalists.

#### *Franco's Problem and Policy.*

Once General Franco had gained a secure footing in Spain, what was his problem? It was:—

- (1) To re-establish order in the country occupied.
- (2) To build up an army and destroy the Red cause in the country still unoccupied.

The first was the more immediate, because he had no intention of following in the footsteps of Generals Denikin and Kolchak in the Russian Civil War—that is, to advance on his enemy before he had established a firm moral base for such an operation. In brief, his whole policy pivoted upon how to discipline disorganisation

so as to cancel out the Red policy of organising undiscipline. Therefore his actions are diametrically opposite to the Reds: instead of conquering by terror he set out to subdue terror by first establishing confidence, and, secondly, to eliminate the causes of anarchism, communism and discontent.

His policy is, therefore, shaped to solve this problem, and it may be examined under three headings: (1) Towards his opponent; (2) towards his own people; and (3) towards the war as a military operation.

As regards the first, he has said: "For the ringleaders and those who are guilty of murder, death must be the penalty. But to the ordinary rank and file of our opponents we shall continue to show leniency and mercy. Many now serving in the Red ranks are there against their will. Many have been helplessly caught up in the enemy's web through the accidents of chance and war. Many are ignorant and credulous people who have been led away by the specious words of crafty agitators. The mere fact that a man has borne arms against our forces is not regarded by us as a crime. We prefer to think it a folly or misfortune."

As regards the second, in interviews, speeches and over the radio he has said: That after the war Spain will not return to the Parliamentary system. "It may be good for other countries, but for us it has been an unmitigated curse, opening the door to class hatred and foreign intrigue." The system he has in mind is one based on the Portuguese model, yet one in which the historic institutions of the country, so far as they contribute towards nationality and unity, will be maintained. The régime will not be of a military character, yet "those of us who have lived in contact with the working classes, and slept with soldiers on the ground, know the needs of the people better than do the old-fashioned politicians." Further, he has said: "We shall allow no parasites. Every Spaniard will have to work according to his capacity. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and will receive an absolute guarantee that he will not

be a slave to capitalism provided that he does not adopt the methods of class war, which make collaboration impossible. We are fighting for a State which will be like one great family, without overlords, serfs, plutocrats or proletarians ; and in which all the elements that go to make the national wealth will be represented."

Finally, as regards the third : from these quotations it will be realised, and General Franco told me so himself, that he is not fighting the people of Spain, but solely the Red elements and the foreign mercenaries who are supporting them. Therefore he can only fight where the Reds are, and as they seldom enter his area, because the whole of the peasantry in National Spain is against them, and as their main support is in the towns, he is compelled for the time being to restrict his operations to sieges. Therefore, so far, this war has not been a field war, a trench war or a guerilla war, but a city war, and because of this it is likely to prove a long one ; for each city taken has to be supplied and reorganised. Only by establishing healthy and contented peace conditions can the contagion of Communism and Anarchism be eliminated. We see, therefore, that Franco's strategy is closely circumscribed by his policy, which is to establish a better peace and not merely to gain victories.

#### *The Reconquest of Spain.*

When this policy is understood, it will at once be appreciated that its end is not only the conquest of Red Spain, but of the Old Spain as well. Not only the elimination of false doctrines, but also of the causes which enabled them to take root. Therefore Franco's progress is not one which can be measured solely by acres gained and by battles won, but above all by the conditions which have been and are being established.

To many, and more especially so in England, where red propaganda has so largely submerged the Press,



it is generally supposed that this has only been accomplished by wholesale destruction of all those holding left wing views and by drastic policing of the rest. Nothing could be further from the truth, for during my visit not only did I talk to many people who held strong radical views, but the number of police seen was no more than normally employed in any peaceful country. Only at the entrances of towns and villages, and by no means all, did I meet small posts of Civil Guards who checked the passes of people entering and leaving. What to me seemed to be most remarkable was the almost entire lack of protection of the main communications. On the Seville-Salamanca road an armed peasant informed me that a raid had recently been attempted against the railway. I thereupon asked him if these raids were frequent. He replied: "No, this was the sole one attempted for months." I asked him why this was so, for the Reds were not far off. His answer was simple and direct: "When they were here we had enough of them—too much. We now know what they are worth, and therefore every man's hand is against them." In fact, the terror they once established has recoiled on their heads. It is this loathing of what took place in July and August last which is the true protector of Franco's communications.

