"Nearly four out of every ten children cannot read or write"

This child lives with her parents in Sacro Monte, the kingdom of the gipsies of Granada, built into the arid mountain slopes. She is fortunate because these folk have been quick to attract tourists to the grottoes that have been carved out of the rock to make homes. The tourists have brought money to the families who entertain with them music and dancing. For some years much has been done to educate the children of Sacro Monte and this little girl learns the Spanish alphabet by finger signs

Report On Spain

by H. E. BATES

Franco's Spain has made constant efforts to join the great family of nations at Lake Success, presenting herself as a country of progress, friendly and always eager to contribute to the democratic way of Western life. But behind the shop window which the world outside is allowed to see, lies a country crippled by the tight bonds of feudalism and politics, her people living in extremes of great wealth and great poverty. A distinguished author and observer has just made a tour of cities and villages to investigate the Other Spain. Now he tells the grim story of children facing a hopeless future and reveals how bitter can be the legacy of civil war

COVER BY ARPAD ELFER

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PAUL ALMASY

OVER

Where Feudalism Rules—

ON a hot late summer afternoon in Barcelona, a city half as large again as Birmingham, in fact, the largest city in the entire Mediterranean, there was suddenly conferred on me a considerable privilege. In a world of flyblown cabhorses, touts, dust, cinders and begging children, I was made to feel, for the first time in my life, in any country whatsoever, east or west, south or north, India itself not excluded, like a rejected, broken and unwanted refugee. I was simply at the main Barcelona railway station and there I was trying, in common with half a dozen Spanish families, somehow to get myself into the presence of the stationmaster and then to kick my way on to a train.

With me were two gentlemen of some influence, friends of my Spanish publisher. They were sad at being able to use their excellent English only on an occasion which had developed into a miserable begging procession across the city from one potential bribee to another. "We are a barbaric people," one would keep saying. "We are a nation of fried-egg eaters," as if this in itself could excuse or explain the way the trains were run. We had come to the station by way of a quarter where singing birds are kept for sale in cages, of kiosks of strip-cartoon magazines and lottery tickets, through market streets thick with the hot stench of cheap meat and cheese and a reek of garlic on crowded pavement.

The station was funereal, shadowy, dusty; there was a smell of bad coal and decaying horse cabs. "There is nothing else for it," the same gentleman kept saying. "We are a people of garlic and fried potatoes. What else can you expect?" I could see that it hurt him terribly to have got us mixed up in a system in which train seats were black-marketed on back stairways, in travel offices where every clerk smoked with a bored and open contempt while keeping up the pretence that there were no seats to be had, and finally in the very offices of the stationmaster himself. "But there you are, there you are," he kept saying. "This is Spain."

In the anteroom of the stationmaster's office, a room of bare, filthy walls, occupied besides ourselves by several scared-looking families with children waiting their turn to go into the office, there was a father of a family, young, dark, thin, who played nervously with his hat, looking with sick apprehension at the office door. The children, overdressed, had a kind of doll-like and hungry sallowness, with big black shining shoe-button eyes.

"Have you ever been to Madrid?" I said to the gentleman of the fried-egg lamentations.

"No," he said. "I have not been to Madrid. It is a long way. I have never been."

"Has your colleague been?"

"No, I do not think he has been either."

"Have you been to Seville?"

"No, I have not been to Seville either. It is not easy to travel so far. It is another country."

It came, at last, our turn to go into the office. We filed in like a collection of beggars about to ask, with cowed humility, for alms. The gentlemen took off their hats. The stationmaster sat at a bare table, on a bare floor, under a large painting of Franco, in surroundings that would have delighted Dickens and Hogarth in their

Franco Is Due, the flags are out and troops line the route. But even when the Caudillo is home in his palace, Madrid is a city full of soldiers and police. Armed guards stand outside all the public buildings and banks

The Working Day Ends, but there is little to look forward to in the evening for these folk. They turn their backs

Moorish Guard follows General Franco's gleaming car as it leaves the National Palace, while at the gateway two of

—And Smiles Are Rare

on a restaurant sign, as they wait for the underground. A modest meal would cost as much as a day's pay

the famous "Moros" hold their pennants aloft. The Spanish royal family lived in this white granite building

sinister and grimy simplicity. The stationmaster looked at us not even as if we were refugees pleading for a crumb of hope in the desperate business of escape, but as if we were simply ciphers. There was a thick reminiscent reek of garlic in the air and I remembered the singing birds in the cages. No, there were no seats, he said, and I was glad. And in the outer office the young father, nervous and scared, clutching his hat, jumped up with unhappy haste to take his turn.

