CHAPTER 12

The Religious Crusade in Spain

In fact, to the writer it seems that the whole world is suffering from some kind of psychosis of excess nationalism and deficiency of calm thought, and to him this explains at least in part the cocksureness with which statements are made pro and con on so many questions by both Catholic and non-Catholics. St. Augustine said long ago: "I hold that one never errs more surely than when he errs as the result of an excessive love of truth or an excessive fear of falling into error."

—Virgil Michel[1]

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 created a deep moral crisis for European and American Catholics, both in terms of its effect on political consensus within intellectual ranks and in terms of the negative public image it created for the Church.[2] The strident American Catholic campaign for Franco and its related attacks on liberalism, for example, earned the Church the dubious distinction of winning second place (ahead of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi agencies) in the 1937 American Civil Liberties Union's poll of institutions that most threatened individual freedoms. Beginning in the same year, several notable American and British Protestant theologians and publications became openly critical of the Catholic Church for what appeared to be its international alliance with the forces of Fascism. The journalist Herbert Matthews held that the Spanish Civil War had divided America along religious and political lines for the first and only time in U.S. history.[3] Pro-Franco Catholic opinion may have played a decisive role in the Roosevelt administration's decision to maintain an arms embargo on Spain, thus helping to assure a Nationalist victory.[4]

After a large anti-monarchist vote in the Spanish municipal election in April 1931, King Alfonso XIII relinquished the throne and transferred power to a provisional government which introduced a republic. The first government of the Second Spanish Republic was made up of a coalition of diverse republican parties and socialists. The regime seems to have had the support of the majority of politically conscious Spaniards.[5] In city plazas and on parade grounds, cries of *vivas* for the Republic and strains of the "Marseillaise" were heard throughout the land. This popular enthusiasm for democracy was encouraging, given Europe's current drift toward authoritarianism. Those in support of the change in government closely identified it with the legacy of 1789, though, in contrast, Spanish republicans could claim that their king had left peacefully and that the revolutionaries had agreed beforehand to an equitable distribution of power. In actuality, the transition was fraught with tensions and bitter emotions stemming from intense regional aspirations, from industrial and agrarian struggles, and, very significantly, from anger against the Catholic Church, which in the popular mind was associated with the privileges and oppression of the old order. Spain had been dominated by a landed aristocracy and a small cadre of industrialists who assiduously resisted economic and political reform. The fact that the Republic was supported by considerable numbers of peasants and factory workers imbued the ensuing conflict with the tones of class war.

The ownership of land in Spain was in the hands of a small group of aristocrats and wealthy bourgeoisie (who were given the opportunity to purchase confiscated Church properties under nineteenth-century Liberal governments) The landless peasants were brutally exploited.[6] Adding to this volatile brew was the rapid industrialization of a few key areas of Spain (Catalonia and the Basque Provinces).[7] The inability of the growing numbers of working poor to protect their interests against the extortionate claims of capitalist financiers and industrialists made them receptive to a wide range of radical, revolutionary social ideas. Much of the peasant/proletarian unrest that grew out of this situation took on distinctly anticlerical tones, owing to the Church's close association with the economic elites and its own reluctance to encourage economic and social reforms.

The Spanish Church offers striking parallels with the French Church at the time of the French Revolution. However, as an institution and in terms of its economic role in society, the Spanish Church was far different from its eighteenth-century Gallican counterpart. Following the confiscation of Church property known as the *desamortización,* begun under the Liberal government of Prime Minister Alfredo Mendizábal in 1835, the Church ceased to be the country's largest landowner. In compensation, and in order to be able to liquidate its holdings in the face of possible future hostile action, the Church including various religious orders, in particular the Jesuits, began investing in other forms of wealth.[8] By the 1930s they had accumulated enormous amounts of mobile property in the form of capital investments. Many believed that the Spanish Church had become the country's single richest shareholder.[9]

The *desamortización* had profound consequences. Although the move was engineered by Liberals hoping to break up the power and entrenched privileges of the Church, only those of considerable wealth could afford to purchase the confiscated property. Thus the transactions had the effect of increasing the wealth and power of Spain's elites and further retarding the emergence of a rural middle class. The *desamortización* also tended to make those wealthy Liberals who purchased religious property increasingly dependent on maintaining the new order, hence becoming in the long run wedded to the status quo. It is important to point out, moreover, that the *desamortización* affected not only Church property but also public-owned common land. The mass dispossession of poor peasants from municipal land led to the emergence of a surplus population, soon to be transformed into a new proletariat. Along with the rural masses, the industrial laborers represented a formidable revolutionary bloc against the Spanish industrial and agricultural oligarchy.

The loss of the Church's landed revenues meant that it was obliged to become heavily dependent on the ruling class for economic support. In return, the clergy assumed a more partisan, elitist position on social and economic issues, alienating themselves further from the masses. Consequently, as the hierarchy jockeyed to garner other forms of capital wealth and preserve its privileges, the Church became increasingly committed to perpetuating the arrange-

ments of oligarchy.[10] Even the conservative Catholic writer José María Gironella, in his epic novel *The Cypresses Believe in God,* dramatized this fact. The hero, a fictional projection of Gironella by the name of Ignacio Olvear, in an exchange with the priest Mosén Alberto, who could not understand why people would use violence against the Church, tells Alberto that the clergy's lives have been too completely disconnected from the lowly, too unaware of the working class and the needy: "it was friendship that was needed."[11]

Politically, the Spanish Church served as the ideological bulwark of monarchy and was intimately connected to it. Prior to 1931, canonical law and civil law existed side by side. Religious indifference was a civil offense, bishops were nominated by the monarch (generally only those with unquestioned loyalty to the ruling elites were appointed), and all ecclesiastics were paid by the state.[12]

What little affection the common people may have felt for an institution so closely allied to an oppressive ruling establishment quickly dissipated when the leaders of the Spanish Church attacked the idea of the Republic and urged the masses to vote against it.[13] This call for resistance, however, was the product of class bias. The episcopate, being closely allied with the oligarchy, was largely opposed to the Republic. However, as noted by William F. Montovan of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), a close observer of the Spanish situation, the majority of the clergy below the rank of bishop supported the new experiment in democracy.[14]

As director of the legal department of the NCWC, Montovan was sent to Spain in 1931 to observe the formation of the new government. Montovan concluded at the time that the Republicans had wide popular support and were committed to constitutional reform.[15] His confidential report to the Vatican on the Spanish situation was unusual for its dispassionate objectivity. Montovan noted the seriousness of the Church's failure to support long overdue social and political reforms, and he was especially critical of the decision of Catholics to withdraw from the constituent Cortes after the approval of anticlerical articles. The refusal of Catholic politicians to push for change within this legally-established political institution and thereby to protect Church interests, wrote Montovan, was an "act of cowardice . . . by men who were amateurs in statesmanship; it was

an unpatriotic betrayal of a responsibility to the nation solemnly accepted with election."[16] Montovan's report to the Vatican pointed out that Catholic opinion was divided regarding social, economic, and political reforms. Therefore it was incumbent upon Catholic leaders, wrote Montovan, to formulate a program that could forge consensus. A major problem in this regard was the failure of the Spanish bishops to encourage Catholic action along lines set forth in the papal social encyclicals. In what must be seen as a damning indictment of the Spanish hierarchy, Montovan averred that reform had begun "at the wrong end." The Cardinal Primate had written a constitution for Catholic action. The archbishops gave it their imprimatur and sent copies to the suffragan bishops. There the effort died.[17] Montovan concluded that the organization for Catholic social action must begin where it would receive popular support: at the individual parish level.[18] Perhaps Montovan's most significant recommendation to the Vatican was that Spanish Catholics must take the responsibility of working for reforms through the elected bodies of the Republic. Of critical importance, he suggested, was the presence of an intelligent Catholic opposition (staking out a moderate ground that could appeal to voters) in the public sectors of Spanish life.[19]

William Montovan's report should not have been a great surprise, for the institutional malaise of Spanish Catholicism was frequently commented upon by visitors to that country. Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, who lived in Málaga before and during the Civil War, wrote that "it was odd, to English eyes, to find that the parish priesthood was simply a privileged bourgeois profession, doing nothing for parishioners except exacting fees for ceremonies or rites deemed necessary." In no country, noted Mitchell, had he ever seen such a vast contrast between the poverty of the poor and the luxury of the rich, the latter of whom were carefully tended by the Church.[20]

Virgil Michel traveled through Spain in 1924–25 and made it a point to talk extensively with people from all walks of life. He read the local newspapers and studied Spanish culture with consummate care. His diary during this period highlights the yawning gap between ordinary people and the Church hierarchy. The higher Spanish clergy, he observed, lived in lavish luxury in close alliance

with the ruling classes and large landowners. They were wholly ignorant of both the condition of the laboring masses and the papal social teachings. His entry for 20 June 1925 reads:

