

5-2015

None Spoke Spanish: An Examination of the Catholic-Protestant Discourse on the Spanish Civil War in the United States

John Maxie Gause
Clemson University

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses

Recommended Citation

Gause, John Maxie, "None Spoke Spanish: An Examination of the Catholic-Protestant Discourse on the Spanish Civil War in the United States" (2015). *All Theses*. 2132.

https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/2132

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

NONE SPOKE SPANISH:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE CATHOLIC-PROTESTANT DISCOURSE
ON THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR IN THE UNITED STATES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
John Maxie Gause
May, 2015

Accepted by:
Dr. Richard L. Saunders, Jr., Committee Chair
Dr. Alan Grubb
Dr. Steven G. Marks

ABSTRACT

The following study endeavors to synthesize knowledge on what has heretofore been an almost entirely unexplored factor in the internationalized Spanish Civil War, that of the debate between Roman Catholics and Protestants in the United States. Upon examining documentary evidence collected from three different periodicals from either denominational camp between February, 1936 and June, 1939, a number of suggestive conclusions have been reached.

First, American Catholics and Protestants were fundamentally at odds regarding the Spanish Republic, the Popular Front, and Francisco Franco's Nationalist insurgency which rose five months after the election of that Leftist coalition. This study indicates that Catholics universally, but not unfairly, condemned the Popular Front as a Soviet construct, bent upon fomenting revolutionary chaos and, hence, supported the rebellion as the shield and the sword of Western Civilization and Christendom. Conversely, Protestant opinion adamantly defended the Spanish government which, despite containing some unpleasant radical elements, would nevertheless be represented as being in consonance with the democratic tradition and humankind's hatred of squalid backwardness.

Next, throughout the course of the conflict, both segments of Christian opinion entrenched themselves in their respective positions and would champion “their” Spanish belligerents by employing of a ceaseless stream of proving by assertion, or *argumentum ad infinitum*. This would include a brief, albeit curious, episode in which both sides would attempt to correlate either combatant faction in Spain with the revolutionary and

democratic heritage of the United States.

Finally, and due in part to the previous item, the almost unswerving partisan fidelities of those American Catholic and Protestant publications demonstrated that they were, in fact, ignorant as to the underlying issues and the fundamental realities of the struggle in Spain. Their reductionist interpretations rendered in black-and-white a scenario that was nothing if not a cloudy, ambiguous gray.

DEDICATION

For those I love and for those who have left us behind.

“History to the defeated
May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon”
– W. H. Auden, “Spain”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In any academic study of this size, there are bound to be dozens of individuals who contributed to its production and the well-being of its author. Here one has space for but a few. First, I would like to offer my profound thanks and appreciation to Dr. Richard Saunders for his years-long status as a personal friend and professional mentor. I would not have been here if not for him. And next, while I never knew Dr. Alan Grubb during the time in which I was an undergraduate at Clemson University, I now greatly regret that reality. My first experience with him came when I took his split course on the First World War. He has been very kind and generous toward me and my work and for that I thank him. The exact same can be said of Dr. Steven Marks, although I studied early Western Civilization with him years ago. But I would also like to extend my warmest thanks to him for enhancing my interest in Soviet history, specifically after completing his outstanding course on the height of Stalin's Purge in 1937 and sharing a Russian meal with the class at his home. Finally, as far as professorial acknowledgments go, I would be greatly remiss in not saluting Dr. Paul Anderson. He, too, acted as a mentor during a very difficult time, helped set me upon this path, and, without his assistance, the second chapter of this work would not have come together nearly so well, if at all.

It would also be negligent of me to not acknowledge the support, camaraderie, and general positivity of my colleagues in our cohort, those who came just before ours, and those who are just now rising through the ranks. And, of course, one must never forget one's family: my father, mother, two younger sisters, grandmother, aunts, uncles,

and all the rest. Nor should one ever forget one's friends—my other brothers and sisters.

There is never enough room to name them all. But they know who they are.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	<i>i</i>
ABSTRACT.....	<i>ii</i>
DEDICATION.....	<i>iv</i>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	<i>v</i>
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: CRUSADE OR CLASS CONFLICT?.....	14
CHAPTER 2: “A SPECIES OF RELIGIOUS WAR”.....	72
CHAPTER 3: “THE TYRANNY OF SEMANTICS”.....	124
CONCLUSION.....	176
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	182

A Brief Introduction and Historiography¹

The brutal civil war that ravaged Spain for nearly three years between July, 1936 and April, 1939 has long been a topic of curiosity for professional historians and amateur enthusiasts. An exceptionally complicated conflict, textured and nuanced with labyrinthine intricacies, it has been burdened with a wealth of historiographical interpretations. Often, it has been sentimentally portrayed as the “last great cause” of the modern era, the “good fight,” most commonly between the forces of liberal democracy on the one hand and those of reactionary, militaristic fascism on the other. Other opinions have held that the struggle in Spain stood as an ideological clash between communism and fascism, a battle between atheism and religion. But what seems to be an almost universal thematic facet of these interpretations has been that the Spanish Civil War acted as something of a prologue or dress rehearsal for the European theater of the Second World War, if not its actual opening act. This is, of course, not an especially surprising conclusion, given the almost immediate “internationalization” of that conflict, which transformed Spain's domestic conflict into a proxy war between the Great Powers then competing for dominance.

In very brief, the war began from a cauldron of purely Spanish forces but was quickly contaminated by external interference. Following the fall of the essentially dictatorial premiership of M. P. de Rivera in 1930 and the subsequent collapse of the Alfonsine monarchy (under Alfonso XIII, of the House of Bourbon) in April, 1931,

¹ For additional information, see annotated bibliography.

Spanish popular opinion allowed for the creation of a second Spanish Republic.² The new government of Spain had arisen primarily through the efforts of the assorted political Left and their immediate aims were to institute a battery of reforms that were inimical to the traditionally vested interests of the constituents of the Right. The new Constitution stripped the heirs of the Spanish aristocracy of their elite legal status and disestablished the Roman Catholic Church. There would be a movement to reorganize (or rather partially dismantle) the bloated Spanish military officer corps; legislative action would be undertaken to proceed toward the secularization of education, the nationalization of banks and railways, and there would be much discussion on the topic of the redistribution of land and wealth.³

Leftist control of Spain's governmental infrastructure did not last, however. By November, 1933, the forces of the conservative and traditionalist Right organized a political confederation (*Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*, CEDA) under the leadership of one G. Robles and handily claimed victory in the elections of that year. Realigned thus, the government of the Republic took on a reactionary character and endeavored to reverse many of the policies put into place by the preceding regime—even to the extent of insisting that its efforts were necessarily defensive against the encroaching Marxist plague.⁴

² The first endured very briefly from February, 1873 until December, 1874. It, like the Second Republic, ended ignominiously following a military *pronunciamento*, albeit much less violently.

³ In regard to the Roman Catholic Church in Spain, that ancient religious institution would be subjected to incendiary attacks during the formative period of the Republic, as it was probably perceived as outcast and unprotected.

⁴ A belief seemingly confirmed by the revolutionary Asturian miners' rebellion in October, 1934 and the

But this, too, did not long endure. By February, 1936, the political pendulum had swung again to the Left: this time, it triumphed through the formulation of a Popular Front. Simply defined by the standards of the day, a Popular Front existed as a broad coalition of elements from the political Left and Center, including every group from anarchists, syndicalists, communists, socialists, social-democrats, bourgeois liberals, and so forth—and these all applied in the Spanish context.⁵ Again drastically reorganized, the government then sought to overturn the reactionary reversals of the regime which had come before.

Very soon after the elections, the nation was stricken by a series of crippling strikes and faced waves of violence directed by radicals against the Right and the Catholic Church. Those in power either could not or would not act decisively to control the actions of their allies, the Right accused the administration of abdicating its responsibility of enforcing the public order, the government faced parliamentary gridlock, and the social turbulence continued to escalate, begetting a cascade of politically-motivated assassinations and reprisals.⁶ Among this number, there would be two that would be the trigger for the beginning of the civil war. During the evening of 12 July, 1936, one Lt. José Castillo, a socialist activist and Assault Guardsman (*Guardia de*

contemporaneous Catalan separatist uprising.

⁵ The idea originated with the Comintern's G. Dimitrov in 1934, and had been devised as the most practical way in which democratic nations could resist fascism and reaction at a time when both Hitler and Mussolini were growing ever more menacing and nearly every developed country appeared to be germinating fascist movements of one description or other.

⁶ Indeed, Spain increasingly appeared to be ungovernable, descending into a state of total social anarchy. There would be bold talk from the Right to the effect that if the government did carry out its duty, then the Right would have to take the steps necessary to quell the public disorder.

Asalto), would be murdered in the streets of Madrid by a group of four Falangist gunmen.⁷ Then, in the early hours of 13 July, 1936, José Calvo Sotelo, a prominent monarchist leader, was taken from his home and shot by multiple socialist militants and *Asaltos*. On 17 July, 1936, the military outposts in Spanish Morocco rose in rebellion; the following day, the garrisons in the major cities on the Iberian mainland revolted. Spain's civil war had begun.⁸

The conflict would, again, rage across nearly three years and, in the end, victory would be claimed over the Republican “Loyalists” by the Right-wing insurgency, later to be dubbed the “Nationalists.” The collective composition of the rebellion would be quite as complex as that of the Loyalists: clerical traditionalists, Falangist “fascists,” two different factions of monarchists, all united by the upstart Spanish military and abetted by the elite, and the Spanish Catholic Church. The progress and eventual outcome of the war notwithstanding—though, at the time, it represented something of a signal triumph, a new high-water mark for fascism—the conflict would be perhaps most significant for its international aspects.

Indeed, the whole of Europe had a great deal of interest in the Spanish struggle. The Spanish Republic received moral and materiel aid from the Soviet Union (and very nominally from France and Mexico). The former power represented the war as a

⁷ Note that the Assault Guards (*Asaltos*) were paramilitary police units established under the auspices of the Second Republic; their trust was to maintain order in urban settings. Secondly, “Falangist” denotes those belonging to the *Falange Española*, the party most closely approximating a “fascist” organization.

⁸ Though they might have offered “bold talk,” the fact was that elements of the incensed Spanish Right were, by the Summer of 1936, already deep into planning a rebellion—they were merely biding their time.

microcosm of the battle between the political ideologies of the Left, particularly “democracy,” and fascist militarism. But, in reality, Soviet investment in the Spanish contest was more cynical. Alongside the armaments and logistical support sent to the Republic, Soviet authorities also dispatched Red Army officers and agents of the NKVD and GRU (respectively, the Soviet secret police and military intelligence agencies); the Comintern, meanwhile, sent its own observers and spies. Their intention was to combine with the relatively diminutive Communist Party of Spain (*Partido Comunista de España*, PCE) and its allies to gradually infiltrate into and exert greater control over the government's political, economic, and military apparatuses.⁹

French interest in the conflict should be obvious. At the time, a similar Popular Front coalition reigned in France and, aside from facing its own troubling episode of social strife, that anxious nation had to confront the potentiality of being almost completely encircled by admittedly unfriendly fascist states. A fascist Spain would have surely meant that France's access to her North African possessions would have been imperiled. But, more importantly, Italy and Germany would have been able to add an ally in any potential scheme to isolate and neutralize France. Thus, during this early phase of appeasement, the French government did not wish to do anything that might provoke the totalitarian powers or incite a larger conflagration, and so endeavored to limit foreign intervention in Spain.

The same might be said to have been true of the government of Great Britain. As

⁹ For more on this intriguing topic, see *Spain Betrayed*, ed. Ronald Radosh, Mary Habeck, and Grigory Sevostianov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

with the French government, it did not want a general war sparked over the Spanish issue, nor could it abide a situation in which the Nationalist rebels reached a state of indebtedness to Italy and Germany that the country would be forced into a state of vassalage to those two powers. At stake in the Spanish crisis was Great Britain's dominance over the Mediterranean—and thereby her access to her vast maritime empire. British authorities could not permit Spanish independence to be undermined by the Italian and German states, for a Spain under the thrall of those hostile powers, particularly Italy, could have been absolutely crippling in that respect. So, too, did British authorities wish to restrict the level of external meddling in Spain.¹⁰

On the other side of the equation, Fascist Italy backed the Spanish Nationalists, deploying tens of thousands of soldiers, along with valuable armored units and squadrons of military aircraft. A major consideration in Italian intervention, as both Great Britain and France had feared, involved Mussolini's ambition of restoring “Roman” hegemony over the Mediterranean, and he believed that a friendly “fascist” Spain would greatly contribute toward accomplishing that formidable goal.

Nazi Germany, too, inserted itself into the Spanish arena for similarly selfish reasons. Other than arming the Nationalists with sophisticated German weaponry for the purpose of testing their tactical applications in real-world scenarios, Hitler wished to extract economic, particularly mineral, concessions from Spain in exchange for his assistance. Otherwise, the dictator wanted the Spanish fire to burn long and bright. It now

¹⁰ These two nations would be responsible for the creation of the international Non-Intervention Committee.

seems that he wished to deflect the attention of Great Britain and France away from his larger designs of expansion, several vital episodes of which actually occurred during the course of the Spanish war.¹¹

With these elements considered, one might now briefly address the historiographical discourse on the Spanish Civil War as it has stretched across the decades. Therein, one can delineate a number of tendencies. First, among these, and perhaps the most noticeable, has been the relative domination of the topic by non-Spanish academicians while native Spanish historians have been slow to synthesize their own histories of the struggle between the Republican Loyalists and the Nationalist insurgency. Unfortunate though this reality might be, it should nevertheless be understood. The long years of totalitarian rule under “*Caudillo*” Francisco Franco rendered forthright internal inquiry into the causes, course, conduct, conclusion, and consequences of the conflict rather a formidable impracticality, if not a stark impossibility. Moreover, the unquiet ghosts of the civil war have continued to haunt that nation; the discussion of it, even since the historic transition of Spain away from a dictatorial regime, has therefore been contentious.

A second observable propensity in this field of specialization is multifaceted. Traditionally, a great deal of emphasis has rested upon the aforementioned “internationalization” of the struggle and the geopolitical and ideological implications

¹¹ For a concise, organized overview of the contemporary international considerations invested in the Spanish Civil War, Spanish Civil War, see Michael Alpert's *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004).

thereof. Indeed, much scholarly effort has been expended to enumerate the historical roles of the foreign powers which actively intervened in the war, whether focusing on the narrative of Soviet manipulation, that of the treading of Italian boots on Spanish soil, or of the humming of German aircraft in the skies above. And this discussion has also extended into the role of the major, ostensibly non-intervening nations: in the case of Great Britain and France, the discourse has tended to dwell upon their respective imperial interests, their desire to maintain the international *status quo*, and their frantic efforts to keep the Spanish contest from exploding into a genuine international crisis—hence the formation of the comically ineffectual Non-Intervention Committee.

There is, however, one final nation to consider in the historiographical discourse on the Spanish Civil War. Across the Atlantic and far away, the United States became acutely interested in the conflict, representative as it was of wider European tensions. In any event, there is a special historiographical niche of studies dedicated to American interest in the war, but on a relatively limited scale. For example, a substantial corpus of literature has been developed on the phenomenon of American volunteerism in Spain, emphasizing the (perhaps over-romanticized) Abraham Lincoln and George Washington battalions of the XV International Brigade.¹² Another specific topic involves President Roosevelt, the American government, and the paired questions of isolationism and neutrality during a time in which the world appeared to be hurtling toward another

¹² See, amongst others: Cecil D. Eby, *Between the Bullet and the Lie: American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Holt Reinhart & Winston, 1969) and *Comrades and Commissars: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007). And also: Peter Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

scenario of general warfare. Recently, historian Dominic Tierney published a monograph on the evolution of Roosevelt's opinion on the Spanish war as it related to wider world events. This author contends that the battle for Spain significantly contributed to the president's growing appreciation of the danger of fascist aggression and his desire to move the United States toward a policy of internationalism, regardless of the contemporary controversy that it aroused.¹³

Controversy, indeed, would describe American public opinion in respect to the Spanish Civil War: that conflict would, perhaps more than any other contemporary European issue, divide the people of the United States. Some scattered monographs have been written that have attempted to detailed this division, but they are few and dated.

Allen Guttman's *The Wound in the Heart* dates from 1962 and undertakes to analyze, utilizing source material produced in the United States between 1936 and 1939, how Americans broadly perceived the war in Spain, and why some people understood it as a "personal tragedy."¹⁴ The author explains that, while seeking to understand any part of the conflict with exclusively American sources, it would nevertheless begin to address the scholarly question of exactly how limited American perception of the war truly was.

¹³ Dominic Tierney, *FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

Roosevelt's emerging understanding of the essential danger of fascism, particularly in the Spanish context, met in confluence with Latin American affairs. He worried that an ascendent "fascist" Spain might adversely affect that region, perhaps inspiring fascist or fascist-esque revolutions there. Though, in fact, there were a number of nominally "fascist" regimes in that part of the world, if delineated by nothing else then their anti-communist credentials. (See: Argentina and Brazil, particularly, but also Chile, Peru, and Venezuela).

For an earlier study, see: Richard P. Traina, *American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).

¹⁴ Allen Guttman, *The Wound in the Heart: America and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962). v.

And, moreover, how it was formulated through fractured, frequently tainted knowledge from the armed camps within Spain while the rest of the world stood poised upon the precipice of war.¹⁵ And, published in 1971, F. J. Taylor's *The United States and the Spanish Civil War* discusses the same topic, again with the conception that despite the official policy of neutrality of the United States, its citizens somehow felt themselves a part of the ideological drama being enacted in Spain, which they perhaps understood it as a prism for the future of contemporary Europe.¹⁶

Both of these studies observe the phenomenon of the investment of generalized American public sentiment in the Spanish conflagration, yet there is a smaller facet contained therein which both authors address very briefly, but which has not yet been more thoroughly explored. This gap in the discourse centers upon the question of the contentious response of the American Christian community to the Spanish Civil War, specifically in regard to the respective organs of the Catholic and Protestant presses. It will therefore be the intention of this study to address this particular issue, albeit in a limited fashion, and offer a degree of interpretative analysis thereto.

Being restricted by both space and time, the scope of this undertaking will be necessarily narrow. Nevertheless, it will endeavor to trace the development of Catholic and Protestant opinion in the United States in respect to the Spanish crisis from the rise of the Popular Front coalition following the February, 1936 elections until June, 1936—that

¹⁵ Allen Guttman, *The Wound in the Heart: America and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962).

