Mr. Hugh Gibson, one of this country's really top-flight diplomats, spoke from London over the Blue Network of the National Broadcasting Company on September 10 in order to give to the American public a report of his findings on a 5,000-mile automobile trip through General Franco's Spain.

He was most enthusiastic. And, expressing his full confidence in General Franco's regime, took the occasion to dispel some of the "fairy stories" that he feels have come to be accepted as fact about Spain.

His remarks were thought by the New York Times to be worth something over a column on September 11 and have been reprinted joyfully throughout the country in scores of newspapers and periodicals, for the most part those who, by their enthusiasm for the cause of General Franco and for our unneutral embargo during the war, helped so greatly with his victory.

It is most natural that wide attention should be paid to the utterances of a radio speaker of Mr. Gibson's standing. Former American Ambassador to Belgium, Poland and Brazil and spokesman for his country at the great International Conferences during the hopeful years when the Peace was lost, he brings to the air, and to the lecture platforms that he is soon to grace, an experience and prestige equalled by few. At 56 he has played an enormous personal role during a quarter of a century of history, through the World War of 1914-18 and the Armistice of 1919 to '39. And there is reason to think that, in spite of his temporary retirement, he may not play a great role again. He is a keen and plausible speaker and his personal appeal cannot but be enhanced by Mr. H. B. Warner's por-
trayal of him in his moving part in the tragedy of Nurse Cavell, as reenacted on the screen.

It is equally natural that Mr. Gibson's remarks should be subjected to the critical examination to which all foreign news coverage and comment is being subjected these days, and particularly so when so much of what he says is so startling to those who know their Spain.

With Mr. Gibson's personal predilection for the cause of Spain's historic governing classes one cannot quarrel since, no longer an official spokesman for the United States, he is as free to have an opinion and express it as anyone else. However, with certain of his remarkable assertions one can and must take issue.

The Spanish war is over; it was the curtain-raiser and now the main show is on. But the issues behind the Spanish war are far from dead. The forces that overcame Spain have attacked on wider fronts and the friends and sympathizers of General Franco and his fascist allies in France, England and the United States have not given altogether convincing proof that they realize the full extent of their responsibility.

Thus, apart from the ordinary demands of historical accuracy, there are excellent reasons for keeping the record straight. That there is already a serious effort being made to rewrite it is obvious. Mr. Gibson went to Spain with little first-hand knowledge of the country. It would seem, was given access to a record that, in the best totalitarian tradition, has been doctored as only the totalitarians can doctor it—with means stronger than ink-eraser.
Although Mr. Gibson prefaces his remarks by saying, "I shall confine myself as far as possible to statements which can be verified by anybody who really wants to know the truth..." It is precisely on points of fact - presumably supplied him by his guides - that his broadcast can most easily be challenged.

The ex-Ambassador, at large, (in the transcript given out by NBC) says, "There are a number of things we know about Spain that are not so. It may be worth while touching on them in the hope that we may be led to scrutinize our information a little more carefully in the future." He can surely not then object to careful scrutiny of this informative effort of which he is the author by a newspaper correspondent who has held him in high esteem during many years in which their paths crossed and who, moreover, has contributed his share of the information from Spain.

Let us take up the question of the bombings of open towns by the German and Italian planes in General Franco's service. Mr. Gibson says that in Valencia and Barcelona he found no more evidence of air raids than he would find in Washington or San Francisco. Only the ports which, oddly, he finds "situated at some distance from the town" were bombed. And he implies, fully aware one assumes as diplomats must be of the full import of their implications, that the reports of the bombardments of these and other towns fall into the category of the "fairy stories" that he undertakes to dispose of by his broadcast.

This is a wholly remarkable statement and one that clearly gives the lie to at least a score of reliable British and American
correspondents who had the misfortune to live through those bombardments and which, moreover, places Mr. Gibson's former Boss, Secretary of State Hull, in an unpleasant light. But not only Mr. Hull, but Mr. Chamberlain, the Governments of France and Belgium, and the Vatican as well. For after the aerial bombardments of civilian areas in Barcelona on March 17 and 18 of 1938, Mr. Chamberlain told Parliament (on March 21) that the city was bombed "at random," Secretary Hull expressed the "sense of horror" of the "whole American people" at the loss of civilian lives in Barcelona which he said was "perhaps greater than ever before in history." The Vatican and the Government of Great Britain, France, Belgium and the United States made official protests to Burgos.

