IN CIVIL WAR days, La Pasionaria—Dolores Ibarruri—travelled from village to village delivering fiery orations in support of the Communist cause and against Franco. She has been exiled for 38 years.

Spain’s La Pasionaria prepares to go home

16/4/1977

By WILLIAM CHISLETT
Special to The Star

MADRID

"La Pasionaria" (the passion flower), the 82-year-old president of the Spanish Communist party and Spain’s most famous political exile, is on the point of returning from Moscow to Madrid after 38 years.

"See you soon, comrades and friends, in the new Spain which is beginning," she said this week in the Communist newspaper after hearing that the government had legalized the party.

No one—except Santiago Carrillo, the party’s secretary-general—was as scorned by the Franco regime as Dolores Ibarruri. For the late dictator Francisco Franco, she was the living embodiment of all that his civil war "crusade" stood against.

Santiago Carrillo, the wily brains behind the party, slipped illegally into Spain shortly after Franco died and was arrested last December. After a few days in prison he was released.

But "La Pasionaria" could not return in such a way because of her age and authorities would not give her a passport to return legally now, with the legalization of the Communist party, she can come back.

"Dolores to Madrid" has been the slogan chanted by party militants since the dictator died. No date has been given for her return—although she says she’ll be home in two weeks—and Communist officials are eager not to antagonize Franco’s disinclined supporters, who are seeing red over the legalizing of the party. For them this was the last straw.

A symbol

For those who fought against Franco in the civil war as well as some on his side, along with most of the "silent (post-civil war) generation," La Pasionaria is the symbol of sorely needed recognition.

La Pasionaria was born into a mining family in the Basque country in north Spain and left school at 15. She soon married a miner and three of her daughters died in infancy as a girl she was a devout Catholic, but the misery of those years full of poverty turned her away from the church and into the arms of Karl Marx.

It was a window opening on her life and she plunged into political activity with an unmatched zeal and idealism. "The source of our misery was not in heaven but on earth. It arose from the institutions established by men which could be altered or destroyed by other men," she recalls in her autobiography.

From the time of the Russian revolution in 1917 until the outbreak of the civil war in 1936, La Pasionaria (the name stuck after she used it to sign a press article) threw herself into the workers' cause.

After the Russian revolution, she travelled to Russia, then returned to Spain to preach the Communist gospel.

Legend has it that she used to wander from village to village selling sardines from a tray she bore on her head, building up her reputation as a fiery orator. Often brushing up against the authorities, she was imprisoned three times (in prison she tried to convert people to communism) and then a few months before the civil war started she was elected to the Cortes (parliament).

By now her reputation was such that the right spread rumors that she had once cut a priest’s throat with her own teeth. The same image of her as an icon was indoctrinated into children after the civil war. Not only was she a Red but also a woman—which was too much for the right to stomach.

Spain by now was in turmoil and as Franco launched his military uprising La Pasionaria went on the radio calling on “workers, peasants, anti-Fascists and patriotic Spaniards” not to permit the victory of the "hangman of Asturias" (a miners’ strike in 1934 in Asturias was brutally put down by Franco). La Pasionaria went straight to the infantry barracks in Madrid on hearing the news of the uprising and harangued soldiers on behalf of the Republican cause. It was here that she coined the famous phrase “they shall not pass,” referring to Franco’s advance on Madrid.

Fled to Moscow

But he did pass, and three weeks before Franco’s victory she fled into exile—to Algeria and then to Moscow.

La Pasionaria lives in a flat supplied by the Soviet government, with her daughter, granddaughter and a yellow canary. "The Spanish government won’t even give my Soviet budgie a passport," she said jokingly a few weeks ago, before the party was legalized. She has a chauffeur-driven car and spends most of her time receiving visitors or tending to the colony of about 700 other Spanish exiles, most of whom still cannot return.

La Pasionaria now is part of history, which the great majority of Spaniards have forgotten. Only the hardware minority extreme right is keeping alive the civil war wounds, refusing to change with the times. For them the civil war is not over. This is why the return of La Pasionaria is so important: It symbolizes the burying of the Communist hatchet.
Spanish right likely to benefit from demise of movement

From William Chislett
Madrid, April 4

The National Movement has died. Rest in peace, curtain. The National Movement died yesterday, on 5 April, on the 37th anniversary of its founding by the Government of the only legal political organization, under General Franco.