> Priests in Spain do not go after stray sheep. Religious education of people is wanting. Thus fewer real vocations, and others enter the priesthood because a living is assured from the government. Priests do not know who belongs or should belong to the parish. Bishops confirm when they please; go about with retinue, sometimes do not get to certain places for 10–15 years.[21]

On the other hand, Father Michel was highly impressed by the religiosity and social activism he observed among the Basque clergy. The priests in this part of Spain were well schooled in the labor encyclicals and their religious houses overflowed with vocations.[22] Yet social and economic conditions in the rest of Spain were so abysmal that Michel claimed it almost shocked him into embracing the visceral message of radical socialism.[23] Indeed, so powerful were these experiences that Virgil Michel's biographer believes they may have been a seminal factor in the development of his positions on Catholic social action and liturgical renewal.[24] The religious and economic situation in Spain was a topic upon which Virgil Michel spoke frequently after his return to the United States. For him, the outbreak of civil war in 1936 was not unexpected.[25]

Although Spain was known as "the most Catholic of all the nations," vast numbers of the population failed to practice their religion.[26] Much of this was a direct consequence of the Church's failure to provide confessional and educational leadership. Even in the most Catholic provinces of Navarre and Catalonia many villages lacked schools. In Andalusia, for example, 45 percent of the people were illiterate. One well-placed and influential student of Catholic culture observed that there were few Spaniards who knew anything at all about Catholicism.[27] The leadership ranks of the Spanish Church were top-heavy and constituted a considerable drain on the limited economic resources of the state, whereas parish clergy were abysmally remunerated. The Catholic journalist Lawrence Farnsworth wrote that he frequently encountered sixteen to twenty

high-ranking ecclesiastics at modest funerals, each collecting a sizeable fee: "And how many times have I walked into some cathedral to find a solemn or a pontifical mass being celebrated in all liturgical pomp with the assistance of the entire cathedral chapter and in the presence of only 3 or 4 of the faithful."[28]

A devout Spanish Catholic academic, Enrique Moreno, concluded that his countrymen had become indifferent to Catholic culture. As a frequenter of ancient cathedrals, Moreno noted that High Mass was often celebrated before no more than two or three parishioners.[29] He also commented on the failure of the educational mission of the Jesuits, who controlled the curricula of 50 percent of Spanish universities.[30] According to José María de Semprún Guerra—a lecturer in the philosophy of law at the University of Madrid, a leading member of the Conservative Party, and founder and long-time contributor to the Spanish Catholic review *Cruz y Raya*—at least 80 percent of Spanish middle-class youth had been educated in Catholic colleges yet knew nothing of the theological traditions of their religion.[31] Semprún Guerra had been educated at a religious college and left after six years of uninterrupted attendance without acquiring more than a vague idea of Pascal's *Pensées,* without having read more than a few extracts of Saint Teresa, scarcely knowing the significance of the writings of the Church fathers, and without having read the Gospels in their entirety.[32]

Clearly, the clergy's association with the landholding classes served as a formidable obstacle to economic reform. It has been estimated that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Church owned roughly one-third of Spanish national territory; the hierarchy was naturally embittered by the efforts at land redistribution enforced by liberal politicians. Churchmen came to identify opposition to these liberal efforts with defense of the Catholic social order represented in their *latifundios.* As a consequence of this linkage of religion with property, the Spanish public suspected that there were always economic motives at the base of Church attitudes. The public associated the clergy with the defense of an unjust social order and hence included them as the enemies of their liberties. For its part, the Spanish Church associated liberal reforms and all things modern with foreign influences. This linkage stemmed in large part

from what the Spanish Church viewed as the Rousseauistic evils of the French Revolution: evil foreign influences designed to destroy national culture.[33] The Spanish Church's attitude toward liberalism was aptly summed up by Reverend Genadius Diez, O.S.B. The "French influence," Rev. Diez claimed, invaded not only the throne and aristocracy but also the class of men who posed as "intellectuals." Only the Church and lower classes, he argued, remained mentally and spiritually loyal to the "Spain of the Reconquest," i.e., to that of Ferdinand and Isabella. The word "liberal," wrote Diez, meant in Spain far more than "progressive views"; it was rather a revolutionary attempt to undermine moral ethics and theology and to bring about the absolute domination of the Church by the state. Today, insisted Rev. Diez, liberalism means the same as anarchism, communism, and socialism.[34]

The reactionary bent of the Spanish Church had engendered a long tradition of anticlericalism that was frequently accompanied by mass violence. Contrary to the assumptions of many conservative American and British Catholics, unbridled anger against the Church and its association with the organs of oppression certainly was not something sparked by the anti-God revolution in Moscow and nor was it unique to the twentieth century. As the Spanish writer Ramos Oliveira observed:

> The people began withdrawing their support from an institution which could reform nothing because it stood in need itself of a sweeping reform. In 1834, there occurred the first murder of friars in Madrid, and the following year saw a repetition of the disorders. Already convents were burning in Barcelona, Saragossa, Reus and Murcia.[35]

II

The Second Spanish Republic was politically unstable from the moment of its inception. Both the aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie as well as the major groups representing lower-class interests were

dissatisfied with it. The Republic's main source of support came from moderate republicans with democratic and liberal leanings. From the outset the new government made a serious mistake in failing to address land reform as the first order of business, focusing instead on legislation to secularize the state. This approach served to exacerbate ill feelings among nearly all parties. In June 1933 President Niceto Alcalá Zamora (a practicing Catholic), following the wishes of the Cortes, signed the Law of Religious Denominations and Congregations, a sweeping effort to prohibit Catholic educational, industrial, and commercial activities and to nationalize Church property. Many Spanish Catholics were outraged, and even Pope Pius XI felt it his duty to denounce the legislation, calling upon Spaniards to unite and remove the dangers that threatened their spiritual and civil welfare.

Those on the Left were also dissatisfied with the performance of the new government. A timid agrarian reform law angered peasants, and failure to address working-class needs fanned urban unrest. Insurrections in the countryside and urban violence forced the government to call on the military to restore order. By the summer of 1933 it had become clear that the moderate republican cabinet, having alienated Catholics and the laboring masses, could no longer govern. New elections were called for November 1933.

The forces of the Right prevailed in the 1933 national elections. In terms of satisfying the nation's social and political needs, however, the triumph of conservatism brought no more success than had the pro-republican elements in 1931. The pro-Church politician José María Gil Robles, who hoped to put together a coalition of rightist groups in the new government—based on an umbrella party called CEDA (Confederación Española des Derechas Autónomas)—was unable to effect any constructive change, in part because his partners were committed to maintaining the status quo. The limited reforms of the previous government were quickly reversed.

CEDA, the most influential grouping on the Right, was a party of moderate Catholic opinion, and many of its members were prepared to support the Republic. Essentially, CEDA pursued a policy called "accidentalism": to CEDA, the forms of government were immaterial provided they protected Catholic interests. The orga-

nization called for a restoration of "the religious rights" of the Church and the inauguration of a social program along the lines set forth by *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. Following through on the papal labor encyclicals, however, would have required a redistribution of landed wealth and industrial reform favoring workers. Since CEDA's bankers were chiefly the landed oligarchy, the redistribution of land and other pertinent social reforms that the party called for never went beyond rhetorical flourish and served mainly as a verbal tactic to win proletarian and peasant support. Although CEDA's republicanism was ambiguous and at best faint-hearted, the party was very clear about its Catholic agenda: the restoration of the Church to its former position of dominance.

Another problem was Gil Robles himself. He was a political opportunist who was never completely trusted by republicans on his left, nor, because he thought in terms of a movement willing to accommodate disparate groups of moderate liberal and conservative opinion, could he manage to win the complete confidence of the Right. Although Robles claimed he was supportive of the Republic and for the most part was a man of reasonable and tempered views, his rhetoric, carefully crafted to appease his right-wing constituents, frightened republicans of every stripe. "For us," declared Robles, "democracy is a means, not an end. . . . When the time arrives, [the Cortes] will submit to us or we will do away with it."[36] On many occasions Robles used language that suggested he favored fascism.

In October 1934 Asturias and Catalonia erupted in a fiery leftist-led rebellion against what was called the "fascist" government of CEDA. The rebels were in no sense united except in anger.[37] Although the so-called "Red" October Revolution was defeated, the violence that marked the affair had the effect of making all parties on the Left, especially the socialists who heretofore had been moderate and even legalistic in their tactics, more uncompromising and sanguine about the efficacy of armed revolt. The most serious upheaval, in the words of Franz Borkenau, "more heroic than any working-class rising since the days of the Paris commune,"[38] occurred in Asturias. Socialists with the help of anarchists took the lead. They set up a Soviet-style regime and began a massive

campaign of terror against their enemies. The government was able to subdue this working-class uprising only by calling in the elite Foreign Legionaries and Moorish troops. The repression appears to have been even more gruesomely cruel than the uprising itself. In the words of a conservative republican and avid foe of the Left: "The accused were tortured in jails; prisoners were executed without trial in the courtyards of the barracks, and eyes were closed to the persecutions and atrocities committed by the police during these sixteen months."[39]

The heroic resistance of the rebels and the vicious counteraction by the rightist government created martyrs, new leaders (Dolores Ibarruri, the famous "La Passionaria," began her meteoric rise to fame during the uprising in Asturias), and a legacy of revolution that would serve as a catalyst for future action. Indeed, most historians of the Spanish Civil War trace the dissolution of the Second Republic, the beginning of its grisly unraveling, to the October Revolution of 1934. In effect, the Left had revolted against a legally elected government.[40] The Right would replicate this behavior in 1936.

