

## CURRENT MAGAZINES

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**The Spanish Tragedy:**—Mr. Horsfall Carter, in the *Contemporary*.

**A Soviet Spain:**—Mr. H. R. G. Greaves, in the *Political Quarterly*.

**Pendulum Over Spain:**—Prof. E. Allison Peers, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

**Civil War in Spain:**—Mr. L. A. Fernsworth, in the *Fortnightly*.

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OF late the name of Kerensky has made frequent reappearance in the literature of European constitutional strife. It has recurred in argument about Blum's prospect of success in the premiership of France, and not seldom in proffered explanation of the difficulties which beset Azana in Spain. Moderate men everywhere are being warned not to prove "another Kerensky," and the assumption which now seems to underly many a magazine article on troubled Europe is the one long ago put into an aphorism by Oscar Wilde: *Nothing Succeeds like Excess*. It is a desperate doctrine, not to be accepted, surely, unless and until one must. After all, the moderate man has many a high achievement to his credit in the social past. Nor, I think, for persons who have studied Russia in sources more reliable than the rhetorical journalism of foreign countries, is the comparison with Kerensky so damning to a reformer as these preachers of violence would suggest.

### I

Of historic parallels to the development in Spain the most obvious is that from Revolutionary France in the eighteenth century. The policies of Blum and Azana, like that of Kerensky, make one think of the effort made, at the eleventh hour, by Mirabeau. For their counsels of moderation, even if too late to be successful, they may be content that the coming historian should rank them so, leaving to others the inheritance from either a Count de Broglie or a Robespierre.

The conditions of Spanish life five years ago, which so insistently called for the Revolution of 1931, have been described by many writers, both native and foreign. Discontent was, no doubt, partly unreasonable, an outcome of post-war *ennui*—particularly impatient in a nation whose sudden prosperity through the war profiteering of a neutral was fated to dwindle as fast as it had grown. Alfonso XIII has often been praised by Spaniards, as Woodrow Wilson was by Americans, for having "kept us out of the War".

Unlike Woodrow Wilson, he was able to preserve this profitable abstinence to the end. It has been suggested that the rival influences of his Austrian mother and his English wife counteracted each other. But if Alfonso was a filial son, there is at least little ground in his record since 1931 to think him an uxorious husband, or to suppose that in Spain as sixteen years earlier in Russia the fortunes of a monarch were affected by what Charles Reade used to call "mulierosity". There was a Court faction at Madrid which urged alliance with the Central Powers, and cheered ex-Premier Maura to the echo when he dwelt upon the unfriendliness he had long seen both in France and in Great Britain towards Spain. Lord Salisbury's unfortunate reference to "dying nations"<sup>1</sup> seems not merely to have elicited a pungent retort, but to have fixed itself in the Spanish recollection. On the other hand, a group small in number, but with a talent for writing and speaking, made the Universities of Madrid and Salamanca resound with eloquence in the cause of the Entente. These professors, heard with the mingling of formal deference and practical distrust which their class must always expect, even sent a delegation to Paris to discuss what Spain could do in the great cause. A young civil servant, who was also a dramatist in leisure time, Manuel Azana by name, cooperated with that academic circle. Of him much more was yet to be heard.

But Spain remained resolutely neutral, selling war supplies to every sort of customer, and learning to understand what a difference it had made four hundred years before when untold wealth had come through the expeditions of Cortez and Pizarro. Gold reserve in the National Bank was quadrupled, most of the country's external debt was wiped out, new industries sprang up like mushrooms and old industries were revived almost overnight. Nobody unemployed, workers earning wages and employers making fortunes on a scale such as Spaniards had never known nor indeed thought possible—at least for their long "backward" race!

It was an exhilarating time, destined, of course, to an early and a disagreeable termination. No less plainly, when prosperity came to an end, with the cessation of those abnormal war orders by which it had been created, public anger would fall upon "the Government"—for closing factories, for reducing wages, for failure to lower prices in proportion to the drop in the worker's purchasing power. The same irrational rhetoric is heard in all countries under such provocation. It has been well said that those who cherish unreasonable hopes are sure to exhibit later a no less unreasonable disappointment.

1. The story went that during the Boer War, after the reverse at Magersfontein, a Madrid cablegram in the following terms arrived for Lord Salisbury: "On receipt of to-day's news from South Africa, the dying nations salute you".