Later on in the war the British Government, though committed then to a Franco victory, set up a Commission of Enquiry into the Bombing of Open Towns. The Franco Government never asked for the Commission to visit them as the Loyalist Government was keeping its pledge not to bomb open towns. But, called to Loyalist territory, the Commission reported "deliberate attacks on the civilian area" in Alicante on May 25, 1938 (272 dead and 224 wounded), Sitges on August 8, Torrevieja on August 25, and Tarragona on October 7. The raid on Barcelona on August 19, which killed 24 and wounded 80, was found to be either a deliberate one on a civilian area or "a very badly aimed attack on a port area conducted by an unskilled squadron."

Then of course, in towns like Barcelona, there is the visual evidence. The Spaniard is an artful creature but the guide who took Mr. Gibson through Barcelona to the port without showing him the bombing ravages in the Plaza de Catalunya, at the University and
elsewhere in the center of that city, was one of the unsung geniuses of a great race.

Then of course there was Gurenica, which Mr. Gibson apparently was not taken to see at all.

Now a second point: our ex-Ambassador, at large, was able to assure his listeners that Franco is not fascist. This news was undoubtedly welcome to American Catholics who clearly would not have wanted to support a fascist cause.

"After visiting Spain," said the Ambassador, "the idea of a fascist regime is simply comic. Anything less fascist would be hard to find." He says that he asked General Franco about the form of the new government and that the General said frankly that he did not know, and nobody did. Of course General Franco has said all along that his regime is fascist * and therefore one's first inclination was to assume that Mr. Gibson had got a scoop; that the Generalissimo, worried by his German ally's courtship of Russia, had decided to scrap his laboriously constructed fascist super-structure — as a measure of precaution. But apparently this is not so for on September 26, weeks after Mr. Gibson's joyful report of conversion, the Associated Press cables from Burgos new details of the forthright and self-proclaimed
fascist character of the Spanish Nationalist State. He says, "Franco speaks of the Phalanx as a necessary instrument to carry out the national reconstruction. Its nine-five members including nine cabinet members, eleven generals and the Ambassadors to France and Belgium, will keep in touch with the people in all the provinces and territories of Spain—in order to find out what they think about Spain, the needed laws and the ways Spanish life can be improved." This council will then report to the Political Junta of the Phalanx, directed by Serrano Suner. The Political junta then advises the cabinet. "In this way," says the AP, "the laws that are to rule Spain are formed."

The little General's mind must have been wandering when he told Mr. Gibson reassuringly that "the men who wrote the 26 points of the Phalanx all are dead." Rafael Sanchez Mazas, a Cabinet member, and Raimundo Fernandez Cuesta, a former Cabinet member exceedingly active in the Phalanx, are founding fathers of the Phalanx along with the Founder, the late Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera. Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of the Founder, is the Chief of the Feminine Section of the Phalanx and "Member Number One" of its National Council. And Ramon Serrano Suner, Franco's brother-in-law (Lord High Brother-In-Law they call him) and Prime Minister wears the mantle of spiritual heir to the Founder by virtue of his last will and testament.

Yet (for American consumption) Spain is not Fascist! It is hard to understand the reasoning of the Franco apologists who, as Mr. Gibson does here, defend the Generalissimo by insisting that he isn't at all what he pretends to be, that he doesn't mean what he says he means and that the fascist regime he has set up at the
cost of more than a million lives and much more is "simply comic."
One can only hope that Mr. Gibson's error was the result of wishful thinking. Knowing Spanish America as he does, the Ambassador would doubtless have found the Phalanx's reaffirmation of Spain's imperial claims in the New World somewhat disturbing had he been given reason to think that the Phalanx was any more than "simply comic."

Had Mr. Gibson ever held a post in Spain (and Who's Who reveals that he had not) his views on General Franco's housing and agrarian reforms would be doubly open to question. He speaks of the charming "workmen's houses" that are being built wholly by private contributions "to replace the slums that formerly disgraced the country."

"If all goes well with those dwellings in Spain," he says, "it is hoped to solve the dwelling problem within five years. . . ." And he adds, "Again, if this is fascism, it is a new sort."

