



An armed Government trawler in the port of Bilbao, with Basque militia-men on board. In the absence of regular naval vessels, these armed trawlers have been playing an important part in the war on both sides.

Beleaguered BILBAO

WHILE the imposing battle-cruiser H.M.S. *Hood* lies off Bilbao, guaranteeing protection to British shipping only so long as it does not try to deliver its cargoes to the port for which they are bound, and British merchant-men sell off their foodstuffs cheap in France, General Mola announces his intention of starving the Basques into surrender and of razing the Basque province of Viscaya to the ground.

Basque Minister of Mercantile Marine replies that his "people will eat cats and dogs rather than surrender." Bilbao, a large port on the North Coast of Spain, about 60 miles from the French border, is the capital and heart of the new Basque Republic. The resistance of the Basque Republic to Franco and the rebels is as determined as that of the people of Barcelona or Madrid, but it is based on different principles.

The Basques want an independent republic above everything. They are Catholics, bourgeois, hard-working. Their republic, if they can keep it, will probably develop much more on the lines of France than of the Soviet Union.

The Basques are good fighters, they have in Bilbao their own arms-factories and rich deposits of iron ore, famous since antiquity, for munitions. Their need for aeroplanes has been met from Madrid. Unless, however, they can break Franco's blockade by sea they are likely to be starved into a temporary submission.

The Valencia Government, it seems, is unwilling to send their still only partly trained Navy on the long sea-voyage from the Mediterranean to the North. Other countries will presumably follow Britain's example and recognise Franco's blockade in fact, whatever reservations may be made in words.

What is certain is that the Basques will resist as long as they can, and may make desperate efforts to re-establish land communications with the rest of Loyalist Spain.



IN BILBAO HARBOUR

Bilbao is the centre of a considerable trade with Britain, particularly in iron-ores for British iron and steel works. Franco has stopped all that.



(Left) Consignments for the rebels from the German ship "Palos," fetched into Bilbao and unloaded. Strong German protests were made although the "Palos" was carrying arms. The ship had to be released.



WHEN THE BOMBS FELL

Lacking an air-force, the Basques were at first helpless against raids. Below, militia-men gather round a stove in the mountains.



WHERE WAR RAGES

In the mountains to the South and East of Bilbao war is raging fiercely. The Basque army is strongly entrenched and well-equipped, but still not strong in the air.