The armed combat served to draw together the multiplicity of factions on the Left in defense of the 1934 revolution: the republicans now saw the necessity of allying in electoral battle with socialists. This led to the emergence of the "Popular Front," a coalition of republicans, socialists, and, with Moscow's approval, the Spanish communists. Communist participation was made possible by the Comintern's *volte-face* in mid-1935, when it decided to support alliances with liberal-bourgeois parties advancing revolution in the developing world.[41] Even the anarchists realized that their best hopes lay with the electoral success of the Left; they too decided to support the Popular Front.[42] The decision of a sizeable bloc of anarchists to reverse their previous policy of electoral abstention was vital for the Popular Front: it won the election of February 1936. Yet as in 1931, the new government of the Left, in the hands of liberal and moderate republicans led by Premier Manuel Azaña (the socialists and anarchists gave the government their votes but refused to participate in it), failed to find common agreement on land reform. The liberal republican proposals for change were stymied by the more radical ideas of socialist and anarchist elements. In frustration, the

peasant masses soon took things into their own hands and, in rebellion against the old regime, began seizing land. Workers throughout Spain engaged in a series of crippling strikes and attacks on property. Azaña condemned the acts of violence in the Cortes, but his government was powerless to temper the revolutionary rage of the workers and peasants.[43]

Meanwhile, a rejuvenated Right prepared to challenge the new order. The government's inability to throttle anarchy—anarcho-syndicalists released from prison, for example, had immediately resorted to violence against their enemies—convinced many that brute force was the only solution to Spain's problems. The most influential leader on the Right, Gil Robles of CEDA, found it impossible to staunch the radicalization of conservative opinion. Indeed, once Gil Robles reiterated his opposition to violence and commitment to work through the established political structures of the Republic, the CEDA began to disintegrate. There was a massive defection of Robles' followers to the Renovación Española (a party of monarchist and Catholic integralists) and, even more ominously, to the Falange, the Spanish fascist party led by José Antonio Primo de Rivera that drew heavily on the programs of Mussolini and Hitler. In the minds of those who trembled from the volcanic eruption of assassinations, illegal seizures of land, and violence against property and persons, only one path offered security: the dictatorship of fascism. In the words of Augustín Calvet, director of *La Vanguardia:* "almost without realizing it, the people 'feel' themselves fascist. Of the inconvenience of a dictatorship they know nothing. . . . Of these they will learn later. . . . But meanwhile they see in that form of strong government nothing more than an infallible means of shaking off the insufferable vexations of the existing lawlessness."[44]

The spreading anarchic violence against established order convinced influential, high-ranking officers in the army that they must move quickly or be overcome by a massive popular uprising. On the 17th of July 1936 the Spanish military declared war against the government. The coup d'état (*pronunciamiento*) had the immediate effect of unifying the Left in support of the Republic. The masses—poor peasants, the urban working classes, and the "little"

people—rose in ferocious anger against the Right. Such popular insurrection could not be controlled by the government. In both Madrid and Barcelona armed workers overcame the military and, through the establishment of their own defense committees, became the real source of power. The generals' revolt against the Republic, which they called the *Movimiento Nacional* or *Alzamiento,* achieved what had eluded the socialists and anarchists since 1931: it brought to power in half of Spain and in almost all its larger cities a revolutionary proletariat.[45]

In many regions sympathetic to the Republic a sweeping social revolution followed that was even more far-reaching than what the Bolsheviks had accomplished in 1917. It was not a result desired by the Popular Front, and indeed was actively resisted by many Popular Front members in positions of influence. The commitment of radicals on the Left to bring a Marxist revolution to Spain by any means necessary now openly confronted the ultra-Right's equally zealous commitment to fascist-style dictatorship.[46] Little space was left for moderates in the Popular Front government who wished to save the constitution of the Republic. In a last-ditch effort to encourage army officers to negotiate, and thereby defuse the socialist-communist-anarchist endeavors to organize their own militias and arm the citizenry, Azaña, recently made President of the Republic, asked Diego Martínez Barrio, leader of the most moderate elements in the Popular Front, to form a new, more conservative government. The Republic's efforts to negotiate with the rebels failed: General Emilio Mola, the man who initiated the *pronunciamiento,* claimed that his men would overthrow his own leadership if he entertained compromise. The hour was too late. "Neither of us," said Mola to Prime Minister Martínez Barrio, "can now control the masses."[47]

The government of the Republic that rose to defend Spain against the generals was indeed powerless to throttle the social revolution. It should come as no surprise, given the popular anger at the Church's alliance with the legions of reaction and the absence of government defense forces, that terrible violence was unleashed against organized religion. At no time in European history or even, perhaps, in that of the world, noted the historian Hugh Thomas, had such hatred been shown toward religion and all its works.[48]

III

A seminal figure providing inspiration and ideological focus for British and American Catholic intellectuals of the Right who gave their services to the Insurgents (or Nationalists, as they were called by supporters) in the Spanish Civil War was Hilaire Belloc.[49] However, the man who had such considerable influence on subsequent Catholic opinion on Spain appeared to be confused initially by the issues. From the outset Belloc was at least superficially appreciative of the deep-seated class struggle at the core of the conflict. Writing to his son in the summer of 1936, Belloc identified as the basic problem in Spain the fact that peasants did not possess their own land (a consequence of the elites' resistance to reform) and that a revolutionary industrial proletariat were denied their just rewards by greedy capitalists.[50] In various articles in British political journals Belloc had argued that the revolt against industrial capitalism was the spiritual inspiration behind the Republic, which represented an economic and social system wholly unsuited, in his opinion, to the traditions of Spain. Moreover, as he had recognized in the case of the French Revolution, the Church was attacked because it had lost its vitality and was associated with the the interests of the rich.[51]

Yet, as Belloc put it, this was only "half of the truth." He was convinced that the spiritual force behind the Republic was not indigenous, for he did not believe that the revolt had proceeded from the victims of industrialism themselves. It was rather managed as a "crusade" from without, its chief point of attack being the Catholic Church.[52] For Belloc, the catalyst was the Communist Party, an organization which everywhere claimed to represent the will of the national proletariat but which, in fact, was completely at the orders of Moscow. In the final analysis, Soviet involvement in the Spanish Civil War and what he deemed the Soviet intentions for world revolution brought Belloc down firmly on the side of the Nationalists. The Republic's inspiration was an anti-capitalism controlled by Moscow; the general who quickly emerged to lead the Nationalists, Francisco Franco, possessed a spiritual energy driven by a special Spanish patriotism and by an allegiance to Catholic tradition which, Belloc believed, was triggered by foreign intervention.

Belloc was convinced that the Spanish Civil War was the kingpin of a "new revolution" engineered by Moscow and its secret allies that was engulfing Europe and threatening the core of Christian culture. Its first objective was the uprooting of Catholicism, a preliminary to the substitution of communism for private proprietorship and the elimination of the family. The Bolsheviks had conducted a rampage of terror against the Russian clergy designed to eliminate Christianity altogether, since it constituted an island of separateness not allowed in a totalitarian regime, and now the process was underway in Spain.[53] Belloc noted similar attempts in Italy, Germany, Hungary, and Poland, though these were checked by the "counteroffensive," by which he meant fascism.[54]

In Belloc's assessment the Bolsheviks were assisted in their efforts to destroy Spain by two other forces: international Jewry and Freemasonry. Belloc, of course, had long believed in a direct conspiratorial linkage between Jews, Masons, and Spanish sociopolitical problems,[55] and he had warned as early as 1910 of impending civil war.[56] The conspiracy was broadened, in his mind, when Jews engineered the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Belloc asserted that the Jews were especially well suited for destabilizing nationalist governments (for instance, the Spanish revolution was being directed, he argued, by Moses Rosenberg, nominally the Soviet ambassador, and France was under the leadership of another Jew, Léon Blum), since they had a natural capacity for such matters: Jews were detached both from the patriotic sentiment of the various European ethnic groups and from the traditions of Christendom, and thus were indifferent to the destruction of each. Spain was vital in this regard, for it represented the last in a series of Bolshevik efforts to destroy Christianity as a necessary step toward absorbing the whole of Europe.[57]

