

Falangism: a stepping-stone to Hitler-style fascism

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The term falangism first came into use during the Spanish Civil War, waged from 1933-1936. It describes a system advanced by Jose Antonio Primo de Rivero, the son of an earlier Spanish dictator, Gen. Primo de Rivera. The word falangism means one-party, referring to the totalitarian-style government advocated by those favoring this fascistic form of rule. Falangism also is identified with syndicalism, or the predominance of trade unions.

Falangist beliefs and goals differ from group to group. All these various groups, however, base their philosophies on A. Primo de Rivera's 26-point system. Because it is a variant of fascism, it presents great potential for abuse, yet fascism is one of several forms of government defined as indifferent by the Church. Therefore it is tolerated, not *sanctioned* by the Church as long as Catholics are free to practice their faith.

In 1933, Gen. Francisco Franco led falangists, monarchists, military officers and other Spaniards in a fight to the death to keep Spain from falling into the hands of the Marxists. Catholic Action was forbidden in Spain and a total of 14,000 priests and religious were cruelly put to death during this war. Franco triumphed over the Marxists to head a one-party government that combined Italian fascism with authoritarian elements of the former Spanish monarchy, toning down the totalitarian tendencies inherent in falangism and fascism.

He further tempered his rule by formally adopting the Catholic faith as the national religion. A. Primo de Rivera's 26 points reflect many principles consistent with Catholic teaching. These include:

- A rejection of freemasonry, communism and liberalism
- A strong emphasis on family values
- The right to own and administer property
- Rights of the worker to secure a living wage
- The condemnation of the party system of politics
- The necessity of upholding the common good, over and above individual rights
- The dignity of the human person
- Elimination of class struggle
- Necessity of work suited to individual talents and circumstances
- Emphasis on a strong work ethic
- The importance of agricultural endeavors and the rural life
- The necessity of education available to all in the creation of an intelligent and productive citizenry

Falangism is a species of nationalism. All nationalistic governments must decide during their formation what principles their education efforts will embody in order to accomplish the intended strengthening of the nation state. In the case of post-revolution Spain, the

chosen system of education and basis for the implementation of national programs was conservative (now understood as traditional) Catholicism. For this reason the Church tolerated falangism in Spain with certain qualifications, but did not endorse the Spanish government as such. Although the method of rule preferred by the Church is monarchical, modern circumstances have forced Her hand in political matters. The Church therefore has limited Her concerns to preserving the freedom of Catholics to practice their religion in any political system determined indifferent, without exception. As Rev. Denis Fahey explained, however, the disdain with which monarchies now are regarded does nothing to prepare the way for the acceptance of Christ's reign as King. Fahey wrote, "It is contrary to the order and finality of the world to abandon the struggle," for a return of all nations to Christ's kingly rule. ¹

Elements of falangism not sanctioned by the Church would include non-Catholic education and a non-Catholic philosophy of life, something the Church always has opposed. The general promotion of the Fatherland or Motherland as the end-all, be-all of existence also is contrary to Catholic teaching. Man must render to Caesar, it is true, but countless martyrs have gladly offered their lives as testimony to the fact that patriotism must be firmly subordinated to the Catholic faith.

The trade union system promoted by falangism/fascism is open to abuses, as Pope Leo XIII observed: ² "Many of these societies are in the hands of invisible leaders, and are managed on principles far from compatible with Christianity and the public well being." As this Pope points out, far better would be a return to an adapted version of the guild workers associations, so beneficial to working men and women in the medieval ages. If the Catholic Church appeared to acquiesce to Franco's form of government from 1936 until his death in 1975, it is only because the principles governing Spain were conservative Catholic in nature. The Church was supported generously during Franco's reign and Her people were well treated. Even under the present democratic government complemented by monarchical rule in Spain today, many elements of Franco's 40-year rule remain.