See also: *American Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War*, ed. Allen Guttman (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1963).

¹⁶ F. Jay Taylor, *The United States and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971).

is, until the dust had begun to settle after the fall of the Republic in April of that year. In order to maintain relative parity, both sides of this conversation will be explored using three individual publications (in addition to some supplementary materials). For the American Catholics, *America*, the *Commonweal*, and the *Sign* will be used. And, for the American Protestants, the *Christian Century*, the *Christian Evangelist*, and the *Christian Leader* will be examined.

Amongst the Catholic newspapers, both *America* and the *Commonweal* were weeklies while the *Sign* existed as a monthly journal. *America* was (and remains) a Jesuit publication, based in New York City. Over the course of the struggle, this paper would demonstrate impeccable anti-communist credentials and never wavered in its support of the Nationalist rebels in Spain, which it perceived to be battling for the perpetuation of Christian civilization. The *Commonweal*, also headquartered in New York, initially boasted a similarly militant degree of stridency in respect to the Spanish war. However, this journal of opinion would later reverse course and, insisting upon more liberal examination of the conflict, couched itself within a policy of impartiality. And, like *America*, the *Sign* was published under the auspices of a Catholic religious society, the Passionists, and would also prove itself to be a great moral enemy of the Spanish Republic.

On the other side of the debate, the *Christian Century*, a self-proclaimed “undenominational,” liberal Protestant newspaper situated in Chicago, would offer enormous, almost unqualified sympathy for the Republican Loyalists and disdain for the

pro-Nationalist stance of the American Catholic Church and, indeed, of the Roman Catholic Church in general. Almost exactly the same could be said to have been true of the *Christian Evangelist*, a St. Louis-based weekly produced by the Disciples of Christ (otherwise simply known as the “Christian Church,” and often perceived as more of a conservative sub-denomination). And, so too of the *Christian Leader*, a Universalist journal from Boston (which, for its part, was often perceived as a more liberal denomination).

What could be said of all of these publications, however, was that each boasted impressive qualities of intellectual acumen, for the topics thoughtfully discussed within their columns ranged from theology to contemporary domestic politics and, indeed, to the international developments during that troubled time. However, the bubbling Spanish cauldron, and its sudden eruption into a scenario of civil war placed blinders on these few journals; each of them immediately proclaimed partisan fidelities to one side or the other, even before hostilities broke out in earnest, and remained mostly entrenched in those positions until the end of the war. This was, as previous historians have posited, indicative of the wider scene in the United States, and is partly the inspiration for the title of this thesis: “None Spoke Spanish.”

This title comes, in fact, from a gibe in the 23 January, 1937 edition of the *Christian Leader*. It ran as such: “then there was the commander in Madrid who gave the regiment a fifteen-minute fight talk, only to find that none of the boys spoke Spanish.”¹⁷

¹⁷ “Crackling,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 23 January, 1937, 128.

The author of this study believes that, apart from lightly mocking the confusingly “internationalized” nature of the Spanish Civil War, this innocent joke reflected the unyielding positions of these small segments of American Catholic and Protestant opinion on the struggle and, indeed, the way in which the whole of the United States seemed to have interpreted it. In this context, that “none of the boys spoke Spanish” might be illustrative of a certain fundamental ignorance as to the realities of the conflict itself, the complexities of the combatant factions, and that for which they were fighting—all of which had been tainted by ideology and befogged by propaganda.

Chapter 1: Crusade or Class Conflict?

Early Winter, 1936 – Late Summer, 1937

The Initial Perceptions of the Spanish Civil War in the American Christian Press and the Drawing of the Denominational Battle Lines

“A special word must be given to controversy. Controversy between Catholic and non-Catholic has its value...[but] controversy tends to bring out some of the worst traits in people; very often it has its origin and motive not in a zeal for God's truth but unconsciously in a desire to demonstrate that I know what is right, that our (or worse, my) church alone has got the truth, or simply that the other fellow is wrong. ...Controversy on important matters...is like war, very difficult to wage without sin and without doing more harm than good.”¹⁸

I.

Though the Spanish Civil War would not truly erupt until July, 1936, the American religious press demonstrated a remarkable attentiveness to the socio-political controversies and growing unrest within Spanish Republic following the elections in February of that year. More notable still, these publications, whether Protestant or Catholic, established respective partisan allegiances to the Spanish Left and Right well before the actual commencement of martial hostilities, fidelities which would remain relatively unshaken throughout the duration of the conflict.

To begin in the Protestant camp, for example: Chicago's *Christian Century*, a self-delineated “undenominational” weekly, ran an editorial which rejoiced that Spain had “turned from Fascism” toward a more “moderately liberal” regime with the ascent of the Popular Front, despite the presence of certain radical elements in that coalition.¹⁹

By the end of March, and as Hitler reconsolidated German control over the Rhineland,

¹⁸ Donald Attwater, “People, Press and Propaganda,” *The Commonweal*, 24 July, 1936, 317-318.

¹⁹ “Spain Turns from Fascism,” editorial, in *The Christian Century*, 4 March, 1936, 348-349.

this same periodical opined that the Spanish cauldron appeared to be in danger of boiling over as politically-inspired tensions mounted. At that time, indications were present to suggest that distinct factions had begun to align against one another in that troubled nation, potentially being preparatory to an episode of violent civil strife. Specifically, another editorial comment in the *Christian Century* mentioned that the violence seemed to be between the forces of “Marxism” on the one side and “clericalism” on the other, nebulous though those descriptors may have been.²⁰ Recognizing that the Spanish Catholic Church had been the recipient of increasing hostility since the rise of the new leftist government, this piece extended the hand of Christian sympathy to that suffering religious organization. But it then immediately negated its fraternal message by casting the stone of blame, implying that the contemporary outpouring of popular anti-clerical violence in Spain had been the result of the long-festering detestation of the entrenched interests of the Church and its own reactionary determination to defend them.

Whatever the case, the author believed that the catalyst for these attacks could be traced to certain irresponsible and inflammatory elements, and warned that international liberal sympathy for the Popular Front would quickly evaporate if the coalition could not bring its more radical components to heel. Further, he presciently predicted that some nascent strain of Spanish fascism might be given the opportunity to seize the reins of power amid the atmosphere of instability, most likely in the form of a military uprising, armed with the ostensible excuse of restoring order to the decaying national situation where the

²⁰ “Marxism, Clericalism or Fascism in Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 25 March, 1936, 451.

legitimate government could not.²¹

Likewise, the *Christian Leader*, a Universalist journal based in Boston, acknowledged that trouble existed in Spain. Interest in and sympathy for the Popular Front appeared to be stronger with the editorial staff of and contributors to this publication. Late in March, 1936, the *Leader* published a full article on the election of the new government: authored by one J. Menéndez, this article celebrated that Spain had been “saved from fascism.” He wrote of the new government's election in a spirit of celebration, asserting that its coming reign represented the hope and the future of the Spanish nation—but also that it would act as the instrument of the people's vengeance against the hateful, almost criminal, negligence of the reactionary regime which came to power following the general elections of November, 1933.²² Menéndez asserted that though critics of the new regime might insinuate some conspiratorial alliances with Moscow, such claims were entirely unfounded; meanwhile, however, definite intimacies had existed between the preceding rightist administration and the National-Socialist government in Germany. In any event, the author applauded that the nation would once more be able to pursue the path of progressive liberalism after nearly two years of common misery under a backward political structure that had teetered dangerously close to the fascist precipice; indeed, that black tide, peculiarly hued with clericalism, would be

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Jaime Menéndez, “Spain is Saved from Fascism,” *The Christian Leader*, 28 March, 1936, 399-400. The author was almost certainly the prominent Spanish leftist intellectual who spent some time in the United States during the 1930s (and who also contributed to the *New York Times*).

halted decisively with the “tremendous force of socialism.”²³

American Protestant interest would balloon for a short time following the February elections, but general interest in Spain would subsequently decline over the next months, with a few small exceptions. In late April, the *Christian Century* commented on a governmental shake-up in Spain, resulting in the presidential ouster of the relatively moderate N. Zamora; his successor, M. Azaña, leaned considerably further to the radical Left. According to the paper's staff, these developments would only embolden the dangerous revolutionary elements of the Popular Front.²⁴

That same issue of the *Century*, however, also featured a brief article entitled “We of the Left.” Evidently an anecdote taken from an actual experience, this piece briefly detailed a political discussion shared between the author and two youths who, belonging to some unspecified faction “of the Left,” indicted the Catholic Church as being an intractable barrier to social progress and a truly democratic Spain.²⁵ While perhaps based upon a true occurrence, this tale must be held in suspicion, for it seems to have been tainted with a subtle degree of anti-Catholic bigotry. Concluding the story, the author claimed to have conferred with an unnamed Spanish Protestant clergyman (a rarity in

²³ *Ibid.*

Despite the author's insistence that the Spanish Popular Front represented a spontaneous movement of “people's” parties to stamp out reaction, fascism, clericalism, and militarism—and that it was in no wise affiliated with the Soviet Union—the Comintern had formulated (with the intention of directing) its Popular Front strategy as early as 1934, which became the organization's official policy in 1935. See G. Dimitrov's Speeches at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (August, 1935). A similar article later appeared in *The Christian Leader* (“Will American Liberties Survive,” 23 May, 1936) that warned of an incipient American fascism and that the only obvious defense would be for the United States to follow the examples of France and Spain and adopt its own “Popular Front.”

²⁴ “President of Spain Is Deposed by Radicals,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 22 April, 1936, 589.

²⁵ Helen G. Murray, “We of the Left,” *The Christian Century*, 22 April, 1936, Pgs. 601-602.

eminently Catholic Spain), who corroborated this rather forceful opinion on the Church by stating that those of the “Left [had] the right of it.”²⁶

Indeed, even as specific coverage of the Spanish ferment waned as the year 1936 advanced into the summer, these few Protestant publications managed to secure avenues by which to attack the Roman Catholic Church. An editorial writer for the *Christian Century* lashed out at what he perceived to be the jeopardized state of the Vatican's moral authority in respect to its public sentiments of “triumphal gladness” regarding Mussolini's declaration of final victory in his Ethiopian adventure in May of that year.²⁷ Likewise, a dedicated commentator for the *Christian Evangelist*, the official organ of the Disciples of Christ (a Baptist sub-denomination), wrote that “fascism translated into religion comes very near to the dogma of St. Peter's Chair.”²⁸

Such anti-Catholic hostility on the part of these few American Protestant newspapers, as reflected in almost defamatory print, could perhaps be taken as an early indicator of the totally contrary position they would adopt as the representatives of the Church declared their own partisanship when the Spanish conflict began in earnest.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ “The Pope Is Not Yet Free,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 10 June, 1936, 830-831.

²⁸ Frederick D. Kershner, “As I Think on These Things: Religious Fascists,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 4 June, 1936, 724.

II.

Though relatively slower in responding to the emerging crisis in Spain, American Catholic publications nevertheless began to report on it with more consistency. The interpretative conclusions reached by these periodicals, of course, could not have been more different than those reached by the Protestant press.

Most interested in the development of the contemporary Spanish political scene, the *Commonweal*, a respected Catholic weekly based in New York, commented on the February elections even before they took place. Rather than expressing a tone of hopeful optimism for the prospects of a sister democracy, this newspaper portended impending doom for that country: the Popular Front and “Spanish socialism.”²⁹ Editorializing further on this leftist coalition, the *Commonweal* denounced it as the spawn of Russian Bolshevism, and that its election would only invite revolutionary anarchy.³⁰ A mere two weeks after this prediction, the same paper noted unrest following the election of the “united leftist ticket” which had been comprised of, on an apparently exclusive basis, “anti-Christian Republicans, Socialists and Communists.”³¹

This same publication continued to bring its readership disquieting news from troubled Spain in the wake of the February elections. By then the country had devolved into general civil disorder: radical extremists had inaugurated an orgy of terrorist violence, setting the torch to churches, convents, Right-wing political offices, presses, and so forth. Although retaining hope that the administration would be able to rein in

²⁹ “Seven Days' Survey: Spain Lines Up,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 14 February, 1936, 438.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ “Seven Days' Survey: the Wide World,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 28 February, 1936, 494.

these unstable elements, the *Commonweal* wrote with authority that the campaign of chaos had been deliberately designed by leftist fanatics in order to force the government into a “Marxist revision of the Spanish Constitution.”³² Week by week, the situation seemed to spiral further; the tumult eventually reached such a feverish pitch that the government declared an official state of alert.³³

Soon the *Commonweal* began reporting that sources within Spain had indicated that some form of electoral mischief might have taken place, which would have then meant that the scepter of power did not truly belong to the Popular Front. Similarly, the regime itself (rather than, as previously, bands of lawless incendiaries) faced allegations of conspiracy from the Right. Such charges read thus: that the coalition in question meant to gain control of the governmental apparatus by any means necessary and to subsequently abuse its ill-gained power in the interest of inciting chaos and revolutionary upheaval.³⁴ And, as the Protestant *Christian Leader* had posited virtually simultaneously, *Commonweal* asserted that the Spanish military officer corps, while proclaiming loyalty to the Republic itself, would be forced to take extra-legal action and intervene if the government found itself unequal to the task of quelling the social turbulence.³⁵

³² “Seven Days' Survey: Disorders in Spain,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 20 March, 1936, 577.

³³ “Seven Days' Survey: Spain,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 27 March, 1936, 606.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

These charges of electoral fraud and the revolutionary intentions of the Popular Front (under Soviet direction) would occasionally emerge as a point of debate between the Catholic and Protestant publications.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

This, too, would become an important position taken by either side—the question of whether the coming insurrection actually constituted an act of loyalty or disloyalty to the Republic. *America*, too, would editorialize upon rumors of a possible rightist *coup d'état* (“Spanish Troubles,” 11 April, 1936, 23-24), potentially with the aim of re-establishing the Alfonsine monarchy (“Spain's

America, another Catholic circular established in New York, only began to feature substantial pieces discussing the nervousness of Spain in May, 1936.³⁶ O. B. McGuire, a regular contributor to the weekly, sought to “tell the truth about Spain,” writing that time had not served to mend the disturbances.³⁷ He, like many others of the Catholic press, wrote that the genuine republican souls of that country had made a grave mistake in consolidating an alliance with radical and revolutionary political organizations. Moreover, he found himself taken aback as to how certain portions of the American press interpreted the woes of Spain, particularly in that so much sympathy had been invested in the cause of the Popular Front. McGuire believed the leftist coalition to be the antithesis of Americanism, having totally contrary attitudes toward such fundamental issues as religious liberty, property rights, the family, and education—but not least because it ostensibly favored a dictatorship of the proletariat. He could not conceive of such support being lent to the proponents of this pernicious strain of extremism while moderate and conservative dissenters (including the Catholic Church) were bracketed wholesale as “clericals, reactionaries, and fascists,” and summarily denounced by a wide segment of the American press.³⁸ What concerned the author most, however, remained the possibility that such an attitude might yield bitter fruit, and could contribute to a resurgence of

President Removed,” 18 April, 1936, 46-47).

³⁶ *The Sign*, the third and final Catholic publication to be discussed in this study, would not print anything of significance on the Spanish troubles until June of that year.

³⁷ Owen B. McGuire, “The Truth about Spain,” *America*, 2 May, 1936, 81-83.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

The name-calling device would remain a critical feature of the discussion of the Spanish Civil War in the United States in general, not only in the Catholic-Protestant debate.

domestic anti-Catholicism.³⁹

Meanwhile, crisis succeeded crisis in Spain. Parliamentary gridlock resulted in successive dissolutions of the *Cortes*, ultimately leading to President Zamora being removed from office, being accused of betraying the “popular revolution.”⁴⁰ New elections had to be arranged for the selection of his replacement which, of course, would only lead to further clashes between Left and Right. And even as the Second Republic passed the fifth anniversary of its founding, what should have been a prevailing mood of celebration was instead marred by a string of apparent political murders, reprisals, bombings, strikes, and riots. The government became more repressive against the Right, forcibly disbanding the relatively diminutive *Falange Española*, the party most closely approximating to a genuine Spanish fascist movement.⁴¹ Outrages continued against the Church: since the February elections, hundreds of churches and convents had been sacked and despoiled by “Marxist rioters.”⁴² *America* reported that, at that time, the most recent wave of attacks against the Church had resulted from wild rumors flying about Madrid to the effect that priests and nuns had been feeding poisoned candy to the children of leftists. Although the tale had been proven false by a government investigation into the matter, an assortment of communists and socialists responded by setting alight three

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Interpreting freely, one could regard this as a rather prescient hypothesis, as accusations of fascism were consistently hurled at the supra-national Roman Catholic Church during this period.

⁴⁰ “Chronicle: Spain's President Removed,” editorial, *America*, 18 April, 1936, 46-47.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

“Chronicle: Spanish Anniversary,” *America*, 25 April, 1936, 71.

“Chronicle: Spanish Troubles,” *America*, 1 May, 1936, 88.

“Seven Days' Survey: the Wide World,” *The Commonwealth*, 1 May, 1936, 16-17.

⁴² “Chronicle: Spanish Disorders,” *America*, 16 May, 1936, 144.

churches, one convent, and four schools.⁴³

While this particular aspect of the pre-war Spanish feud had been briefly portrayed in the American Protestant press as a predictable result of the Church's unreformed habits of medieval reaction, the Catholic press rather saw the burnings as a component of the communist conspiracy, a directive handed down from the Comintern to splinter movements worldwide. Certain writers maintained that the destruction of religious institutions, most particularly Catholic Christianity, had been designated as essential by the puppet-masters in Moscow wherever they wished to establish and maintain a presence, and that Spain stood at the forefront of this crucial struggle.⁴⁴ Successful Popular Front programs, then, represented the culmination of this strategy to enslave humanity through means more subtle than active revolution. L. K. Patterson, a contributor to *America*, warned his readers against such platforms. He wrote that however they might describe themselves as the patrons of peace and democracy in the face of implacable fascist militarism, they only camouflaged the reality that, back of their movement, stood the Red colossus which ruled through terror.⁴⁵

⁴³ *Ibid.*

"Seven Days' Survey: the Wide World," *The Commonweal*, 15 May, 1936, 73.

⁴⁴ G. M. Godden, "Soviet Destruction of Religion," *America*, 9 May, 1936, 107-108.

John LaFarge, S. J., "The Catholic Press and Communism," *America*, 30 May, 1936, 177-178.

"Lessons from Spain," editorial, *The Sign*, June, 1936, 645.