"But there are seats, of course," the porters said outside. "We have seats. For £8 we can get you seats."

"For two persons?"

"Oh, no. For one person."

"You begin to see now," the gentleman said, "why we do not travel much."

"Yes," I said. "I begin to see."

Outside the cities, in the country, against a landscape of peculiar harshness, often treeless and often waterless, discoloured by sun, the peasant on his five or six shillings a day does not travel much either. Pine trees everywhere have been stripped of their lower branches, leaving them like slender emerald umbrellas sprouting out of rocky, dusty earth. Coal is expensive and a man must have something for cooking. Aloes like gigantic grey-green rosettes sprout vast horizontal flowers from roadside banks. Bamboos wave in ditches. Cactus make thorny hedges by tracks of road and rail.

From this dusty sun-scorched earth there rises a feeling not simply of uneasy hostility, but a feeling that this is not Europe at all. Infiltration from Africa has left a scar on earth, on people, on custom, on husbandry, on air, helping to stunt the growth of a country already crippled by bonds of religion, of politics, of sex, of feudalism, of civil war. To anyone who has had the slightest glimpse of that stunted life, so utterly removed from all life north of the Pyrenees, the war in Spain was an affair of such clear and inevitable simplicity that it is very surprising that the conflict has never been renewed. All its causes remain; all its issues remain unresolved.

Since Guernica a new generation has sprung up. Spain, everywhere, like all Catholic countries, teems with children. What is their life? What have they inherited? What, above all, since it concerns us closely, is their destiny?

The cancer of war does not stop growing because the shooting stops; and of all cancerous growths the malignancy of civil war grows deepest, is hardest to eradicate, bitterest to forget. It is not for nothing that your taxi-driver, touring a city for you in his ancient, comic, lace-curtained vehicle whose moth-eaten grubbiness is not exceeded by the paper money with which you pay him, never talks to you until you are alone, points with dark significance at the gaps and scars of war, and rubs his finger and thumb testily together at the lines of myopic-eyed shovel-hatted young priests crocodiling blackly and furtively along streets that, in their alternate grandeur and degradation, typify all of Spain's uneasy, stubborn, painful contrasts.

For he knows, even though he dare not say it, that his children are growing up, as he did, into a

