

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE FALL OF BARCELONA: UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY:
THE PRICE OF WHEAT: A CHANGE IN THE PAPACY.

THE FALL OF BARCELONA has marked a decisive stage in the weary Spanish struggle. Indeed, the victory of General Franco is now almost universally accepted, not only by his opponents in Spain, but also by governments of other countries. The British and French cabinets have hardly waited for the completion of the conquest before extending recognition and the dispatch of envoys. In the press accounts of the campaign's last stages, the legions of Franco are no longer the morally dubious "insurgents". Nothing succeeds like success, and, overnight, the victors have become transformed into the eminently respectable "nationalists". Wherever our sympathies may lie, we may wish for Spain at least a period of relief from her protracted agonies, and a peace that will lead to the rebuilding of her ancient national life.

Unfortunately, the very conditions of the struggle do not lend themselves to such expectations. The civil war has certainly not been simply a domestic concern of the Spanish people, and the victory has not been won by Spanish arms. The huzzahs that greeted the entrance of the conquerors into Barcelona were mild-mannered compared with the bombastic shouting that issued from the throats of the Fascist populace in Rome. The cities of Catalonia had become an experimental laboratory for the German air-force. Photographs of the hostilities show the victorious commander-in-chief continually accompanied by a body-guard of North African braves, who presumably were not in attendance simply to add a touch of picturesque romance to the military spectacle. The republican cause was supported by international brigades, composed of soldiers of fortune, who fought almost until the collapse of the unequal struggle. Certainly, General Franco would never have reached a victorious decision if he had relied entirely on the support of his own people. Signor Mussolini would not be flattered if he were described as an altruist, and nobody, in sincerity, is likely to consider him under any circumstances as the high-minded supporter of a worthy cause simply for the sake of the cause. "To the victor the spoils". The Spanish people will

not be allowed to work out their own salvation without a good deal of fear and trembling.

General Franco proclaimed himself as fighting what the current jargon describes as "an ideological battle". He was engaged in that curious form of military combat known to students of history as "a war of religion". He regarded his army as the spear-head in a world-wide conflict between the spiritual and the materialistic interpretations of life, more specifically in the struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and the militant, atheistic Communism that is now generally labelled Bolshevism. He saw himself as a warrior of the Church Militant, engaged in a battle against a godless liberalism in which the Catholic soul of Spain had to be saved from the insidious poison that flows out over all the world from the city of Moscow. We have no reason to question his sincerity; but, when we look at his strange assortment of allies, we are disposed to wonder whether the General in particular and the people of Spain in general may not yet fervently utter a prayer to be delivered from their friends. It was another General, although in a very different sense—General Booth of the Salvation Army—who, challenged as to the strange quarters from which he sometimes accepted donations for his redemptive schemes, used to say that the blackest money could be washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Perhaps so high an end as the deliverance of one's country from anarchists and Communists may justify the employment of any means, but it is not inappropriate to recollect a certain fear of the Greeks, bringing gifts. When did Mussolini begin to care a single piastre about any cause in civilisation, holy or unholy, beyond his own advantage? When did airplanes adorned with swastikas become the avenging angels of the Holy Catholic Church? Is Iberia to become once again the gate-way of Islam into Europe? Rich deposits of mineral ore, the dominance of the Mediterranean basin, the creation of a great totalitarian *bloc*, are much more tangible prizes than the restoration of Spain to her ancient faith. A victory won by the help of strange allies will leave behind it millions of sulking, irritated Spaniards, with all the capacity of the Latin nature for underground intrigue, plotting for the day of revenge and liberation. We have grave fears that the Spanish question is far from settlement.

How will the Francoist victory affect the 1939 programme of the dictators? France and Britain, very rightly, refused to intervene in the struggle, but they cannot be indifferent to the

result. The Berlin-Rome axis has swung around once more, and enlarged its area in the circuit. Not even the haste with which the recognition has been granted to the Franco régime is likely to break the alliance of Spain with Italy. A Black-Shirt army of occupation can speak more eloquently than a trade commissioner. France is in a particularly perilous situation. It will be immensely more difficult now to withstand Italian claims to extension in the Mediterranean. Once again, military aggression, carried on in the most impudent defiance of pledges, has established its ends. To that extent, the reconciliation of Europe has become an aspiration banished into the more remote distance, and the trouble-makers in Berlin and Rome have now leisure to ask themselves where they will launch their next attack.

UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY as announced by President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull has been undergoing a sea-change. These gentlemen have not only sounded a blast in defence of democracy at home; they have taken good care so to direct their fanfare that it has echoed in the councils of the dictators. The present Executive of the United States of America has put itself beyond all shadow of doubt behind the alliance of Britain and France in withstanding the encroachments of the totalitarian political philosophy. And there is every reason to believe that to the extent the people of any nation give much consideration to questions of international relations, the public opinion of the United States largely supports the Presidential attitude.

It is even suggested that Mr. Roosevelt protests his democratic sympathies rather too much. Hitler and Mussolini have been riled to the point of turning their artillery of vituperation on White House. The President is now included in the goodly company of such prophets as Mr. Anthony Eden, Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George as a fomentor of the war-spirit. A man is known by his enemies as much as by his friends, and the hostile criticism of men like Der Fuehrer and Il Duce is an occasion for congratulating the American President. The spectacle of the cooing doves of Rome and Berlin snapping their beaks at the American eagle is highly diverting. The question raised is concerned with the extent to which Mr. Roosevelt's support may not be too vocal and reiterative even for Mr. Chamberlain in his policies of appease-

ment. It is much easier to hurl defiance across the Atlantic than to live with Italy and Germany separated only by the English Channel and the North Sea. The United States took a considerable time to make up her mind as to intervention in the Great War, and the record of public opinion in the country during the subsequent years has not suggested, to put the matter mildly, that there would be any swifter decision taken in the event of another and probably greater war. However, if the present mood continues, there seems every reason to believe that the full might of the great Republic would be pledged and used on the side of the democracies, almost from the very commencement of hostilities. Further, the anger of the totalitarians at the Presidential impudence appears to suggest that they are well aware of that circumstance, and that it is inspired by a salutary realisation of the consequences.

Short of entering into an actual, formal alliance, the American administration has gone as far as can be expected—indeed much further than could have been expected a very few years ago. The President has given a formal denial to his reported utterance about American frontiers being in France, and probably he was misquoted. But, if he did not use the actual words attributed to him, he must have meant something very like them. What we do know is that he has kept on ordering appropriations for military, naval and aerial defences that make even European budgets look small. Moreover, he began to do so earlier, and he has kept up the pace longer. There is a tacit understanding between the defence departments of Washington and Paris about the supply of American airplanes. Indeed, Mr. Roosevelt has revealed that more than a thousand machines have already been sold. If we combine the urgent need for airplanes in any new conflict with the American capacity to organise mass-production of automobile equipment, we begin to realise that a new, and perhaps unconsidered, factor has entered into the field of forces that determine the ultimate direction of international affairs.

The totalitarian powers seem to have no gift of subtlety in the management of their propagandist zeal. Methods of crude and strident oratory accompanied by the bludgeons of uniformed rowdies may be effective at home, but they tend to provoke an effect directly opposed to their intentions when used abroad. The dictatorial mind must not include within its mental equipment a capacity for self-criticism. Impudent aggression of Nazi sympathisers within the United States has

had a good deal to do with swinging the American mind over from an attitude of active neutrality to one of benevolent accord with the democratic countries. The population of the United States are a good-humoured people who dearly love a show with plenty of flag-wagging, but they can be fiercely intolerant when any standard is raised as a rival to *Old Glory*. It would be difficult to imagine anything more calculated to rouse the popular indignation than the suggestion that the swastika could stand alongside the star-spangled banner in the affectionate loyalty of any American citizen. If stupid and unimaginative blundering in the relations between the United States and the Central Powers brought the American people, finally and solidly, into the last conflict, it appears as if the same foolishness may have begun the same process, only, this time, somewhat earlier in the proceedings. Moreover, Mr. Roosevelt is not Mr. Wilson. The President of 1939 is much more the dashing man of action than the academic and hesitating President of 1914. The blood of the Roosevelts will out. And, in an hour such as this, does the world not need men who say what they think, and who are bold in acting upon the same?

