

APPEAL OF THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT.

New Zealand Government Offices, 415, Strand, London, W.C. 2, 10th June, 1937.

SIR,—

At the public meeting of the Council held on the 28th May the above question came up for consideration.

The representative of Spain, M. Alvarez del Vayo, stated that in December last the Government of Spain had asked for an extraordinary session of the Council in order to draw attention to the grave danger of war that was developing from the situation in Spain. Faithful to its obligations with regard to the League of Nations and within the framework of Article XI of the Covenant, Spain came before the Council not to make any specific demands, but to raise a question which from the point of view of the League of Nations should be of equal concern to all the States members of the League.

His first point of view was that it was not possible to serve the cause of peace effectively without resolutely facing those who desired to disturb peace. The existing conspiracy of silence was an injury alike to the prestige and to the very future of the League. Because of the accumulating proofs of foreign intervention in the affairs of Spain on an even greater scale and with more insolent boldness, and in view of the dangers to the peace of Europe arising out of this intervention, the Government of the Spanish Republic came to Geneva to draw attention to a situation, the extreme gravity of which no one on the Council could deny.

The League's unity of viewpoint on the situation had in December resulted in the adoption of a resolution which, however, was not a final word on the problem. The question therefore remained open, and so it was natural that the Government which had first raised the question should take the initiative in bringing it before the Council when the circumstances so required. During the months since December the Spanish situation had gone through four main phases—

- (1) Intensified Italo-German intervention culminating in the open aggression of Italy against Spain and in the battle of Guadalajara ;
- (2) The institution of a system of control worked out so painfully and with such disastrous delay by the London Committee ;
- (3) The ruthless application of the theory of a "totalitarian war," exemplified in the destruction of Guernica ;
- (4) The recent attempts of the London Committee to bring about the withdrawal of foreign combatants.

The invasion of Spain by Italian and German troops could have been no surprise to those who had always preferred not to look danger in the face. The several months of sham non-intervention during which Governments had closed their eyes to all violations had the natural result of inducing Germany and Italy to go all out when the rebels were stopped before the gates of Madrid. Seventy thousand to eighty thousand Italians had poured into a sovereign and independent country in order to hew their way by fire and sword into Madrid, a capital in which a few years ago the Council of the League of Nations met, without constituting a formidable enough fact to be officially noticed. In case the appearance on Spanish territory of this army had escaped the notice of some Governments, the Spanish Government had taken the liberty of presenting to the members of the Council and to international public opinion a white-paper which is to be translated by the Secretariat and will be forwarded at a later date. There are more than five hundred documents in the possession of the Spanish Government which are not included in this white-paper. This document proves—

- (1) The existence on Spanish territory of complete units of the Italian army whose personnel, material, liaison, and command are Italian ;
- (2) The fact that these Italian military units behaved in the sectors assigned to them as a veritable army of occupation ;
- (3) The existence of services organized by the Italian Government for its military units on Spanish territory as if they were in a finally conquered country ;
- (4) The active participation of the most eminent personalities in the Italian Government who have addressed messages to the invading forces, giving them advice and encouragement in their aggression.

The reply of the Spanish people to this criminal invasion of Spain was given by the soldiers of the Republic. The Spanish Government's representative could not help asking whether the Council had also a reply to make.

Talking of Guernica. Mr. del Vayo said that in the peaceful Basque countryside, German aviation had selected the town which symbolized the whole of the ideal and of the religious sentiment of a glorious people merely for experiment in the conduct of a totalitarian war. One could not accuse those who used these tactics of acting without reflection. There was in existence a whole series of well-known texts of German authorities which revealed the deliberate character of the new philosophy of war. They were not asking the Council to begin a discussion at that meeting on the destruction of Guernica. The Spanish Government had addressed a request at the time to the Government of the United Kingdom asking it to send a Commission of inquiry and it asked that Government to be good enough to put forward this request to the Council Committee of Non-intervention. That request still stood. The whole of Spain under the lash of "the furious impotence of the rebels is a Guernica." "Malaga is Guernica . . . The fifty thousand civilian inhabitants of Malaga who, crying 'the Fascists are coming,' fled along the 220 km. of road where death for ever separated families, were a foreshadowing of Guernica." Two recent manifestations of the depths to which world opinion had been