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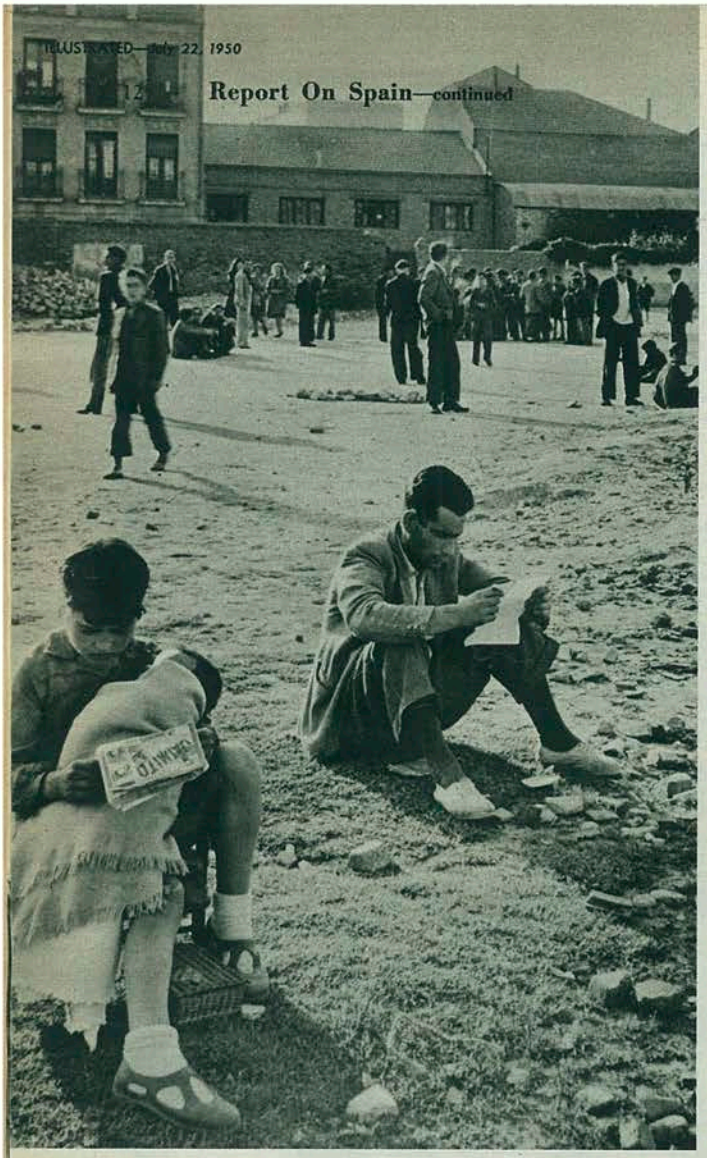
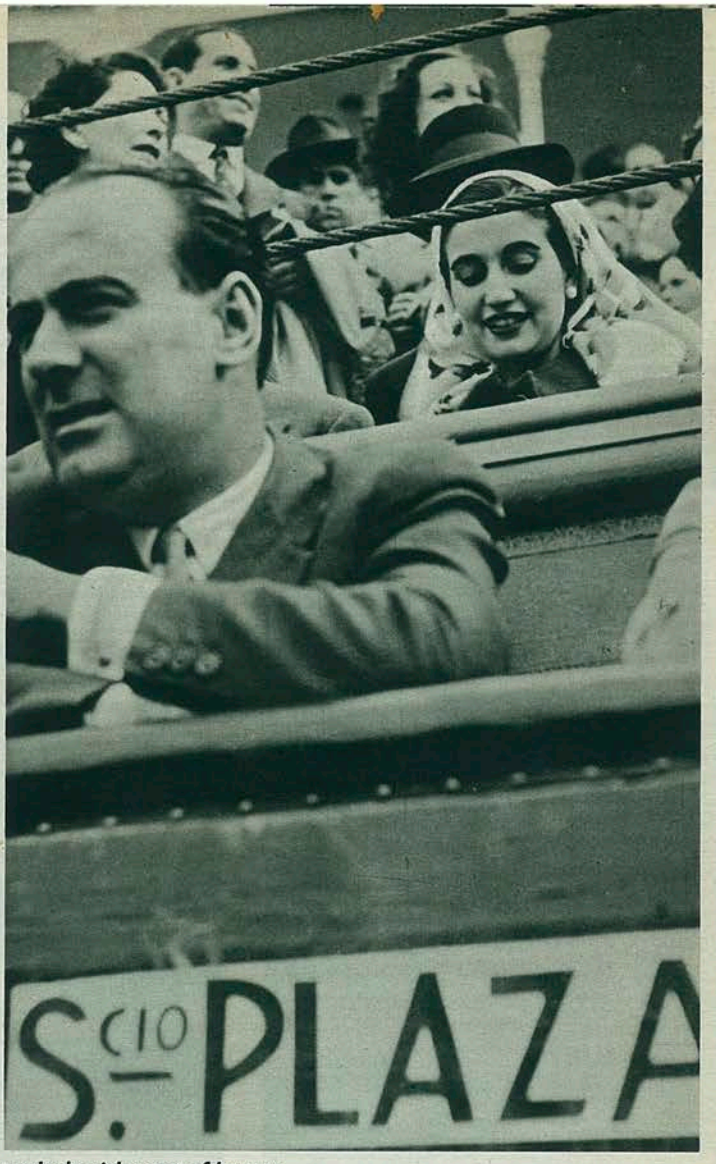
Children Are Everywhere and all gardens and open spaces become playgrounds. "In the cities," writes H. E. Bates, "there are a million exotic perambulators, carriages of the rich: lace-canopied, exquisite, showy"

