The Spanish Civil War as Carried by the *Milwaukee Leader* from July 18, 1936, to August 1, 1937

Howard F. Bell

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THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AS CARRIED
BY THE MILWAUKEE LEADER
FROM JULY 18, 1936, TO AUGUST 1, 1937

By

Howard F. Bell

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Journalism, Marquette University, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
June, 1938
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- September 6, 1936.

Time Magazine

One Year of War, 1936-1937 - The Paulist Press, New York, N. Y.
METHOD

All copies of the Milwaukee Leader were examined from July 18, 1936 to August 1, 1937, in an effort to determine how this daily paper handled stories of the Spanish Civil War during the first twelve months of civil repercussion. Not every edition of the Leader carried war stories, but every issue containing war news was noted, the column length measured in inches, and a comparative chart graphed indicating relationship between the amount of straight news, pictures and editorials. Supplementary charts show the incidence of war news over a thirteen month period, and comparative analysis of war stories into straight news, features and summaries.

Besides amount, the writer is also concerned with the subject matter of all news pertaining to the Spanish war, the author, the geographical source and method of transmission.

Such information as gathered was written on forms provided for the purpose.
PREFACE

In preparing this paper, the writer has made a conscientious effort to convince at least himself that all that one reads in the daily papers relevant to war in Europe is not so much fake and fable; that the reports made by correspondents who have proved themselves reliable through many years in reporting news can be taken without the proverbial grain of salt.

Consider then, the feeling of futility experienced when stumbling on these lines from "One Year of War," published by the Paulist Press, New York City:

"...A greater phenomenon, however, has been the consistent practice of the press to ignore the true situation in Spain. The publication of facts, easily obtainable, concerning the cause and progress of the conflict, has either been entirely suppressed or presented in such a manner as to utterly mislead."

The little book steams along at a great rate, saying it is almost inconceivable that a false and malicious propaganda can so effectively sway the press of a great Democracy (U.S.) as to align it with the minority whose sole object is the complete destruction of the culture and spirit of a great nation.

The crux of the discussion, then, is a more clarified definition of the word truth. Let the writer go on record
as saying that the reporting of the Spanish Civil conflict must retain a degree of objectivity and veracity.

The illustration section contains the service of the United Press Association. Thus, the Spanish Civil war, as carried by the [illegible] Dispatch, in a report of the reporting done by the press of United Press correspondents, sending information from Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Switzerland, France, Italy and such states.

In the period beginning July 15, 1936, and ending August 1, 1937, the Dispatch carried a total of 3,850 column inches on the Spanish Civil war. This was an average of 854.6 percent, or 0.25 inches per day.

Of the 3,850 column inches carried by the dispatch in a year—the 2,380 last 12 months—were the new stories. Three hundred and eighty-seven stories were devoted to persons and the remaining 128 to non-personal previous as a story.

In summarizing the amount of coverage given the war by the Dispatch, the Dispatch was distributed to the people of the United States. By the end, the Dispatch had sold over 500,000 copies, making it the most widely read paper in the country. The Dispatch's coverage was not limited to merely the Spanish Civil war, as it also covered other significant events from around the world.
CHAPTER I

The Milwaukee Leader subscribes to the service of the United Press exclusively. Thus, the Spanish Civil war, as carried by the Milwaukee Leader, is a record of the reporting done by the corps of United Press correspondents, sending information from Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Switzerland, France, Italy and even Moscow.

In the period beginning July 18, 1936, and ending August 1, 1937, the Leader carried a total of 3,330 column inches on the Spanish Civil war. This was an average of 253.8 inches per month, or 9.7 inches per day.

Of the 3,330 column inches carried by the Leader in a year's time, 2,842 inches comprised straight news stories. Three hundred twenty-three inches were devoted to features and the remaining 135 inches summarized previous news stories.

In considering the amount of coverage given the war by the Leader it must be remembered that the paper has no Sunday edition. Consequently, the many Sunday features appearing in other papers found no place in the Leader. Further, there was no evidence to show that news stories and feature material written by United Press correspondents abroad, intended for Sunday editions, were held and

printed in the Leader at a later time.

