

What is Spanish Falangism?

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While the phases of the Spanish Civil War are followed by all with keen interest, less attention is paid to the exact ideas that inspire the revolt of the Spanish national forces against communism: perhaps because many believe that the positive ideological phase, in revolutions, always develops at a later date.

We are not of this opinion. We believe that the best soldier is one who fights with a precise knowledge of his cause and that ideas — even if they are only intimated, or vaguely grasped, more than clearly formulated — are the essential reality in every genuinely important historical upheaval. We are therefore grateful to Alberto Luchini for informing us of the doctrinal program of one of the primary Spanish nationalist movements, the so-called “Spanish Falange”, rendering its terms lively with resources and a truly astonishing style of translation and we would say almost necromantic, through vigour, precision and pleasing improvisation (*I Falangisti spagnoli*, Beltrami, Florence, 1936). It deals with a general profession of political faith, whose formulation appears to be due to José Antonio Primo de Rivera or to the writer Giménez Caballero. The program, through the richness of spiritual content, has almost surprised us, in so far as we believe it opportune to report it to the Italian public by expressing, in brief, its meaning.

First Point. Neither linguistic nor ethnic or territorial unity is considered sufficient to give the idea of nation its true content. “A nation is a predestined, cosmic unity.” Such, it claims, is also the case in Spain: a unity, a destiny, “an entity subsisting beyond every person, class or community in which it is actualized”, not only, but moreover above “the total quantity resulting from their aggregation.” That is, it is about the spiritual and transcendent idea of the nation, as opposed to every community — of the right or left — and every mechanism.” A true entity of its perfect truth, a living and sovereign reality, Spain tends, consequently, towards its own definite destination.” In this regard, they not only speak of “a return in full to worldwide spiritual cooperation”, but also of a “universal mission of Spain”, of a creation by the “solar unity” that it represents, of “a new world.” Of course, this latter proposition, good intentions aside, remains a question mark.

What can Spain today, and even tomorrow, say in regard to the universal idea, is in fact unclear. But the reality is that here we have the effect of a precise logic. One cannot in fact assert spiritually the idea of nation without being instinctively brought to surpass its particularism, to conceive it as the principle of a supranational spiritual organization, with a value therefore of universality: even when it has little disposition to give concrete and effective form to such a need. And vice versa: every particularistic restriction of a national idea is going always to accuse it of a latent materialism and collectivism.

Moving on to more specifically political part of the program. The Falangists say no to the agnostic State, a passive spectator of national public life, or, at most, a police officer in a grand

style (“night watchman state”). The State of all, total and totalitarian, justifying itself, however, in this form, always with reference to the ideal and perpetual notion of Spain, independent of any interest whatever merely of class or party.

The eradication of parties and of the associated parliament follows naturally from this view. But the Falangists, under the force of the secular traditions of their homeland, also seem to be on guard against those excesses of totalitarianism, which, in their work of leveling and uniformitization, threaten to make some nationalist tendencies, despite everything, similar to the nationalizations by Bolshevism. It is so that the Falangists insist on the necessity that organic human groups, alive and vital, articulate the true state and are its solid foundation; so they intend to defend the integrity of the family, the cell of social unity; local autonomy, the cell of territorial unity; and finally, corporate and professional unity, the cells of a new national organization of work and organs to overcome the class struggle.

In the latter respect, adherence of the Falangists to the fascist corporate idea is complete. “The union and corporate groups, so far unable to participate in national public life, will have to rise, knocking down the artificial barriers of parliament and political parties, with the direct organs of the State.” The community of producers as an organic whole will be conceived as “totally co-interested and involved in the only and highest common enterprise”: an enterprise in which the leadership must always be secured to the general national interest.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the chapter that immediately follows this is about the human personality, and that it denounces the danger that a whole nation will turn into a kind of “test laboratory”, as in the the logical consequences of Bolshevism and of mechanism. The prominence given to the dignity of the human personality, by distinguishing it clearly from the individualistic will, seems to us indeed as one of the most salient and characteristic of the Spanish Falangist program and the effect of a healthy traditional vision. We quote the passage that, in this respect, is the most significant: “The Spanish Falange discerns in the human personality, beyond the physical individual and physiological individuality, the spiritual monad, the soul ordered to eternal life, the instrument of absolute values, an absolute value in himself.” Hence, the justification of a fundamental respect for “the dignity of the human spirit, for the wholeness and freedom of the person: freedom legitimized from above, of a profound nature; that no one can ever transpose into the freedom to conspire against civil society and to undermine its foundations.” With this statement, one of the greatest dangers of the anti-Marxist counter-revolution is decisively overcome: the danger, that is, of infringing the spiritual values of the personality in the moment of rightly striking the liberalistic and individualistic error in political and social life.

With this premise, every materialistic interpretation of history is rejected by the Falangists; its spirit is conceived by them as the source of every truly decisive force – it is worth pointing it out. And a profession of Catholic faith is likewise natural; the Catholic interpretation of life is, historically speaking, the only one that is “Spanish” and every work of national reconstruction must pertain to it. This will not mean a Spain, which would once more have to submit to the interference, intrigues and the hegemony of ecclesiastical power, but a new Spain, animated by the “universal Catholic sense” that already guides her, “against the alliance of the ocean and

barbarism, to the conquest of unknown continents”: a Spain permeated by the religious forces of the spirit.

So the Falangists fight for these ideas, as a “volunteer warrior” meant to “conquer Spain for Spain.” These are ideas that, in their general outlines, seem to us perfectly “in order”, they already present a precise aspect and may have the value of solid points of reference. If the Spanish national movement will really be penetrated by them, we have a double reason to sincerely wish them a complete, rapid, and decisive victory: not only for the negative anti-Communist and anti-Bolshevik facet, but also for what in its positive aspects will be able to follow from it in the whole of a new hierarchical Europe, of nations and of personality.