Similarly predictable, at least for such as knew the régime of Alfonso XIII, was the next step by which the Government tried to combat a rising popular resentment. Attention might surely be diverted from hardships at home by an enterprise abroad that would stir the Spanish imagination: what the Russian Minister von Plehve called "a little victorious war", when he planned it in 1904 to direct the energies of the St. Petersburg and Moscow proletariat into fighting abroad rather than rioting at home. The war which von Plehve started with Japan turned out to be neither victorious nor little, and a like comment has to be made on King Alfonso's punitive expedition to Morocco in 1921 against Abd-el-Krim with his Riff tribesmen. The Battle of Annual ended with a slaughter of Spaniards conservatively estimated at 10,000, capture by the Riffs of the complete Spanish equipment, and the death—either in action or by suicide—of General Silvestre, that royal favourite who had been entrusted, against the will of the Madrid War Department, with supreme command.

It is indeed surprising that the Monarchy did not then collapse at once. The man who saved it was a General who had won renown as an administrator in Catalonia, in high favour with the heads of great industries for his stern decisiveness in a strike. General Primo de Rivera became the Mussolini of the Spanish situation. Assisted by dexterous exercise of the royal prerogative to supersede the Ministers and even the Cortes, popular—in the first instance at least—with the Army officers whose interests have always been bound up with those of the Throne, with a talent for business notable in anyone and quite extraordinary in a soldier, he ruled Spain dictatorially for the six years from 1923 to 1929. Public liberties were, of course, suspended. But there was industrial achievement, economical administration, work for multitudes of the previously unemployed. It is not surprising that Primo de Rivera's son, just now among the Fascist revolutionaries, can conjure in many a circle with his father's name. Perhaps, too, it was not the least evidence given by his father of remarkable sagacity that he resigned from dictatorial office just on the eve of the Depression. The attempts of a successor to carry on, with de Rivera's ruthlessness but with nothing of his talent, ended soon in the debacle of 1931. Alfonso "patriotically" withdrew (by night) across the French border.

## II

**A** PART from the circumstances of War and post-War Europe by which all Governments, good and bad, were severely tried, did the condition and management of Spain call in any special way for Revolution? The answer is that the premonitory symptoms were conspicuous long before the World War. Not less clearly than Arthur Young in his *Travels in France* indicated the imminence of the French upheaval, writer after writer in Spain had been warning the authorities that the situation there could not last.

The pictures by such a novelist as Blasco Ibanez must not be accepted uncritically as disclosures of Spanish life. Still less can one depend upon the accuracy of the propagandist pamphlet by Ibanez, under title *Alfonso XIII Unmasked*. But the immense popularity of these writings, among the class best able to detect local error or biased statement, goes to attest their substantial correspondence with fact. Unfortunately for King Alfonso, Ibanez had won the attention of Europe by his other work long before he took up the very controversial issue of the demand for a Spanish Republic. It is unfortunate, too, for our contemporary European dictators that the men of mark in their respective countries, the men who already had the ear of the wider world, are so generally their hostile critics, and that they have to enlist for their own propagandism agents whose repute is still to be made. How many outsiders, of at least three very different types, have got their ideas of the Nazis from Einstein, Emil Ludwig or Karl Barth! How many are content to enquire no farther about Fascism, but to rest on the judgment of Salvemini, of Ferrero, of Benedetto Croce! How many derived their ineradicable impression of Lenin and the Bolsheviks from the attack by Maxim Gorky!

Probably in *The Mob* and *The Intruder* we have pictures more lurid than the facts justify regarding the hardships of Spanish poor and the vices of Spanish ecclesiasticism. No one can read *The Shadow of the Cathedral* without appreciating how deep must have been the resentment, not only of the clergy, but of all religious people in Spain, against the author of that powerful but prejudiced book, nor can anyone be surprised that during the dictatorial régime Ibanez had to withdraw across the frontier. From his exile, like Victor Hugo's *Story of a Crime* written against Napoleon III from an asylum in the Channel Islands, came the great indictment of Alfonso's misrule. A sorry tale had to be told: the tale of a nation nearly 50 per cent illiterate, with 40,000 children even in the capital city lacking schools of any sort; the tale of an army with a plethora



of officers in grotesque disproportion to the total, in order that leisurely and well-paid careers might be available for scions of the Spanish aristocracy while the distress of the poor was beyond description; a tale of vast fertile estates held by a few grandees in feudal opulence, so that where 70 per cent of the population must live somehow from the land, the poorest soil had to be cultivated for miserable returns of quasi-Serfdom. Not without reason, in days gone by, was Spain regarded after the manner which Lord Salisbury's contemptuous indiscretion would suggest. It was the case of eighteenth century France over again, with scandals crying aloud for redress, and privileged orders letting slip the golden opportunity when they might have been the reformers themselves. In the words of the old prophet: "They knew not the day of their visitation."