This being the first article published in this magazine on the Spanish situation; commented on the ostensible assault against Catholic Spain by the forces of extreme anti-clericalism.

⁴⁵ Lawrence Kent Patterson, S. J., "The Communistic Common Front," *America*, 23 May, 1936, 155-157.

In this article, the author also warned of the existence of a similar "Common Front" in the United States. This was, of course, pointing the finger at CPUSA and its chief, Earl Browder. At the time, this organization attempted to manipulate devices of patriotism to foster the image of communism as being the "Americanism of the Twentieth Century." Particularly, this meant the attempted appropriation of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln—mighty heroes of the bourgeois revolutionary tradition—in order

In the month leading up to the outbreak of the rebellion, the Catholic publications seemed to have lost any hope that the discord in Spain might have been ameliorated through the concerted efforts of reasonable factions both within and outside of the government with constructive input from the opposition. Instead, *America* reported that the respectable and responsible segments of the leftist government had been shunted aside to make way for a “Socialist-Syndicalist-Communist alliance” to sit upon the throne, an unholy communion headed by a “Masonic Premier.”⁴⁶ And while admitting that the traditionally impoverished conditions of that nation had fertile soil for such ideologies to take root, the same weekly held that the solution to the fundamental causes of the Spain's social and economic woes rested in a “Christian organization of society” and Catholic social action, not Marxist radicalism, no matter how those of the Left might demonize clerical-traditionalism.⁴⁷

This age-old conception of Spanish society, wrote O. B. McGuire of *Commonweal*, found its greatest threat in the person of M. Azaña, who had by that time been elected to replace Zamora as the president of the Republic.⁴⁸ In trying to better

to pigeonhole them into the evolving lexicography of the proletarian revolution.

⁴⁶ “The Spanish Crisis,” editorial, *America*, 6 June, 1936, 194-195.

The “Masonic” label, was definitely employed as a device to drum up as much loathing in the Catholic community as possible, given that the clerical hierarchy had long damned the order as an anti-religious conspiracy. In any event, the charge of “Masonry” would occasionally be applied to the Spanish government by the Catholic press.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

By this time, *America* seemed to have gotten in the habit of leveling invectives against the Republic itself, which this editorial also accused of being corrupt from its inception in 1931 and, by 1936, had become utterly despicable for attempting to undermine the foundations of a Catholic nation by offering the “Godless panaceas of Moscow.”

⁴⁸ Owen B. McGuire, “President Azaña,” *The Commonweal*, 5 June, 1936, 145-147.

Azaña, for his part, would remain the Spanish president until the end of the civil war and the fall of the

personify the new Spanish executive, McGuire painted a portrait designed to shock his readers. According to the author, Azaña abandoned his Catholic faith during his youth and shortly turned to radical ideologies, becoming militantly anti-clerical in the process; the president faced further charges of wanting to stamp out all vestiges of the Faith in Spain for the sake of assuaging his obsession with revolutionary purity. However, while the author did not then subscribe to the fearful position adopted by his colleagues that Azaña, in collusion with the Popular Front, sought to establish a sort of “Soviet republic” in Spain, he nevertheless perceived a lurking danger from the more fanatical elements within the leftist coalition.⁴⁹

As the heady days of June, 1936 waned, *America* offered a short piece on the unabated public commotion in Spain. Illustrating a situation clearly careening out of all control, J. G. Robles rose to address the *Cortes* earlier that month. This man, a prominent rightist and founder of the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA, Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right, the conservative coalition that secured the 1933 elections) recited a litany of morbid statistics before the leftist-dominated parliamentary body. Since the Popular Front assumed power in February of that year,

Republic in April, 1939—but would scarcely be mentioned again by the American Christian press.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

A similar position was espoused by L. A. Fernsworth—a journalist who would report extensively on the Spanish war for the *New York Times*—in *Commonweal* (“The Red Drive in Spain,” 26 June, 1936, 237-239). He did not detect the solidarity of leftist or extremist political opinion that so worried Catholic authors. Rather, he correctly believed that the large, anti-Soviet Spanish socialist and anarcho-syndicalist blocs would present an obstacle so tremendous as to offset the feared machinations of Moscow. Still, one wonders how this would be of any consolation to Catholics—for even if the communists were to attempt to precipitate a revolutionary crisis, the Republic would still have to deal with the similarly-minded militancy of the anarchists. (See also Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov’s *Spain Betrayed* for how this inter-factional dispute would play out over the course of the war).

according to his numbers, over 400 churches had been totally or partially destroyed; 269 people had been killed, with more than 1,500 having been injured; over forty offices belonging to Right-wing organizations had been totally or partially demolished; more than 340 strikes had been called. Going further, Robles stated that in the mere two days before his address, there had been 65 new deaths, attended by 230 woundings and the declaration of some 170 fresh strikes.⁵⁰

By then, the apoplectic squabbling and virtual paralysis of the Spanish political scene likely gave the impression that the government either could not or would not do anything to suppress what increasingly appeared to be an inexcusably extended episode of general anarchy—and either possibility damned. Robles' appearance before the *Cortes* might have served as a notice to the administration that the Right-wing had become thoroughly disgusted with the government's immobility, and that it might burden itself with the restoration of order. Indeed, that day would come, but not before another half-month of social disharmony, which both the American Catholic and Protestant presses covered in detail.

⁵⁰ “Chronicle: Spanish Violence,” *America*, 27 June, 1936, 287.

III.

Even as the waves of rebellion, revolution, and civil war broke over Spain after mid-July, the representatives of the Protestant press did not recognize the significance of developments in that country for some weeks. Among these, the *Christian Century* first (and tellingly) acknowledged the mutiny of Spain's ultra-conservative military officer corps, which it immediately delineated as a “fascist-monarchist revolt” against the “socialist government” of the Popular Front.⁵¹ The *Christian Evangelist*, too, featured an editorial on the newly-born Spanish Civil War at the end of July, but refrained from commenting on the relative justice of either cause: this publication opined that the early dispatches coming from across the Atlantic were contradictory and misleading to the point of rendering sound judgment impossible. And though it attempted to maintain a tone of impartiality, the *Evangelist* quickly revealed its sympathy for the Republic. The paper's editorial staff saluted the gallantry of the government and its supporters, motley an assortment though they were, for their stand against a concerted “fascist” onslaught, led by experienced military personnel. As would become fashionable (both in the contemporaneous and historiographical sense), the paper would declare that the melee in Spain represented a crucial episode for the whole of Europe in the general war between the mutually hostile ideologies of the Left and Right.⁵²

⁵¹ “Editorial: Fascist-Monarchist Revolt Flames in Spain,” *The Christian Century*, 29 July, 1936, 1029. This particular editorial lamented that the bubbling socio-political strife in Spain had evolved into “the bloodiest civil war in over a century.” It further wondered if Spain would be forced to return to a monarchy or whether she would be able, through force of arms, to maintain her Republic.

⁵² “The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 30 July, 1936, 980. The issue, as it was represented in the *Evangelist*, stood thus: would fascism (or something similar)

This understanding of the Spanish war in terms of its ideological complexion found further articulation in a prominently-featured editorial comment in the *Christian Leader* during the following month. According to this piece, the conflict demonstrated the “destructive centrifugal force of extreme class consciousness,” and both sides possessed the trappings of quixotic, all-or-nothing idealism.⁵³ While the *Leader* expressed sympathy for the Popular Front, it nevertheless put forward a position more notably negative than either the *Century* or the *Evangelist*. It could not recognize the cause of the government as being any more democratic than that of the rebels, conceived and maintained with the collusion of rabid extremists as the leftist coalition had been.⁵⁴

The writers on the staff of the *Evangelist* could not bring themselves to agree with this perspective on the civil war and denounced certain newspapers in the United States which, ever wary of international communism, had grown positively inconsolable over rumors coming from Spain. However it might be constituted, they argued, and for better or worse, the embattled Left-wing government came to power following a legitimate election (in which the incumbent rightist regime controlled the electoral machinery), and therefore absolutely represented the side of “democracy.”⁵⁵ Moreover, the blanket label of

prevail in Spain, or would the Republican government (honeycombed as it was with radical anarcho-syndicalists, socialists, and communists) be free to carry forward its confused ideas of revolution? Furthermore, it had been asserted that if Spain were to fall beneath the fascist jackboot, France would shortly follow.

⁵³ “Don Quixote versus Machiavelli,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 15 August, 1936, 1027-1028.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Indeed, the *Leader* believed Spanish democracy to have been an abortive experiment from the start, for the political pendulum had swung from extreme to extreme thrice in five years and had never found the happy home of reasoned moderation.

⁵⁵ “Spain, America, and Communism,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 6 August, 1936, 1011.

“communism,” as it had been applied to the Popular Front, had been propagated by the:

“...forces of black reaction—the fascist, militarist, clerical, landowning groups which [had] halted progress for centuries and which [considered] it their duty to serve God by halting progress in [the twentieth] century.”⁵⁶

Addressing the religious issue, the piece regretted pre-war attacks against the Church, and also that the bloodshed had aroused cruelty in the Spanish Left, which had led to unspeakable excesses against the Faith. But then this article almost entirely excused the violence because “quite understandably...[the Spanish people have] accepted the Catholic Church in their country as a symbol of everything reactionary, privileged, and plutocratic.”⁵⁷

Expressing more interest in the religious embellishments affixed to the uprising, specifically by the insurgents and their supporters, the *Christian Century* remarked in early August on the evolution of the Spanish “holy war.”⁵⁸ It should have been no surprise that the clash should have been denominated as such by that side, especially as the Roman Catholic Church had so much at stake. Much like the *Evangelist*, the *Century* believed that the Church's age-old union with the *ancien régime* made it a virtual

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The rebels, the editorial maintained, were not really opposed to “communism,” but merely used the blanket invective against anything which they disliked—that is, anything trending toward social and economic reform that would damage their interests, which had been entrenched over centuries.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The article even goes on to draw a corollary between the historic role of the Church in Spain and the Orthodox Church in Russia—both had been the traditional “servant of the oppressors.” Whatever the political or religious situation, the *Evangelist* declared for the government of Spain, even if its victory might usher in a radical, perhaps communist, dictatorship—for even that would be “better...than fascism, the alternative.” But then, does not faint praise damn?

⁵⁸ “Spanish Revolt Becomes a Holy War,” editorial, in *The Christian Century*, 5 August, 1936, 1052.

inevitability that it would throw its formidable weight on the side battling for a social order conceived of as:

“...an absolute monarchy defended by a Praetorian guard, a feudal system of land ownership and Catholic unity enforced by the inquisition and police power of the state. Their cry is against godless communism and materialistic Marxism, but their antipathy toward any form of liberalism, republicanism, or parliamentarianism is no less.”⁵⁹

Indeed, it had been reported that the most devoutly (if not fanatically) Catholic segments of the rebel faction had drawn the sword of the Crusade, proclaiming a new *Reconquista* to drive the heathen Marxists, the modern Moors, from the Spanish fatherland.⁶⁰

R. Niebuhr, writing for the *Century*, would continue the discussion of the religious question in the Spanish conflict that seemed to have so absorbed the paper. Reviewing the hardships the Church had suffered over the brief progress of the war, the author could find precious little sympathy for it, as had become the trend with those writing for the other Protestant publications. He perceived unforgivable spiritual arrogance in any institution which sought to identify its momentary tribulations with those endured by Christ at Golgotha.⁶¹ What other Protestant writers had merely implied, Niebuhr stated more forthrightly his opinion in respect to the case of the Spanish Church: that it had

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

A later editorial (“Spanish Civil War Poises on the Verge of Crisis,” 19 August, 1936, 1099) in the same periodical would turn this formula around and designate the Spanish rebels as contemporary Moors, only then under Catholic leadership.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, “Spiritual Arrogance in the Name of Christ,” *The Christian Century*, 2 September, 1936, 1157-1158.

Niebuhr also assailed the Church for having the audacity to demean the Spanish Loyalists (who had by that time been denominated thus) as the “rabble” while lauding the rebels, the supposed defenders of the Church, as “the forces of Christian law and order.” A similar sentiment can be found in an editorial in the *Christian Leader* (“The World Situation and We the People; 5 September, 1936, 1130).

richly deserved the drubbing it had received. Though it might drape itself in the martyr's cloak and clutch a crucifix to its breast, the author asserted, that did not change the historical reality that it had served as an instrument of reaction which had kept the nation mired in backwardness for centuries, a total betrayal of its sacred trust to the common people of Spain. In short, the Church had sown the wind of fury over the course of generations and therefore had to suffer the furious whirlwind of retribution. For that institution to then dissemble with professions of sanctimonious piety could only be described as the “most sinful pretension of the human spirit.”⁶²

Sins of the Spanish Church aside, the initial months of the war saw these Protestant publications maintain a powerful interest in the international implications of the civil war. The conflict had been quickly represented as potentially problematic for Europe—a legitimate concern, given that it might have escalated into a general conflagration and, at that time, it appeared as if a number of the major powers had already chosen sides. Great Britain and France, for their parts, were desperate to keep the peace and, perhaps in an early fit of appeasement, winked at the support lent to the rightist rebellion by Italy and Germany. Therefore, with the insurgency enjoying the substantial backing of the international “fascist bloc,” it should have been considered natural that the Soviet Union would back the Spanish Republic—though into the Autumn of 1936, such assistance to either side had only barely begun to arrive in any substantial

⁶² *Ibid.*

Interestingly, this quotation stands almost as a corollary to Samuel Johnson's charge of patriotism being the last refuge of the scoundrel.

quantity.⁶³

On the topic of the “internationalization” of the Spanish war, the activities of the hastily-assembled Non-Intervention Committee would become *de rigueur* for discussion amongst the Protestant publications, though opinions on its activities and effectiveness would vary somewhat. All seemed to agree that such a program, flawed though it might have been (and would, indeed, later prove itself to be), the Committee would serve as a useful mechanism for relieving the warlike tensions in Europe, which the Spanish question had only exacerbated. In addition, some thought that strict non-intervention would be to the exclusive benefit of the Republic. It began the conflict being much better armed than the rebellion and, considering the relative poverty of the uprising before its allies had poured in aid, it followed that if the flow of materiel into the country could be decisively halted, the government's forces would have little difficulty in crushing the insurrection.⁶⁴

As for their own country, each paper seemed to believe in the course of isolationism, the contemporary national standard. Yet on the other hand, the *Christian Century* intelligently posited that the whole of the Western Hemisphere should have been

⁶³ “Spanish Civil War Threatens Europe,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 12 August, 1936, 1075.

“Spanish Civil War Poises on the Verge of Crisis,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 19 August, 1936, 1099.

“The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 27 August, 1936, 1108.

By this issue of the *Evangelist*, the conflict was already being portrayed as a Continental proxy war.

⁶⁴ “Powers Pledge Neutrality toward Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 2 September, 1936, 1147. Charles A. Thomson, “Understanding Our World: Non-Intervention in Spain,” *The Christian Leader*, 5 September, 1936, 1145.

concerned with the potential impact of the war on Latin America.⁶⁵ The *Christian Evangelist*, expressing the strongest opinion, considered it to be the duty of the United States to be pro-active in blockading the rebel-held ports in Spain in recognition of international law. But the *Century* took this to be a foolhardy course, for direct military action of this sort carried danger that could potentially lead to the heightening of international hostilities, if not the immediate declaration of war.⁶⁶ This fear almost immediately justified itself: the *Evangelist* reported on the previous month's unsuccessful bombing of the USS *Kane*, a Navy destroyer, in Spanish waters by a belligerent aircraft of unspecified origin. Though the event passed without ill effect, the paper recognized that such incidents could be manipulated by the jingoistic “yellow” press to raise the hue and cry for retaliation.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Spanish rebels had arrived in Toledo to relieve the diminished garrison which had defended the ancient fastness of the *Alcázar* since the first days of the uprising. Apart from such striking military gains being made by the rebels these Protestant papers were finally able to report the announced intentions of the mutiny.⁶⁸ To the *Christian Century*, its platform stood as fascism, naked and unqualified. Interpreting

⁶⁵ “America Refuses to Intervene in Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 2 September, 1936, 1147-1148.

⁶⁶ “The Week in Review,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 3 September, 1936, 1140.

“American Neutrality Requires More Than Legal Argument,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 9 September, 1936, 1179-1180.

⁶⁷ “The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 10 September, 1936, 1172.

This vessel's objective was to evacuate American citizens left stranded and endangered in Spain with the outbreak of the civil war.

⁶⁸ Charles A. Thomson, “Understanding Our World: Non-Intervention in Spain,” *The Christian Leader* 5 September, 1936, 1145.

“The Saving of Our World,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 24 September, 1936, 1234.

emotionally, the paper's editorial staff wrote that the rebels' twenty-seven point program promised the formation of a dictatorial state based on the precepts of Italian corporatist Fascism, but that it also made allowances for the restoration of some of the privileges of the traditional ruling elite and the Spanish Church.⁶⁹ But even if the destiny of Spain were to be seized by the rightists, certain correspondents wrote that it would not be bought cheaply. Repeating the words of J. Allen of the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Evangelist* predicted ghastly consequences if the fall of the government ever became inevitable: radical extremists might endeavor, with their last gasp, to re-enact the September Massacres of 1792 against their class enemies.⁷⁰

By October, 1936, the Protestant papers became fixated upon the insurgents' thrust toward Madrid, their seemingly impending triumph, and the potential effect that a “fascist” Spain would have on international political equations. First, and in spite of the work done by the Non-Intervention Committee, there continued to be external involvement in the Spanish war; the *Christian Evangelist* nominated Italy, Germany, and Portugal as the worst offenders. Such flagrancy, wrote the *Evangelist*, could only invite war—especially as the Soviet Union promised before the committee that it would openly

⁶⁹ “Powers Promise Hands Off in Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 9 September, 1936, 1179-1180. “Spain's Rebels Promise to Curb the Church,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 16 September, 1936, 1211-1212.

These two editorials also admitted that the Spanish “fascist” platform did not necessarily guarantee the restoration of the temporal power of the Church in political matters and also recognized that the rebels might settle for the return of the Alfonsine monarchy. An article in the *Leader* (“News from the Nofrontier News Service: Back of the Spanish War,” 26 September, 1936, 1232) would conclude, however, that there had definitely been collusion between fascists, monarchists, and the Church in the contemporary uprising.

