

SPAIN, TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

THE change which Spain has undergone since the fall of the Monarchy three years ago can hardly be appreciated except by those who were well acquainted with the work of the Dictatorship previous to the establishment of the Republic. Out of the debris of the centuries-old Monarchy a new Spain is born with new ideals and a new spirit. The old traditional institutions which routine had rendered feeble with the passage of time, have in the end been overthrown and are now being superseded by new organizations with fresh energy and a new vitality. The destructive work of the Republic has been severe; but it had become necessary. The Agrarian Reform framed by the Socialists and passed by the first Cortes in 1932 was a marvellous piece of communistic propaganda. Its aim was to deprive the nobility and the big landowners of their immense property, much of which was cultivated indifferently or not at all, and to distribute it amongst the workers, and, in some cases, to consider it as a common property of the workers. This plan was put into practice for a time until the new Cortes after November 19th, 1933, revoked it, with the result that the country is in such a state that reform cannot be delayed any longer.

The religious question has similarly been discussed warmly by all the political parties, and one is glad to be able to say that the Spanish Catholics have endured an unpleasant though fruitful ordeal. As a result new methods are being put into practice to cope with the old abuses and to replace the old lifeless routine. The 'official' catholicity of Spaniards during the Monarchy has now disappeared, and instead Catholic life is more internal, more private, but much more intense and more effective in reality. That outward brilliancy of the old traditional celebrations has in many places decayed (though in a few instances it is even more brilliant); but in all cases it is now more sincere and more personal. There used to be

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too much display about religion in Spain and often, perhaps, the people were in danger of dwelling upon the accidental aspect of the Faith, leaving the essentials aside or taking them too much for granted. In that regard we are pleased to bear witness that a great change has been wrought; and now the mass of people take their religion as something more personal. Hence the religious revival which is being spread all over the country by the activities of Catholic Action under the presidency of the Hierarchy; and the co-operation of the clergy, both secular and regular, and of the laity, is distinctly encouraging and promises a future of glory and splendour for the Catholic Faith in Spain. This revival marks a new era in the history of the Church in this country and can be considered important enough to be compared with the religious renaissance of the sixteenth century in Spain. What Spain needed was an intelligent organizer who could co-ordinate all the disjointed elements into a united front against the destructive forces of irreligion and anarchy. That organizer has been found and Spain is at work again. A New World is to be conquered; or rather the Old World is to be spiritually conquered anew, for, as Mr. G. K. Chesterton remarks, Spain is the last stronghold of the Faith in Europe, and no other country is in a better position to perform in the Old World the deeds which Spain performed in the New World in the sixteenth century.

The problem of Education is still engaging the attention of the Cortes. The suspension of a clause in the Constitution by which religion cannot be taught nor Religious Orders allowed to teach has prevented a good deal of the evil which would certainly have followed otherwise. Most of the secondary schools of the Religious Orders have been functioning normally, except that the teachers, although Religious, acted publicly as employees of a Catholic society which was the nominal owner of the school. The ineptitude of the Government to replace so many primary schools which had been suppressed, has encouraged the foundation of Catholic educational centres

all over the country: and it is highly significant that in the diocese of Madrid alone one Society has opened in less than one year over a hundred and twenty Catholic schools. An able writer discusses, in *Contemporanea*,¹ whether the building of new professedly Catholic schools is really the thing that Catholics need in Spain. And he is of opinion that in a country Catholic almost in its entirety, it is not Catholic schools so much as Catholic professors taking part in the official State schools, that is wanted.

Politically Spain is as yet in a period of transition. In fundamental questions there are only two main parties, *viz.*, Right and Left, the former includes the C.E.D.A., Monarchists, Agrarians, Traditionalists, and Basques; the latter includes Radicals, Socialists, and Communists. The parties of the Right have a majority in Parliament, and it is upon their vote that the permanence of any Government in power depends. But neither of the parties is content with the work of the Cortes, and to tell the simple truth, the country at large expected from the Cortes much more and better legislation than it has been given. True it is that the Constitution cannot be reformed until 1936, and in the meantime the most that could be done was to suspend the effect of its more iniquitous clauses, and, speaking generally, this has been done. Thus the Secondary Schools have continued; the salary of the clergy has been restored in part; the Agrarian Reform has been suspended, the law of Municipal Limits has been made null; the Amnesty Bill has been published and applied, and a few other minor questions have been satisfactorily solved. But yet this does not seem to be all that could have been done. Some politicians criticise the attitude of Gil Robles towards the Republican régime, and are displeased by his refusal to assume power. But they fail to realise that the young leader will never assume power until he is permitted to choose a Government of his own, and then the

¹ Dr. Luis Urbano in *Contemporanea*, July 1933, April and June 1934.

Cortes will either submit or else will be dissolved. Everyone is convinced of the futility of parliamentary government in Spain, and the general tendency is towards the *New State*, the *Corporate State*. If the Socialists triumph in the next elections (or in the next revolt) they have promised to establish the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. If the Fascists ever obtain a majority they will establish a *Fascist Dictatorship*, which promises to defend the Catholic Church first, and then the nation. If Gil Robles succeeds in obtaining an absolute majority in the near future he will establish the *Corporate State*, but not a Dictatorship, and will do away with the parliamentarianism of today. He is the one most marked as a new politician and as the leader of the New Spain, and there is reason to hope that he will succeed in his noble aspirations. For that reason it is not without importance to know what his standpoint is. 'Our programme,' he says, 'is the realization of as much good work as possible in every direction. We must go on gaining ground steadily (moving always upwards towards that ideal which is the purpose of our aspirations We move towards a new conception of the State, and it is the obligation of those who are responsible for the leading of the masses to pay the greatest attention to the new ways of the world, without allowing themselves to be carried away by exotic novelties, but without being insensible to the fruitful innovations of the times In order to achieve the New State no plots or revolts are necessary: we require power given freely without restriction by the people; we must do away with old-fashioned formalism. Democracy for us is not an end but a means to obtain the establishment of a New State, and when our hour comes, Parliament will either submit or disappear. We do not need to look for the unitive element of the new Spanish State in that of other countries who endeavour to find it in the glories of the Roman Empire, in fetichism of the State, or in idolatry of the race. We should be mad to have recourse to such idols or to seek for the principle of unity in the idea of an all-absor-

bent State. We must seek for it in the Christian spiritual ideal of our fatherland, and to it we are drawn both by our duty as Catholics and by our duty as Spaniards. I wait for the future as the biblical sentinel anxiously awaited the dawn, because our generation has a great mission to fulfil. It has the task of creating a new spirit, of founding a New State, a new nation, of cleansing Spain of Freemasons and Jews. We shall make of Spain a great nation, we shall impose a programme of social justice, endeavouring to correct the abuses of the upper classes as well as the violences of the lower.²

Whatever *New State* the Right may come to form, the first principle of their programme is the defence of the Catholic Church because she is the animating principle of the history of Spain and of Spanish tradition. So that, apart from other reasons, on merely patriotic principles the security of the Church will be their main tenet. For whatever people abroad may think of Spanish Catholicism, one thing is certain, that the Spaniard to be a good patriot must be a good Catholic; those who are not good Catholics are not good patriots, because the Catholic Church is the soul of the history of Spain. For the Spaniard Christ Our Lord is not of the past only, not simply a *dead Christ*; He is of the present, a risen Christ, a living Christ, and those who live with Him partake of His life, for He is Life. New Spain hopes to live this life, which is before all supernatural, thus making the Church once more the backbone of the history of this country, and the safeguard for its vitality and its activities in every branch of human affairs.

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² *Political Discourses*.