### III

THE question of urgent interest to the outside onlooker at what Mr. Horsfall Carter has called "The Spanish Tragedy" is this: did the republican reformers achieve, or at least attempt, in 1931 a moderately decent job—all their difficulties and disadvantages considered? Or did they perpetrate such injustices, when their own chance came, as to make the *ancien régime* on the whole, with all its faults, seem preferable? We know well how that question was answered regarding France, by most people in England, in the years following 1793. We also know how drastically the answer was afterwards revised. Is the Spanish situation similar?

The republican achievement is often set forth in very glowing colours. We are told about the thousands of new schools that were established, about the energy thrown into a plan for training teachers, about the Government aid so quickly made available for distressed agriculture, about the rapid establishment of workers' insurance against sickness and old age, about the generous boldness with which proposals of local self-government were framed for sections long discontented with the dominance of Madrid—such areas as Catalonia and the Basque Provinces. Nor will any fair-minded critic find serious fault with the republicans for the postponement of certain measures about which impatience was so hard to restrain. Transformation of the agricultural system of a country by wholesale expropriation of *latifundia* is not a task to be carried out in a hurry, especially if the Government must stop its legislative proceeding again and again to suppress an armed revolt on the Left or on the Right, by those enraged at the slowness and by others no less enraged at the speed with which the old ré-

gime is being changed. Not the least of the reproaches fairly chargeable against monarchist obstinacy is this consequence to which it led: that reform, once it inevitably came, was a feverish enterprise, with faults both on the side of weakness and on the side of violence.

But republican performance had another aspect, which the propagandists of the Spanish Revolution must present with apologetic prudence to readers abroad. Disestablishment and disendowment of the Church had been known elsewhere, and the foreign critic is not likely to assume that for Spain this was either necessarily good or necessarily evil. The exclusion of the clergy by law from educational positions was a more drastic step, by which M. Briand's legislation of thirty years ago in France is recalled, and one reflects how inexpedient as well as unjust a good deal of that legislation was afterwards acknowledged to be. But what shall we say of the confiscation of the whole property of the Jesuit Order? Of the denial to religious Societies of the right to hold property at all? Of the secularization of cemeteries, interference with the rites of burial, and numerous gestures of mere vulgar impiety to which the revolutionary leaders lent themselves? No doubt, it was admirable to curb the insolence of the Army, abolishing those old privileges of the Spanish military caste which rendered the civil population so often subject to its capricious bad temper. But why should the reforms of social justice be so intermingled with insult to the most sacred traditions of a Catholic country? No one supposes that Premier Azana designed this, or that he even consented to it willingly. But the more reluctant he showed himself, the plainer it became that the Barcelona atheist wing was too strong for his resistance. With singular ineptitude in a country such as Spain, names and mottos from Bolshevist Russia became current. The party of the Right must have rejoiced. For the Left had fallen under direction of the "heavy-handed".

It was the adoption of such measures by Premier Azana's first Cabinet that precipitated the resignation of two such stalwart Republican Ministers as Zamora and Maurer. Their retirement acted in some degree as a salutary warning; the initial ruthlessness of radical procedure against Church and property-owners was abated; but enough was left to make difficult the task of those who had to justify what was done at any unbiassed tribunal, and much more than enough to keep Catholic Spain in a mood of increasing irritation.

Concurrently with the complaints of outraged religion came the protest of a multitude of officers in the Spanish forces of the

Monarchist régime who had been "retired", and who argued with much success (first to themselves, then to their friends) that such treatment of their sacred order was just another proof of republican wickedness. It is by no means obvious to the outsider that a Government which reduced the commissioned officers on active service for a country no larger in population than Spain from 22,000 to 12,000 is necessarily "irreligious", or that these retired gentlemen, to whom generous pensions were allowed, had any particular grievance against a Cabinet devising such economies in the World Depression. The parallel usually suggested with Bolshevik behaviour to the Tsarist officials is not corroborated by anything I recall of the fate of the general staff in Moscow and Petrograd! But the rage of military men placed, as they think, prematurely on the retired list is often implacable, and one cannot wonder that they have lately rushed to swell the following of Generals Franco and Mola.