Best features to come out of Spain were written by Webb Miller, chief of United Press European correspondents, who visited Spain when major offensives were planned by either side, decisive battles fought, or military strategy disclosed. Outstanding example of such reporting was the series of stories relative to the Franco counter-attack on (2) Madrid, in which Italian lieutenants were given opportunity to show field superiority. After having proved their worth, Italian government newspapers lauded the victors of Santander, key point of the Basque front, as "typically and essentially an Italian victory."

Other features were written by Irving Pflaum, attached to the Loyalist forces for about three months of the war; Michael M'Ewen, who was stationed at Gibraltar, and Harrison La Roche, whose material was cabled from Hendaye, France.


Uniform characteristic of the stories emanating from Spain was the anonymity of news sources. With exception of those stories in which government communiques were given

as the source of material, all others were attributed to "usually reliable sources," or "officials high in government circles." Instances in which the source was someone who would suffer if his name was quoted, the vague "it was indicated" was used. Fifteen per cent of stories gave no mention of source whatever.

Mention of the geographical source of United Press correspondents stories is both important and significant because out of the nine different Spanish towns listed as news sources, not once did a dateline list Salamanca. A contemporary magazine has this to say about Salamanca, and its relative importance as a news source:

"On the arcaded Plaza Mayor in the center of the city there is no silence, but plenty of listeners. Here are four large sidewalk cafes; fashion has chosen just one, the Cafe Noveliti, to be the official saloon of Rightist Spain. Here daily gather whatever foreign correspondents are in town, staff officers, German and Italian aviators, secret agents....Perhaps no one spot in all Spain contains as much actual news and incredible gossip as the tables and dining room of the Noveliti."

Only once during the year did the Catholic church intervene even orally. From the Vatican Summer Home, Castel Gandolfo, Pius XI released news through correspondent Ralph Forte in which His Holiness excoriated Communists, but felt sorry about the war. He believed, according to the dispatch, the Rightist revolt against the Madrid government was justifiable, and mentioned that

3) Time, September 6, 1936. p.17, col.1.
4) October 18, 1936.
Russia financed the Leftists with "extraordinary amounts of money," and aimed at implanting the Communist regime internationally. Although not stated in so many words, the reason the Church feared Leftist forces is evident. She fears the force Communism would yield in event of a Leftist victory, and under the present setup, feels protected by a power which has guaranteed the fundamental principles of all society.

With the exception of the first three days of the war, stories were uniformly fair and objective. After this initial period, in which, apparently, correspondents had not yet established sources of primary information, or perhaps the censorship was too stringently enforced, every effort was made to give an unbiased picture of Spanish history. Where quotes of some Loyalist spokesmen were given, these were balanced by antithetical quotes from the Nationalist side. Government communiques were often blasted by the addition of editor's notes. In one story in which the account of the bombing of Madrid was being relayed as the attack went on, the point at which the censor interrupted the call was given. (5)

Beginning on August 1, 1936, the lead story on the war Spanish was routed through Gibraltar. These stories, written in Gibraltar by Michael M'Ewen, attempted to arrive at a happy medium between the conflicting reports

5) September 2, 1936, p. 1 col.1
received from the opposite sides. Dispatches from the warring factions were read and analyzed by M' Ewen. Only then, after the conflicting reports had been sifted and evaluated, was the story sent out on the United Press cable. For ten months of the war, these stories were given lead position for the day in the Leader. Other less important stories were run in conjunction.

Regarding news accessibility during the year's conflict, an official Rightist tour was arranged primarily for French correspondents, but United Press chief Webb Miller managed to get to the scene a few days previous for a private investigation. The correspondent for the London Daily Herald insisted the French reporters were duped when they did not report seeing an Italian garrison of 30,000 soldiers. Miller partly agrees with the French journalists on the 'no garrison' stand, but wrote extensively of an Italian and German personnel of 500 pilots and 100 planes. He further states the island of Majorca is still in Spanish hands—but the Italians and Germans are guests of honor.