The Movement's capacity of political power is certainly over but whether its members will rest in peace remains to be seen.

The Movement was founded in 1937 nine months after the beginning of the Civil War. It grew together the various groups which supported General Franco's crusade with the Falange, the genuine Falange, its Independent New Organization under General Mola, the Falange under the Government of the Republic, the Falange under the Government of the Carlist Centre.

It was an action of political move by Señor Suarez, who has started to think of appointing himself as the general elections as a Catalan Government candidate.

In Madrid, the Opposition's negotiating committee with the Government was meeting to discuss the legalization of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and other political party. The Supreme Court has refused to take the decision on legalizing the PCE and sent the thorny issue back to the Government. The Opposition will reiterate its demand for the legalization of all political parties.

From Our Correspondent

Barcelona mayor backs Catalan autonomy moves

Madrid, April 6

Mayor of Barcelona, has added his influential voice to the growing autonomy movement in Catalonia by asking for the re-establishment of the Generalitat, the Catalan Government, which was suppressed by General Franco during the civil war 39 years ago today.

Señor Suarez, who enjoys the confidence of Señor Suarez, the Prime Minister, in his Government, asked for the re-establishment of the Generalitat. The status given was by the Generalitat, the Generalitat and other institutions was revoked in 1939. The Mayor was very careful in the way he wanted his request, which was made in Madrid. Most of the councilors are highly conservative supporters of the Franco regime. His request, which will be forwarded to the Government, was approved without a formal vote being taken.

This is a remarkable achievement by the young, liberal mayor, for only a few years ago the Barcelona town council refused even to support a group to finance a revival of Catalan culture. The autonomy movement is supported by the majority of the Catalan political parties and has become an issue in the campaign for the general elections.

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From Our Correspondent

Spain speeds up release of political prisoners

Madrid, April 6

Groups of Basques are planning to arrive in Madrid to press for the release of Basque political prisoners in Spain. At the same time the Spanish Government appears to be speeding up the release of political prisoners, mainly Basques, with a view to setting up so many as possible by Easter Sunday.

Señor Rodolfo Martin Villa, the Director General, was due to meet the Basque political prisoners in the Ministry of Justice to discuss the situation. Although the Basque political prisoners had been freed from Segovia prison last year, they had to have their release declared before the Basque people could be supported.

Coaches will leave San Sebastian tomorrow morning for Madrid and will then go on to Barakaldo to demonstrate outside the prison there. The authorities are expected to be confident that not too many people will arrive in Madrid in May of the Easter holidays.

According to the latest figures issued by the Justice Ministry, all political prisoners have been released, among them 468 Basques. Another 75 prisoners will benefit from the amnesty, the Ministry said.

Assuming that the total of 468 will all set free, then few, if any, political prisoners will remain in Spain. The Government is getting further from the amnesty was announced last December. The Mitchell Committee is reviewing these criteria for releasing political prisoners of crimes of violence.

Among the Basques to be freed is a man sentenced to long political prisoners. The Supreme Court has refused to take the decision on legalizing the PCE and sent the thorny issue back to the Government. The Opposition will reiterate its demand for the legalization of all political parties.
WEST EUROPE
Renewed campaign of violence threatened by Basque separatists
From our correspondent
Madrid, April 11

The Basque separatist organization ETA is intensifying its efforts to start a new campaign of violence against which there are any democratic freedoms and a total amnesty a month before the Spanish general elections. If these conditions are not fulfilled, we shall immediately pass to the attack," said the spokesman of ETA's military wing told The Times.

In addition, he said, ETA will also recommend that peace talks be halted by the Government declared as a state of emergency for the region on April 9 and that the E T A deadline at around 11 am on April 11, which it listed as the minimum number of democratic aspirations that the people must have without having to resort to violence.