Many to this day believe the Catholic Church not only supported Franco's regime but endorsed falangism and its fascist parent. Those now leveling pro-Nazi, anti-Jew allegations against Pope Pius XII claim he supported fascist Italy, endorsed Franco's regime and failed to stop National Socialism in Germany dead in its tracks during his tenure there as papal legate under Pope Pius XI. Yet even more recent secular historic accounts seem to contradict this belief. In The Library of Congress' Country Studies, the author states that most analysts describe Franco's system as semi-fascist precisely because Catholicism tempered its more undesirable elements. The Encyclopedia of Religion and Politics describes Franco's regime and other similar fascist efforts in Europe as para-fascist, citing the mitigating influences of Catholicism/Christianity, which provided the basis for these governments.

¹ Ruler's of Russia, pg. 83

² Rerum Novarum

In his papal biography on Pope Pius XII, ³ Charles Hugo Doyle, S.J. was careful to explain that fascism is one of the indifferent forms of government tolerated by the Church. To prove this, he quoted Pope Pius XI's encyclical addressed to Spain in 1933: "Universally known is the fact that the Catholic Church is never bound to one form of government more than the other, provided the divine rights of God and Christian conscience are safe. She does not find any difficulty in adapting Herself to various civil institutions, be they monarchic, republican, aristocratic or democratic," (pg. 114).

In his book, Doyle quoted author Joseph Dineen as follows: "Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli were so opposed to Communism that they chose to ally themselves with Franco's government," (p. 115). Commenting on this passage, Doyle writes, "That they were opposed to communism there can be no doubt, but to say they 'chose' Franco's government is incorrect." To prove this he cited Pope Pius XI's blessing for those fighting the Marxist rebels seeking control in Spain: "Our Benediction, above any mere political and mundane considerations, goes out to those who have assumed the difficult and dangerous task of defending and restoring the rights and dignity of conscience, the prime condition and most solid basis of all human and civil welfare." Doyle added that the Church's primary interest, as always, was 'defending and restoring' the rights and honor owed to God and religion. Marxist rebels already had executed some 14,000 priests and religious in Spain.

Others maintain that Pope Pius XI supported the corporativism and syndicalism so favored by the falangists. But this is to ignore the plain words of his encyclical. "There are some who fear the state is substituting itself in the place of private initiative instead of limiting itself to necessary and sufficient help and assistance. It is feared that the new syndical and corporative institution possesses an excessively bureaucratic and political character and that, notwithstanding the general advantages referred to above, it risks serving particular political aims rather than contributing to the initiation of a better social order." ⁴ If the Pope then went on to speak of a possible "middle course," it must be remembered that Nazi Germany had not yet played its hand, nor had it come to light that many of the unions of workingmen in this country had been corrupted by Mafia and other elements. And yet the Pope allows for the possibility that all might not be well even at that point, and might go awry in the future. He never strays from the Church's continual insistence that in order for any earthly government to function correctly and harmoniously, it must be attuned to the laws of God and Catholics must be in the forefront of the governing body. The Catholic Church could hardly be called her own institution and the Pope Christ's vicar on earth if She did not have the right to defend Her own interests and those of Her Divine founder. To deny the Church this right is to deny the very purpose of Her existence.

As Doyle also pointed out, A.D. Petroff, writing for a Russian publication in the 1930s, was the first to accuse the Church of patronizing the reconstructed Spanish State under Franco as a prototype of the Christian State. Anticipating this unjust accusation, Pius XI already had warned Franco that he should not use God and religion "for selfish interests,"

³ The Life of Pope Pius XII, 195

⁴ Quadragesimo Anno

as a cloak to strengthen his religious party. The Spanish bishops also told Franco: "We would be the first to regret that the irresponsible autocracy of a parliament should be replaced by the yet more terrible power of a dictatorship without roots in the nation," (p.117). Doyle offered other proofs of non-complicity too numerous to include here.