As for display given the Spanish war in the Leader, the war rated 32 banners in the opinions of the editors. One hundred twenty-five stories were carried under spread heads; and one hundred thirty-eight under one column heads.

Of the 3330 inches of war news, 1,727 stories appeared

on page one. Ninety percent of the stories began on page one, consistent with the Leader's policy of playing national and international news on the front page.

The labels given the two sides by the United Press correspondents were as follows:

GOVERNMENT FORCES
1. Communists ------------------ 22
2. Reds ------------------------ 129
3. Loyalists ------------------- 690

FRANCO'S FORCES
1. Rebels ---------------------- 573
2. Nationalists --------------- 29
3. Insurgents ----------------- 205
4. Fascists ------------------- 25

The terms Loyalists and Rebels were used in headlines exclusively.

Only evidence of unfairness or inefficiency in handling of stories was found in the headline connotation, and this is no reflection on the quality of the reporting, but rather an indictment against the work of the Leader editorial department.

Interesting to note in retrospect is the frequency with which predictions of the war's early conclusion appeared in the first two months of the conflict. At the outbreak of the war, Loyalist command, seriously affected

7) July 20, 1936 - Spanish Democracy Fights For Its Life British Imperialism Moves Behind Scenes of War in Spain
with a case of overconfidence, predicted the situation would be brought under control in two weeks. At the conclusion of the first two weeks, a slightly less confident announcement was made to the effect that the war might last five weeks before peace was restored. When five weeks elapsed, a guarded announcement from the Loyalist command predicted the conflict might continue for two months. Finally, when evidence showed the situation getting more out of hand each day, it was regretfully announced from Loyalist headquarters the fight might go on into the winter. Only one more prognostication was made after the one of August 25, 1936. This one was launched when winter crept nearer, but the planned big Leftist putsch bogged down. Rightist chances in Spain seemed bright enough for Burgos papers to carry this typically Spanish boast over the signature of Gen. Franco: "The war is won. It will finish with a general collapse of our opposition which each day becomes more certain. One day Spain will wake up and have the surprise of learning the war is over." On November 7, Leftist forces boasted from the city of Madrid: "On November 7 we crush Franco. Long Live Madrid—Capital of the World."

As a matter of fact, no important military action had taken place on either side on November 7. Preliminary to the Franco offensive, Rightist bombs killed 330 civilians

8) November 9, 1936. p.1, col.5,
at Lerida. Three days later Leftist bombers hovered over Saragossa, blowing up a munitions dump. Leftist propagandists elaborately explained this was not retaliation. Press dispatches say because strength depends entirely on their hold on the populous lower classes, Leftist strategists have avoided bombing civilian centers. Bombing has not yet produced the theoretical effect, the breakdown of civilian morale, but there were signs to show that in Catalonia at least it might. Natives suddenly find that their autonomous Catalan government had not only been practically swallowed by the Valencia regime, but after almost a year and a half's warfare, they were directly in line with Franco's fiercest offense.

United Press correspondent Irving Pflaum, visiting the Aragon front, got this amazing dispatch past censors and into the Leader:

"It became evident, after touring the Loyalist front, that the shattered spirits of the Catalans constituted the principal reason for moving the government from Valencia to Barcelona over the week-end. Another reason for the transfer was said to have been reports that the Catalans were negotiating for a separate peace with Franco. "While many talk of a Rebel victory, others speak of a 'truce.' "Catalonia's financial condition is poor, although officials insist it is 'only temporary.' "Rich Catalan farmers who experienced the recent Anarchist-Communist disorders, appear to favor the Rebel side as much as they do the present regime in Barcelona, and it was indicated that the Negrin govern-

(9) Page 7, op. cit.
ment might assume a more conservative policy to win over these farmers and business men.

"The Negrin government, not yet settled in Barcelona, announced simultaneously that death would be the penalty for any Catalan trying to escape into France."