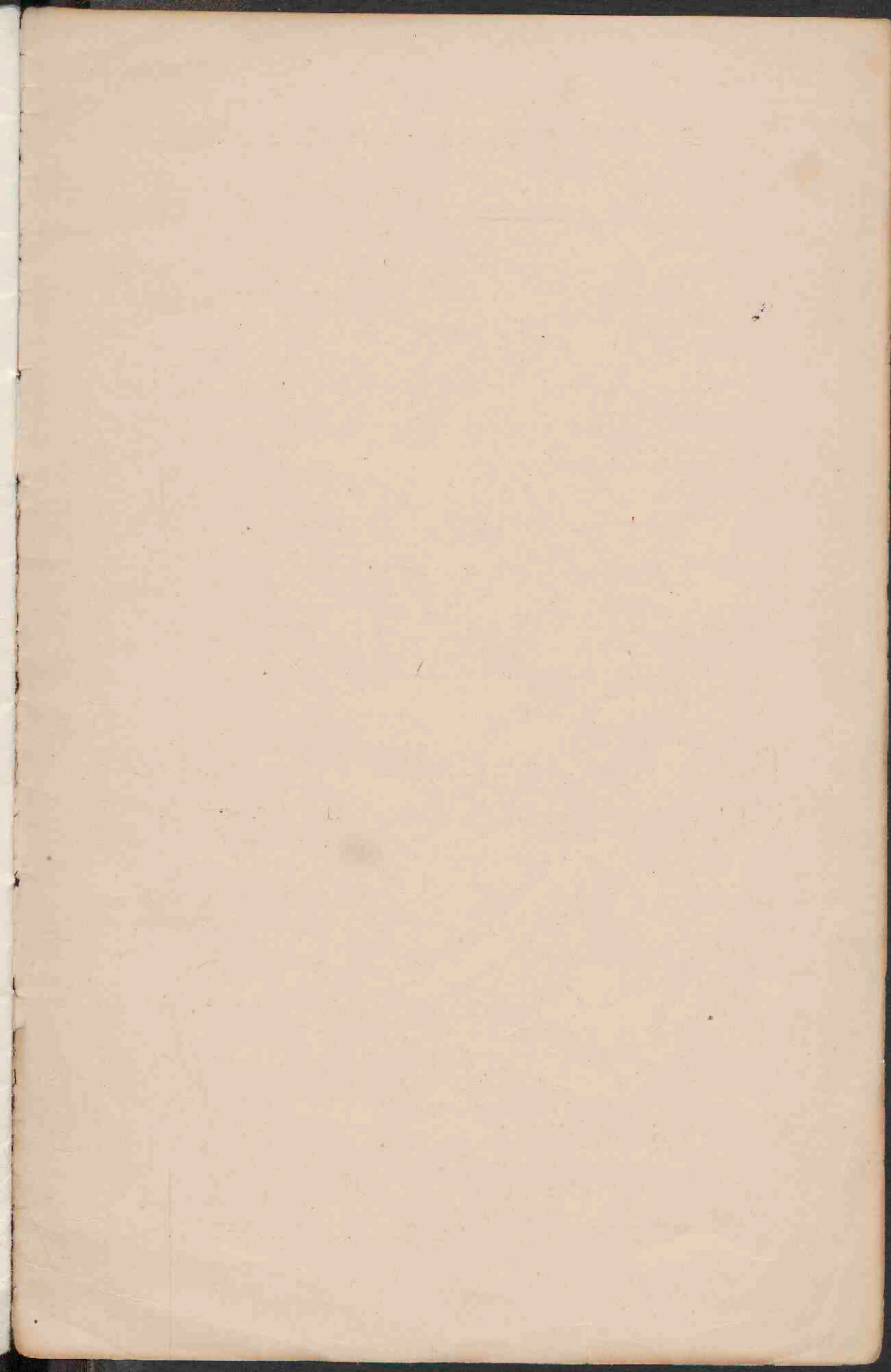
Were this not so, and had he attempted to meet terror by terror, to-day at least 50,000 soldiers would be required to guard the Salamanca-Seville line alone, and every village would be a potential hostel for red guerillas and bandits.

In the towns it is the same, few police are seen. In them there is no feeling of tension. Citizens go about their daily work, taxis ply for hire, all shops are open and well stocked, and cafés and restaurants are full until long after midnight.

These things and many others for which I have no space here we should try to understand, for a new Spain is emerging from out of chaos: a Spain of historic traditions and of future hopes. The urge of the

Conquistadores is once again abroad, and it is a proud, valiant and all-conquering spirit. Thus, in Malaga, spoke the Marquis de Valdecañas to me—a descendant of one of those old conquerors and a man who had lost all in this war: "Though terrible for the individual, this war is the salvation of my country." He is right, for to-day Franco is conquering the rottenness within Spain.

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