⁷⁰ “The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 10 September, 1936, 1172. Such brutality, in fact, had already been occurring on behind the lines on both sides.

declare for the Republican cause if aid to the rightists did not cease. In any event, this same piece held that a rebel victory in Spain, should it be achieved, would have done so only through the force of foreign arms.⁷¹ And while one might conclude that an ascendent “fascist” Spain might not have been so worrisome on its own, the papers expressed great anxiety that the total political reversal promised by the rebels (achieved, again, with extensive foreign assistance) would do much to upset the delicate balance of power in the Mediterranean. What concerned them most in this scenario, however, was the fate of France; their fearful deductive logic concluded that a defeated Spain implied that the French Republic would be the next to crumble beneath the fascist wheel.⁷²

Other important developments that month received due recognition. First, after months of waging warfare against the Republic while fighting its own internal battles, the rebellion proclaimed General F. Franco as its leader and, indeed, as the leader of all Spain.⁷³ Second, the Vatican extended unofficial sympathy to the Spanish insurgency, an event which received predictably extensive commentary in these few Protestant publications.

The *Christian Century* noted that the Pope had addressed certain “serious lessons”

⁷¹ “The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 15 October, 1936, 1332.
“The Attack on Madrid Continues,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 28 October, 1936, 1411-1412.
Reporting likewise, an editorial in the *Christian Century* (“How Near to War Is Europe,” 21 October, 1936, 1382-1383) added the Vatican alongside Italy, Germany, and Portugal in the list of the natural allies of the Spanish rebels.

⁷² “Spanish Rebels Near Madrid,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 7 October, 1936, 1309.
“The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 8 October, 1936, 1300.
A later editorial in *The Christian Century* (“The Fascist Pressure Grows in France,” 14 October, 1936, 1348-1349) reinforced this opinion, stating that fascist elements were already in place in that country, biding their time to stage their own rebellion.

⁷³ “General Franco Proclaimed Dictator of Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 14 October, 1936, 1348.

being taught to the world in troubled Spain, where Providence had elected to stage the modern episode in the struggle for the survival of Christian civilization.⁷⁴ This newspaper's staff took indignant exception to this religious inflection, as well as to the ostensible blessing of the uprising and its portrayal as an earthly instrument of the Kingdom of Christ; its writers interpreted this as a disingenuous attempt to obliterate the political, social, and economic factors which so obviously defined the war.⁷⁵ This Protestant publication, alongside its peers, maintained that the contemporaneously radical and violent strain of Spanish anti-clericalism had not been born out of hatred for the Faith itself, but rather out of a justifiable sense of animosity toward a Church that had become the defender of wealth and privilege, the abettor of class oppression.⁷⁶

Yet the *Christian Leader* still thought it worthwhile to reprint certain sensationalist stories indicting the Loyalist forces of heinous anti-religious atrocities, even though they had apparently been confirmed to be total fabrications by correspondents on the ground in Spain. Included among these “outrages against Christianity” were stories of a female communist militant who mutilated the eyes of a dying priest with a hatpin, the public beheading of eight monks, and, in what stands as a truly bizarre mental image, a “Red beauty queen” who engaged in the torture of a large

⁷⁴ “The Pope and Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 7 October, 1936, 1310-1312.

⁷⁵ “How Near to War Is Europe?,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 21 October, 1936, 1382-1383.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

“The Pope and Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 7 October, 1936, 1310-1312.

It was incumbent upon the Spanish Church, therefore, to “repent in sackcloth and ashes” for the betrayal of its sacred trust to the meek and lowly.

Herman A. Newman, “Death in the Summertime,” *The Christian Leader*, 17 October, 1936, 1328-1329. Likewise, this article cast opprobrium on the Catholic Church for employing the straw-man of Marxism for the justification of the rightist revolt in Spain.

group of helpless nuns.⁷⁷

Even more galling to the Protestant press than the sympathies of the Vatican in respect to the Spanish crisis would be Pope Pius XI's invitation to Protestant Christendom to join with the Roman Catholic Church in its worldwide struggle against communism. The *Christian Century* found this to be a curious development, as for centuries the authorities of that religious institution had refused to acknowledge as legitimate the schismatic branches of the Faith. In any case, the paper urged the rejection of this proposed anti-Marxist crusade, for Protestantism, in its turn, did not recognize the claims of the Roman Church to either spiritual or temporal authority.⁷⁸ F. D. Kershner, of the *Christian Evangelist*, believed much the same, although one can detect in his opinion a far greater degree of bigoted anti-Catholic paranoia. He thought that such a proposed partnership could be positively identified as a component of a conspiracy to subtly corrupt the foundations of Protestantism (particularly American Protestantism) in order to further the agenda of conquest nurtured by the medieval Church.⁷⁹

Protestant interest in the international developments in relation to the Spanish conflict and the complex Catholic dynamic thereof remained high during the last two months of the year. Even as F. D. Roosevelt secured the American presidency for the

⁷⁷ "News from the Nofrontier News Service," editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 10 October, 1936, 1295.

⁷⁸ "The Pope Would Lead All against Communism," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 28 October, 1936, 1411-1412.

⁷⁹ Frederick D. Kershner, "As I Think on These Things: the Real Thing," *The Christian Evangelist*, 15 October, 1936, 1332.

This rather odious opinion would be repeated by the same author in the same section of the same publication; he believed that the massive American Catholic Church sought to place the yoke of papal domination upon the shoulders of the United States. (26 November, 1936, 1535).

second time and the Italian and German dictators solidified the foundation of the alliance that would come to be called “the Axis,” Franco's rebels and his auxiliaries were hammering on the gates of Madrid.⁸⁰ These papers reported that European tensions remained high as the provisions of the non-intervention agreement were routinely violated on an enormous scale. Men and materiel from various foreign sources continued to flood into Spain daily, more completely transforming the civil war into an international brawl. And though the opinion seemed to prevail that the odds were increasingly weighted against the defenders of the embattled Republic, the *Century* and *Evangelist* carried weekly editorials proudly informing their readers that the “fascists” had not yet passed.⁸¹

Praising the Spanish Republic's stand against aggression though they might, these papers leveled charges of rank cowardice against the major European democracies which, in their self-interested urgency to maintain the wider peace of the Continent, had allowed non-intervention to become a sham at the expense of a sister democracy. To their thinking, it appeared as though Great Britain and France were content to abandon Spain to the consuming plague of a “fascist” insurgency, equipped through the largess of Italy

⁸⁰ “The Tension Tightens over Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 4 November, 1936, 1445.
“Italy and Germany Reach Accord,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 4 November, 1936, 1445-1446.
“The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 19 December, 1936, 1500.
The *Century* would also comment on the separate German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact, which would later be joined by Italy (“Japan Joins the Fascist Front,” 2 December, 1936, 1597-1598).

⁸¹ “The Tension Tightens over Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 4 November, 1936, 1445.
“The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 5 November, 1936, 1436-1437.
“The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 12 November, 1936, 1469.
“Spanish Fascists Close in on Madrid,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 18 November, 1936, 1516.
“The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 19 November, 1936, 1500.
“The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 26 November, 1936, 1532-1533.

and Germany, a theory which gained more credence when those totalitarian powers formally recognized Franco's legitimacy at the end of November.⁸² Indeed, as it then appeared that Mussolini and Hitler would soon be gaining a grateful fraternal ally in a Franco-dominated Spain, the *Christian Century* offered the estimation that the greatest menace to the world should no longer have been considered to be the Soviet Union, but rather the ascendent “fascist internationale,” which held nothing sacred except the rule of the sword.⁸³

At the same time, these newspapers continued to ponder the Vatican's proposal of a joint Catholic-Protestant, anti-communist action; these few sources replied, unsurprisingly, with scathing and resounding negativity. The *Christian Century* strengthened its already-established position, opining that this proposed campaign against leftist radicalism existed primarily as a means to shore up the power and privilege of the Church wherever it might be threatened—and not necessarily by Marxism alone, but also by political, social, and economic liberalism. To join such an effort would only be to promote reaction, if not to foster a strain of clerical-fascism. Furthermore, the editorial staff of the *Century* thought that this Christian “anti-communist front” could not be scrutinized in isolation from the ongoing struggle in Spain. There the Church had a great deal to lose and had responded by calumniating the recognized government while

⁸² “The Week in Review,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 5 November, 1936, 1436-1437.

“The Week in Review,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 26 November, 1936, 1532-1533.

⁸³ “The Fascist Internationale,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 2 December, 1936, 1600-1602.

Others, however, did not share this view. A correspondent wrote to the *Evangelist* to express his opinion that Franco's “Nationalist” movement existed as a militant manifestation of traditionalist patriotism, in spite of it appearing to be of the fascist bent and however it might have been backed (and definitely manipulated) by the Continental fascist powers. (17 December, 1936, 1637).

essentially beatifying the “fascist” rebels.”⁸⁴ The only logical option open to Protestants, the paper would conclude in a later editorial, would be to “stay out,” unless the suggested offensive against communism could be amended to include fascism.⁸⁵

There ended the American Protestant commentary for the last half of 1936. During this period of time in which the Spanish Civil War broke out in earnest, the evidence presented above demonstrates that each of these weekly newspapers adopted attitudes favorable to the Republic from the very outset of the conflict, despite their denominational differences.⁸⁶ In analyzing these sentiments, one comes away with the impression that, by and large, they were inspired by genuine sympathy for the beleaguered Spanish government and its “Loyalists.” One cannot, however, entirely escape the likelihood that these opinions might have been motivated in part by anti-Catholicism. Each of these publications put forth certain editorial comments and articles which positively dripped with venomous dislike of the supranational Roman Church. And often, too, were these pieces written in connection to the Church's position on the Spanish

⁸⁴ “Shall Protestants Accept Pope's Invitation?,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 25 November, 1936, 1550-1552.

The *Christian Evangelist* would publish a letter from chairman of the New York chapter of the “Friends of Spanish Democracy” agreeing with the *Century's* estimation of the Church's stake in Spain, for there her ancient prerogatives were threatened by modern liberal laicism, leading those “degenerate priests” in the Spanish hierarchy to “degrade God to the position of a belligerent” in their support of the insurgency. (Robert L. Paddock “The Struggle in Spain,” 5 November, 1936, 1447-1448).

⁸⁵ “Stay Out!,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 9 December, 1936, 1646-1648.

The editorial believed that no Protestants, especially no American Protestants, should combine forces with a religious hierarchy that condemned the excesses of the radical Left (particularly, it noted, in Spain) while simultaneously rendering silent sympathy to fascist terrorism.

⁸⁶ Being what may have been the only voice of dissent, one Eleanor Bissell wrote two articles for the *Christian Leader* in October, 1936 arguing for the cause for the Spanish rebels. She argued that theirs was the just cause, for it represented the struggle against world communism. (24 October, 1936, 1356) (31 October, 1936, 1391-1392).

war, its apparent tendency to see communists lurking in every shadow, and its supposed mutual understanding, if not alliance, with reaction and fascism.

But, in any event, as the year came to a close, the *Christian Leader* remained the sole publication to send holiday greetings, divorced from all politics, to all of suffering Spain.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ “As the Silent Stars Go by Madrid,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 19 December, 1936, 1600. Interestingly, the *Christian Century* featured an editorial review of the year 1936 that commented on the trend of fascist aggression sweeping across Europe. The Spanish war was discussed at some length and, despite its earlier position on the “democratic” cause of the Popular Front, the *Century* admitted that regardless of which faction claimed victory in the war, only bloody dictatorship seemed likely to be destined for Spain, indicating something of a cooling of pro-Republican passions. (“Retrospect,” 30 December, 1936, 1743-1745).

IV.

The American Catholic press entertained a very particular degree of interest in the Spanish turmoil as it finally erupted into open warfare in July, 1936. And whereas those Protestant newspapers cleaved onto their interpretation of the emerging civil war as a class struggle (almost with the trappings of Marxist inevitability), the Catholic publications tended to see it as a conflict informed primarily by a religious dynamic.

Into the month that would witness the beginning of the Nationalist uprising, the Catholic journals would note that the discord which had plagued Spain since the February elections had not abated. Rumors circulated that a number of the nation's middle- and upper-ranking military officers had been arrested for their supposed involvement in an alleged conspiracy to effect a *coup d'état*.⁸⁸ Both *America* and *Commonweal* would comment on the unrestrained political violence in unhappy Spain following the assassination of J. C. Sotelo on 13 July.⁸⁹ This politician, a prominent Catholic monarchist and an important member of the rightist opposition to the Popular Front, had stood before the *Cortes* earlier in July and denounced the government for its apparent abdication of authority and seeming disregard for public order. He further charged that the administration had allowed a certain Spanish "Red Guard" of extralegal paramilitary organizations, though political in outward complexion, to subvert the rule of law.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ "Chronicle: Spanish Troubles," editorial, *America*, 11 July, 1936, 328.

⁸⁹ "Week by Week: Red Strains," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 24 July, 1936, 316).

"Chronicle: Spanish Monarchist Slain," editorial, *America*, 25 July, 1936, 376).

⁹⁰ "Week by Week: Red Strains," *The Commonweal*, 24 July, 1936, 316).

The murder of Sotelo was carried out in Madrid by a mixed squad of Assault Guards (militarized urban police) and socialist triggermen in an act of reprisal to answer the previous day's killing of one Lt. J.

Events would escalate quickly after the death of Sotelo, though the American Catholic papers would, understandably enough, report on Spanish developments with confusion for some time. *America* would offer that while information on the emerging war had been proven contradictory or, at best, uncertain, it had been established that the revolt had been “apparently well planned by Fascists and Conservatives later joined by Royalists in fair numbers,” but had enjoyed a then-undetermined degree of success.⁹¹ Yet further dwelling in confusion, the editorial staff of *America* struggled to define the rightist movement: sources had “variously described” it as monarchist, fascist, and “Restoration[ist].”⁹² Whatever the case, this paper held the opinion that the rebellion stood as a justifiable “protest against the prolonged inability of the leftist regime to maintain order.”⁹³

It did not take long, however, for these Catholic publications to amend their muddled opinions on the civil war and adopt what would become their own standardized, nearly unyielding form of rhetoric with in respect to the Spanish conflict, which would be notable for its particular emphasis on both Catholic solidarity and anti-communist stridency.

Castillo, himself a Guardsman and an active socialist, at the hands of a Falangist gang. These dual assassinations, demonstrative of a national crisis careening out of all control, are also considered to be the events which precipitated the rebellion.

⁹¹ “Chronicle: Revolt in Spain,” editorial, *America*, 1 August, 1936, 399.

⁹² “Chronicle: Behind the Revolt,” editorial, *America*, 1 August, 1936, 399.

Commonweal, meanwhile, reported Spanish news from sources that pinned the “fascist” label on the uprising from the outset. These same sources also claimed that clergymen bolstered rebel lines and that their sanctuaries were used as strongholds; across the lines, conversely, the Church continued to suffer atrocities “amidst virtual anarchy.” (“Spain,” 7 August, 1936, 366).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Indeed, less than a month into the war, *America* would declare war-ravaged Spain to be a “delightful playground for moralists, special pleaders, [and] propagandists,” especially for all those “lovers of Communism and Sovietism” who foolishly exalted the cause of the Popular Front, though its revolutionary underpinnings and anti-religious hatreds had been clearly exposed.⁹⁴ L. K. Patterson, a Jesuit contributor to *America*, commented likewise. However, this author wrote that while the embattled Spanish government coalition had been conceived with the sole objective of adding a territorial possession to the communist bloc, he reluctantly admitted that the opposing faction likely sought to realign the nation under some form of fascist-like regimentation. And though he determined neither to be particularly palatable alternatives, he thought better of the latter, for whatever its politics might have amounted to, it stood in defense of the Faith against the radicals that would have seen it obliterated and scattered to the wind.⁹⁵ *America* would continue with its commentary on the war in this vein for some time, once even going as far as to delineate the “communist” cause in Spain, ostensibly espoused by the government, as a kind of “neo-Islam,” and hence the greatest threat to Christendom and

⁹⁴ “Comment,” editorial, in *America*, 8 August, 1936, 411.

This piece also expressed concern with the tendency of certain segments of the American press to affix blame for the “reactionary” uprising primarily to the Church, and worried whether the Spanish conflict would exacerbate latent anti-Catholic hostility in the United States.

⁹⁵ Lawrence K. Patterson, S. J., “Left and Right Battle for Spain,” *America*, 8 August, 1936, 412-413. This same edition of *America* would carry a like-minded editorial which stated that sympathy for the rebellion did not necessarily imply approbation for either reactionary militarism or fascism, but rather that it could be defended in light of the outrages committed by leftist regime against Christianity and, indeed, against civilization itself. (“Perils of a Communist Victory in Spain,” 8 August, 1936, 420-421). An article by J. P. Delaney, S. J. would continue this strain of the discourse, arguing that the Spanish rebels should not really be called rebels, for theirs was the cause of Christian civilization against Marxist barbarism. (“Call These Men Nor Rebels,” *America*, 22 August, 1936, 460).

her civilization.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, the *Commonweal* provided information on the conflict with more marked sobriety than had its sister publication, though it did tentatively agree with the general hypothesis that, for better or worse, the rightist rebels had more claim to righteousness than did the “radical” Spanish government.⁹⁷ As had the Protestant papers, this Catholic journal quickly demonstrated a sensitivity to the potential complications the civil war might impose upon the wider stage of international politics. Even as early as mid-August, when the rebellion had only just begun, the editors wrote fearfully that the Spanish conflagration could become the flashpoint of another general European war, not least because the major powers in that part of the world appeared to have declared for one side or the other for reasons of irreconcilable ideological sympathies.⁹⁸

Catholic interest in this facet of the war would, of course, endure through the remainder of that year. Yet, during these few months, these representative Catholic publications demonstrated a shift from cautioned skepticism to partisan certainty in respect to the civil war in approximately the same fashion as had the Protestant journals. During this period of time they became fixated upon the religious aspects of the war and dwelt ever more upon the ostensible march of anti-religious communism in Spain that

⁹⁶ “Communism Marches On,” editorial, *America*, 15 August, 1936, 444-445.

A weekly update in *Commonweal* would state something similar, in that it saw the savagery of the conflict as not unlike that of “Christians and Turks” of ages past. (“Bread upon the Waters,” 14 August, 1936, 375). The September issue of *Sign* would, in fact, comment in an identical fashion.

⁹⁷ “Murder in Madrid,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 28 August, 1936, 413-414.

⁹⁸ “The World Revolution,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 14 August, 1936, 373-374.