The Freemasons contributed to this tripartite revolutionary conspiracy, claimed Belloc, by directing their highly-placed agents in the Republican government to secretly incite mob action against Church property. As Belloc wrote during the 1909 Barcelona uprising, "Not a single case of violence was directed against the house of a capitalist or upon any great capitalist work or bank."[58] Contrary to what gullible English newspapers had reported, there was nothing spontaneous about such acts of disdain for religion. It was, Belloc

asserted, simply a ruse by the authorities to produce popular hatred against religion. A major factor that conditioned Belloc's analysis of the Spanish situation was the Comintern's advocacy, noted earlier, of a united front to oppose the forces of fascism. Recognizing the threat posed by Hitler, the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (Communist International), which gathered in August 1935, determined that it was necessary to collaborate with bourgeois parties. The goal was to infiltrate such organizations in order to transform them into tools for communist revolution. The idea was developed by Stalin and publicly introduced by the Bulgarian General-Secretary of the Comintern, Georgi Dimitrov:

> Cannot we endeavor to unite the Communist, Social Democratic, Catholic and other workers? Comrades, you will remember the ancient tale of the capture of Troy. The attacking army was unable to achieve victory until, with the aid of the Trojan Horse, it penetrated to the very heart of the enemy camp. We, revolutionary workers, should not be shy of using the same tactics.[59]

The Trojan Horse idea convinced Belloc that Moscow's aid to the Republic, the rapid growth in Spanish Communist Party membership,[60] and its collaboration with Popular Front parties were part and parcel of the blueprint for world revolution.[61] The Comintern's new program was enormously successful in Spain. Their carefully calculated "moderate policies" (designed to look respectable to the middle classes), an insistence on stopping anarchist revolution in the countryside, and the fact that their allies, the Soviets, had the guns needed by the Republic, were all sufficient reasons to attract a myriad of elements into the communist fold, most of whom had never read a word of Marx. In fact, many Spaniards joined the Communist Party as a means of stopping the Republic's social revolution.[62] "Representative government," a polity Moscow had decided to cultivate and which Belloc, from his own experiences in England, had long denounced for its corruptive tendencies, seemed the ideal spawning ground for the Comintern's Trojan Horse program.

Just as the French Revolution had its heroes in Danton, Robespierre, and Napoleon, so the Spanish Republic, for Belloc, had a hero who symbolized in his person the Christian crusade in Spain.

This hero was General Francisco Franco, who had assumed control of the rebellion against Spain's democratically elected Republic. Here was a leader, in Belloc's mind, who had the qualities of both a Charlemagne and a Napoleon. Central to Belloc's lionization of Franco was his belief that the general had the popular and moral support of the Spanish people. Belloc also insisted that the masses were behind the Church.[63] In short, Belloc regarded Franco, like Napoleon, as the repository of the general will, a force incapable of manifesting itself through the diseased parliamentary government of the Republic. Franco would save Western civilization, just as his predecessors rescued Christendom from the yoke of Islam.

After having made a personal visit to the Nationalist front line in 1939 where he had a private interview with his hero, Belloc was moved to write the following panegyric:

> When I entered Franco's presence I entered the presence of one who had fought that same battle wherein Roland of legend died fighting, and Godfrey in sober history had won, when his battered remnant, a mere surviving tenth of the first crusaders, entered Jerusalem. They came in on foot, refusing to ride where God and man had offered up the Sacrifice of Golgotha.[64]

In Belloc's public commentaries on the Spanish Civil War there was nary a hint of any parallels with the French Revolution and the related issue of class struggle. The probing economic and sociopolitical analyses that undergirded his earlier books on Robespierre, Danton, Napoleon, and the French Revolution itself, are notably missing in his writings on Spain.

One of Belloc's admirers, Arnold Lunn, who was studying the older man's writings on the French Revolution, could not help but notice striking parallels between what Belloc said about France's history and what was presently occurring in Spain. Lunn had started with a strong bias against the French Revolution and was perplexed at Belloc's enthusiasm for it. Lunn wrote Belloc and asked if he had changed his mind about that pivotal historical event.[65] Belloc responded by asserting that the French and Spanish events were separated by a profound spiritual difference:

> The French Revolution was founded on patriotism and property, the Spanish is founded on Jewish Communism which specially attacks those two fundamental ideas of our Western civilisation. What the two movements have in common is hostility to the Catholic Church, but in the French case that hostility came in from the side, it was incidental. It took root because religion had been lost in the directing mind of the French people. The civil constitution of the clergy was the consequence and started the whole quarrel; but the Communist attack on the Church is a *main* activity: indeed, the two great forces now facing each other in the Western world are Communism and Catholicism. That is why it was good strategy on the part of the Moscow Jews to attack Spain. I think they would have succeeded if it had not been for Franco forestalling them. It was a close thing.[66]

Once Belloc had found what he believed to be the "key" to the Spanish imbroglio, he appears to have felt no need to analyze the affair any further: like Procustes with his bed, everything would be made to fit the thesis. Belloc's vision was Manichean. In his mind Spain was on the verge of an Armageddon-like struggle between good and evil. In this sense his assessment of the situation was identical to the propaganda of the radical counter-revolutionaries in Spain. They, like Belloc, also saw their enemies as the anti-Christ, composed of three parts: Jews, Freemasons, and Marxists.[67] From this point on, Belloc's objective was to get the message out, to undertake a massive campaign of propaganda to show the world that Franco was wrestling the anti-Christ in a noble but insufficiently appreciated struggle to save Western civilization. As he told a Queen's Hall meeting of the Friends of Nationalist Spain in March 1939:

> . . . in spite of the contradictions and cross purposes of the moment, one major fact still stands out. The Spanish struggle has been a crusade: a struggle between forces organized for the destruction of religion and forces organized in the defense of religion. . . . It was to restore the Spanish nation and the religion with which that nation is identified that Franco rose and that he and his followers have fought. . . ."[68]

There was a lacuna of critical analysis in Belloc's visions of Spain, as was the case with most others on both the Left and Right who chose sides in 1936. Objective, analytical evaluations were not necessary—a strong emotional response was sufficient. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Belloc's failure to study carefully the case of the Spanish anarchists. If he had looked more closely, Belloc might have recognized some striking parallels between the motives of workers and peasants in Catalonia and his own involvement with the virtually revolutionary upheavals in British labor circles prior to World War I. This broader perspective might have made him, and those who followed his lead, more sensitive to the complex social dynamics that drove the conflict in Spain. However, this is probably a moot point, since Belloc's circle had no interest in such matters as regards the civil war: the anticlerical fury at the beginning of the conflict defined the issues in a purely religious, emotive perspective. Yet in terms of Belloc's perceptive critique of industrial capitalism there was a sharp rupture with respect to what he analyzed in Britain and what he chose to see in Spain.

Belloc does not appear to have noted any affinities whatever between the working-class revolution directed by the Spanish anarchists and syndicalist activity in pre-war Britain. As we have seen in *The Party System, The Servile State,* and in numerous articles in the *Daily Herald,* the *New Age,* and other such avant-garde papers, Belloc, along with Cecil Chesterton, had condemned conventional English political processes as irrelevant for satisfying working-class interests. The two chastised trade union leaders for "selling out" to the oligarchy of capitalists and urged the workers to take things into their own hands and smash the bureaucracies that oppressed them. Belloc and both the Chesterton brothers (Gilbert and Cecil) urged the British laboring classes to reject wage slavery and demand control and ownership of the means of production.

The Catalan anarcho-syndicalist trade union, the Confederation Nacional de Trabajo or C.N.T., was probably the most radical element in the mélange of revolutionary groups in Spain. Their members were bitter foes of the Spanish communists. The C.N.T. was founded in 1910–11 to accomplish the same objectives as the syndicalist and industrial unionist groups (formed at the same time)

that Belloc and his friends had supported in the pre–World War I years. Like their British counterparts, the Spanish anarchists opposed "bourgeois" politics and urged their members to use "direct action" tactics against their employers with the objective of bringing control and ownership of the productive system into the hands of the workers. Rather than prolong collective bargaining, the Spanish anarchists, much like the British syndicalists who were appreciative of and seemingly influenced by Belloc's views on the subject, fully distrusted management and preferred the swiftness of the strike to reach their goals. The C.N.T. was essentially libertarian. It had no permanent officials. The association's literature celebrated the independence of the worker and opposed all forms of bureaucratic and elitist structures because they stifled the individual's creative capacities. They were uncompromising in their resistance to the wage slavery of modern capitalism. Not unlike Distributists, the Spanish anarchists were communitarians who championed a return to life on a small scale.

As opposed to their communist and socialist rivals, whose "nationalization" programs hinged on control by the party standing "above" workingmen with a tight leash on the rank and file, the C.N.T. spoke of what it called "collectivized" policies, meaning control from "below," essentially from the factory floor.[69] The urban workers in the C.N.T. were syndicalists, meaning that they favored a "vertical" social restructuring along lines familiar to Britain's guild socialists: workers would be organized into self-governing guilds or syndicates interacting in democratic fashion with other related vocational units. These arrangements were supposed to restore the freedom and dignity workers lost in the soulless tyranny of the modern factory system.