The sheer might of an aroused United States of America is a force against which almost any opposition in the world would hurl itself in vain. The American people are the most powerful ally that could adhere to any cause, and their intervention on any one side would be sufficient in itself to assure victory. We have often made impolite comments on the assertion made by over-enthusiastic Yankees that "America won the war", but there is quite an amount of truth in the claim. It was the moral and military effect of America's entrance on the allied side that finally broke the Central Powers. Otherwise the struggle might have ended in an indecisive stale-mate. The years that separate us from the close of hostilities have not altered the strategic value of American friendship. With a re-armed Britain and a supporting United States of America standing behind France on the continent of Europe, the balance of power has definitely and decisively swung to the democratic side. And, in the meantime, that is almost the only consideration worth taking into account when we review international affairs.

THE PRICE OF WHEAT is the question of gravest national importance that has emerged in the present session of the Canadian House of Commons. Beside it, occasions of debate like the Bren Gun Enquiry and the McCullagh broadcasts,

however lively and even entertaining, are as the small dust of the balance. As goes the price of wheat, so goes the Canadian West, from the head of the great lakes to the Rocky Mountains, and in that region resides a sufficiently large population to make the question of no trivial importance.

The emergence of a problem like fixing the price of wheat reduces all talk of Canadian isolationism from international affairs to the level of political sword-play. Political independence from a war-torn Europe may be a desirable ideal, but it is the inescapable entanglement of Canada with the world across the ocean that has come home with devastating force to every farmer in the prairie provinces. We cannot sign an economic declaration of independence without, at the same time, and by the same act, announcing our own demise. It is at this point that the realities of international politics have begun to affect the welfare of a considerable section of the Canadian people.

The problem can be very succinctly stated. How can we continue to export an international commodity of basic importance in a world of economic nationalism? The last war proved the thesis that not only does an army march upon its stomach, but also that victory goes to the nation holding out for the longest period. Nowadays, military theorists speak of the "war-potential" of a nation, by which they mean not simply military man-power and munitions: included in the estimate are the entire resources in population and essential goods of the people who are involved in the struggle. Everywhere to-day military considerations are dominating national policies. The aim is economic self-sufficiency, so that populations may be able to withstand the conditions of virtual siege that are imposed by engagement in military conflict. Not only the central European powers, but countries like France and Great Britain are increasing their grain acreage and encouraging their agricultural producers by economic assistance. The free exchange in goods, which is the life-blood of civilised intercourse between nations, is lessening in volume. An economist told the western leaders recently that they must blast their way to new markets or perish; but what kind of economic dynamite can be employed against the powerful barriers of fear and hate that divide the nations of mankind to-day?

The question is further complicated by the existence of an actual, if not an absolute, surplus of wheat-production in the world. The distinction is made because, with all the world-stocks of this basic commodity, there is still a good deal of under-

nourishment and actual starvation among the children of men. But meantime, setting supply over against demand, without taking into account the harvest of 1939, we see that there is too much wheat being grown in the world. The result is an acute depression in agricultural prices, to such an extent that, unless some aid is given to the farmer, the returns will not compensate for the cost of production. A bumper crop in 1939, if such bounty should be granted from the hand of Providence, will be an added embarrassment. Such is the dilemma that faces this great primary industry of the Canadian economy.

Western Canada is slowly, almost imperceptibly, recovering from repeated crop disasters. Long continued drought, supervening on the economic collapse of 1929, had laid terrible burdens of debt not only on provincial governments but also on the backs of what were once the world's most prosperous farmers. For the past year or two, the evil spell that seemed to have cast itself over the great plains of the West gave every appearance of being broken. A splendid scheme of rehabilitation aiming at a wiser utilisation of land was in progress. Specially-bred varieties of wheat gave promise of defeating the menace of rust. The heavens were opened and gave their rain. But, unless the returns to the farmer from the production of wheat can be maintained by an adequate price-level, the West will fall back into a condition of economic confusion and chaos.