It is true that the slums of Madrid and Barcelona were bad though not nearly as bad as the slums of Naples, of London or New York. It is true, although Mr. Gibson does not say this, that much slum clearance in the two cities was accomplished by General Franco's shells and bombs. But what no one told Mr. Gibson apparently is that the Spanish proletariat is overwhelmingly a landless agrarian proletariat. Close to 70 percent of the population of Spain lives on and from the soil by the work of their hands. And pass their lives in hovels in forgotten villages. And it was they who saw in the lurid doctrines of the Anarcho-Syndicalist agitators their only hope for release. The urban and industrial proletariat on the other hand were largely Socialist and supported wholeheartedly the moderate "bourgeois" reforms of the Republic that General Franco overthrew with the help of his
fascist allies and of certain craven "democracies."

And the cure for the tragic situation of Spain's peasantry lies in a far-reaching Agrarian Reform. The Count of Romanones, one of Spain's great landlords, once wrote that 90 percent of the ills afflicting the Spanish body politic - poverty, illiteracy, bossism, addiction to violence - could be laid to her agrarian maladjustment. Charles the Third of Spain saw this in the enlightened Eighteenth Century and had a report drawn up; in 1931 when the Republic came into being the agrarian problem was essentially as it was mirrored in that famous report dated 1770.

The Republic of 1931 accepted the challenge and in 1932 voted its great Agrarian Reform Bill and established a technical institute and Land Bank which proceeded to lay the groundwork for a sweeping readjustment.

What the Franco people told Mr. Gibson about this Reform he retails as follows, "According to Red propaganda, Utopia was to be established by a few simple steps, particularly the division of the great landed estates and the land of the Church, but somehow it didn't work out. But the gentlemen in Madrid had not thought matters out beyond the matter of confiscation, and they never got to the point of giving the peasants effective aid or equipment, so they were no better off than before. Incidentally, the great landed properties turned out to be a great deal of a hoax, mostly without value..."

What the Franco people neglected to tell their visitor was this:

The Reform, far from Utopian, was based on a hard-headed
principle hardly more "radical" than the Russian Land Reforms of 1905. Under the inspiration of the philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset and the greatest legal minds of the country, it was drafted as an anti-collectivist reform designed to create a middle-class of peasant landowners (kulaks in Russian Bolshevik parlance). AND THE OWNERS WERE TO BE PAID FULL VALUE FOR THEIR LANDS. But first land surveys had to be undertaken and inventories drawn up. Neither had ever existed. In August, 1932 there was a military rebellion promoted by the Grandees and in retaliation the Constituent Cortes of the Republic voted the confiscation without indemnity of their estates, but theirs alone.

The Institute, smothered under legalistic restrictions, worked slowly. By the end of 1933 it had established a mere 12,260 peasants on 288,706 acres. In the Fall of 1933 the Right came to power in elections won with a slush-fund raised largely by the landowners and the Reform was halted and in fact reversed and peasants already settled by the Republic were ejected from their lands. The Spring of 1934 saw a widespread peasant "strike" of revolutionary proportions, out of sheer disillusionment.

In February 1936 it was largely peasant discontent that brought back the Republicans on a wave of triumph. The Agrarian Reform began to work at top speed settling peasants on the land and providing them with loans for farm equipment and for seed. The title to the land remained in the hands of the State; payment to landowners who were not Grandees was guaranteed by the States. But the reform had been too long delayed. They were forcible seizures—of lands, already legally theirs—by an impatient peasantry and it was this situation, aggravated by resistance on the part of the landowners and a Civil
Guard in their services that provoked the ferment in the Spring of 1936. General Franco and his rebel officers, rising to save a Feudal Spain threatened at long last by "bourgeois" reform, which they called of course "red revolution." They rose to save Spain from the first fundamental reform. By February of 1937 the Agrarian Reform Institute had parcelled out 9,528,013 acres and granted credits totaling 72,464,400 pesetas. Yet these almost ten million acres were only 15 percent of the total available land in the 24 (out of a total of 50) provinces.

And Mr. Gibson is proud to report that by the end of the year General Franco will have settled some 200,000 acres. But the Associated Press (again letting him down badly) reports on a later date (September 22) that all of the large estates broken up before the war are to be returned to their original owners. And it is of course on the record that the peasants who were rash enough to benefit from the Republic's reforms have been shot. Which should be a lesson to them.