In his papal biography of Pope Pius XII,⁵ Nazareno Padareello explained why the Vatican had to tread softly in its condemnations, even of Freemasonry and Communism. Quoting an address given by Pius XII to members of the Sacred College and the diplomatic corps in 1946, he wrote: "We have been very careful, despite strong feelings in some quarters, not to allow a single utterance, a single mark of approval or encouragement for the war against Russia to come from our lips." The fascists condemned the Vatican for this stand because they wished to use the Holy See's renewed opposition to atheistic Communism as fodder for their propaganda campaigns. Padellaro labeled those who "presume to reproach the Holy See with undue leniency towards fascism (as) politically ignorant."

Today worldwide, falangist groups of various descriptions are cashing in on the increasing abuses cropping up in some democratic regimes to promote their own political views here and abroad. Those groups active in America:

- Proclaim Christianity as their platform, advocating a return of prayer and the Ten Commandments to the schools and enforcement of religious freedom
- Place strong emphasis on family values, property rights and agrarian interests
- Support a ban on abortion and euthanasia
- Favor strict laws banning pornography and displays of homosexual behavior in public with an accompanying campaign against indecency
- Advocate strict adherence to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights
- Demand the right to keep and bear arms
- Are in favor of laws forbidding immigration and for deportation of those in America illegally

While some groups vary in intensity in their views, they share most goals in common. Many would read the above and agree entirely with all these goals, and therein lies the danger. Just as in the days prior to World War II, shadowy fringe elements (such as the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi sympathizers in the U.S.) could theoretically dominate an entire range of groups with these very goals.

While a falangist-style government might sound most attractive to conservative Catholics and Protestants because religious freedom is guaranteed, all would depend on the faithfulness of those in control. Catholics, especially those intending to practice their faith to the letter, did not fare well in post-Reformation England, or for that matter, in many of the American colonies. The Ku Klux Klan/WASP (white American, Anglo-Saxon Protestant) mentality that has never lost its foothold in the Deep South does not bode well for Catholics, especially those not professing an ecumenical mindset. Just a quick look at some of the conservative Protestant sites on the worldwide web is enough to convince the

⁵ [Portrait of Pius XII](#), 195

true Catholic that many non-Catholics are actively seeking to discredit and destroy what remains of the Church.

As Pope Leo XIII stated: "If society is to be healed now, in no way can it be healed save by a return to Christian life and Christian institutions." ⁶ And here the word Christian reads Catholic. It cannot be ignored or forgotten that in essence, falangism is a fascistic form of government and that fascism tends to admit the abuses of dictatorship. Nor can it be denied that this form of government, even professing Christianity, is still capable of presenting love of country as the predominating civic religion. This very heresy was condemned by Pope Leo XIII under the title of Americanism in these words: "Those opinions cannot be approved by us, the sum total of which some indicate by the name of Americanism...for it raises a suspicion that there are those among you who desire a Church in America other than that which is in all the rest of the world." ⁷

For those not familiar with the history of this heresy, several American bishops and some cardinals in the latter half of the 19th century attempted to identify Catholic belief with American democracy. To accomplish this, they diluted and omitted some of those doctrines contained in the deposit of faith in order to make it more appealing to potential converts. Any organizing of the state under so-called Christian principles that would claim to embrace Catholicism, yet actually minimized or compromised its doctrines would place Catholics in danger of embracing this heresy.

We live in perilous times, times which try men's souls. But the solution cannot help but lie only within the pale of the Catholic Church. Until now, many have believed that the New World Order proclaimed by presidents and endorsed by political leaders worldwide was the greatest threat to Christianity. Yet fascists and falangists both define their political movements as the establishment of a 'new order.' If American Traditionalists advocated only falangism this would be disturbing enough, since only a "Christian" (i.e., Protestant) model for education could be used as the accepted standard in America. Instead, many sympathize with or openly promote Hitler-style fascism, and this alarming trend is escalating worldwide. That "Christian" falangism is gaining adherents indicates that fascism in its more "acceptable" form is successfully being sold to Americans fed up with Big Brother democracy. In future essays we will discuss why Nazi fascism is such a powerful tool in the hands of those wishing to organize and enthuse Traditionalists.

⁶ Rerum Novarum

⁷ Testem benevolentiae, January 23, 1899; DZ 1975