In 1938 the government adopted the allied principles of fixing a price and establishing a Wheat Board. This meant practically a nationalisation of wheat-buying at an artificially stabilised price. The cost was heavy, running into many millions of dollars, but it seemed the only method of saving the livelihood of the wheat-producers. This year, the agricultural interests of the West have been early on the scene, while parliament is actually in session, with demands for a similar arrangement in respect of the 1939 crop. But the government is somewhat hesitant about yielding to the solicitations, and is proposing alternative schemes.

The 1938 method of dealing with the wheat-price was open to many objections. Its great advantage was its direct and uncomplicated simplicity. The market was assured at a fixed price, and all the farmer had to do was to deliver his grain. But what of the farmer who had no crop, or a relatively poor yield in respect of his acreage under cultivation? The advantages of the bonus went in largest measure to the big-scale farmer on the best land, where, under modern mechanised methods of

production, costs were proportionately low. The small man with his poor farm got the least advantage from the national scheme. Consequently, the government are proposing to modify the 1938 arrangements, by putting the bonus on a complicated basis of acreage under cultivation along with a scheme of crop insurance. Here, again, the results are not so desirable as might appear. Every acre, good, bad or indifferent, will be turned to wheat-production and, already, the total yield is too great for an over-stocked world-market. The fact is that there is no one satisfactory method of helping the wheat-industry through a difficult time.

The government has also to look at this question from a national point-of-view. The production of wheat is not the only depressed industry in Canada. All primary products are under a similar disability. What of the prices of Nova Scotia fish and British Columbia fruit? Are they also to be fixed? What justification is there for taking large sums from the public treasury to bolster up any one industry, however important? The contention of the western farmer is that he is asking nothing more than the great manufacturing interests of Eastern Canada have enjoyed for a very considerable time. Left to a world of free competition, how long could such industries as the manufacture of automobiles and textiles continue to operate? The tariff is a covert method of artificial price-fixing, to which the agriculturist through his purchase of farm-machinery has long paid tribute. Moreover, the financial interests of Montreal and Toronto are too heavily committed in Western Canada ever to acquiesce, even from the point of view of their own self-interest, in a prolongation of western depression. As a matter of fact, a considerable portion of the fixed price will find its way back east in the shape of payments on mortgage principal and interest. And, is not a fixed price paid in respect of honourable industry more desirable than the payment of public relief?

A CHANGE IN THE PAPACY has been necessary through the death of the illustrious Pius XI. This event has attracted a world-wide notice. Seldom has the demise of an exalted personage been the occasion for such a sincere tribute of affectionate regard, not only from the faithful members who were bound to his throne through spiritual allegiance, but also from all who care for the preservation of civilised values in society.

And almost as seldom has the election of a successor aroused first concern and then elation among the people of the western world. The papal office has advanced to a place of singular importance in modern life.

Achille Ratti, who seventeen years ago was elected sovereign pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, died as a moral and spiritual hero. His steadfast adherence to duty, in spite of great physical weakness, aroused universal admiration for his own personal courage. He was a mountaineer to the very end. However, his brave encounter with the inevitable frailty of a great age is not sufficient to warrant the bestowal of such high praise. He was head of a great section of the Christian Church, with immense power, it is true, but requiring to be managed with superb skill and wisdom. It is too early as yet for an evaluation of his varied contribution to the life of his times. Historically his conclusion of the Lateran treaties, terminating the long *impasse* between the Italian State and the Vatican, arouses interest, but it is possible to over-emphasise its importance. The creation of a small Vatican state was a step of very dubious wisdom, and it is not likely that the final solution of the eternal conflict between spiritual and political loyalties will be much relieved by this step. As a matter of fact, it might easily have created more difficulties than it resolved. The essence of any treaty relation between Church and State is a condition of mutual respect and common aim, pursued through different but cognate means. Otherwise, there is inevitable conflict. In this case, a community of purpose was what was lacking. We had what was much more like a head-on collision of rival catholicisms. For an ecclesiastical body, making such claims to complete sovereignty as the Church of Rome, to enter into a concordat with a totalitarian state was a hazardous enterprise. Our admiration goes out to the late Pope in that, despite this entangling alliance, he was brave enough to condemn the worship of the State, and with special application to Italy and Germany.