Discontent was thus fomented in many quarters, often combining in their ultimate effect the efforts of groups that were aiming in quite different directions. Strikes in great industrial centres, developing into fierce riots with bloodshed and wreckage, testified proletariat bitterness against reformers who were proceeding too cautiously, at the very time when plots were being hatched by counter-revolutionaries in disgust with the recklessness of innovation. In Catalonia, whose claim to regional self-government the Right has so fiercely refused, there was very soon seen a raging propaganda against the Left for the "headstrong timidity" (as Disraeli would have called it) with which the new Catalonian Statute was being framed. With all these perils in mind, it was needful to suspend the Constitutional Guarantees by which individual liberty was to be made safe. The humorists, of course, were quick to point out how these reformers, within a few months of their reform, were not only quarrelling with one another, but arresting the application of their own boasted Charter of Freedom.

#### IV

**R**EACTION came decisively in 1933. The *Popular Front*, now so much abused both in France and in Spain for uniting diverse groups in common quest for plunder, was not the first enterprise of such questionable blend. It was preceded in Spain by the *Anti-Marxist Coalition*, which one may describe with at least equal propriety as a League of persons whose interests—

otherwise different and even conflicting—agreed in a common concern to perpetuate class privilege. Whether it is more reputable to come together in the hope of sharing new pillage or to remain together that the acquisitions of old pillage may be left alone, is a problem in social ethics too complex to be here discussed. If those in the *Popular Front*, professing zeal for justice, had often motives less creditable, it would be a simpleton indeed who would suppose the *Anti-Marxist Coalition* to have been made up exclusively, or even chiefly, of zealots for piety and order. The shade of Karl Marx may well have looked down with ironic satisfaction upon those who had such strong motive to assail in principle the doctrine they were so conspicuously illustrating in practice.

For in 1933 the Class War had indeed begun to rage in Spain. The Agrarian Party, led by Gil Robles "for preservation of landed property and defence of the Catholic religion", had as its ally the Basque Nationalist Party with its old enthusiasm for the Carlist branch of the royal house, and even a "Radical" group, so called, under the leadership of Alexandre Lerroux, willing for almost any other innovation if the rights of "Property" were left intact. Unfortunately, however, for those who wanted to pick and choose, the only chance of success for any group lay in cooperating with other groups near it, however complete the needful "swallowing of principles".

It was the Anti-Marxist Coalition which in 1933 prevailed, and for two years it exerted itself to undo one by one the works of its revolutionary predecessor. The Government of Alexandre Lerroux was not, indeed, a Government of "the Right". At no time since the Revolution has "the Right" secured a majority of its own. But "the Centre" had, for the time, Right-ward tendencies, and without daring to abolish the Republic, the Administration revoked piecemeal much that the Republic had enacted. It re-endowed the Church, cancelled Labour legislation, stopped the process of forming schools under lay control, and disallowed the land reforming measures which the Catalans had passed for their own province. Of course riots broke out all over Spain, but with the loyal cooperation of army and police they were suppressed very thoroughly, and the measures of Draconian rigour by which the least sign of discontent was stopped were left in the recollection of communists who "bided their time".

That time came in the spring of 1936, when the rival Coalition, calling itself *Frente Popular*, entered upon office.



## V

It was elected on a Ten-Point Programme, which cannot be described in respect of any of its items as "Communist". Often indeed, it has been so called, but by those who have never read it, or who are in ignorance of what Communism is, or—most frequently of all—by journalists in whom both disqualifications for judging are present simultaneously. The Ten-Point Programme is one of social legislation, embracing some projects which it will surprise the British or American observer to find still unattained in any civilized country. It is true that Spanish Communists supported the *Popular Front*, as French Communists lately did, thus breaking their long established practice of abstention from politics in a "bourgeois" nation. But is not this change rather to be welcomed than to be condemned? Whether we like it or not, we simply must make up our minds to the fact that in all countries there is now a section properly called Marxist, and entitled to hold as an intellectual conviction that theory of the social order promulgated by Karl Marx. We neither can nor should suppress such convictions by violence, any more than we can or should wage any other persecuting war.