They are: legalization of all political parties and trade unions; a amnesty for all Basque separatists; the formation of a Basque parliament; the creation of a Basque language and the Basque language and the Basque language.
Communists call off rally as generals accept party's legality

From Our Correspondent
Madrid, April 13

Spain's senior army generals have told the Government that they accept the legalisation of the Communist Party (PCE) with reservations, and gave a veiled warning that they might not go along with any more such extreme steps towards democratic reform.

A summary of their decision, broadcast on Radio Nacional, said, 'It seems certain that it is precisely the PCE which is trying to keep these events from getting out of hand. There is a risk that professional agitators will take advantage of the situation. The democratic forces are expected to try to put on the brakes to stop any excesses.'

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Opposition circles were understood to fear that the generals' displeasure might impose on Senor Suarez, the Prime Minister, political restrictions which could affect the forthcoming elections.
Suárez regime faces army action threat

From William Chidrlell
Madrid, April 14
Spain's senior Army officers today met to discuss the
Government's plan to dissolve the Cortes, a move that
is expected to cause a constitutional crisis.

The officers were meeting to discuss the
Government's plan to dissolve the Cortes, which
could lead to new elections and possibly
to the ousting of Prime Minister Adolfo
Suárez. The meeting was held in
response to the arrest of several
officers who were suspected of
plotting a coup.

The meeting comes as the
Government is preparing to
dissolve the Cortes, a move
that is likely to trigger
crisis talks among the
country's political leaders.

WEST EUROPE

Communists recognize Spanish
flag but give warning against moves to put clock back

From Our Correspondent
Madrid, April 15
The Spanish Communist Party
emerged from a meeting with the
newly formed Civil War
alliance to reaffirm its support
for the government.

The party's leaders said they
would continue to support the
government's efforts to
implement reforms, despite
the recent protests and
demonstrations.

The Communist Party has
been a vocal critic of the
government's policies, but
it has also given support
when it believes the govern-
ment is acting in the best
interests of Spain.

The meeting was held at the
party's headquarters in Madrid
and was attended by the
party's leaders and members.

The party's statement
reaffirmed its support for the
government's proposals
to reform the economy and
reduce unemployment.

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Last-ditch move to halt Spanish Communists

From Our Correspondent
Madrid, April 19

The conservative Popular Alliance, led by Senor Manuel Arenas y Pacheco, the Prime Minister, today announced that it had been forced to conclude an electoral pact with the Spanish Communist Party in order to ensure the defeat of the Socialist party, which it is feared would pose a strong challenge to any government that might come into power.

The pact was reached after a meeting between the leaders of the three main parties, the Conservative, the Nationalist, and the Socialists. The Communists, who had refused to enter into any kind of coalition with the other parties, were persuaded to join the pact by the promise of certain concessions, including the appointment of a number of Communists to key ministerial posts.

The pact was immediately denounced by the Socialists, who accused the Conservatives of selling their principles to secure power at any cost. The Left-wing press, which is traditionally sympathetic to the Communists, also expressed its disapproval of the agreement, calling it a sell-out of the working-class interest.

The Socialists, who are currently the largest party in parliament, are expected to challenge the pact in court, and the issue is likely to become a major political controversy.

Centrists in Spain looking for poll pact

From Our Correspondent
Madrid, April 23

With the closing date for candidates for the general election only days away, the centrist parties are under intense pressure to agree on an electoral pact in order to avoid a fragmentation of the vote that could result in the victory of a single party.

The centrist parties, which traditionally have been divided over the issue of entering into any kind of coalition, have been forced to face the reality that a large number of their voters are likely to be left without a representative if they do not agree on a pact.

The most likely candidates for a centrist pact are the Liberal party, the Christian Democrats, and the Socialists, who have all indicated a willingness to enter into talks. However, the Socialists, who are currently the largest party in parliament, have so far refused to commit themselves to a pact, and the talks are likely to be difficult.