“Week by Week: the Danger Spot in Europe,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 21 August, 1936, 394-395. On the notion of Spain being a potential powder keg, *America* agreed.

bordered on obsession. This could be considered reasonable, of course, as the Spanish branch of their Church had undoubtedly been subjected to horrific persecution as the war smoldered through its first phase. Regardless, and perhaps to an extent more so than their Protestant contemporaries, these newspapers began to define the war in the sense of stark moral absolutism that often attends uncompromising religiosity: in Spain, thereafter, the issue was ultimately determined to be between communism and Christianity.⁹⁹

Even *Commonweal*, despite its temperance in previous months, became increasingly disturbed with the unceasing reports from Spain detailing the revolutionary desecration of the Spanish Church wherever the Popular Front retained power, which the weekly concluded to have been enacted with the connivance of Soviet Russia.¹⁰⁰ The *Sign*, entering the stream of Catholic discourse for the first time since the rising, subscribed to this understanding. It further offered that it had been perfectly natural that the Spanish clergy committed to the “conservative and decent” rebel coalition against the “atheistic communism of the Loyalists,” which had been fully unleashed earlier that year by radical proselytizers to fulfill their wish to remake Catholic Spain into a Soviet possession.¹⁰¹ Yet, while urging Catholic Americans to lend their sympathy to tormented

⁹⁹ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 19 September, 1936, 554-555.

“Current Fact and Comment: Seen from Different Angles,” *The Sign*, September, 1936, 67-68.

America would protest the arbitrary labeling of the government's supporters as “Loyalists” and the anti-government insurgents as “Rebels;” its staff believed that it would be more appropriate to denominate them respectively as the Marxist “Rabble” and the “Christian Forces of Law and Order” or simply “Nationalists.” (5 September, 1936, 519-520). (3 October, 1936, 602-603).

¹⁰⁰ “Week by Week: Spanish Horror,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 4 September, 1936, 435.

“Seven Days' Survey: the Wide World,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 4 September, 1936, 443.

¹⁰¹ “Current Fact and Comment: the Situation in Spain,” editorial, *The Sign*, September, 1936, 67.

“Current Fact and Comment: Catholics and the Revolt,” editorial, *The Sign*, September, 1936, 67.

America seconded this opinion, continuing its already-established commentary that held that the radical

Spain as directed by the Vatican, *Commonweal* retained some of its moderation and insisted that Catholics, and more particularly their press, avoid stances of alarmist militancy in response to the Spanish Civil War. Its staff appeared to entertain a not-unfounded fear that uncritical militancy might only arouse latent anti-Catholic feelings among certain quarters of public sentiment in the United States which tended to support the cause of the Spanish government.¹⁰² The editorial staff of *America*, on the other hand, scoffed at *Commonweal's* suggestion. Rather than choosing the route of conciliation, the journal scorned all those who defended the “liberalism” of the Spanish Republic and the “communistic” Popular Front. It appeared to that journal's writers that the definition of the word in contemporary Spain had been corrupted to mean the freedom from the restraint which made civilization itself possible.¹⁰³ Indeed, one contributor to that publication, J. P. Delaney, would declare that the Catholics of Spain had but “one choice” in the matter, and that was either for or against the defense of their God, Country, and Civilization in what he (and other Catholics) had already delineated as a religious

assault upon Spain, more particularly on the Church, had been of Soviet manufacture, and that as more of the American public became aware of this reality, then there would (should?) be a tidal shift of opinion in favor of the insurgents. (5 September, 1936, 506-507). (12 September, 1936, 539).

¹⁰² “Week by Week: Footnote on Persecution,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 4 September, 1936, 436.

“The Beleaguered Church,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 11 September, 1936, 453-454.

“Through the Cross to Light,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 25 September, 1936, 493-494.

In accordance, *Sign* believed that if such anti-Catholic hatreds were aroused in the United States in response to general Catholic sympathy for the cause of the rebellion, it should not have come as a surprise; it would only have been a continuation of the long tradition of Anglo-American anti-Catholic (and anti-Spanish) bigotry. (September, 1936; Pgs. 67-68) (October, 1936, 131-132, 141-144)

¹⁰³ “Spanish Liberalism,” editorial, *America*, 5 September, 1936, 516.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 17 October, 1936, 26-27.

Especially irksome to the staff of *America* was the tendency of certain segments of the American press to identify the cause of the Republic with “democracy” without qualification; to the editorial staff of that publication, this only demonstrated gross political illiteracy. (31 October, 1936, 84-85).

crusade against the foreign contagion of atheistic communism.¹⁰⁴

Based upon the evidence presented above, it can be demonstrated that, at least in the columns of these few publications, the American Catholics rather quickly adopted the conception of the Spanish Civil War as being a struggle between the hateful, atheistic barbarity of Moscow and Roman Christian civilization—and then proceeded to reiterate it *ad infinitum*. This pattern would continue throughout the remainder of 1936, and the Catholic press would never acknowledge what troubled their Protestant contemporaries about the conflict. That is, of course, the seeming allegiant confluence between the Church and Franco's Nationalist movement, which to the Protestants appeared to be an emergent iteration of fascism.¹⁰⁵

Indeed, the last two months of the year saw very little development in their commentary. But there was, to be sure, a brief period in which a few Catholic writers turned their attention away from communism to focus on another whipping-boy, the anarcho-syndicalists of Catalonia. To some, these radicals were considered to entertain their own conspiracy, born of another poisoned doctrine; to others, they were merely

¹⁰⁴ John P. Delaney, "Catholic Spaniards Have Only One Choice," *America*, 12 September, 1936, 539. A later article in *America*, containing the by-then-familiar trope of communism versus Christian civilization, would offer that the rebels were battling against those who would subject Spain to the "hammer and sickle of Asiatic slavery." (10 October, 1936, 7-8).

¹⁰⁵ "Week by Week: One Factor in Spain," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 6 November, 1936, 31-32. Theophane Maguire, C. P., "What of Spain," *The Sign*, November, 1936, 194. Francis McCullagh, "Long Live Spain!," *The Sign*, November, 1936, 205-207. "Week by Week: the Lesson of Spain," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 18 December, 1936, 203-204. Philip Burke, "The Claws of the Bear," *The Sign*, December, 1936, 265-267. And yet for all of this certitude, a certain T. Flanagan recognized the "dilemma" of the Spanish war. In his opinion, he wrote to *America*, the people of Spain had the unenviable choice of either siding with those who claimed to be the servants of God and Civilization but who had for centuries oppressed them, or with those who promised to break the chains of their slavery but who would only institute another form of bondage. (19 December, 1936, 257).

another of Moscow's creeping tentacles. Whatever the case, the anarchists were deemed to have been just as injurious to the Faith as the communists.¹⁰⁶

America did, however, report on one interesting event that seems to have escaped the notice of the Protestant press. In early November, the so-called American League against War and Fascism held a meeting at Madison Square Garden in which representatives of the Spanish Popular Front addressed an audience of considerable size and presented their country's plight. They apparently argued that their government was not at all communistic, but rather proudly democratic. At the same time, according to *America's* commentary, each of the constituent elements of the opposition (including the Church) were tarred black with the unsophisticated brush strokes of broad generalization, and were depicted as the appendages of advancing fascism.¹⁰⁷

Catholic interest in the internationalized complexion of the Spanish conflict naturally endured as the year ended. Perhaps more interestingly, though, one can glean a sense of simmering resentment amongst certain Catholic writers in response to the

¹⁰⁶ Harry C. Plummer, "Barcelona Seized by Anarcho-Syndicalists," *America*, 21 November, 1936, 148-149.

"High Points in the Spanish Situation," editorial, *America*, 28 November, 1936, 156-157.

Harry C. Plummer, "Twin Despots of Spanish Democracy," *America*, 28 November, 1936, 177-178.

Harry C. Plummer, "Spain Demands Religious Freedom," *America*, 12 December, 1936, 220-221.

These opinions, of course, were offered without the understanding that the communists and the anarchists did not get along particularly well, to say the least.

¹⁰⁷ "Comment," editorial, *America*, 7 November, 1936, 98-99.

The substance of this address would actually be turned into a pamphlet entitled "Spain's Democracy Talks to America," which would be published and distributed by the American and Canadian Leagues against War and Fascism. This meeting (and the subsequently produced pamphlet) would receive more specific denunciation in an editorial comment in the *Commonweal* (4 December, 1936, 141-143).

Further, all of this was believed to be a part of a nation-wide propaganda effort, directed by CPUSA and its subordinate "front" organizations to further their revolutionary cause in Europe and the world—all, of course, at the behest of the Comintern. What was worse, *America* and *Sign* offered, was that such propaganda seemed to be having the desired effect—otherwise honest (non-Catholic) Americans were being duped into subscribing to it. Catholics, on the other hand, were presumed to know better.

swelling of anti-Catholic opinion in the United States, ostensibly due to the the civil war. Indeed, one F. H. Spearman wrote a piece for *America* in which he expressed bitterness over the fact that Catholic Americans were being forced to “eat dirt” by their neighbors and that their Church faced constant defamation from the non-Catholic press.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, D. C. O’Grady wrote to the *Commonweal* and endorsed that publication’s established belief that hysteria or militancy in the Catholic position on the war would only elevate anti-Catholic sentiment in the United States, and would contribute to the arsenals of those who would place the whole of the Church in the camp of the fascists.¹⁰⁹

But hysteria and militancy had, by the end of 1936, essentially become the standard position on the Spanish Civil War by most of the contributors to these few Catholic periodicals, and not to mention by the respective staffs thereof. Almost perfectly encapsulating this trend, one need only reference the *Sign*’s final relevant article on the subject for the year, entitled the “New Crusade,” which called for good Catholic souls to declare a modern crusade (that glorious, thoroughly Christian institution) against the modern enemy of the Faith, communism, the “last great heresy of the East.”¹¹⁰ According to the author, the time had then come to confront that mortal enemy as Christ once

¹⁰⁸ Frank H. Spearman, “They Must Not Get Away with It,” *America*, 21 November, 1936, 152. This article expressed further irritation with the non-Catholic press’s continued attacks against the Church’s relationship with the Nationalist coalition while it insisted upon the democratic virtues of the Popular Front when “democracy” appeared to be the contemporary rallying cry for world communism. In other words: “...democracy, into disrepute they have dragged down thy name.” (*America*, 5 December, 1936, 194-195). The December editorials in *Sign* commented likewise.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel C. O’Grady, “Communications: But Do You Know Your Reds?,” letter to the editor, *The Commonweal*, 18 December, 1936, 221.

¹¹⁰ J. G. E. Hopkins, “The New Crusade,” in *The Sign*, December, 1936, 312-313. One will recall that communism had been designated elsewhere as a kind of “neo-Islam.” Here the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed further depiction as an organizational representation of, for example, the Spartans at Thermopylae, holding the line of civilization against the encroaching Persian hordes.

enjoined: "...not with peace, but with a sword."¹¹¹ And most Catholic Spain was certainly to be the first battlefield.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

By the end of the year, both *Commonweal* and *America* began to press the argument through editorials and articles that the use of force by Catholic Spain against its oppressors was justified by religious doctrine. (*America*, 28 November, 1936, 180-181). (*The Commonweal*, 6 November, 1936, 42-44).

V.

As 1936 faded into 1937, these American Protestant newspapers had, in respect to their understanding of the Spanish Civil War, shifted from a position of caution to one of entrenched partisanship. For most of 1937, the rhetoric adopted and employed by these publications would change very little, and thereby assumed a character of rote predictability.¹¹² For the Protestants, of course, that would mean a continuation of the emotional interpretation of the war as an ideological struggle between democracy and reaction (or fascism), however imprecise those terms might have been.¹¹³ Otherwise, they continued to be interested in the internal politics of wartime Spain, the progress of the conflict and the way in which the international situation developed around it, the troubled work of the Non-Intervention Committee, and the moral dilemma over whether more steps should have been taken by the democracies to aid the Republic. There also continued, albeit briefly, the derisive discussion of the Vatican's proposed campaign of mutual Catholic-Protestant cooperation to confront and destroy the supposed menace of communism.¹¹⁴

Opposite their own interpretation of the war, these publications worried over the

¹¹² As had, indeed, that of their Catholic adversaries.

¹¹³ "In a Nutshell," editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 8 May, 1937, 581.

This edition of the paper featured a brief editorial quote: "...we are sure that liberty and democracy in the world will be endangered if Franco wins. The hodge-podge coalition against him so glibly damned as red is fighting our fight." (8 May, 1937, 581).

¹¹⁴ Here one might reference two items of peripheral interest. In early January, 1937, the *Christian Leader* ran an editorial which reprinted a list from the *Atlanta Journal*; this list purported to rank the top ten major news stories of the day. Interestingly, the Spanish Civil War ranked only ninth, coming in only above the (outdated?) issue of German rearmament. Secondly: that year these three journals and a number of their contributors would express their concern, indeed disappointment, with the happenings inside the Soviet Union as limited details began to surface in respect to Stalin's Terror.

extent to which rank-and-file Catholic opinion in the United States trended toward sympathy for the Nationalists' "holy war." They already knew that certain important members of the American Catholic hierarchy had come out in favor of the uprising. Specifically citing the Archbishop of Cincinnati, J. T. McNicholas, the *Christian Century* summarily denounced him as a pro-Franco propagandist who uncritically towed the Catholic line. This clergyman attacked the "communist" government of Spain while totally ignoring the "fascist" complexion of the supposedly Christian rebellion.¹¹⁵ The *Christian Evangelist* would express similar concerns: even while the eminently conservative *Chicago Tribune* had concluded that the uprising stood as a reactionary assault on a progressive democratic government, Catholics of all descriptions seemed unwilling to amend their established definition of the rightist movement as anti-communist and thoroughly Christian.¹¹⁶ Further, the *Evangelist* held such pro-Franco vehemence as a rather foolish blunder, for its staff believed that the Nationalist movement had amply demonstrated its fascist proclivities. And fascism, being at its core hostile to religion, could never be regarded as a true friend of the Faith; indeed, the paper wrote that the "church which trusts the fascists is a church which walks knee-deep in folly."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ "Cincinnati Archbishop Is Propagandist for Franco," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 27 January, 1937, 102.

The *Century* would also review with disdain the Catholic "American Committee for Spanish Relief" (chaired, in fact, by the *Commonweal's* own chief editor, M. Williams). Its editorial staff believed that this venture was "propaganda disguised as charity," and only contributed to the cause of fascism in Spain. (26 May, 1937, 668).

¹¹⁶ "Behind the Headlines," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 4 February, 1937, 145.

To describe the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Evangelist* nominated it as a "sanctified newspaper of conservatism."

¹¹⁷ "Again, Catholicism and Spain," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 27 May, 1937, 679-680.

B. Y. Landis, writing for *The Christian Leader* would offer likewise. (12 June, 1937, 754-755).

Such charged commentary naturally brought the various editorial staffs of these Protestant newspapers again to the consideration of the Catholic Church's conception of a pan-Christian anti-communist crusade. Without exception, these writers considered the whole idea ludicrous, especially as it seemed to them that it would force Protestantism into a sort of stooping vassalage in order to battle an enemy designated exclusively by the Pontificate—which, in this case, they believed to be nothing more than a man of straw. The *Christian Century*, as it had earlier established, continued to assert that this proposed movement had been born from the Church's desire to preserve its power and privilege wherever it faced diminution or destruction, with Spain then being the most obvious pressure point.¹¹⁸ Moreover, it had become increasingly clear to these journals that the whole concept had been fueled by the insufferable arrogance which typically attends assumed entitlement, and that the Church did not much care who or what rallied to its standard so long as its interests were upheld.¹¹⁹

Moving away from the more intangible ideological considerations, the staffs and contributors to these Protestant newspapers maintained their discourse on the practical

¹¹⁸ “The Church Must Itself Repent,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 6 January, 1937, 6-7. S. H. Fritchman, writing for *The Christian Leader*, would later comment likewise (7 August, 1937, 1005-1006).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*
“The Week in Review,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 7 January, 1937, 4-5.
Randall S. Hilton, “Our Greatest Need,” *The Christian Leader*, 30 January, 1937, 144-145.
“The Vatican Fires Both Ways,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 31 March, 1937, 401.
“Rallying under a Divinely Delegated Superior,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 31 March, 1937, 401. The *Christian Century* did, however, acknowledge that such a campaign would be more palatable and perhaps acceptable to American Protestants if all forms of fascism were included in the rubric of what a united Christianity would undertake to defeat. Indeed, as certain American Catholic writers had warned, for the Church and her faithful to encourage rabid anti-communist zealotry while only dismissing fascism as a mildly objectionable extremism would only further impress upon Protestants that the Church favored fascism. (13 January, 1937, 38).

aspects of the Spanish conflict. As before, they reported on the military undertakings of either belligerent faction, expended many column inches on the speculative discussion of Spain becoming the *casus belli* of another general European war, and bemoaned the already-compromised mission of the Non-Intervention Committee.

They continued their discussion on the complications that the civil war had introduced into the arena of international relations, particularly as it then appeared that the mastery of the Mediterranean hung in the balance—a question as critical to the existing imperial interests of Great Britain as it was to the dearest ambitions of the Italian dictator.¹²⁰ And, as Europe had not then been plunged into war over the Spanish crisis, the Protestant journals often highlighted the work of the Non-Intervention Committee, though they entertained no illusions as to that body's effectiveness in preventing international meddling in the conflict, specifically on the part of Italy and Germany. These papers offered many editorial opinions on why that necessity had justified such contemptuous non-compliance for the fascist powers. They had, during late 1936, recognized the legitimacy of the Nationalist movement, and to renege on their Spanish commitments would have meant not only the sacrifice of the valuable concessions that Franco had supposedly promised them, but would have also constituted a disastrous blow

¹²⁰ “Italo-British Agreement an Influence for Peace,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 13 January, 1937, 35.

Harold E. Fey, “A General War in 1937?,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 7 January, 1937, 12-13.

Also distressing to the Protestants was what they had understood to be Hitler's interest in the acquisition of strategic North African territory opposite Gibraltar in return for his munificence, a development which would have done much to upset the Mediterranean *status quo*. (*The Christian Century*, 20 January, 1937, 67-68).

to their international prestige.¹²¹

To have read these Protestant journals without any additional context, one might have come away with the conclusion that Franco's rebellion had been fought for him by foreign militants and mercenaries of the worst description. Indeed, an early January issue of the *Christian Leader* featured an update on the progress of the conflict, which jokingly offered the opinion that the only genuinely Spanish aspect of his campaign had been “the target.”¹²² Purporting to understand the object of all this, these publications argued as they had for months: that the mutiny had been abetted by Italy and Germany for the sake of ensuring the creation of a fascist stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula in order to bolster the strength of the previously-delineated “fascist internationale.”¹²³ But however the Protestants might have been determined to preserve their certitude that the complexion of Franco's coalition was more specifically Italian and German than Spanish, they could not deny the momentum of his military adventure, which despite his continued frustration

¹²¹ Raymond Leslie Buell, “Understanding Our World: German-Japanese Pact Arouses Democracies,” *The Christian Leader*, 2 January, 1937, 20.

