



*Days of our  
Years*

Salvo

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declared legitimate the very servitude from which democracy had vowed to liberate mankind."

Not only did the Church of Rome acquire a reputation during the last century for being the sworn enemy of all the political interests of democracy, but it placed itself squarely across the path of science. "There is not a single great scientific doctrine," adds Guignebert, "no matter whence it came or in what direction it moved, that did not encounter the condemnation, or at least the opposition and the ill will of the ecclesiastical authorities. This is the reason that science and Catholicism are almost contradictory terms."

When Rome discovered in the course of time that it could not stem the mounting tide of popular freedom and scientific research, it sought to head off the trend towards democracy by permitting Catholics to participate in popular political movements, without, however, for a moment abandoning its old reactionary principles. Leo XIII, who is generally taken as the most social-minded of the Popes, consented that Catholics in France should at last rally to the republican regime, but then the damage had already been done: because of Rome's protracted opposition to the democratic republic, millions of middle-class people and virtually the entire proletariat had become estranged from the Church and, what is more serious, from Christianity. Finding the Church always in their path as a tremendous obstacle, always in opposition to the two great movements which have determined contemporary evolution—democracy and modern science—liberals and scientists left the Church alone and stopped arguing about the claims of Rome to have the last word and to impose its views.

When the hope of a restoration of the old feudal order, which was destroyed by the French Revolution, did not materialize in the course of the nineteenth century, but instead the labor movement gained steadily in strength and in the consciousness of its strength, the papacy changed its tactics but not its fundamental policy. It encouraged the formation of Catholic political parties in the democratic states whose constitutions it had formerly denounced. Such parties came into existence in Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy. The chief task of these Catholic parties was to prevent political democracy from moving towards its logical consequence: social and industrial democracy. They set out to stultify the growth of the labor movement by withdrawing the Catholic masses from the influence of the general labor movement and to

canalize the entire working-class movement into channels where it should offer no threat to the existing order.

There should have been no surprise, therefore, when the Vatican took the side of Franco in the civil war in Spain. Franco attacked the emerging democratic regime with the aid of the Fascists of Germany and Italy and with the intention of turning Spain into a totalitarian state with a totalitarian religion.<sup>7</sup> For today Rome considers the Fascist regime the nearest to its dogmas and interests. We have not merely the Reverend Father Coughlin praising Mussolini's Italy as "a Christian democracy," but *Civiltà Cattolica*, house organ of the Jesuits, says quite frankly: "The very Christian idea of class collaboration has been widely diffused and its translation into reality takes on the most diverse forms. But whereas everywhere else its realization is slow and indecisive, in Italy alone it advances energetically and with rapid strides towards its complete fruition. In Italy it has chosen the form of the corporate state, which is, without doubt, the most audacious experiment amongst those we know in the postwar years. It is to be noted that the condition of success of this regime is its double nature, for it includes simultaneously positive and negative elements. On the one hand, these move away from the liberal and Socialist ideas and, on the other hand, they approach the principles exposed in that magnificent document of the Roman Church (the encyclical *Rerum novarum* of Pope Leo XIII is meant), which should be called the charter of the Christian labor movement."<sup>8</sup>

There you have an authoritative declaration which holds that Fascism is the regime that corresponds most closely to the concepts of the Church of Rome. In other words, the regime which is based on the ruins of the working-class organizations it has destroyed, including the Catholic organizations in Italy, Austria, Germany and the Basqueland, the regime which has reduced the workers to the level of famished slaves, who have no more rights in this life but to work for the aggrandizement of the imperialist states of Mussolini and Hitler and to prepare themselves for slaughter on the battlefield—that regime has the approbation of, and receives its inspiration

<sup>7</sup> Bernanos relates that in the Balearic Islands the clergy, with the help of the insurgent military, forced backsliders into the confessionals on pain of death. *Op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> Franz von Papen declared on January 14, 1934, in *Der Völkischer Beobachter*: "The Third Reich is the first power which not only recognizes, but which puts into practice the high principles of the papacy."