Peasants associated with the C.N.T. advocated a rural social order based on the *pueblo* or "small town" whose inhabitants would form democratic, cooperative, self-sufficient mini-communities free from outside interference.[70] The rural visions of G. K. Chesterton and Belloc had been colored by the idyllic *Rural Rides* of William Cobbett of a century ago; the Spanish anarchists were inspired by their ideas of the primitive communes that existed in the medieval, supposedly halcyon days of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain.

The writer Gerald Brenan, who experienced the civil war firsthand and subsequently came to appreciate the vitality of Spanish Catholicism, has called the anarchists uniquely Spanish. His description of their ideals, however, would seem to apply equally to Distributism, which G. K. Chesterton and Belloc thought uniquely English. The Spanish anarchists, Brenan wrote, managed to "canalize" feelings that were deeply seated in the Spanish soul:

> One may describe this as a hatred of political shams, a craving for a richer and deeper social life, an acceptance of a low material standard of living and a belief that the ideal of human dignity and brotherhood can never be obtained by political means alone, but must be sought in a moral reformation (compulsory, it is needless to say) of society. That is what one might call the characteristic Spanish attitude. Contrary to the Liberal doctrine which separated Church from State and society from government, it aims at an integration of political and social life. But it is not totalitarian. Far from asserting the moral supremacy of the State, it holds the Christian view that every human being, whatever his capacity or intelligence, is an end in himself, and that the State exists solely to advance these ends. And it goes further. The long and bitter experience which Spaniards have had of the workings of bureaucracy has led them to stress the superiority of society to government, of custom to law, of the judgement of neighbours to legal forms of justice and to insist on the need for an inner faith or ideology, since this alone will enable men to act as they should, in mutual harmony, without the need for compulsion.[71]

As was clearly the case with Distributists, Brenan viewed Spanish anarchists as similarly driven by a strongly idealistic, moral-religious vision reflecting a nostalgia for an earlier *Gemeinschaft* order where individuals had dignity and the security of place.[72]

The anarchists were primarily responsible for the violence unleashed against the Spanish Catholic Church. But this was a rage fueled by an intense anticlericalism and the Church's solidarity with the traditional institutions of tyranny; it was a collection of hatreds not unlike those that spawned terror against the Church during

the French Revolution. Yet this terrifying fury, as Brenan correctly observes, was not strictly anti-religious. It was rather a violence fed by the fires of the social Gospels. At the core of New Testament teaching is the damnation of the rich and the blessedness of the poor. The Christian notion of the social good is tied to the functioning of a corporate ethos in which the rich have a paternalistic responsibility to serve the poor. There was always a persistent danger, Brenan pointed out, that any weakening of the Church, any large-scale failure of the priesthood to fulfill its mission of social deaconry, could lead to more emphasis by its critics on the social principles of equality and brotherly love; for those failing to heed such injunctions, it could lead to the pain of the sword.[73]

There were both obvious and significant differences between Spanish anarchism and the industrial unionist elements supported by Belloc and company. The anarchists opposed all forms of private property as oppressive (yet this was also the case with some of the guild socialists with whom the G. K. Chesterton and Belloc allied themselves), and, like the French revolutionists, they were violently anticlerical. All this was behind anarchist-directed, not communist, violence against the Church. Belloc's outrage at the anticlerical fury clearly outweighed any visceral sympathy he may have had for the Spanish revolutionaries. Yet it is clear that he did not bother to examine their social situation and programs very closely, which suggests that Belloc's understanding of the Spanish situation was limited, reductionist, and ultimately subordinated to his larger thesis that Europe was the faith, and the faith was Europe. In this perspective, Spain, the most Catholic of nations, represented the unbroken tradition of Catholic culture (that is to say, the faith in its purest form). Since Europe's culture was determined by Greco-Roman traditions preserved in the mother Church, Spain's struggle against communism was, in effect, a battle to preserve Western civilization.[74] In the final analysis, Belloc's purpose was not to analyze the Spanish tragedy with any scholarly objectivity. His mission was to wage a propaganda campaign to save civilization from the rabble. One of Belloc's more ardent disciples, Arnold Lunn, said it best: "it is infinitely more important to write propaganda for the Faith than to write anything else. For Catholicism is not only a culture it is culture."[75]

Many Catholics who rushed to the defense of Franco interpreted the issues along lines that had been set down by their mentor, Belloc.[76] The most articulate and persuasive of the English were Belloc's protégés Arnold Lunn, Christopher Hollis, Gregory Macdonald, Douglas Jerrold, and Douglas Woodruff. The Spanish Civil War for them was a religious "White Crusade" against communism, a struggle to save the West from the perdition of atheism.[77] The complex web of social, economic, and political factors that contributed to the wrenching conflict in Spain were given short schrift by these writers, for they were seen as secondary issues in a struggle that was inherently religious.[78]

The extraordinary violence against the Church and its representatives in territory under control of Republican loyalists when the revolution first broke out was the immediate catalyst in bringing many Catholic intellectuals to play an active role on Franco's behalf and as the war dragged on this remained the defining issue for most Catholics. Arnold Lunn was typical of this mind-set when he wrote that "the persecution of the Church by the Spanish Reds would have been decisive for me even if I had not numbered among my friends a single Spaniard."[79] The Catholic publisher Frank Sheed later admitted that his friends knew very little about conditions in Spain, "but as between people who murdered priests and nuns and people who didn't, we preferred those who didn't. It was practically a reflex reaction."[80]

The response of Belloc and his associates to the Spanish situation, with some exceptions, essentially mirrored general English Catholic thinking on the Republican experiment in Spain. When the Republic of 1931 first took shape, most English Catholics were hopeful that the Spanish Church would reform itself and make an effort to work constructively with the new government.[81] As the *Catholic Herald* put it, the cause of freedom and religion were linked and only in a "free, instructed, religious and moral" democracy could the Church find a true ally.[82] Even after the wave of anticlerical violence in May 1931 the conservative Jesuit magazine *The Month* felt that the popular anger with Catholicism was due to the Church's close ties to a corrupt and exploitative state, and it criticized Spain's Catholic leaders for failing to serve the poor.[83]

The general view in England was that the Spanish Church ought to support social change along lines outlined in the papal labor encyclicals (the matter was all the more urgent as *Quadragesimo Anno* had just been published) and that the current situation offered an ideal opportunity to make common cause with the Republic to initiate such reforms. There was considerable hope that the Catholic Action group under Gil Robles (which stressed the replacement of class warfare by the social Gospels and the establishment of a Christian corporative state) could come to terms with the new government. Increasingly, especially after the Asturias revolt, English Catholics saw Gil Robles as the only barrier to a Marxist takeover in Spain. However, as reports of mounting extremism and violence grew more ominous in the spring and summer of 1936, English and American Catholics became convinced that the central issue in Spain was less the failure of the Church to promote social reform than revolutionary Marxism, a sentiment given further credence in the following year with the publication of Pius XI's encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* condemning atheistic communism. Once the generals revolted, all Catholic aspirations for the creation of a new Christian order in Spain disappeared, and the defining issue now became the battle against Bolshevism.[84]

The fury unleashed against the clergy after the *pronunciamiento* solidified the issue. For most Catholics the matter was now purely one of religious freedom. As the Jesuit journal *The Month* was quick to point out, if the Nationalists were defending the faith, all else was of no consequence.[85] Thus from the very outset of the conflict there was little interest in examining the social and political context of the Spanish Civil War; Hilaire Belloc and his fellow propagandists had a frightened, ready-made audience for their message.

One of the most zealous proponents of Belloc's "White Crusade" idea was Reginald Dingle, the translator of an unabashedly propagandistic panegyric of General Franco (George Rotvand's *Franco Means Business,* with an introduction by Gregory Macdonald) and a regular contributor to most of the influential Catholic periodicals in England. Rotvand's main thesis was that Franco was a hero of epic proportions: he was a military genius, a charismatic intellectual with almost perfect qualities in every sense. In fact, claimed

Rotvand, he is a man with "no weakness."[86] Dingle was merciless with Catholic writers who failed to see Franco the way Rotvand described him. Such Catholics, he insisted, lacked the faith.[87] Dingle was singularly incapable of recognizing the resentment of many working-class Catholics against the Spanish Church's relationship with wealth and privilege. Throughout the conflict he insisted that attacks on the Church were unequivocally the product of a diabolical hatred of the supernatural.[88]

The writings of Belloc's young disciple, Gregory Macdonald, revealed a common feature of nearly all right-wing Catholic views on the Spanish conflict, namely, a deep-seated animus for liberalism. In fact, a central feature of the crusade idea was not an attack on the conditions that spawned communism (and this is what so annoyed liberals like H. A. Reinhold, Luigi Sturzo, and Virgil Michel) but an assault on movements and individuals with liberal political views. In this effort, many prominent British and American Catholics were willing to accept "anti-democratic disreputables" as allies.[89] Macdonald put Franco in the company of the great defenders of Christendom (Roland, Alfred the Great, Godfrey deBuillon, Don John of Austria, and others) because Franco was holding forth against the combined forces of the nineteenth-century liberal tradition, which Macdonald labeled the "Left Wing." In this category he lumped together such seemingly disparate groups as Manchester liberals, democrats, internationalists, humanitarians, philanthropists, and communists. Like Belloc, Macdonald regarded all these categories as cloaks for a series of sinister conspiracies. Liberalism, for instance, was considered a gospel of rights and freedoms for the wealthy to exploit the poor. Democrats were people who hoped to control the commonweal through secret committees; humanitarianism was a ruse for the denial of a belief in God. And finally, the communists, representing the apogee of the left-wing conspiracy utilizing the false doctrines of Genevan international law (the League of Nations was presumably vitiated from its origins by Protestant and Jewish connections), were operating through the guise of the United Front to destroy Christian Europe. For all these reasons, Macdonald and his fellow right-wing Catholics saw the Spanish Civil War as a turning point in history.