Mr. Gibson, on information supplied him by Franco's people, finds himself able to dismiss the problem of the latifundia that has been the bugbear of every regime in Spain since Charles III first began to care. He says that "all of the estates in Spain of 1,000 hectares (2471 acres) or more if put together would give a less acreage than the properties of one single English Duke and less than a good many American landowners." Let us see. According to the official figures of the Agrarian Reform Institute in 1934 expropriable estates of over 1000 hectares owned by the Grandees totalled 1,389,933

*By a curious coincidence, this charge of Mr. Gibson's is identical with that made in the 6-penny propaganda pamphlet "Daylight on Spain" by Charles Sarolea.*
acres. Single British estates may indeed run this large, Mr. Gibson knows his England, but in Spain a people with an older democratic tradition didn't like this and were trying to do something about it.

According to these same official statistics which have never been questioned, until now by Mr. Gibson in his new quality of roving reporter, the concentration of latitundia was such that in certain Andalusian provinces such as Cordova, Seville and Cadiz the great holdings occupied from 40 to 58 percent of the total arable land. And it was in these provinces that Spanish anarchism flared from the middle of the last century down until the Republic began to get at the root of the evil. Agrarian experts are in agreement that something over 50 percent of the land of Spain was held by less than 50,000 persons while more than two million peasants eeked out meagre livings on tiny plots and another 2,000,000 enjoyed complete freedom from the anxieties of ownership.

Mr. Gibson's claim that the land of the Grandees turned out to be "mostly without value" seems strange in the light of certain facts: first that a Right government in 1934 voted a "Counter Agrarian Reform" by which the Grandees were to be indemnized to the extent of 577 million pesetas; and second, in July of 1936, the Grandees and the other inheritors of the wealth and privileges of the Old Spain, rose in armed and bloody rebellion to get them back.

Still another "myth" the Ambassador discovers in "the vast lands of the Church frequently said to amount to one-third of the territory of Spain..." Mr. Gibson is perfectly correct in revealing
here what every Spanish school child knows, namely that the vast Church lands were confiscated in the early Nineteenth Century. However the power and wealth of the Church lay in its favored political situation and in the financial and industrial holdings of the religious orders. Angel Marvaud, the French expert on Spain, now leader writer of Le Temps (not a radical paper) wrote that in 1909* one could safely

* L’Espagne au XXe Siecle, Armand Colin, Paris, 1922

estimate at "around a third of the national wealth, the property, real estate and securities, held by the orders... The Northern railroads, the Transatlantic Company, the orange groves of Andalusia, the Basque mines and those of the Riff, many of the factories in Barcelona," were in Jesuit hands, openly or secretly. In 1933 Sir George Young, long a resident of Spain wrote that in 1931 at the advent of the Republic "the Jesuits controlled one-third of the country's wealth, and that the working capital of their enterprises amounted to sixty million sterling. Add to this that through its agricultural credit banks the Church controlled the production and population of this agricultural country..."

On still another matter Mr. Gibson seems not to have been afforded access to the very best information, if any at all. This was on the painful question on the victor's treatment of the vanquished. "I saw something of the methods followed in dealing with red prisoners," and it is difficult to conceive anything more sensible and farsighted and above all to reconcile what is going on with lurid tales being
spread in other countries of general massacres under oppression."

I can quite understand that Mr. Gibson's hosts would have hesitated to take him down to witness the daily executions of the "reds" but news of these must somehow have reached him. The American Embassy in Madrid is housed in the imposing palace of the Dukes of Montellano on the aristocratic Castellana but I can't help but feel that muffled echoes must penetrate there occasionally from the prison walls where firing squads plug out the lives of Spanish Republicans thus belatedly winding up the business of the Non-Intervention Committee on which the United States sat by proxy.

It not there are always the British and American papers and if they are not allowed into Nationalist Spain then their correspondents might be consulted. Pro-Franco William P. Carney of the New York Times, now home to accept a decoration from the Knights of Columbus, wrote in April that in the four provinces of Madrid, Albacete, Toledo and Ciudad Real there were 225,000 prisoners awaiting trial. He wrote June 20 that the courts of Madrid were giving out about 20 death sentences a day to these men. The diplomatic correspondent of the Manchester Guardian wrote in the paper for July 27, 1939, at a time when probably Mr. Gibson was making his tour, that "The Terror in Catalonia today is comparable with that which was carried out on both sides in the first year of the Spanish Civil War, except that the procedure is judicial and not quite as indiscriminate as it was then."