OVER





The poor have a stony ground; the rich a seat of honour

There are no bullfights for the lowly-paid workers who must spend the long Sunday afternoons idling outside their poor surburban homes. But for the wealthy there is the *loge d'honneur* at the ringside. A frequent visitor to the Madrid fights is Carmen Franco, daughter of the Caudillo, now married to a wealthy doctor

Don Salvador the master, Manuel the worker

One of Spain's richest landowners, Don Salvador Guardiola lives in a palace in Seville and visits his estates only to inspect the fields. Manuel is head of a team of 200 workers who earn a few shillings a day

world still held down by feudalism and poverty —by power of State and by power of that State within a State, the Church, whose power shows not the faintest sign of break or decline in its hold on peasantry and aristocracy, on custom and emancipation. He knows that they will grow up into a world in which a whole series of economic upheavals, including a crippling and bloody civil war, have made graft as inevitable as the air they breathe, black marketry as natural as begging for bread.

And what will they do, his children? What can he hope they will become? Spain being a man's world—emancipation and woman are two words that still do not go together with any popularity—his sons would seem to have the better, wider chances. Only thirty-five per cent of them are likely to be illiterate now, compared with at least half of them in 1930. If he lives in the country a boy will be able to start work in the fields or on the big estates for a few shillings a day; in the town, as a medium-paid worker, for a little more—facts which, if he had the means of comparison with the outside world to which he will never travel, would tell him that he was the lowest-paid worker on any part of Europe's soil.

And when he is old enough to appreciate the fact, if not by means of figures then by the plain proof of belly and bread, that the cost of living index is now 247 per cent compared with 1935, he will know something of Spain's bitterest problems. He will probably never eat a meal even in the most modest of restaurants, since the cost of that meal and the total of his day's pay

Bananas are for the few and so are the latest fashions

The only way some workers can get bananas or sweets for their children is to gamble on a street lottery. They buy a ticket for a few pence in the hope of winning fruit or chocolate. Dress shows are for the rich only; the ordinary housewife has little money to indulge her tastes. In Spain no men are allowed at these displays

packet will be one and the same thing; he will probably never know the luxury of a little chocolate or a banana for his own children in turn. He may sometimes have a bang of a few pence on a street lottery. But long before that he will have learned to beg for bread or pennies at the doors of hotels and restaurants and taxis, to grab free rides on the backs of overcrowded tramcars, to think of food in terms of bread smeared with a little pimento and garlic.

He may become a shoeshine boy, dragging his box from café to café. He could become one of the army of 110,000 priests and so help to restrain the rest of his 30,000,000 countrymen from acquiring too much of that higher literacy which can finally be so disruptive to both ecclesiastical and feudal power. Or he could do practically the same thing, enjoying at the same time greater privilege and prestige and the joy of possessing a uniform by becoming a soldier; or he could become a policeman, standing as an armed guard on a public building, a bank or even a tourist office—the last to remind fellow countrymen, perhaps, of the need for being careful where, when and how they go.

Spaniards of Right Wing sympathies comfortably installed in capitals where civilization is still not simply a matter of theoretical privilege do not like you to talk or even to think in this way. They grow even angrier at any forthright conclusions drawn about the obvious way of life of many Spanish women. What, then, are the chances of the taxi-driver's daughter, the peasant girl, the sister of the beggar and the shoeshine boy? [*Continued on page* 35]

Señoritas who dance; señoritas who toil

Beauty and grace in old Seville where girls display their traditional costumes outside the cathedral. In the fields women work ten hours each day under a broiling sun. There is no shade in the broad fields

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She will grow up, it is quite obvious, into a world where man, for all the wretchedness of his status, is the superior being. "We believe," says Pilar Primo de Rivera, Spanish women's leader, "in the superiority of the male. . . . The Spanish woman is completely satisfied with her lot. . . . It is the man who is the author of all the big creations."

In the cities there are a million exotic perambulators, carriages of the rich: lace-canopied, exquisite, showy, and she will probably earn a little money pushing one before she begins to have children herself. Physically and sexually she will develop early: bloomy-breasted, dark-eyed, swarthy, attractive.