“Goering and Mussolini Confer about Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 27 January, 1937, 102.

“No News from Spain Is News,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 3 February, 1937, 133.

“Powers Promise Hands off in Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 24 February, 1937, 235-236.

¹²² “News from the Nofrontier News Service: Franco the Internationalist,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 16 January, 1937, 81.

The *Leader* reprinted a quip from a Richmond newspaper, applicable to both sides in the war: “Then there was the commander in Madrid who gave the regiment a fifteen-minute fight talk, only to find that none of the boys spoke Spanish.” (23 January, 1937, 128).

¹²³ The *Christian Leader* would report that the Germans had established an outpost in northwestern Spain, and had from that location been broadcasting messages of National-Socialist solidarity with the Nationalist rebellion in its battle against “Communist, Marxist, Anarchist, Jewish barbarism.” (2 January, 1937, 15-16). This account would dovetail with other stories into the summer of that year: the publication of the contents from the “war journal” of a dead officer serving in the Italian Blackshirt militia (17 July, 1937, 918), the importation of Spanish oranges into France, which arrived in crates bearing German labeling (24 July, 1937, 945-946), and the supposed capture of a ream of sensitive Italian military documents in the Guadalajara sector (28 August, 1937, 1113).

before the gates of Madrid, had achieved significant gains across the north of Spain and in the Basque provinces.¹²⁴

Clearly, then, the Protestants believed that the Non-Intervention Committee had failed in its trust and the contemporary military situation reflected it. This aside, there were, by the end of the summer of 1937, two more facets of the conflict that captured the attention of these newspapers and perhaps bear mentioning.

First, they expressed interest in the development of the internal politics of the Loyalist camp, particularly after the conclusion of the so-called “May Days,” which decisively shifted political patterns within the Republic. In what would later be described as a miniature civil war within the wider Spanish Civil War, there transpired in Catalonia a series of events which led to an anarcho-syndicalist and “Trotskyite” socialist uprising that forced the government to act decisively against it. In the aftermath, the Prime Minister, F. L. Caballero, himself a socialist firebrand, faced ejection from the government, as did every vestige of anarcho-syndicalist and radical socialist representation. This dramatic governmental reorganization received positive commentary, particularly by the *Christian Century*. Its staff offered the opinion that those certain uncooperative elements which refused to compromise on their revolutionary ideals for the common interest of the Republic had to be jettisoned if the “fascists” were ever to be

¹²⁴ Here the Protestant papers, particularly the *Christian Evangelist*, perceived a dilemma for the Catholic Church: how could that institution countenance the Nationalist movement when it was then visiting death and destruction on the historically Catholic Basque country, which had mostly remained loyal to the Republic? (6 May, 1937, 583-584). The *Christian Century* and *Leader* would comment likewise, but would focus more on the April bombing of Guernica by the German Condor Legion.

vanquished.¹²⁵

Secondly, a number of Protestant writers confessed to anxiety over the contradictions they perceived in the enforcement of American neutrality in respect to the Spanish war. While they admitted that the policy would serve as a considerable barrier to prevent the United States from becoming entangled in the quarrels of the Old World, it definitely constituted a breach of international law in that it refused to acknowledge the right of a recognized, friendly government to defend itself in the face of an internal revolt.¹²⁶ On a similar note, the *Christian Century* editorialized on the potential danger posed by illegal American volunteerism in the conflict. Though making it clear that its sympathies lay with the cause of the Republic and those fighting for it, this paper damned the phenomenon as the product of unthinking irresponsibility, for it held the potential to undermine the basis of American neutrality.¹²⁷ On the other hand, W. E. Davies, writing for the *Christian Leader*, doubted the traditional route of neutrality. He believed that the

-
- ¹²⁵ "Spain Passes through Cabinet Crisis," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 26 May, 1937, 667.
"Spain's New Cabinet Gains Strength," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 2 June, 1937, 700.
"Spanish War Remains in Summer Doldrums," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 25 August, 1937, 1036.
To comment further on this important incident, one must return to *Spain Betrayed*. The declassified Soviet documents within that volume offer a convincing case that the May Days were not all they seemed. Indeed, they strongly suggest that the crisis in Catalonia was deliberately precipitated by Spanish communists and their pro-Moscow socialist deputies, all under the direction of Soviet military intelligence agents. Their ultimate goal in provoking militant action from the anarcho-syndicalists and their assorted radical allies was, of course, to manufacture an excuse to topple Caballero, ever resistant to Soviet manipulation, destroy his natural base of power, and replace him with a candidate who was thought to have been more amenable to communist (read: Soviet) "suggestions."
- ¹²⁶ "The Week in Review," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 7 January, 1937, 4-5.
"What Sort of Neutrality?," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 13 January, 1937, 38-40.
"Is Neutrality Moral?," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 17 March, 1937, 341.
- ¹²⁷ "Keep out of Spain!," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 27 January, 1937, 104-106.
This same publication, however, applauded the efforts of their Quaker countrymen, who undertook that year to organize non-partisan humanitarian relief for the souls of suffering Spain. Curiously, certain Quaker relief representatives would report back to the newspaper and totally reinforce Protestant ideas about the rebellion, including the complicity of the Catholic Church in it. (7 April, 1937, 452-454).

Spanish Civil War had forced liberals to confront the discomfiting dangers of the contemporary day and arrived at the conclusion that the world had become at once so intimately intertwined and simultaneously hostile that isolationism had been rendered obsolete. And while he never necessarily advocated for American intervention on behalf of the Republic, he did stress the importance of the leadership of the United States against the aggressor nations and nascent fascist movements, wherever they should threaten the peace.¹²⁸

By the Autumn of 1937, as demonstrated by the material discussed above, Protestant opinion in respect to the Spanish crisis had remained fundamentally the same and, indeed, had been further reinforced. Their faith in the essential righteousness of the Republican cause endured, as did their disdain for the “fascist” Nationalist insurgency and all those who supported it—most pointedly, it then seemed, the Catholic Church. All which one might say had changed was the emergence of the (perhaps limited) opinion that the United States owed the Spanish Republic unwavering support, not only out of the rightful recognition of international law, but also for the sake of the so-called “democratic tradition.” This latter line of reasoning would soon become important to the next phase of the Protestant discourse on the Spanish Civil War.

¹²⁸ W. Ellis Davies, “Can America Become a Hermit Nation,” *The Christian Leader*, 13 March, 1937, 338-339.

D. G. Lothrop, writing for the same publication, would hold a similar opinion, though he was more expressly concerned with the Spanish war. He wrote that the cause of the beleaguered Spanish Republican Loyalists could not be considered apart from short- and long-term interests of the United States, and that the country should have thereby done all it could—the right thing, according to international law—to support the Republic of Spain, a sister democracy in a modern battle against tyranny. (10 April, 1937, 457-458).

VI.

The year 1937 would see the Catholic press's interpretation of the Spanish Civil War transform in a number of ways, some more subtle than others. For example, it became increasingly uncommon to read of it as a war of religion or a holy crusade, although these papers could never entirely escape from that early judgment.¹²⁹ But Catholic writers maintained their fixation on the primacy of international communism as the villain in the Spanish drama while continuing to argue for the relative virtues of the Nationalist insurgency—all of which came at the expense of somewhat lackluster reporting on the progress of the war and the international developments which surrounded it. However, there would develop some dissension within the ranks of these few Catholic publications. *Commonweal* began to insist that the conflict be reviewed with a greater degree of sensitivity to its nuances, cautioning against reductionist interpretations of it, and became something of a voice of reasoned moderation amongst its more hysterical peers. This development would be met with outraged incredulity, most particularly by *America*.¹³⁰ Otherwise, there would be some discussion on the notion of

¹²⁹ Even the previously militant *America* began to at least moderate its views on the conflict: "...we must sternly forbid ourselves to regard the Spanish war as primarily, or even secondarily, a religious war. The rightists cannot be held as a Catholic junta, the soldiers of Franco should not be applauded as Catholic crusaders for God." (30 January, 1937, 397-398). To this paper, the religious dynamic began to recede slightly as the struggle began to be defined more as a question of radical (read: communist) revolutionaries versus Franco's counter-revolutionary forces—which even this paper's staff would eventually admit had certain regrettable "fascist" tendencies (13 February, 1937, 444-445). A correspondent to *The Sign* even wrote to the magazine, expressing disgust at the flippancy with which the author of the previous month's article, "The New Crusade," treated the idea of a religious war. (January, 1937, 365-366). Another interpreted Franco's movement as "fascist" (March, 1937, 491). Others, of course, would disagree.

¹³⁰ M. Williams, *Commonweal*'s founder and executive editor would, however, retain some of his Catholic militancy in respect to his opinion on the Spanish war.

old-fashioned anti-Catholicism being a major factor in non-Catholic Americans' support of Loyalist Spain. Here again one might perceive a certain tendency amongst the Catholic publications: the effort being expended to defend Franco's Nationalists was also a convenient reflexive mechanism to protect the denomination they represented.¹³¹

Definitely shifting away from the previous definition of the Spanish war as being one of religion, there began in 1937 a veritable Catholic drumbeat to prove that the side of Franco's Nationalists more precisely represented liberty than did the Republican Loyalists. *America* even forwarded the notion that the ostensible popularity of the uprising represented something akin to a democratic vote, which had clearly stated that the “people of Spain would no longer submit to a government which had allowed chaos to prevail.”¹³² This same newspaper (along with the monthly *Sign*) would even solicit commentary from G. Robles, the noted Spanish rightist. He would reinforce their convictions of the Popular Front being illegitimately constituted, and whether it had sown discord itself or merely allowed “chaos to prevail,” it had been the right of the Spanish people to revolt.¹³³ O. B. McGuire and B. Grimley, writing for the *Sign*, took further

¹³¹ Even if some writers, like E. H. Smith, admitted that a considerable amount of blame had to be apportioned to the Church, a reality not made any more palatable due to the fact that the Church, wherever it had been threatened, tended to ally with dubious reactionary or fascist elements. (“An Alarmist Speaks,” *The Commonweal*, 1 January, 1936, 261-263).

¹³² “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 2 January, 1937, 290-291.

“Chaos” presumably preparatory to a revolutionary crisis.

¹³³ “Comment”, editorial, *America*, 13 March, 1937, 530.

Gil Robles, “The Spanish Republic from 1931 till 1936 Elections,” *America*, 15 May, 1937, 124-126).

Gil Robles, “The Spanish Republic from February till July, 1936,” *America*, 22 May, 1937, 149-151).

Gil Robles, “The Spanish Republic and Basque Independence—The Truth about Guernica,” *America*, 29 May, 1937, 172-173.

Owen B. McGuire, “Gil Robles and the Republic,” *The Sign*, May, 1937, 598-601.

America would run a piece by E. S. O’Kane, who had traveled to war-torn Spain, that would further

interpretative liberties and asserted that duty to God, no less than patriotism, had impelled them to strike against the baleful combine of radical elements which had seized control of their country.¹³⁴

The Catholic press would naturally continue to pillory this leftist government coalition as a purely Soviet construct. These few papers maintained their rhetoric on the mortal danger posed to the civilized world by international communism, holding the example of contemporary Spain aloft to demonstrate a contextual microcosm of what the Comintern envisioned on a global scale.¹³⁵ And yet both *America* and the *Sign* would again feature articles on Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, indicating that some of their more savvy (or perhaps reasonable) contributors understood ideological distinctions and that the whole of the Loyalist bloc had never existed as an entirely communist entity. This particular strain of radicalism would receive negative commentary, namely in that it relied upon terror and violence.¹³⁶ In any event, these papers primarily condemned the

reinforce all of this. She claimed that the righteousness of the rising was backed by some ancient Spanish code that held that the vested authority could only be served loyally so long as it discharged its duties faithfully. (“*Viva España!* The Nation in Crisis, 27 March, 1937, 585-586).

¹³⁴ Owen B. McGuire, “They Had to Revolt,” *The Sign*, January, 1937, 339-340.

Owen B. McGuire, “Sifting the Spanish News,” *The Sign*, February, 1937, 411-413.

Bernard Brimley, “Back Stage in Spain,” *The Sign*, June, 1937, 662-664.

One might add that this journal's editorial commentary would regularly endeavor to portray the future dictator of Spain as a Godly liberator and a benevolent despot rather than a fanatic or a fascist brute.

¹³⁵ “Current Fact and Comment: False Issues,” editorial, *The Sign*, January, 1937, 323.

“Current Fact and Comment: The Truth about Spain,” editorial, *The Sign*, January, 1937, 323.

“Current Fact and Comment: Stalin, the 'Democratic' Dictator,” editorial, *The Sign*, June, 1937, 709.

¹³⁶ Harry Chapin Plummer “Red and Black over Spain,” *The Sign*, January, 1937, 329-332.

The Pilgrim, “With Scrip and Staff: Spain's Dragon No Youthful Dinosaur,” *America*, 27 February, 1937, 491.

There also seemed to be an understanding that these two political affiliations were fundamentally at odds. They predicted that the anarcho-syndicalists would likely be crushed, either by a Nationalist victory or by the Republican government itself, which they interpreted as becoming increasingly communist-dominated. A sound judgment, on the whole, if only a shot in the dark at the time.

agents of Moscow as the primary antagonists in the Spanish crisis.

Most particularly concerning to these Catholic newspapers seemed to be the florid professions of eternal friendship and brotherhood lavished upon the democracies of the world by the Comintern, amounting to its desire for them to join in solidarity against its own denominated enemy of fascism. They were of the opinion that these were rather naked attempts to lure the democracies into devastating anti-fascist wars to the exclusive benefit of the communist cause. Auxiliary to this, on a smaller scale and closer to home, the staffs of both *America* and the *Commonweal* warned against those native Leagues against War and Fascism and pseudo-Popular Front organizations, which they interpreted (not necessarily incorrectly) as Trojan Horse-like stratagems for the purposes of domestic infiltration and the manipulation of public opinion.¹³⁷ They believed such “Trojan Horses” to be adept at propagandizing, most especially in the tactic of applying damning labels to those who either remained aloof or otherwise refused to participate in their anti-fascist adventures—in this case, the Roman Catholic Church.¹³⁸

These Catholic journals assigned blame to the publications of the American Left for their apparent role in contributing to this process, especially in their prejudiced and

¹³⁷ “Week by Week: Up War!,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 1 January, 1937, 259-260.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 30 January, 1937, 387.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 6 February, 1937, 422.

See also:

Wilfrid Parsons, “Fascist-Communist Dilemma,” *The Commonweal*, 12 February, 1937, 429-431.

Wilfrid Parsons, “Popular Front and Catholicism,” *The Commonweal*, 19 February, 1937, 464-466.

¹³⁸ “Fascism, Communism, and Americanism,” editorial, *America*, 6 March, 1937, 516-517.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 10 July, 1937, 314-315.

All of this was essentially a vicious campaign of name-calling inspired by a rigid ideological dichotomy. The Church found itself being denounced as “fascist” for its refusal to countenance any movement which contained anything resembling “Marxist” or otherwise “anti-Christian” elements. But, to be sure, the American Catholic press was equally guilty of assigning arbitrary labels.

dishonest treatment of the Spanish war, which had led the mass of otherwise decent citizens to support the “Reds.”¹³⁹ More specifically, the editorial staff of the *Sign* expressed great anxiety over its perception that substantial elements of the liberal Protestant press seemed to be enthusiastic subscribers to the cause of the Republican Loyalists, perhaps emboldened by a resurgent anti-Catholic bigotry.¹⁴⁰ Correspondingly, contributors to the *Sign* would insist upon the necessity of “enlightening key Americans on Spain” in order to break the hypnosis that “Red” propaganda held over non-Catholic souls.¹⁴¹ This may have been a response to the appearance of a certain joint statement, published by approximately one hundred American literary figures, in which they appealed to all members of their craft to align themselves with the Spanish government, which they interpreted as being “in harmony with American traditions.”¹⁴² A. Beck believed that this campaign to arouse non-Catholic Americans had to be taken further, and proposed the formation of an organization of Catholic “Minute Men,” which he defined as a “group of letter-writers for protest and correction against the Church in the

¹³⁹ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 9 January, 1937, 314-315.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 16 January, 1937, 338-339.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 3 April, 1937, 602-603.

Albert I. Whelan, “Spanish Propaganda Is Not Truly Spanish,” *America*, 3 July, 1937, 296.

On this note, *Commonweal* would report on a happening that escaped the notice of the other publications, that being a meeting of some 15,000 at Madison Square Garden, concerned over the unfair treatment of the Spanish Civil War in the American press. (4 June, 1937, 141-143).

¹⁴⁰ “Current Fact and Comment: An Unholy Alliance,” editorial, *The Sign*, January, 1937, 324-325.

Owen B. McGuire, “They Had to Revolt,” *The Sign*, January, 1937, 339-340.

“Current Fact and Comment: the Truth of the Matter,” editorial, *The Sign*, February, 1937, 388-389.

“Current Fact and Comment: Loyalist Propaganda,” editorial, *The Sign*, June, 1937, 644.

¹⁴¹ Rev. M. O'Connor, “Letters: Enlightening Key Americans on Spain,” *The Sign*, March, 1937, 489-490.

¹⁴² “An Attack on Democracy, editorial, *The Commonweal*, 12 March, 1937, 537-538.

O. B. McGuire, writing for the *Sign*, would elaborate on this growing trend of interpreting the conflict through the prism of “Americanism.” (“Spain Teaches Us,” July, 1937, 713-716).

press.”¹⁴³ While obviously an instrument meant to combat (and seemingly escalating) anti-Catholic bias, this phenomenon should not have been considered apart from the developments relating to the Spanish Civil War.