As the war progressed day by day, a slow infiltration of terror seeped into the Loyalist high command. Repeated shakeups in ranks of high-commissioned officers were made in an effort to bring the Franco advance to a halt.

International ramifications of the Spanish conflict as revealed in the columns of the Leader for the first year of the war are convincing of one thing certainly; doubt in the minds of observers and students of the European scene as to the termination point. The issue as stated by United Press correspondents was neither confusing nor complex: Italy and Germany fear a collectivist state on the shores of the Mediterranean more than Russia (and France) fear a fascist union on their very borders. On July 6, 1937, the Leftist government was reported to be training troops as fast as possible, hoping to have a million men afield in the spring of 1938. Rightist forces were forced to rely on Italy for manpower, notwithstanding the fact that there were already 60,000 Italians in Spain.

In the course of the first year of the war, the Leader carried 112 cuts, or pictures on the conflict totaling

560 column inches. Of these, 72 depicted Loyalist scenes, while 40 portrayed scenes showing Franco's side of the story. Even a war didn't appreciably change the Leader's policy of using little art.

The Milwaukee Leader carried no news whatever relevant to Samuel Baron, editor of New York's Socialist Call, who went to investigate conditions in Barcelona and Valencia where the trials of several prominent Spanish labor leaders were being tried for instigating 'Trotskyist riots.' (Mr. Baron had been active in the United States, organizing and promoting aid for Leftist Spain). Instead of being allowed to observe and criticize, Baron was promptly jailed, but managed to sneak out news of his plight by a prearranged code. After International Socialist pressure brought about his release, once more he traveled through Leftist Spain, observing. Earlier in the year Baron had opportunity to view the war unmolested; his subsequent writing contrast conditions in fall and the winter of 1936-1937. Baron relates:

"The civil population in Leftist Spain now is desperate. Food supplies have been reduced to severe siege rations. Under the present regime, democratic forces have lost their spirit, and this, coupled with severe privation, has weakened their resistance.

"The government's removal of itself from Valencia to Barcelona has been very unpopular, both as an admission of failure and because of the political complications that are likely to follow.

"The people resent their Government's arbitrary use of censorship for the political
advantage of those in control, and dislike the reign of terror by secret police, informers, and spies of the Communist Cheka."

(11)

At the same time, Socialists were distributing copies of a speech delivered in Madrid by Francisco Caballero, former Premier of Leftist Spain. His speech was a rebuttal to the forces who had replaced him; who resent criticism of any sort. Its contents were largely suppressed by the Leftist's governmental cable censors.

Thirty-seven editorials appeared in the Leader on the Spanish situation during the year studied. These totaled 216 inches, with the editorial column of 16 pica measure. All editorials were ardently pro-Loyalist, inasmuch as the Leader is a Socialist organ. Of the thirty-seven editorials in question, thirteen were written in refutation of editorial comment appearing in the Milwaukee Journal, anti-Socialist, anti-Progressive, anti-Newdeal daily.

Harold Cardazo, United Press correspondent, writing (12) from Rebel army headquarters, gives a sidelight on the position of Il Duce in Spain, from a speech by Italy's dictator himself. In the dispatch, Cardazo quotes Mussolini as saying the figures purporting to be the number of Italian soldiers in Spain has been inflated and made fantastic with the evident purpose of creating war psychosis. Immediately after this speech, notes were sent to Rome inviting the Fascist government to discuss

11) October 17, 1936, p. 17, col. 3-4.
immediate withdrawal of foreign volunteers at a tri-
power conference. Behind this polished diplomatic
verbiage was veiled a threat of Franco-British force,
varying from the opening of the Catalan frontier for
munitions and volunteers from France, to matching Italian
volunteers with similar detachments from the French
regular army. Italy was little worried over these threats,
with her dictator believing French and British public
opinion was not yet right for open intervention.

From a perusal of the blank forms used in assembling
and recording the data for this paper, out of a total of
one hundred thirteen straight or 'spot' news items, eighty-
six percent dealt with both Leftist and Rightist forces,
appallatives heretofore unused by the Leader editorial
staff.