The issue of an electoral pact is likely to become a major political controversy, and the outcome of the election could depend on whether the centrist parties are able to reach an agreement.
Ex-premier to stand for Spanish Senate

From Our Correspondent
Madrid, April 22
Señor Carlos Arias, the former Prime Minister, who advised King Juan Carlos last July for telling the truth in democracy at the required time, announced today that he will stand for the Senate for the neo-Francoist Popular Alliance.
His surprise decision is another sign of the polarisation taking place in Spanish politics with general elections less than two months away.
Señor Arias said he had decided to come out of political retirement because of the “time of suffocation and insecurity” and because “we are heading for a catastrophic situation and the country does not take economic advantage of the planned policy. It is also mentioned the legislation of the Spanish Community.”
The Popular Alliance of Señor Manuel Fraga, who was the Interior Minister in the Arias Government, was successful by the Community Party’s legislation.
Señor Fraga himself said that he was running as a candidate for the Senate for the Spanish Communist Party.

F o r e i g n 

Neofrancoist call for a strong state

From Our Correspondent
Madrid, April 26
Señor Manuel Fraga Trías, the leader of the neo-Francoist Popular Alliance, told King Juan Carlos today that Spain necessitates a “strong state.”
Speaking for the seven parties which make up the alliance, Señor Fraga told the King during an audience in the Zarzuela Palace: “There is only justice for the law.”
He added that a new constitution should be created by a Constitution Congress.

Communist poet returns to Spain after 38 years

From Our Correspondent
Madrid, April 27
Rafael Alberti, the poet, who will be a Communist candidate for the Congress of Deputies in the general election, returned to Spain today after 38 years in exile.
He was given an enthusiastic reception at the airport, which was away from Rome’s airport, wearing a Mao suit.
Señor Alberti ranked high in the Communist Party’s public opinion, along with Señor Manuel Fraga ("La Pasiónaria"), the 82-year-old President of the Communist Party.
Now that he is home, there is speculation that the return of "La Pasiónaria" responsible in Moscow will not be long delayed. The Communist Party is trying not to give too much publicity to these homecomings in order to avoid energizing the Francoists still clinging to the leader of the party.

Señor Suárez to stand for Spanish Congress

From Our Correspondent
Madrid, April 25
Señor Suárez, the Spanish Prime Minister, has confirmed his candidacy for the Congress of Deputies in the forthcoming general elections, according to government reports today.
Señor Suárez, who is noted for announcing decisions at the last moment, was reported to have told a journalist last night that he was not “interested” in believing that he would stand.
He will probably stand as an Independent and thus not be seen to be supporting directly any of the political parties, although he will undoubtedly look to the democratic centre. He is the only leader of a party in Spain who does not have to resign before the elections if he wishes to stand.
Señor Suárez, who has to decide whether to support any party, is the most famous figure among those facing the elections.

The Cabinet met today and Señor Suárez was expected to announce the establishment of a register, according to government reports.

The Prime Minister has been under pressure from the conservative parties to ensure that the chamber is weighted in favour of the democratic centre.

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Spanish Communist Party returns to Spain after 38 years

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The alliance made its first appearance in Barcelona last night with five of its leaders, all former ministers before the Francoist regime, and now the Spanish Communist Party will be a Communist candidate in the elections.

The main theme of the Popular Alliance is to unify the country, well known as the Francoist regime, and the election campaign is now under way.

The government has to resign before the elections and the Prime Minister has been under pressure from the conservative parties to ensure that the chamber is weighted in favour of the democratic centre.

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Legalization sought by Spanish unions

From William Chislett
Madrid, April 28

The leaders of Spain's main trade unions welcomed the Government's decision to legalize their organizations. The General Union of Workers (the trade union wing of the Popular Socialist Party), the Communists, and the Independent Socialist Workers' Union all presented their statutes to the Ministry of Employment today.

The move was the result of a campaign by the Centre last month of greater trade union freedom after 37 years of monopoly by the "vertical" sindicalism established by General Franco.

The unions' acceptance of the new law, which is basically similar to the one used in the legalisation of political parties, came at the same time as they announced their statutes to the Ministry.

Señor Enrique de la Mata, the Minister of the Interior, had earlier implied that the 37-year-old monopoly was to be ended, and it was generally believed that the new law was imminent.

The unions have been seeking for some time to make the law permanent, as they believe the new unions' movement will be the only way to make the law permanent.

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