On the opposite side of the same token B. B. Carter, writing for the *Commonweal* did not advocate for the over-simplification of the Spanish issue. She criticized the Nationalists, cautioning that it would have been a major embarrassment for American Catholics to express unqualified enthusiasm for Franco's cause, only to have it become indecent or barbaric later. In her measured opinion, while unpredictable radicalism or communist manipulation might have been the rule in Loyalist Spain, the rightist insurgency held the potential to institute a regime of reactionary subjugation upon their victory.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, G. N. Shuster, also of the *Commonweal*, repeated an almost identical line in two separate articles. He explained his stance against the ideological streamlining of the civil war in that however Catholics might rail against the “Left” in the United States for its supposed contributions to the communist propaganda machine, the Church had its own apparatus for the same, but opposite, purpose. According to the author, it tended to castigate the Spanish Republic and the Popular Front whole-cloth while championing Franco's movement, which he believed had amply demonstrated its capacity for tyranny.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Anthony Beck, “Minute Men: Be One of Them,” *America*, 8 May, 1937, 102-103.

See also: Denis Gywnn, “The Anti-Fascist Front,” *The Sign*, July, 1937, 757-759.

¹⁴⁴ Barbara Barclay Carter, “European Catholics and Spain,” *The Commonweal*, 5 March, 1937, 516-517.

¹⁴⁵ George N. Shuster “Some Reflections on Spain,” *The Commonweal*, 2 April, 1937, 625-627.

George N. Shuster, “Some Further Reflections,” *The Commonweal*, 23 April, 1937, 716-717.

J. A. Magner—again, of the *Commonweal*—held a similar opinion; he believed that victory for either

As remarkably restrained in tone as these opinion pieces might have been they drew intense criticism from the staff of *America* and some of its contributors. Those offended believed that only fundamental ignorance about the realities of Spain could have inspired anyone to comment thus.¹⁴⁶ In fact, the journal felt such a sense of betrayal over this issue that its editor, F. X. Talbot, issued a pair of articles in which he sought to clarify some truths on the Spanish conflict for his wayward coreligionists (and not to mention the general American reading public).¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, it might seem to disinterested observers that *America* merely seemed resentful that a sister publication would dare to break the lockstep of the Catholic phalanx.

On the part of the *Commonweal*, its founder and chief editor, M. Williams, responded to *America* and attempted to explain the appearance of the items which had so enraged the staff of the other newspaper. He wrote that while his journal would always side with the Church, its mission also required that it serve as an open forum for a variety of perspectives.¹⁴⁸ Regardless, he would proclaim his staunchness of attitude when it came to the war. Subscribing to the general Catholic interpretation of the conflict, he remained firmly within the pro-Nationalist camp and attacked the American press at large

side in the Spanish struggle would mean the demise of democracy in that country and the ascendance of dictatorship of one form or another. ("Alternatives in Spain," 11 June, 1937, 173-175).

¹⁴⁶ "Comment," editorial, *America*, 13 March, 1937, 530-531.

¹⁴⁷ Francis X. Talbot, "In Answer to Some Reflections on the Spanish Situation," *America*, 10 April, 1937, 9-10.

Francis X. Talbot, "Further Reflections on the Spanish Situation," *America*, 1 May, 1937, 76-77.

One need not dwell long on the content of his letters, for they continued to address the familiar topics: the Popular Front being a Soviet appendage, the battle of the Nationalists being that of the Church and Western Civilization against Bolshevist barbarism, and so forth.

¹⁴⁸ Micheal Williams, "Correspondence: Mr. Williams Explains," letter to the editor, *America*, 24 April, 1937, 65.

for what he considered to be its poisoned bias, which he explained over a series of five “open letters.”¹⁴⁹

Indeed, this internal wrangling over interpretative norms (not to mention the preoccupation with the almost paralyzing fear of some master communist conspiracy) occupied a great deal of the attention of the Catholic press. So much so, in fact, that three other important aspects of the war received significantly less discussion than they had previously: the actual fighting in Spain, the evolution of the contemporary international scene, and the lingering question of religion.

Concern naturally endured over the progress of the war and its continued potential for it to become another major European confrontation—albeit perhaps to a degree less so than could be found in the Protestant papers. Emphasis tended to lie with Franco's positive momentum across Spain; these papers tended to ignore his inability to capture Madrid, but sang his praises with his triumphant entry into Bilbao, where he had apparently been greeted as a savior.¹⁵⁰ The tragedy of Guernica received some treatment by these papers, but they did not, as the Protestant journals had, attribute the crime to the Nationalists' German aviators. Rather, in what would become a standard pro-Franco rebuttal, they blamed the unworthy act of malice on retreating communist and anarchist

¹⁴⁹ Michael Williams, “Open Letter to the Leaders of the American Press, on Spain,” *The Commonweal*, 7 May, 1937, 33-37.

Again, one might add: *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*. The other concerned letters appeared on the following dates of that year: (21 May, 85-87). (28 May, 113-115). (4 June, 151-153). (25 June, 231-234).

¹⁵⁰ Edward J. Ferger, “Normalcy Restored to Bilbao with Advent of Franco,” *America*, 7 August, 1937, 415-416.

incendiaries.¹⁵¹ They would also relate their impressions of the “May Days,” which they interpreted as perhaps being the death knell for the “Red” government; it then seemed to them that the internal unity of the Loyalist coalition faced imminent and catastrophic collapse.¹⁵² Upon the wider stage, there remained a rather markedly infrequent interest in the internationalization of the war, most particularly on the botched work of the Non-Intervention Committee and the unbroken flow of men and materiel into Spain.¹⁵³

Related to this topic, the Catholic press reported on the danger posed to American neutrality by the foreign civil war. They commented positively on the Spanish embargo and worried over the problem of the thoroughly illegal practice of American citizens sneaking abroad to join in the battle, particularly on the side of the the Republic.¹⁵⁴

And, as for the matter of religion, the *Sign* continued to dwell thereupon, almost alone amongst its peers to do so. That monthly pursued its fixation on cataloging the atrocities committed against the Church by the Spanish “Reds” under Russian tutelage, According to J. Q. Murphy, this even included a “Cheka-like” police force, designated to

¹⁵¹ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 15 May, 1937, 122-123.

Gil Robles, “The Truth about Guernica,” *America*, 29 May, 1937, 172-173.

“Crime of Guernica,” editorial, *The Sign*, June, 1937, 644-645.

¹⁵² “Chronicle,” editorial, *America*, 15 May, 1937, 135.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 29 May, 1937, 170-171.

“Week by Week,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 20 August, 1937, 393.

¹⁵³ “Week by Week,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 8 January, 1937, 287.

“Seven Days' Survey: the Wide World,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 22 January, 1937, 328-329.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 17 April, 1937, 26-27.

Douglas Jerrold, “Spotlight on Spain,” *The Sign*, August, 1937, 9-13.

These pieces of commentary noted, as did similar pieces in the Protestant journals, that the question of Mediterranean suzerainty teetered in the balance. D. Gwynn, writing for the *Sign*, was one of the few Catholic writers who devoted full-length articles to the international considerations and tensions bound up within the Spanish crisis. (February, 1937, 428-429). (April, 1937, 557-559). (June, 1937, 688-690).

¹⁵⁴ “Seven Days' Survey: the Nation,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 15 January, 1937, 328.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 1 May, 1937, 74-75.

the task of running religious figures and the ardently faithful to ground before dispatching them in devilish public spectacles.¹⁵⁵ *Commonweal*, however, did offer some little commentary on the question of religion. E. A. Peers wrote of the “Spain that had no Easter,” which he damned as an enduring crime forced upon a bleeding nation by the “Reds.”¹⁵⁶ As with the *Commonweal*, so too with *America*. Surprisingly, that newspaper spent but little space in attempting to refute the charge that had been leveled against the complicity of the Spanish Church in fomenting the rebellion, which had been ostensibly inspired by the reflexive desire to protect its power and privilege.¹⁵⁷ Even when *America* and its contemporaries did address these accusations, they tended to treat the very notion as if it should have been beneath the contempt of any decent Catholic soul.

¹⁵⁵ James Q. Murphy, “Anti-Religion in Spain,” *The Sign*, March, 1937, 456-460.

“Slaughter of Priests in Spain,” editorial, *The Sign*, March, 1937, 453.

“Red Spain’s Ideas on Religion,” editorial, *The Sign*, May, 1937, 581.

¹⁵⁶ E. Allison Peers, “The Spain That Had No Easter,” *The Commonweal*, 7 May, 1937, 39-40.

In another outburst of religious fixation, however, *Commonweal* would print a poem from an anonymous source that would again liken the Spanish conflict to a modern *Reconquista*, a quest to reclaim that country from the heathen Bolsheviks where once it had been saved from the Mohammedan heretics. (“Spain’s Sacrifice,” 14 May, 1937, 71-72).

¹⁵⁷ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 26 June, 1937, 266-267.

VII.

The evidence presented above indicates that, from the election of the Popular Front until the outbreak of the civil war, and into the early Autumn of 1937, the opinions of the American Catholic and Protestant presses remained strongly polarized and, indeed, fresh developments from Spain only seemed to encourage each camp to further entrench themselves. Correspondingly, their respective narratives interpretative the evolving Spanish conflict remained in virtual stasis, almost as do broken records.

The Catholics maintained their stance on the evils of the embattled Spanish government, believing it to have been the product of a malignant foreign doctrine while the Nationalist insurgency represented something approximate to the “true” soul of Spain. But, while the representative American Catholic journals initially attached enormous religious significance to the conflict, they eventually retreated from this position. Although one could never be entirely sure, one might suggest that this might have been due in part to a natural emotional response to the supposed horrors being visited upon their supranational Church in a foreign land, one which cooled over time. Of course, another possible interpretation might suggest that Catholic writers might have restrained their religious readings of the conflict out of a fear of provoking the latent anti-Catholicism of their co-religionists on the other side of the Schism.

The Protestant journals, for their part, had entrenched themselves firmly in the pro-Loyalist camp from the beginning and served as its rather vocal champions. These defenders of the Spanish government were active in dismissing denunciations of

radicalism (most especially that of communism) as being the dominant factor in the Popular Front. Rather, they insisted upon the government's adherence to the so-called "liberal tradition" but still retained some vague notions of the almost Marxist inevitability of the conflict in Spain. On the other hand, they were quite as active in casting stones at the rightist insurgency, which they denounced as being a malicious fascist combine, only made possible through the connivance of Italy, Germany, and the authoritarian Roman Catholic Church. Here, amongst the Protestant papers, there seemed to be a curious mixture of wishing to be the most in line with the spirit (anti-clerical) Left, which might have allow them to justify their own proclivities to heap abuse upon the Church.

Whatever the case might have been for either side, there would be printed in July of that year a certain pivotal document, a joint pastoral letter from the ranking members of the Spanish Catholic hierarchy. This missive would not be recognized by any of these Christian publications until late August, but it would soon serve as the impetus for a new, albeit brief, phase of discussion of the Spanish Civil War in religious press of the United States, a phase of discussion centering around an unique conception of religion.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ "Week by Week: Justice and Peace," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 27 August, 1937, 411.

Chapter 2: “A Species of Religious War”

Autumn-Winter, 1937

The “American Civil Religion” and the Public Climax of the Catholic-Protestant Discourse on the Spanish Civil War

“Well, there's somethin' else to turn to and its just as good as religion. I refer to patriotism. *That* ain't played out. Not only has it not played out; its organized for you just as neatly as religion was when people were still religious. Not as many units and individuals, but a better organization than the church ever was. Its better because it can use pressure as well as propaganda to put itself over.”¹⁵⁹

I.

However vehement the disagreement had been between American Catholics and Protestants in respect to their fundamentally irreconcilable interpretations of the civil war in Spain, the waning months of 1937 would witness a dramatic episode that would demonstrate the passionate sincerity of commitment with which each Christian faction defended its perspective on the Spanish conflagration. Up to that time, the developing interdenominational dispute over the distant conflict had been relatively muted by virtue of it being essentially relegated to the variously diverse organs of the nation's religious press. That comfortable distance from the secular outlets of the news media would be significantly reduced beginning in September, 1937 and would continue through October of that year; thereafter, the Catholic-Protestant debate would once again become almost totally submerged into its accustomed milieu of denominationally-oriented publications.

What lends this specific affair its remarkable peculiarity lies in the fact that it took shape within the distinguished pages of the *New York Times* and thereby provided a wider reading public with an intimate snapshot of the uncompromising ideological duel even

¹⁵⁹ Renwick C. Kennedy, “Red Menace,” *The Christian Century*, 8 December, 1937, 1515-1517.

then developing between two distinct blocs of the American Christian intelligentsia. Such a prestigious and widely-circulated platform provided each side with the opportunity to enunciate the arguments they had been formulating in relation to the bloodshed in Spain since the inception of the rightist rebellion in July, 1936 and the subsequent eruption of civil war in that country. Furthermore, it is compelling that both the Catholics and Protestants took exceptional care in their published missives to conflate their respective sentiments regarding either of the belligerent coalitions in Spain with particular reference to the “liberal-democratic tradition,” or what might otherwise be delineated as the “American civil religion.”

Here, of course, one must address what is meant by “civil religion,” specifically as it applies to the United States. It must first be understood that this concept is distinctly sociological in its origin and rather flexible, if not nebulous, in its definition. One might, however, cite the religious and cultural scholar W. Herberg as a primary historiographical progenitor of the theory. He writes that “civil religion” in the United States is the enshrinement of the so-called “American Way of Life,” a certain category of civic faith held implicitly in common by the nation's citizenry, which tends to operate as a unifying force.¹⁶⁰ The primary determinant of this peculiar dogma of Americanism, Herberg further emphasizes, is the intensely romantic and idealistic notion of the immortal struggle of democratic liberty against the tyranny of arbitrary authority.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Will Herberg, “America's Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence It Comes,” in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Ritscher and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 76-77.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 78-80.

R. N. Bellah, moreover, has earned recognition as another definitive promulgator of the theoretical principle of the American “civil religion.” In an article from latter 1977, he posited broadly that:

“...there are...certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share. These have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension is expressed by a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals...”¹⁶²

Bellah further asserted that the sacral lore and iconography of the American Revolution represents perhaps the deepest fount of this supposed “civil religion,” which has contributed to a shared national experience that is: “...genuinely American,” having “...its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols.”¹⁶³

It follows, then, that such a “creed of Americanism” in the United States would be primarily constructed upon a highly romanticized (indeed, pseudo-religious) history of all that which contributed to the roiling ferment of ideological passion at the nation's conception—which could further be defined as a sort of legitimizing “origin myth.” Indeed, one need not reach far to identify the underlying legendary trappings in the American “civil religion.” The prophets, heroes, and saints of the American myth would certainly be the righteously rebellious Founding Fathers, the Continental Congress and

Will Herberg, as quoted in Andrew M. Greeley, *The Denominational Society: A Sociological Approach to Religion in America* (Glenview: Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1972), 159-162, 169.

¹⁶² Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Ritscher and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 24.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

Army. The mortal victims of the repression of the Crown, most notably those fatally wounded in the so-called “Boston Massacre” of 1770, could correspondingly fill the “religious” role of the martyred dead. Likewise, the signing of the Declaration of Independence (itself a “holy” American text) in 1776, General George Washington's bitter encampment at Valley Forge in the Winter of 1777-1778, and the fateful Siege of Yorktown in 1781 all serve similar “religious” functions. Such factors, perhaps, compound to form a sense of a common national doctrine of civic faith or, as Bellah writes, “...the civil religion is...a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or...as revealed through the experience of the American people,”¹⁶⁴ which “serve[s] as a genuine vehicle of national religious self-understanding.”¹⁶⁵

With this essentialist definition in hand, it might now be posited that, at least in part, it was through this unique prism of the “American civil religion” that the Catholic and Protestant factions in the United States had come to observe the unfolding events of the civil war in distant Spain. It seems as if, by the autumn of 1937, either denominational bloc had determined, whether consciously or not, to interpret the highly politicized conflict in the familiar context of their own nation's formative revolutionary experience and ideological traditions, the fundamental essence of “Americanness.”

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

II.

The clearest evidence to suggest such a phenomenon might be found across three specific, denominationally-oriented articles featured prominently in the *New York Times* between 3 September, 1937 and 14 October, 1937. This short series of articles laid bare the intensity of a curious religious segment of the antagonisms wrought in the United States by the Spanish Civil War, wherein both Catholics and Protestants publicly and most fully integrated their arguments with the principles of the national “civil religion.”

The most remarkable feature of these opinion pieces is that they illustrate, in a general sense, how certain groupings of concerned Americans projected themselves into the Spanish trenches based upon lines of religious fidelity. Moreover, the pro-Nationalist Catholics and their pro-Loyalist rivals, as reflected in the contributions to their press organs, imbued their respective factions in Spain with the most heady, enlightened principles which energized the American Revolution, the so-called “Spirit of 1776.” Furthermore, these uncompromisingly sectarian letters positively overflow with acrimonious trans-factional denunciations. Either camp accused its opponent of lamentable political irresponsibility (if not gross political illiteracy) and essential moral bankruptcy for supporting the ostensibly “wrong” combatant alliance in the Spanish conflict. Such charges naturally lent themselves to mutually opposing indictments suggesting the deplorable American character and ideological extremism of one side against the other.

This highly publicized episode of the theretofore obscured clash within the

American religious press between Catholics and Protestants began to take shape as the war raged into the summer of 1937. On 1 July of that year, a number of the upper Spanish Catholic hierarchy issued a joint pastoral letter to the effect of justifying the position of the Church in relation to the civil war. It would be reprinted in the *New York Times* on 3 September, 1937, ultimately becoming the catalyst for the intensification of the denominational dispute in the United States; moreover, it would serve to encourage the discussion of the American “civil religion” in the context of the Spanish Civil War.