Breaking down this data further, of all straight news
stories, (99) dealing with both Leftist and Rightist armies,
only five, or 1.9 percent favored the Leftist cause.

Stories transmitted to the Leader by United Press
correspondents usually did not indicate the vehicle for
sending news; when no special mention was made, either in
the story or the dateline, it was inferred the regular
United Press cable was responsible. The majority of dis-
patches (92%) were transmitted thusly. Ten remaining were
dispatched in this manner: four by radio, three by mail,
two by telephone and one by wireless via a native runner
from Franco's army headquarters near Guadarrama, to Hendaye,
France.
CONCLUSION

During the twelvemonth period studied, the Milwaukee Leader, official state organ of the Socialist party, naturally showed prejudice in favoring the Leftists (sometimes called Communists, Reds, Loyalists, Populists, Leftwingers and Government forces) because of the close affinity in basic political principles between the Socialists here and Leftists there, which body is reputed to be composed 85% of Communists.

This prejudice could be indicated in the only manner possible; that is, with type, headline phrasing, makeup and position. Common occurrences included playing up a Leftist victory, playing down a Leftist loss; playing up a Rightist loss, playing down a Rightist victory.

Any noodling with the copy itself, except editing, cutting, or even adding supplementary material (in smaller type, and followed by a three-em dash) would be a breach of contract. Such breaches were apparently avoided. During the year in which the study was made, as far as this observer could ascertain, there was no slanting, coloring or distorting of copy to dovetail with the whims of the office.

Most surprising of all stories is one sent from Toledo on September 8, 1936. This city, held by Rightist troops from the 18th of July to the 27th of September, was taken
after the defendants listed 67 dead, 430 wounded, and 139 additional injured. Jan Yindrich, United Press correspondent, sent in a story in which he told of watching the Alcazar being battered, marveling at the pluck of the Rightists in holding out against the Leftist onslaught. Records show Leftists used every offensive device in the books; artillery, dynamite, gasoline, fire projectors and tear gas. Headlines in this case were inconsistent, if not misleading. The No. 1 head and deck read: Alcazar Near Ruin As Cannons Blast—Half of Old Fort's Tower Swept Away in Fierce Siege. The story itself indicates that the damage to the old fort was only minor.

Most typical of all stories are ones the Leader enjoyed printing, if one can imagine a human being feeling joy at the printing of war news: July 20, 1936, (Beginning of outbreak) "Military Revolt Sweeps Mainland; Gov't Crushes Madrid Rebels." Excerpt from another story of the same day: "The Spanish government increased wages of workers, shortened hours of labor and took steps to take over armament and other key industries. They crushed international individualism and the whole set-up of money power in the country." A line from still another story of the same day: "Many children have been killed by ruthless Rebels." Wallace Carroll sent a story from Geneva on July 21, 1936, summarized thusly: "Thank God for the brave women who helped save Barcelona against the desecrating, brutish Rebels who have violated the sanctity of once-beautiful Barcelona."
An editorial on July 21 urges France to take heed in the "desperate Fascist attempt." Most pungent paragraph within the opening months of war is one clipped from an editorial of the same day: "Should the rebellion succeed, Spain will be in for a reactionary regime of the worst type, and there will be a general slaughter and repression of the decent and progressive elements of the population." On July 23, 1936, from a dispatch by Antonio Uriel: "Government efficiency brings about the capture of Guadalajara; Rebels are stubborn." The day following, Lester Ziffren writes: "Everything looks black for the Rebels. Loyalists are steadily pushing them back."

Most ironic sidelight, now that the war can be viewed with a partial perspective, is the notice, released during the first week of the rebellion: "The one week suspension of the Cortes, unicameral Parliament, has been extended for twenty days."
Graph indicating the rainfall data given to the Spanish Civil Government during the first 15 months of the war.
Constructive graph showing the column inches devoted to news stories, pix and editorials.
Graph showing the column inches devoted to straight news stories, features and summary stories.
APPROVED

major professor

dean

date