During his reign he directed a special campaign against atheism and Communism. He rightly saw that there could be no common ground between a materialistic philosophy of life and the Christian religion. Superficially, Communism can sometimes represent itself as more Christian than Christianity itself. In its attacks on privilege and wealth, and in its espousal of the proletarian cause, the poor and the down-trodden appear to have a charter of emancipation. And yet, any element of

compassion in practical Communism is borrowed from the Christian medium in which Marxism was conceived. Unmodified naturalism has no place for pity. The basis of a Christian ethic is not to be found in the totalitarian attitudes, whether they be directed towards Fascist or towards Communist organisations of social existence. Christianity has a very different conception of life. It is founded on the absolute worth of the individual as a spiritual entity deriving his value from a personal relation to the very Author of his being. Pope Pius XI has made us all his debtors by his clear recognition of the inevitable quarrel that the Christian faith must maintain with any order of society which denies the spiritual nature of man.

In its vigorous direction of the Catholic Action movement, the Holy See has given evidence of what Cardinal Newman described as one of the authentic marks of the living Church, namely "chronic vigour". An institution so venerable, taking pride in its antiquity, might easily be overshadowed in its vital witness by the mighty structure of tradition. The encyclicals of Pius XI in reference to the principles of social life breathed the atmosphere of the times. Too long the Church has been regarded as the friend of privilege and reaction. The Socialistic movements have tended to sweep past its doors. In every branch of the Church there is, to-day, a clear recognition that in an age of social re-organisation there is a Christian conception of society, which is part of the Gospel that is to be offered to men.

In the very last year of his pontificate, Pius XI made a vigorous declaration of Christian teaching on the question of race-discrimination. He frankly branded all doctrines that maintain the superiority of any particular race as heresy. It was a brave utterance at the very hour when the Fascist régime in Italy was beginning a mild imitation of the infamous German pogrom against the Jews. Small wonder that, when the great Roman cathedrals were filled with devout worshippers to remember in solemn ritual their departed Chief Pastor, companies of Jewish people were also meeting to pay tribute to a great Christian. Such events are heartening in a world so filled with hatred and violence. May the great Pope rest in peace!

The vigorous haste with which the conclave of Cardinals elected a successor to the papal seat is clear evidence that the Church of Rome is determined to maintain a united front against its modern enemies. Moreover, the reported unanimity of choice and the prelate chosen attest the conclusion that

Pius XI had the unanimous support of the Church in his vigorous policies, and that the Sacred College with no dissentient voice wanted these lines of action to be continued in his successor. The new Pius is a man eminently fitted to lead the Church at a critical time in history. His qualities of mind, his training and experience and, above all, his intimate association with his predecessor, mark him out as a man matched for his hour. His first public allocution was an inspiring utterance. When the spiritual head of a great Church that is world-wide in its organisation fastens upon peace as the gravest need of our time, our hearts are lifted up and strengthened.

When we look at the ancient Church of Rome in her far-flung organisation, we are impressed by the singular opportunity to influence human destiny that lies to her hand. Her spiritual headquarters are in the capital of Fascist Italy. South Germany and Austria are still solidly Catholic. In the United States of America, she numbers her adherents by millions. Here, in Canada, the French-speaking population is passionately devoted to her form of faith. Latin-America is largely Catholic in culture. Eiré has written her allegiance to Rome into her very constitution. France has still her great cathedrals and village churches with millions of worshipping followers. Here, surely, is a mighty weapon to tame the unruly passions of men, to direct their energies through the potent voice of conscience, and to bring about a new régime of love and goodwill in the counsels of the nations. His opportunity is the measure of the grave responsibility that now lies to the hand of Eugenio Pacelli.

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