A most revealing assessment of the Christian crusade idea was put forward by the English Catholic convert and writer Stanley B. James in *The Month* of September 1937. Rather than recognizing the call to arms in Spain as an unfortunate human tragedy, James deemed the struggle largely positive, offering hope for a new type of "Catholic Action." James saw a clear parallel between the civil war and the crusades of the eleventh century. Although the latter failed, the spiritual energies they unleashed transferred the militant crusading ideal to a higher plane and, as it reappeared in the religious revivals of the Middle Ages, not only saved Europe from falling to the prey of commercialism but sparked a Christian cultural renaissance. In James's view, Europe of the 1930s was in need of a similar revitalization. The spiritual and economic collapse that followed World War I produced a moral vacuum, a fertile breeding ground for "amoral liberalism" and the atheistic propaganda of Marxists. Given the low morale of Western Europe, the war in Spain offered Catholicism a golden opportunity. General Franco's vigorous offensive against what Gregory Macdonald called the "Left Wing" would give new heart to Catholic Action, which had wallowed too long in a defensive siege mentality. In tones reminiscent of Georges Sorel's myth of the general strike and the mystical musings of José Antonio Primo de Rivera's fascist dreams, James welcomed Franco and the Spanish bloodletting as a means of breathing life into a Catholic renaissance:

> Has it to be confessed that the forms of Catholic Action proposed to us, admirable as they are, have as yet failed to create widespread enthusiasm? If so, that is because there is no Peter the Hermit among us, nor anything like a Crusade to which he could summon us. Need this be so? For the creation of a popular movement, now as in the time of the Crusades, something spectacular and physical is required.[90]

James's wishes were fulfilled in the eyes of the eminent American Jesuit publicist and scholar, Joseph Thorning, S.J. After having returned from Spain in the autumn of 1937 Thorning waxed rhapsodic in praise of Franco's soldiers: "War has few attractive features

but it must be acknowledged that the war-time tempo occasionally lifts a nation from lethargy and *dolce far niento* into the zone of timetables and the systematic dispatch of business."[91] There were a good number of Belloc's disciples who accepted Stanley James's challenge to revitalize the faith through Nietzschean combat. Indeed, a special feature of the Catholic Right's crusade for Franco was its love of a good fight. Once again, Arnold Lunn provides a model of the style. Lunn was stimulated when he could intimidate large crowds, in particular, said he, when they shouted with anger: "I like to make these enemies of everything which I love." Lunn claimed that he believed it would be infinitely easy to enjoy "burning a mob of Reds." He feared that American Catholics were insufficiently militant. One of Lunn's major objectives as Visiting Professor of Apologetics at the University of Notre Dame was to raise the level of militancy in his students. "Unless they get stirred up," said Lunn, Americans will "get it in the neck."[92] Lunn went so far as to urge his audiences to kill for their religion. Father Virgil Michel, with redolent disgust, reported that when Lunn spoke at St. John's University he not only called Franco's campaign a holy war of the Catholic religion but told the students: "You must be ready to die for your faith; yes sometimes you must be ready to kill for your faith."[93]

Arnold Lunn's ally in militant religious polemics, Douglas Jerrold, saw something both ennobling and biologically imperative in combat. His words had an uncomfortably fascist ring to them:

> An idea for which a man is not prepared to die is not an idea sufficiently dynamic to stimulate the instinct to serve, and it is on the stimulation of this instinct, on its predominance over all else that, as a matter of mere biological necessity, the health of the race depends. For it is only in serving that the male can attain moral dignity, without which the race must deteriorate and ultimately decay.[94]

Arnold Lunn was a great admirer and close friend of the Spanish grandee and ardent monarchist, Captain Gonzalo de Aguilera, Count de Alba y Yeltes, Nationalist Spain's diplomatic agent in London. After Britain recognized Franco's government in 1939, Alba was appointed Ambassador to the Court of St. James, where

he stayed until 1945.[95] Lunn was fond of dropping the Count's name and that of other notables as a way of impressing people with his close connections with the Spanish aristocracy.

Despite his pedigree (he was a descendant of James II, which endeared him to English Catholic notables), educational training (Beaumont and Madrid University), and government experience (he was appointed Spanish Minister of Education in 1930 and subsequently Foreign Minister in the Berenguer Government), the Count de Alba was a brute in nobleman's clothing. He seems to have been much more popular in Britain than in his native country, and London, where he spent most of his time, afforded him the congenial company of other well-placed aristocrats. The Count owned almost 222,000 acres of property in Spain but seems to have been the quintessential absentee landlord.[96] Aguilera served the Nationalist cause in many different capacities, but he turned out to be somewhat of an embarrassment as Franco's press liaison officer in the north of Spain. For example, on the day the civil war broke out, which he helped plan, the Count proudly informed an English visitor that he promptly lined up the laborers on his estate, selected six from the group, and shot them in front of the others—"*pour encourager les autres,* you understand."[97] The troubles in Spain, Aguilera announced to the American journalist John T. Whitaker, were due to the introduction of public sanitation. Before city drainage the *canaille* had been killed off by diseases:

> Had we no sewers in Madrid, Barcelona, and Bilbao, all these Red leaders would have died in their infancy instead of exciting the rabble and causing good Spanish blood to flow. When the war is over, we should destroy the sewers. . . . Sewers are a luxury to be reserved for those who deserve them, the leaders of Spain, not the slave stock.

Whitaker claimed Aguilera told him that

> We have got to kill and kill and kill, you understand. . . . It's our program . . . to exterminate one third of the male population of Spain. That will purge the country and we will be rid of the proletariat.[98]

Whitaker was disgusted by the Count's talk, yet he wrote that it was typical of what he heard expressed by hundreds of others on Franco's side.[99]

Arnold Lunn, on the other hand, found Aguilera "not only a good soldier but a scholar" whose general philosophy was positively enlightening.[100] Lunn told the Count that he wished he himself had been born a Spaniard, for there were only two types of Christian he found appealing: "Saints like St. Theresa and St. Peter Claver, and real tough conquistadors such as my good friend Aguilera." Lunn took considerable pride in his own tough guy image, which he carefully cultivated as a militant Catholic figuratively bashing heads for Franco. Lunn reassured his friend Aguilera that he was every bit as tough as the Count: "Hair shirts or beautiful guns looted at Bilbao. I've not much more use for anything in between."[101] The Count responded in kind. When Lunn boasted of having a debate in which he "flattened out" an Oxford don and an Eton master who were wearing the fashionable color of pink, Aguilera wrote that he himself would have enjoyed immensely "to have been present and have helped to jab at these pinky products of protestantism."[102]

Perhaps the best example of the merging of civil war machismo and religious zealotry can be seen in the career of a South African Catholic poet, Roy Campbell. Campbell can rightly be called the "Hemingway of the Right." Like Campbell, Hemingway was also a convert to the faith but one who served the other side. Campbell's persona was that of a rough man of the bush, though in fact he came from a wealthy South African family. Yet Campbell seems more the genuine article than Hemingway, for he actually supported himself in Provençe as bullfighter and fisherman. His male chauvinism may also have exceeded Hemingway's: Campbell boasted of shaking up the illusions of his new wife that she was going to wear the pants in the family by hanging her out of a fourth-floor window. This, he wrote, earned her respect.[103]

Roy Campbell welcomed the struggle promised by civil war:

> I was disgusted at what I took to be the tame, cringing fatalism of the Nationalists who, after all, formed the majority. They had turned both cheeks so many times that it began to look cowardly

> rather than Christian. . . . Little did I know what a feast of heroism was in store![104]

The conflict did more than simply inspire Campbell to flex his literary muscles: it also convinced him and his wife to forsake their amorphous Anglo-Catholicism for the real thing. In a secret nighttime ceremony in June 1936 they were received into the Roman faith by Isidro Gomá y Tomás, cardinal-archbishop of Toledo and primate of Spain. With this, Campbell claimed, he could at least step into the front ranks of the Regular Army of Christ.