Mr. Gibson says that "The men who have been given the problem of combing out the red country were given as a guiding principle they must assume that most of the people they had to deal with were decent Spaniards; that some had been brought into the war by force; that
others had been touched by propaganda and there was, therefore, only a small minority, those charged with actual crimes, murder, robbery and the like, to be tried by regular tribunals."

He could not have said that he had been apprized of the existence of Franco's Law of Political Responsibilities (of the date of February 9, 1939) which classifies as "actual crimes" the mere fact of having been a Mason or a moderate Republican.

Old Dr. La Motte Grignon was shot for the "actual crime" of being a Catalan chef d'orchestre who played Catalan music. Antonio Hermosilla, editor of La Libertad, shot for the "actual crime" of having edited throughout the years a fine liberal bourgeois paper that, incidentally, during the World War was pro-Ally. The 70 year old Catalan historian Carlos Rahola, chronicler of Napoleonic times, for the "actual crime" of slighting dictators in a recent book.

The Ambassador brings to the air a professional talent, one of the diplomatic tricks that Americans have always felt were the exclusive competence of the wicked Europeans. He begs the question. He assures his listeners at the outset that he will not attempt to deal with the "rights or wrongs of the Civil War." He then proceeds to refer to the supporters of the Spanish Government as "reds" and speaks of the "subversive propaganda" that gained such a foothold among the poor and ignorant of Spain in Republican days. Mr. Gibson was apparently not told that the poor and ignorant of Spain supported the pathetic "bourgeois" Republic that held out to them their first hope of peaceful change and that the subversion was carried out by the Francs and other employes of the State who rose against it on promptings from Rome and Berlin. It is odd to hear an American Ambassador, even one
on vacation, label "subversive" any people's determination to defend their legality.

The Ambassador further begs the question when he raises the horrific suggestion that had the Republican cause won in Spain a Communist Spain would now be on the side of Russia and Germany. A "Communist Spain" even now when the sorry debris of that Republic in the concentration camps of the South of France have been proved to contain less than eight percent of Communists? A Republican Spain with eight percent of Communists would have been on the side of Russia and Germany thinks Mr. Gibson, but a fascist Spain infested with the Gestapo and dominated by a Phalanx in itself dominated by Berlin and Rome will not however take sides against the British and French. One hopes Italy and Spain are neutral but their neutrality is such that the British Admiralty denies itself the use of the Mediterranean. Republican Spain was France's ally no less and would have remained so.

But the point that Mr. Gibson seems to miss is this: had the British and French been wiser than to allow the Germans and Italians into Spain, in the summer and fall of 1938 they need never have contemplated a Munich and had there not been the senseless betrayal of Spain, consummated before Munich and the later betrayal of Czechoslovakia Stalin need never have had to open his eyes so far to the perfidy of his would-be partners in a Peace Front. In Spain more was lost for the democracies than honor.

It is altogether a rare and remarkable picture of the past and present of Spain that Ambassador Gibson draws. Its master touch surely is his discovery that that enthusiasm for Franco's plans of
reconstruction is so great that there is in Spain virtually a "new deal carried out by the people instead of the Government."

In the transcript "new deal" is not capitalized. One cannot know how Mr. Gibson meant it to be until one sees his text from London.

New deal?

The Army that lost the Empire riding high in a State that it had never been quite able to monopolize before.

The Phalanx, considered as dangerously anti-clerical and hardly better than gangsters by the Spanish Right at the beginning of 1936, become the One Party and its symbols and the name of its founder inscribed on the walls of the Churches.

The Monarchists, Carlists and Alfonists, in peril from Phalangist National-Syndicalism as never from the Republic.

The Jesuit-inspired Clericals with their ideals in the junk heap and their leader Gil Robles banned.

Education lost again to the Church that, enjoying a monopoly so long, managed to maintain 55 percent of all Spaniards in a state of complete illiteracy. Village schools wholly abandoned to priests.

The tens of thousands of school teachers trained by the Republic, now out of jobs, where alive.