Army Of Dyed Heads

And being born dark-haired, as she probably will be, she will then do what millions of dark-haired women all over the northern hemisphere seem to take infinite pains to do: she will begin to dye her hair blonde, red, blue or auburn-brown. But with this difference: in Spain she will seek the change, or her mother will seek it for her, much earlier in her life. She may even be a dyed red-head by the time she can walk; she will look like a cheap little red-haired street walker. She will certainly join a great army of dyed heads before she is sixteen, and the chances are that she will join, if she lives in a city, a considerable army of prostitutes, too.

If she belongs to the peasantry she will of course find other things to occupy her. The land, hard, scorched, very often completely treeless, relentless and bitter, will give her back a miserable subsistence for her work. Her ten hours a day will have its reward of about four shillings, or just over fourpence an hour. On an estate where prize bulls are sold for £280 apiece, this would seem to be exquisite comment on the remark that "ninety-nine per cent of Spanish women believe firmly in the superiority of the masculine intellect." It would almost seem better to be a bull.

Presumably she will go to school: I say presumably because, although there are 42,000 schools involving 4,800,000 pupils, and 150 colleges housing 150,000 students, illiteracy, at thirty-five per cent, is still astonishingly high. There is a gap somewhere when nearly four out of every ten children cannot read or write. But no doubt the superiority of the masculine intellect makes up for these defects, leaving woman to struggle on as best she can in her stunted, secluded, half-oriental world, in that curious semi-purdah that does not belong to Europe at all. For her comfort the Church will succour her; she will be at mass at six in the morning. She may even be perfectly content with things, unaware that her four shillings a day qualify her for election into the category of the worst sweated labour in Europe.

Laughterless Darkness

But the children of Spain, in my experience, do not smile much. I would even go further and say that I do not remember them smiling at all. I do not remember anyone smiling very much. People always smile, of course, for photographers, but I am not a photographer and I still carry on into my life a haunting impression from Spain of laughterless darkness, and a curious sort of blight, that has been my experience in no other country except, significantly enough, Teneriffe.

Spain haunted me as a country of infinite and inarticulate sadness. Her children made my heart ache: not necessarily because they were stricken by poverty and filth and the sore-eyed wretchedness that you can see in any city from Cairo to Capetown, Calcutta to New York, or because they turned my stomach by begging bread of me as I came out of good restaurants; but because I could not bear the notice of the prospect which is theirs. There is something about the whole peculiar structure of Spain and Spanish life which imparts an intense cynicism. There is a combined odour of medievalism, graft and stagnation and, worst of all, of subterranean distrust of brother for brother that revolts in me anything that is English, anything that is European.

For Spain, as I see it, is not Europe. Geographically she hangs like a pendant over the western Mediterranean, pointing to Africa. Strategically she may seem a desirable place in the depositions of war commanders. Politicians may talk of her "working her passage back among the nations." But my own view is that Spain has nothing the rest of Europe requires. She has no kind of example in social progress, morality, emancipation, education, transport or in sheer freedom of living from which the rest of us can take a single profitable lesson.

Statisticians may point to her increased production of silk, coal and oil, to the fact that only oil and bread are now rationed, that coupons are no longer required in restaurants. In her internal economy these are doubtless important things; but they hardly concern us. What does concern us is something else—for it is equally patent that Spain has a kind of inverse example to offer and that its importance in our world is great.

Rift And Antagonism

The twentieth century has seen everywhere an immense and disturbing increase in the rift and antagonism between State and individual. Modern States created of individual will have a curious way of turning into forces acting repressively on the very will that created them. Wins for freedom against the tyrannies of totalitarianism have a way of presenting the victors with less freedom than that with which they started and a taint by the tyrannies against which they fought.

Spain, as I see it, is an illuminating example of the repression of the individual by State-held, Church-aided power. It is the perfect example—aggravated by centuries of associated custom of fear and climatic apathy—of power cynicism: of the way the many may be held in subjection by the few, of the way the control by State, for all its rightness in theory, may work when wrongly interpreted and wrongly used. It is a terrifying example of the State mausoleum.

That is why the children of Spain continue to haunt me: not simply because they are Spanish children but because they are as symptomatic of the future of all other children as the Civil War of Spain was symptomatic of all other wars. In a world in which the faint rumblings of a third conflict increase even as I write these words, the hands held out for bread may hold in them, if we are not desperately careful, a frightening prophecy. The fate of the children of Spain today might become, as I see it, the fate of our own children, in our more hideous tomorrow.