But it is surely most desirable that those whom we think of as holding, unfortunately, the mistaken opinions of Karl Marx should take their part as ordinary voters, choosing among the different "constitutional" groups. Nothing could be worse than to isolate them as "Communists": what wise statesmanship would pursue is the task of re-assimilating them into the social fabric. At the moment of writing, the wild tirade from Mr. William Randolph Hearst, supported by Father Coughlin, against President Roosevelt, calling the President a Communist because Communists seem likely to vote for him rather than for Mr. Landon or Mr. Lemke, illustrates the absurd lengths to which election propaganda will proceed. Looking at this Spanish case, without the distorting influence of a desperate fight for votes and only a few weeks left to secure them, one should feel about such "argument" as Flaubert felt about belief in democracy—that it shames the human mind.

Elections, however, with their inevitable folly, are part of our system, and we have to make the best of them. Premier Blum in France, like Premier Azana in Spain, took a long step towards the wholesome conciliation of classes. The critics of each, by denying and—so far as lies in their power—preventing the possibility of political compromise, run a tremendous risk for the project they

hold dear. To bind up two different things, the cause of class privilege and military domination with the cause of constituted order, religious and civil, in the hope that these will stand together, is to run the risk of making them fall together. Try, for instance, to maintain for the Spanish Special Courts, in which Generals and Colonels were above the ordinary law, that respect which intelligent people never withhold from institutions of justice: before long you may find that institutions of justice have come to share the odium and contempt rightly due to those Special Courts.

That grim consequence has now developed in Spain. Even a leader so moderate and cautious as Premier Azana was driven ever further and faster, by the denial of cooperation and the incessant conspiracies on the part of "the Right", to depend on the extreme wing of "the Left". He had to choose between annulling the Republic and extending indulgence to those wilder spirits in Barcelona and Bilbao by whose help alone the Republic could be maintained. Generals of the old régime, whose disloyalty was well known, were not cashiered, but merely transferred to commands in the Balearic and Canary Islands, where it was hoped (groundlessly, it seems) that they would be harmless. If Premier Azana had consulted Stalin, as Primo de Rivera consulted Mussolini, doubtless more effective measures to render Franco and Mola safe for the Republic would have been recommended. But the desire at first was to disarm criticism and resistance by moderate measures, and if measures altogether immoderate have since appeared, great part of the blame must fall on those Monarchists who gambled for the desperate hazard "All or Nothing".

That the weeks which preceded the recent Fascist rising were marked by collapse of government, is not to be questioned. A more difficult question is—By whom was the collapse brought about? Ever since the days of Peisistratus at Athens, the *agent provocateur* has been a conspicuous figure where schemes of tyranny are being contrived. Mussolini had set the example of making prolonged disorder a pretext for Fascist Revolution: plainly, then, the strategy of Fascism is to create in the first instance prolonged disorder. First produce chaos, and then appeal to it as pretext for desperate remedies. It is a thrice told tale!

Outrages, "atrocities" as they used to be called in Great War days, are reported from Spain by almost every cable. On which side are they more frequent and worse? A hard question, probably not worth deciding even if one could. Professor Allison Peers speaks of 170 churches burned, 269 persons killed and 351 strikes declared within a few months, February to June, of the

present year. What has happened since the actual civil war broke out, must be left for some still distant historian to narrate. At the moment, competitive mendacity makes one almost refuse a hearing to either side. It was, of course, obvious that when Government troops had been incited successfully to mutiny, and officers of the Republic had taken the lead in sedition, the civil population, suddenly armed by the Government and sent forth—an undisciplined horde, men and women—to fight desperately for hearths and homes would perpetrate many an outrage for which “the international law of war” grants no indulgence. It is unlikely that they exceeded (or that anyone could exceed) that contempt for usages of civilization shown by Fascist troops in Ethiopia; but within the limits of their contriving power they have done the like. Parliament, the *Cortes*—what of its restraining influence? Fascists and Monarchists of the de Rivera tradition will not surely complain, if the machinery they did so much to disable has failed to protect them in their own time of need.

At this moment of writing (September 22) the forecasts are dark, Fascism appearing on the whole more likely to prevail. But no one knows, and—as I have tried to show—neither merits nor faults are all on one side. The outcome, in either or any event one can credibly conceive, seems sure to be tragic for individual liberties. Neither a Mussolini nor a Stalin dictatorship in Spain can be awaited without a shudder.

H. L. S.