Campbell hoped to serve in the ranks of the Carlist militia, the *Requetés,* but Marqués de Pablo Merry del Val, chief of the Nationalist Press Service, persuaded the poet that Franco needed "pens not swords." Nevertheless, in his autobiography Campell writes of having killed Bolsheviks in self-defense as he fought his way out of Toledo, and in the poem "We/Who Are in the Legion" describes taking part in a cavalry charge.[105] Campbell deliberately created an image of himself as a zealous soldier taking up arms for Franco. He was indeed zealous, points out his biographer, Peter Alexander, but as a writer not a soldier. In fact, Campbell's single battlefield experience consisted of a one-day motor tour of the front on 1 July 1937 as a correspondent of the London *Tablet.*[106] The South African poet David Wright, who came to know Campbell very well after the war, wrote that Roy was almost the exact reverse of the truculent persona he projected in his writings. All this was part of Campbell's theater to the world: it was a "put on," part of the mask of vainglory braggadocio behind which hid a modest man.[107]

Campbell's writings on Spain, which one critic has called preposterous distortions of fact,[108] had the hard edge of combat about them. The celebration of slaughtering one's enemies was so graphic in his epic philo-fascist poem of the civil war, *Flowering Rifle,* that Stephen Spender claimed to have become physically ill reading passages from it.[109] Hilaire Belloc and his circle, on the other hand, found the book, in Belloc's words, "a really good thing," a work of art against which all of Campbell's other work would pale.[110]

As might be expected, Campbell was not one to sit back and accept Spender's criticism lightly. He struck back by calling Spender

and his leftist friends "cowards." The following lines were aimed at Spender and his party:

> . . . these three hundred Red-Necks thrilled and caught,
> By Prophecy, on the live wires of thought,
> Brought here to learn why communists 'feel small'
> And we so perpendicular and tall
> (Like a Catholic over Comrades' Hall)[111]

Campbell did more than attack Spender in print. One evening he mounted the stage where Spender was giving a lecture and punched him.[112]

Campbell's style and sentiments were mirrored in a coterie of reactionary English writers associated with the January Club. Founded on New Year's Day 1934, this was an informal association of like-minded thinkers, many of whom expressed great admiration for the works of Hilaire Belloc. The group gathered at luncheons and dinners to discuss the virtues of fascism.[113] Although they did not agree on all matters, the members were convinced that the democratic political system in Britain had to be scrapped. A companion and protégé of Hilaire Belloc, Sir John Squire, editor of the *London Mercury,* became the first chairman of the January Club. Many who joined this group wrote for Jerrold's *English Review* and Lady Houston's *Saturday Review,* a journal that championed Mussolini and all forms of fascist dictatorship. Among the January Club's more prominent members were Francis Yeats-Brown, Sir Charles Petrie, Muriel Currey, and Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, all of whom were unabashedly philo-fascist.[114] The January Club articulated various positions on Fascist Italy that were essentially the same as Belloc's, and, not surprisingly, its members became some of the most vocal and influential sources of pro-Franco propaganda in Britain.

Sir Charles Petrie, an Irish baronet and, in the words of Douglas Jerrold, a "genius" on foreign affairs whom he alone had the good fortune to have discovered, was one of England's more ardent monarchists. Petrie's ideas on the subject appear to owe much to Belloc. Indeed, even his language and literary imagery resembled Belloc's.[115] Petrie praised Belloc's exceptionally insightful attacks on England's

parliamentary system and deeply respected what he called his anti-democratic authoritarianism.[116] Like Belloc, Petrie was a close reader of *Action française* and regarded the Catholic writers Paul Déroulède, Maurice Barrès, and Charles Maurras, among other French reactionaries, as the true intellectual sources of the fascist ideology he so admired.[117] Although he praised fascist dictatorship, Petrie realized that this political form was highly personal and lacked adequate mechanisms for transferring authority. In the end he believed it must give way to a feudal-style monarchy, which to Petrie's mind was inherently more stable than aristocracy or democracy.[118]

Along with James Strachey Barnes, the fascist triumphalist and El Duce sycophant whose views on Italian politics he completely accepted, Charles Petrie was one of Britain's foremost champions of Mussolini. The Italian dictator was the best representative of "a revival of monarchy"; his invasion of Abyssinia gave Italians pride and confidence once again as the true heirs of imperial Rome. For this deed, claimed Petrie, Mussolini "deserves to rank among the greatest leaders in history."[119] To Petrie, Mussolini was a benevolent and patriotic despot. As for his purging of the liberal democratic priest Don Luigi Sturzo, it was a necessary consequence of the politics of the Popular Party, which the Fascist government could ill afford to tolerate. Indeed, wrote Petrie, the Vatican's troubles with the Fascists were directly caused by the intrigues of Sturzo's party.[120]

Sir Charles Petrie's position on the Spanish Civil War mirrored his interpretation of Italian Fascism. The followers of Franco were the progenitors of the true Spanish monarchical tradition. Like the reactionary Carlists, they had no time for the "imported" social and political customs of the French Revolution but rather were trying to restore to Spain the praxis of throne and altar found in Catholic corporativism.

Many of the writers associated with the *English Review* circle and the January Club were members of the "Friends of Nationalist Spain," the most important pro-Franco organization in Britain. This group was founded by the Count of Alba and Luis Bidwell Bolín, who before the war was a journalist for Spain's chief Catholic and pro-monarchist paper, the Madrid daily *ABC*. Bolín served Franco in many capacities, eventually acting as press attaché at the

Spanish embassy in London. The idea behind the Friends of Nationalist Spain, wrote Bolín, was to make "the truth better known" about what was happening in that country.[121] Bolín himself, however, was notorious for ensuring that only his version of the truth about Spain was made known. As Nationalist Chief of Press in the south of Spain, Bolín had been instructed by his boss, General José Millán Astray y Terreros, to intimidate foreign journalists into following the Nationalist line.[122] Bolín pursued his orders with zeal, especially in the case involving Arthur Koestler, whom he had imprisoned. It appears that Bolín was prepared to hang Koestler on the spot after arresting him in Málaga (Bolín disapproved of Koestler's journalism) but was persuaded from doing so by the intervention of Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, a well-connected English nobleman.[123]

There were five "original" founding members of the Friends of Nationalist Spain: Bolín, the Count of Alba, Charles Petrie, Victor Raikes, MP, and Douglas Jerrold. Jerrold and Bolín claimed that they "lit the fuse" for the civil war by conspiring to smuggle Franco out of the Canary Islands on a secret flight in order to take charge of the military uprising in Morroco.[124] The Friends quickly attracted supporters, and Bolín could boast that the group had a considerable amount of political clout in appropriate circles. Such pressures served to influence banks and the government in favor of Nationalist interests.[125] Arnold Lunn related that Neville Chamberlain had told Sir Martin Melvin, owner of the Catholic weekly *The Universe,* that if it had not been for the forceful action of Catholics he would have been obliged to take action extremely embarrassing to Franco's cause.[126]

An important member of the "Friends" who served as an active propagandist carefully working behind the scenes was the Marquis del Moral, Frederick Ramón Bertodano y Wilson. Moral was born in Australia, served in the British army in the Boer War and World War I, and later acquired a Spanish title and citizenship. Along with Jerrold and Bolín he published an anti-Republican book called *The Spanish Republic* in 1933.[127] The purpose of the book was to expose the Republic's corruption, human rights abuses, and general drift toward anarchy. Christopher Hollis gave *The Spanish Republic* a very favorable review in the *Catholic Herald* (29 July 1933), and it was well received among English Catholic readers.[128] Douglas Jerrold claimed

that Moral was the spark plug behind the Friends, a "remarkable and buoyant personality" whose "overflowing hospitality kept our small group in being and in remarkable amity over a number of years."[129] Moral had personal access both to Franco and to a number of conservative MPs, over whom he had considerable influence.[130] In August 1936 Moral submitted to the British Foreign Office photocopies of "certain secret reports and orders of the Socialist-Communist Headquarters in Spain," supposedly obtained for him with considerable difficulty, calling for an uprising between early May and late June 1936. This was part of the evidence used by the Catholic Right to prove that the *pronunciamiento* was prompted by the necessity of averting a communist takeover in Spain. These documents, which the British Foreign Office found to be forgeries, were later published in Arthur Loveday's books *World War in Spain* (London, 1939) and *Spain, 1923–1948; Civil War and World War* (London, 1949). Loveday was pro-Insurgent and a former president of the British Chamber of Commerce in Barcelona, and his books were vehicles of propaganda for Franco's cause. Close analysis of the documents and the circumstances in which Loveday procured them suggest that they were concocted before the civil war by some pro-fascist group to convince the Spanish people that the Reds were planning a revolution. Variations of this so-called "secret evidence" were published in 1937 by the Nazi-controlled anti-Komintern in Berlin and reprinted in a number of other publications in France, the United States, and elsewhere.[131] These documents served as "indisputable evidence" for the British and American supporters of Franco's cause that the *Movimiento Nacional* was the only thing that prevented a communist takeover in Spain. Typical of this attitude was Owen B. McGuire, a regular commentator on the Spanish Civil War for *The Sign,* the national Catholic magazine of the American Passionist Fathers. Reference was seldom made, wrote McGuire, to plans for a Red revolution in the spring of 1936, which only failed because of the army uprising.[132]