Protestants, liberals, Free-Masons, radicals, socialists, communists proscribed. And the syndicalists whose fury was for feudalism not for a capitalism they had never known. The Masons, thousands of them dead, for they, it seems spread the infection of
of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" throughout the Nineteenth Century.

The Basque Nationalists, with the Catalans the only modern capitalists in Spain, exiled or dead. Their priests dead, or in concentration camps or watched by the Gestapo.

Courts and courts-martial functioning in the spirit of the Inquisition and of the Juntas de Purificación under Ferdinand VII which aroused the shocked protest of even the Czar of All the Russians.

And a Caudillo (Spanish for Fuhrer or Duce) who, in Mr. Gibson's words, "now has more power than was ever exercised by any Spanish ruler, even by Charles V or Philip II.

That this is a "new deal" no one can deny. That it is a "New Deal" is less evident.

Why Mr. Gibson has seen fit to make this kind of debut in the journalism of the air I cannot imagine.

It is true that he has long breathed the rarified atmosphere of the international diplomatic set.

It is true that he married a lady of the Belgian aristocracy, Mlle. Ynes Reyntiens, with, incidentally, the Marques de Villalobar Ambassador of His Catholic Majesty Alfonso XIII of Spain, as his best man. It is also true that Mrs. Gibson's capital is deeply involved in Catalan hydro-electrical enterprises, in railways and many other interests that were naturally on the side of the rebellion.

It is true that he is no Rooseveltian Democrat-if Democrat he is at all. He was Mr. Hoover's spokesman in Europe in the fatal
year 1932-33. He had so little sympathy with the New Deal's policies in Brazil that he is no longer Ambassador there or anywhere.

It is undeniably true that he has the usual friendships that an Ambassador has in the international business world and among the American business interests such as the International Telephone and Telegraph that are so deeply involved in the consequences of their own short-sighted support of Franco.

And it is true that these people are frightened silly lest they lose out in Spain, as chancelleries are frightened lest Franco's neutrality become something else. They have recently contrived an American loan for Franco in the shape of a cotton credit of $13,500,000 of which 80 percent is carried by the Export-Import Bank (the American taxpayers) and 20 percent by a group of New York banks. They have done everything to please him even to harassing the Spanish Republicans and refusing their offers of a service in the Allied armies. And these people who are straining so comprehensibly to counteract the Nazi and Fascist influences that they themselves helped to unloose over Spain, understand that to be really effective they must disassociate him in the American mind from the others. They must make him palatable to American taste.

Anyone or all of these factors might account for a certain sympathy for General Franco on Ambassador Gibson's part and a hope that things will turn out all right. But it would be a gratuitous affront to him for anyone to think for a moment that he has allowed his eyesight and his judgment to be influenced by any of these factors.

Yet the information retailed by Mr. Gibson is of the pecu-
up until now only liar calibre found/in a fanatical religious press—information which the late Cardinal Mundelein's New World felt impelled to label false.

One can then simply conclude that an old diplomat and a wily one by the standards of the grand tradition, has been taken in by the new totalitarian school which rewrites the history of yesterday in its own schoolbooks and sometimes in our newspapers and broadcasts right over here.

One can hope that from this adventure Mr. Gibson will conclude that the canons of even the old diplomacy and of journalism don't mix at all.

And that the broadcasting companies will conclude the same thing and realize that there is more than one kind of propaganda.

For Spain is still dynamite, or should be, because far too many imaginations were stirred by the Loyalist epic to an awareness of the issues involved there and here for any Government to be given facilities for smirching the record. The kind of propaganda that belittles beliefs for which one has worked is a deadly kind.

Moreover, if the War in Europe now is not the same war that the Spaniards fought and lost and if there are no lessons for its conduct to be learned from their heroism and their sacrifice then this is quite a different kind of a war—quite
The Spanish Republicans who sought arms from Russia only when the democracies had refused them their right to arms, Dr. Negrín, who fought his own extremists to preserve the rights of Catholics, Republicans and Liberals in the Loyalist ranks, a proved democrat and humanist, would be on the side of Germany and Russia, but the Spanish Rebels, subscribers to an older totalitarianism, and General Franco, a rebel military puppet and executioner, would hold fast to the gentle liberal ideals of the West.