Another key activist for the Friends was the Tory MP, Brigadier-General Sir Henry Page Croft. Like his friend Hilaire Belloc, Croft proclaimed that Franco was a gallant and heroic Christian figure and worked indefatigably for his cause both inside and outside Parliament.[133]

Hilaire Belloc also did his part for the Friends of Nationalist Spain. He wrote the chairman of the Friends Committee, Lord R. F. Phillimore, a seminal figure in the Franco propaganda campaign and unofficial envoy to Nationalist Spain for Prime Minister Chamberlain, that he supported their cause "from the bottom of my heart." Phillimore recruited Belloc as a keynote speaker for a major public meeting of the Friends to discuss the importance of Spain for Christian civilization. The gathering was held at Queen's Hall on 29 March 1939; its main purpose was to "scant" the idea of Italian and German domination in Spain.[134]

Belloc also worked actively in a confidential, behind-the-scenes fashion for the supporters of Nationalist Spain. He served as a recruiter of wealthy and influential conservatives willing to tour Nationalist territory and thus provide support for Franco's crusade. Among a host of potential recruits on Belloc's "strictly private and confidential" list were Duff and Lady Diana Cooper, Mrs. Raymond Asquith, Lady Helen Asquith, J. M. Morton, and Desmond McCarthy.[135]

Douglas Woodruff's London *Tablet,* which was the most prominent organ of Catholic opinion in Britain,[136] Jerrold's *English Review,* the Chesterton-Belloc alliance's *G.K.'s Weekly* and the *Weekly Review,* and the Jesuit paper *The Month* were all English journals of some influence among Catholic intellectuals that took up the propaganda campaign for Franco. Another was the *Colosseum.* This feisty, impolite quarterly was founded and edited by the young Bernard Wall (he was twenty-five years old when the first issue appeared). Inspired by Chesterton's and Belloc's papers, though with a decidedly more highbrow touch, the *Colosseum* provided a forum for Catholic-minded thinkers who sought to recover spiritual balance and Christian moral integration in a world consumed by the blind power of science and machines. Echoing Chesterton, the energetic Wall pointed out in one of the journal's early issues that "Modern life is on the average no more than a meaningless circle, unsanctified by any ideal, ordered towards no end, a frightful hash and chaos of old survivals and new fads."[137]

The youthful Bernard Wall had drunk deeply from Bellocian wells while a student at the Jesuit school, Stonyhurst. "Where tri-

umphalism touched the nerve of my schooldays closest," he wrote, "was in the influence of Hilaire Belloc."[138] Having been taught history in his last two years at Stonyhurst by Christopher Hollis, Wall entered Oxford with a physical *joie de vivre* fueled exclusively by Belloc's polemical works. His deep convictions about the truths of Belloc's book *The Servile State* led Wall to seek out the fledgling Distributist League at Oxford. He soon took charge of the movement, and, thanks to his prodigious energies, the League grew enormously in numbers.

The appearance of the *Colosseum* in March 1934 was Wall's debut as a publicist. The operation was comparatively successful. It quickly built up a subscription list in England and the United States with a circulation that exceeded that of T. S. Eliot's *Criterion*. *Colosseum* published a number of distinguished continental writers, including Jacques Maritain, the Russian Christian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev, Gonzague de Reynold, an eminent nobleman and professor at the University of Fribourg, and the Belgian writer Marc de Munnynk. British writers who appeared regularly in the journal were J. M. Turnell, Eric Gill, Christopher Dawson, and E. J. Oliver, Wall's Oxford friend who frequently helped him edit the paper.

The young and impressionable Bernard Wall, following the lead of his intellectual mentors Arnold Lunn and Christopher Hollis, argued in his writings that the Renaissance was a chief source of the twentieth-century malaise.[139] In the same vein as several reactionary intellectuals who had been influenced by the brilliant T. E. Hulme and Ramiro de Maeztu[140] (notably, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, and William Butler Yeats), he contrasted the roving, restless romantic of the day unfavorably with the "classical type" of Christian eras.[141] Not surprisingly, the youthful Wall continued to walk the paths suggested by de Maeztu and, much to the chagrin of his more liberal-minded Catholic friends and advisors (including Eric Gill, Father Victor White, Don Luigi Sturzo, and Jacques Maritain), became infatuated with fascism as a movement in tune with the moral integration of classical times. As Wall's assistant E. J. Oliver observed, the reactionary impulse all over Europe against the French revolutionary tradition represented a return to morality. The object of the Royalists in France and the critics of democratic, Republican

government was moral as political: ". . . it is the characteristic of these modern movements that they reunite politics with morality."[142]

The *Colosseum* threw its undivided and engergetic support to the Nationalist crusade because, taking up a line of argument so eloquently expressed by the *éminence gris* Hilaire Belloc, Franco was saving Spanish Christian culture from Bolshevism. But Wall went further than Belloc and most other conservative Catholics who supported the rebels: he was willing to accept the fascist label for Franco. To the editor of *Colosseum,* the rightist totalitarian alternative to Marxism had many qualities, both positive and negative. Fascism, like democracy, might occasionally bring accidental evils and dangers. But it was capable of being a good political form the Church could accept and with which it could collaborate.[143] Most significantly, wrote Wall, fascism was the best weapon against Bolshevism:

> Fascism has saved Italy from the fate of Spain, and it may also save Spain from the fate of Russia. Italy has a youthful healthiness which is badly needed in the world, and the fact that Fascism has made Italy a great power is a good thing primarily because the whole mode of life, the way of civilisation that Italy represents so superbly, has been resurrected at a time when the basic culture of Europe may have disappeared entirely.[144]

Bernard Wall's eventual embrace of fascism was rooted in his strong distaste for liberal democracy. Like many other conservative Catholics, he regarded communism as its natural outgrowth. His main criticism of liberalism was its antipathy for tradition. Wall admitted that conservatives and the elites of the old orders had provided good cause for such hostility, for they had lost touch with the masses and their ideas and programs had favored the rich. Since the defeat of conservatism in World War I, however, liberal politicians through their control of the League of Nations had mounted a root-and-branch attack on all vestiges of tradition in European culture as retrograde and evil. In their laudable quest for social justice, the forces of the left were aiming to create a new world order in which religion, patriotism, and family values would become outmoded historical curiosities. Liberalism, "the philosophy of Geneva," was

grounded in a deracinated view of humanity: it denied the legitimacy of national historical traditions as integrative forces in the cultures of Europe. What liberals failed to appreciate, claimed Wall, was that tradition was as essential to civilized life as social justice, that the one could not be achieved without the other. In a phrase derivative of Belloc, Wall noted that the movements of the left were strongest amongst "those classes which do not share the heritage of European culture."[145]

Bernard Wall came to believe that the fascist movements in Italy and Germany were positive reactions to the excesses of deracinated, cosmopolitan liberalism. Fascism represented a "revival of traditionalism," not entirely like the old conservatism it replaced, but rather evincing a willingness to embrace scientific development constructively while at the same time preserving the basic cultural life of people by subordinating technical and commercial development to traditional beliefs. Fascism in Wall's view was a herald of the "new Middle Ages":

> The strictness of its discipline is suggestive of feudalism, and this discipline may be a necessary means for giving mankind today a corporative social conscience. . . . The very exaggerations of the claims of the Fascist State over the individual and its use of military discipline for knitting the atoms of society into a corporative whole suggest a comparison with the achievement of feudalism in building up our civilisation.[146]

In its October 1938 issue *Colosseum* published for its readers the complete text of José Antonio Primo de Rivera's official doctrine of the Phalanx (or Falange Espanola, the party of Spanish fascism). It was a full-fledged attack on democracy and liberalism that called for the construction of what de Rivera named the "totalitarian State." *Colosseum* announced that de Rivera's fascism represented the true spirit of the Nationalist revolution in Spain.[147]

Wall's quarterly also distinguished itself from other British and American Catholic publications on the issue of Nazi Germany. Its editor occasionally had good things to say about Hitler. In January 1939, for example, Wall wrote a long article discussing the merits

of Nazi racist policies, noting how they compared favorably with Catholicism as a force for creating national solidarity. Racism, argued Wall, "gives the people unity and hope."[148] *Colosseum* supported a rapprochement between Germany and Britain. Wall asserted that it was important for the British to appreciate the fact that Germany needed *Lebensraum*. Like Great Britain and the United States, Germany, with the most "technologically developed" and "educated" people on earth, had the right to expand.[149]

In some ways Bernard Wall's views were the apotheosis of the continental integralist ideas that infused the English-speaking world through the pens of such persuasive writers as Hilaire Belloc and his Latinophile coterie. Given the authoritarian and anti-Semitic proclivities of integralist thinking, it was only natural that those who were seduced by its creed would feel sympathy for the reactionary posturings of fascists and fellow-travelers who defended Franco's rebellion as a crusade for Christian culture.