This piece must first be noted for its length, being in excess of a full page. The mere fact that it received such a substantial amount of space in what can certainly be nominated as a premier American publication suggests that a great deal of contemporaneous importance had been attached to it. Yet one must also question, however unprofitably, why there had been a delay of two months between the letter's original publication abroad and the date at which it appeared in the columns of the *Times*. Whatever the case may have been, one must next recognize the editorial introduction to the letter, which stated that it represented the “...official and authoritative Catholic position with regard to the war in Spain” by virtue of it being “...signed by two Cardinals six Archbishops, thirty-five Bishops, and five *Vicars Capitular*.”¹⁶⁶

Given the prestigious ecclesiastical background of the letter's signatories and the generally discomfiting experiences of the Spanish Church since the founding of the Second Republic, it should be of little surprise that this clerical interpretation accentuated

¹⁶⁶ “Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5.

the religious dynamic of the conflict. Rather than identifying the war as a product of exploded political, social, and economic tensions, the prelates referred to it primarily as a kind of modern holy war, a “...decisive struggle for or against the religion of Christ and Christian civilization.”¹⁶⁷ Indeed, the prelates expended a great deal of space in enumerating the radical attacks mounted against the Church by the Republican government—ostensibly an insufferable series of heinous crimes that had been ongoing since 1931. While the hierarchs asserted that the organs of Spanish Catholicism had acted in the properly submissive manner toward the legally-constituted political authority in the interest of the national weal, they also wrote that the forces of secularizing liberalism offered no quarter to the Church and her orders, and had acted determinedly to abolish the ancient rights. To the clergymen, this perfectly encapsulated the unreasoning and uncompromising hatred of the Faith by the political Left. In response to the virulence of Republican anti-clericalism, they further claimed to have expressed their disagreement with the government through peaceful protest, for they believed that such a direction represented a potentially fatal deviation away from the traditional union of the Faith with the functions of temporal government in Spain.¹⁶⁸

Though the electoral mechanisms of the Republic provided for the ascent of a conservative administration (as aligned beneath the banner of G. Robles' CEDA coalition) after November, 1933, the prelates emphasized that the threat embodied by the militant

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

See also chapter four in Hugh Thomas' *The Spanish Civil War* for the author's succinct account of the history of the Church in Spain.

forces of the Left had not been ameliorated. In fact, their letter suggested that the political frustrations of the Left had left it sullen and seething. Over time, the danger from that end of the political spectrum compounded, reaching its essential apex as the diverse factions of the Left unified in a pact of mutual solidarity—the Popular Front. Aligned thus, the Left managed to secure the general elections of February, 1936. To the clerics, however, this novel political confederation had triumphed at the ballot box only through fraud, intimidation, and violence. Moreover, the Popular Front represented little more than a puppet to certain “...hidden powers which controlled its functions,” a rather thinly veiled reference to the Communist International and the Kremlin.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, Catholic authorities insisted that the legality of the government existed only in name, and that the Popular Front stood merely as a mirage to conceal the sinister collusion between the Communist Party of Spain (*Partido Comunista de España*, PCE), its allies, and the Soviet Union. Naturally, they wrote, this conspiracy had been carefully designed to maneuver the nation into position for positioning the nation for a sanguinary Marxist revolution with the ultimate aim of shifting governmental power from an “irresponsible autocracy of a parliament” toward “a more terrible one of a dictatorship without roots in the nation.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

See also Yale University's *The Annals of Communism: Spain Betrayed*, compiled and edited by Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov. As it so happened, this estimation on the part of the Catholic prelates was rather prescient.

See also K. E. McKenzie's summation of the general strategy which motivated the Popular Front in his *Comintern & World Revolution*; he emphasizes that platform, as conceived by G. Dimitrov in 1934-1935, was a merely tactical maneuver to allow greater flexibility for international communist organizations to operate within existing political systems and form alliances with non-communist parties while not sacrificing their revolutionary ideology. (159)

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Again, armed with the representative primary evidence compiled in *Spain Betrayed*, it is now known

According to this “authoritative” Catholic interpretation the military uprising in July, 1936 should have been lauded, in spite of the terrible civil war it wrought. The hierarchs wrote that even as the former failed to attain its immediate objective and the latter took shape, the looming prospect of wholesale revolutionary upheaval had been mercifully preempted, at least partially quelling the attendant Red terror that would have moved to extinguish the torch of Christian civilization in Spain for all time. They believed that such a claim found ample justification in light of the breathtaking number of sacrilegious outrages committed against the Church throughout the reign of the Popular Front and the course of the war.¹⁷¹

And yet, it would have likely been interpreted as highly unseemly if representatives of this transnational, ostensibly peaceful Christian institution asserted so openly belligerent a position. Even while the signatories affirmed the righteousness of the Nationalist cause in the defense of the Faith, traditionalism, and sound government, they also contended that they did not wish for the war and, indeed, lamented it. However, they believed that the fury of war could sometimes act as a facilitator of peace, for “...war...[is] yet sometimes the only remedy for replacing things on the center of the pivot of justice

that the Soviet Union and Comintern deployed agents from their respective secret police and military intelligence apparatuses in order to penetrate the Second Republic and manipulate the Loyalist cause for their own ends.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The prelates themselves established certain rough figures, believing some 20,000 places of worship had been sacked; similarly, thousands of clergymen (and perhaps some 300,000 faithful) were believed to have been put to the sword.

See also Beevor, 48, 82-82; Bolloten, 51; Thomas, 171-176 for varying lists of statistics regarding general anti-Catholic atrocities over the course of the reign of the Spanish Popular Front and the Spanish Civil War.

and bringing them back to the Kingdom of Peace.”¹⁷² And, to this end:

“...the Church, even while she is the daughter of the Prince of Peace, has blessed the emblems of war, has founded the military orders, and has organized the Crusades against the enemies of the Faith.”¹⁷³

One need not dwell on this statement, for it is readily apparent that the clergymen had already delineated the Republic (or, perhaps more specifically, the Popular Front and its Loyalists) as the “enemy of the Faith,” the principal target of a cleansing “Crusade” for the purpose of replacing the nation “on the center of the pivot of justice.” This “center” could have been fairly interpreted by any critical audience to suggest an aggressive return to a more traditional and authoritarian Spain, with the former temporal powers and privileges of the Church restored unto her. Through this argument, then, the clerics would have certainly appeared to have married the religious elements of their supposed holy war with the broader, more mundane socio-political aspects of the struggle.

Even as these members of the Spanish hierarchy clearly emphasized the conflict as a necessarily Christian campaign against the savage throngs of Marxist infidels, they also posited that the war had been required to correct a dire political imbalance in Spain. Indeed, they insisted that the rebellion represented the popular will given martial form, a

¹⁷² “Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

The prelates also wrote that, from their estimation of the Republican camp's actions, the rebellion and civil war had characteristics of being primarily “anti-Christian...we do not believe that in the history of Christianity and in the interval of a few weeks there has occurred such an explosion of hatred against all forms of thought, will and passion, against Jesus Christ and his sacred religion.”

natural manifestation of the mass murmurings of the dissatisfied and disillusioned citizenry. The rightist insurgency stood as a “civil-military movement,” an “armed plebiscite” and, in so being, actually demonstrated unimpeachable loyalty to the liberal ideals of popular government. Therefore, the Nationalist coalition embodied the only truly patriotic spirit of modern Spain, essentially reflecting the traditionalist impulses of the general public, which simultaneously harmonized with the “historical essence of Spain.”¹⁷⁴

For all the support lent to the counter-revolutionary Right, the representatives of the Spanish Church also seemed to have had some reservations against fully committing to the cause of the Nationalists, for:

“...[it] has not been able to identify herself with [the] conduct, tendencies, or intentions which at the present time or in the future might be able to distort the character of the national movement, its origins, manifestations, and ends.”¹⁷⁵

Moreover, the clerics urged prudence from the leaders of the insurgency—specifically in that when the time came to establish a new regime in peaceful Spain, that:

“...they [would] not accept foreign models for the structure of the future of the State, but that they [would] consider the requirements of the national life from within, and the course marked by past centuries.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ “Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5

In Salvadó’s work on the conflict, the author emphasizes how the war was interpreted by the Catholic clergy as a modern Crusade, a *Reconquista*, harkening back to the centuries of religious warfare waged between the forces of Christianity and Islam on the Iberian Peninsula. (123).

¹⁷⁵ “Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5

Thomas reiterates this point . Though this letter was signed by ranking members of the Church’s hierarchy, there seemed to be at least a degree of moral disquiet with instances of Nationalist cold-bloodedness in the lesser clerical ranks. (182-183)

¹⁷⁶ “Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5.

Given their highly privileged vantage point, these two statements probably indicate that the clergy felt at least a certain degree of apprehension in respect to the rebelling faction. That they were not willing to more forthrightly express such any such misgivings regarding their ostensible defenders should be obvious. Whatever the case, it seems that their not unfounded concerns were twofold. First, while the prelates' letter underscored the crimes of the Republic against the Faith and the atrocities that followed the ascent of the Popular Front, there remained the unsettling reality that the Nationalists, especially their Moorish auxiliaries, could be unnecessarily cruel and bloodthirsty. Yet again, for the seeming double-mindedness on this first point, the ecclesiastical statement partially reversed direction and claimed that if any unseemly or barbaric conduct could have been attributed to the Nationalist camp, then it had been essentially defensive in nature—an unfortunately necessary countermeasure against a guileful and merciless foe.¹⁷⁷

Considering their second statement, the clergymen apparently had cause to worry that the Nationalists, pending their victory, might unduly impose some alien system of governance upon the nation, something hazardously foreign to the traditions and historical essence of Spain. Such a reference hearkened to the reality of the rather substantial Italian and German intervention on behalf of the Nationalist upstarts: the

¹⁷⁷ “Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5.

Antony Beevor writes that the “Nationalists justified the brutality of their repression as reprisals for the red terror...but the subsequent nationalist killings exceeded those of the left several, if not many, times over.” (93)

Spanish prelates seemed to have feared, as did international observers, that the rebels had become so beholden to their benefactors that a triumphant Nationalist Spain would have been essentially forced into a humiliating state of vassalage, if not puppetry, to the Fascist and National Socialist regimes. Once again, a critical audience might have interpreted this position as being one that embraces authoritarianism—albeit in form thoroughly Catholic in its conception and execution, as dictated by “the course of past centuries.”¹⁷⁸

The signatories concluded their apostolic letter with a prayer that the passionate hatreds rampant in Spain might be dampened, and for the love of Christ to be restored for the sake of sanity, justice, and order. In the meantime, however, they stressed the necessity of Catholic solidarity, primarily through the steadfast adherence to the line they had established by “watching over the Catholic press and propaganda, rectifying the mistakes of that which is indifferent or adverse.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ “Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5.

Alpert's *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War* deals exclusively with topics of this nature: in France and Great Britain, there were understandable worries that a German- and Italian-backed “fascist” victory in Spain would upset international politics and the strategic balance of Europe. Similarly, Tierney's *FDR and the Spanish Civil War* details the evolution of Roosevelt's understanding that a “fascist” Spain could serve as a springboard through which such rightist extremism could penetrate into the Western Hemisphere.

¹⁷⁹ “Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5

To this effect, has has been demonstrated, many American Catholic periodicals had performed admirably, and would continue to do so until the end of the civil war in Spain.

III.

The Spanish hierarchs' letter, following its rather belated publication in the United States, floated about unanswered for approximately one month. Then, on 4 October, 1937, a group of some 150 assorted American Protestant clergymen and laypersons—educators, literary figures, and sundry—issued a vitriolic (and, perhaps, presumptuous) challenge in the *New York Times* to the Spanish prelates and, by an immediately obvious extension, their Catholic brethren in the United States. Therein, one might find one of the very few significant instances of the secular publicization of the Catholic-Protestant debate on the American “civil religion” as it related to the Spanish Civil War.

In their reply to the Spanish hierarchy, the Protestant signatories dismissed out of hand the interpretative notion of the distant conflict as any sort of holy war or Crusade; rather, they diagnosed the war as being one borne of long-festering political, social, and economic tensions within that unhappy nation. Furthermore, they asserted their profound disquiet that ranking officials of the Spanish Church would attempt to justify a military insurrection against a legally-constituted democratic government to the world at large, all for the ostensible purpose of defending the worst sort of regressive traditions of the establishmentarian Roman Catholic Church.

As such, the Protestants' missive denounced the Spanish clergy for its unapologetically reactionary position, which offended a number of the fundamental components of the American experiment (or, perhaps, certain tenets of the liberal-democratic tradition that act as the infrastructure for the national “civil religion”): “[the]

principle [of] democratic institutions, the freedom of worship, and separation of church and State.”¹⁸⁰ These Protestants felt so strongly about the socio-political stance adopted by the Spanish Church that they condemned it as being an essentially medieval entity—thus the mortal enemy not only of the Republic and the Popular Front, but also of the core precepts of liberalism and parliamentary government in general. They reviled this “authoritative” position of Spanish Catholicism, holding it aloft to demonstrate it as being singly representative of a hopelessly obscurantist worldview; indeed, they found it “...hard to believe that [it] was written in the twentieth century.”¹⁸¹

Further lambasting the Spanish clerics, the Protestants reiterated the prelates' own assertion that following the legal incorporation of the Second Republic in 1931, the Spanish Church had dutifully bent the knee to the secular authorities of a dawning political regime. Then, expressing mock puzzlement, they wondered why the Catholic position had been so thoroughly reversed after the elections of 1936. Essentially leveling an accusation of rank duplicity and cynical opportunism against the Spanish hierarchy, the Protestants queried that if the Church had truly honored the democratic mechanisms of the Republic, why had she rallied to the banner of an unseemly coalition of seditious which fomented open rebellion with the express intent of usurping the power of the duly constituted government administration of the Popular Front? This was

¹⁸⁰ “Open Letter in Reply to Spanish Hierarchy's Recent Views of War,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1937, 12.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Similarly, Guttman cites the words of the Pope Pius IX, in which the Vatican condemned the Republic, even from its inception in 1931, of anti-religious animosity in that the “...separation of Church and State [was] a 'serious...and particularly repugnant error' in Spain 'where the Church has always and rightly held the most important... and active part in legislation...and public institutions.’” (33)

considered to be doubly heinous in that the Church had conspicuously lauded the election results of 1933, after which the political pendulum in Spain swung heavily toward the traditionalist Right.¹⁸²

Thereby, the Protestants declared, this “authoritative” stance of the Spanish clerics could only be interpreted as a malignant sally against the fundamental ideals and institutions of liberal democracy, and also as a naked expression of longing for a wholesale return to the Church’s preeminent position of worldly power in Spain, with all its attendant privileges restored. They found further cause for dismay in the hierarchy’s assertion that the rebellion represented an “armed plebiscite” of the Spanish people—for if this were to be accepted as truth, would it have not also been just to describe the Moorish, German, and Italian ancillary forces supporting the Nationalists as “imported voters?”¹⁸³ Indeed, though the mainline Catholic position never hesitated to illuminate and condemn Soviet intervention in the civil war (and not to mention the ostensible international communist conspiracy embodied in the Popular Front), it consistently ignored, evaded, or dismissed the embarrassing complication of the collaborative relationship shared between Nationalist Spain and the two “fascist” behemoths of the

¹⁸² “Open Letter in Reply to Spanish Hierarchy’s Recent Views of War,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1937, 12.

See Thomas (Chapter 8, 64-73), Bolloten (8) for the developing political troubles between 1932 and 1933 and the temporary rise of a traditionalist-conservative, if not reactionary, government under the heavily Catholic CEDA (*Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*).

¹⁸³ “Open Letter in Reply to Spanish Hierarchy’s Recent Views of War,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1937, 12.

Indeed, as the rebellion began in Spanish Morocco, much of the initial composition of the Nationalist forces was made up of Moorish troops; see Part Three of Beevor’s work for a discussion on how the civil war mutated into an international proxy war, with contingents of Soviet, Fascist, National Socialist, and other miscellaneous contingents of internationalists ultimately coming to participate in the Spanish struggle.

Continent.

According to the Protestants, these elements coalesced as certain ranking clerical officials of the Spanish Catholic Church stated that their support of the rightist insurgency emerged from their interpretation of the movement as being a defensive maneuver, a preventative measure from having the nation shift from the “irresponsible autocracy of a parliament” toward “a more terrible one of a dictatorship without roots in the nation.”¹⁸⁴ Naturally, the Protestant's challenge subscribed to the logic that such a statement would imply that the only fitting form of autocracy or dictatorship for Spain would be one *with* roots in the nation—that is, one defined by a traditionalist and authoritarian power structure, reinforced by a virile military apparatus, the unassailable moral authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and so forth.

To the citizenry of the United States, presumed inculcated in their peculiar “civil religion,” such an condemnatory interpretation of the stand taken by eminent Catholic ecclesiastics would certainly seem to reflect a base contempt for the basic criteria of enlightened, liberal democracy. However, for this self-appointed group of Protestant prosecutors, the problem of the Catholic position on Spain ran far deeper. They worried whether the Spanish hierarchy spoke merely for itself, or if it echoed the enshrouded sentiments of the governing authorities of the Roman Catholic Church, as directed from the resplendent halls of the Vatican. Might, they further reasoned, the clerical leadership

¹⁸⁴ “Open Letter in Reply to Spanish Hierarchy's Recent Views of War,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1937, 12.
“Text of Pastoral Letter Signed by Spanish Prelates Justifying Franco Rebellion,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1937, 4-5.

of the Church in the United States hold a similar degree of disdain for the institutions of liberalism and popular government? Could the American Catholic hierarchy and priesthood have the ability to leverage moral or spiritual suasion over their collective flock to inculcate and entrench such a point of view? They believed this to be a plausible scenario with a reasonable basis for alarm, for during the approximate month after the publication of the prelates' letter, no detectable voices from the estate of American Catholicism had raised the hue and cry of incredulity against their Spanish co-religionists.¹⁸⁵

Concluding their response, the Protestants expressed their profound regret that the issue of religion had been dragged into the fray by the Spanish clerics, especially when the true battle in Spain could so obviously be delineated as one between the avatars of progressivism and democracy versus those of reactionary elitism, if not militaristic fascism. While lamenting the meteoric upsurge of popular anti-clerical (as opposed to simply anti-religious) violence mounted against the Church in Spain, they regarded the scenario as almost unavoidable—implying that such acute suffering had been the just reaping for a centuries-old tradition of institutionalized reaction. Regardless, the representative Protestants believed that it had been quite unfortunate that the Spanish hierarchy had situated itself on the “wrong” side of the conflict, and that the official position of the Church in that country had unflinchingly expressed “...contempt [for the]

¹⁸⁵ “Open Letter in Reply to Spanish Hierarchy's Recent Views of War,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1937, 12.

See also Traina (178-185).

principles that are precious to the heritage of the American people.”¹⁸⁶

This concluding statement, then, might be fairly nominated as an interpretation of the Spanish war through the lens of the American “civil religion,” as it seemed to evoke certain “sacred” tenets of Americanism—particularly those which have been thought to have propelled the course of the nation's Revolutionary past and endured to define its enduring politico-cultural ideology. As such, the concerned Protestants seem to have rallied to the ostensibly democratic ideals which they believed to have been the animating force behind the Republic—rather than attempting to present any sort of comprehensive defense of the beleaguered government administration itself. On the other hand, they did not hesitate to place the the Spanish Catholic Church alongside the selfsame forces of tyranny against which the American revolutionaries of generations past had waged a war of liberation. And, to this effect, the Protestant signatories seem to have offered a challenge to the Catholics of the United States to establish a case in defense of their own righteous adherence to the unspoken precepts of “Americanism.”

¹⁸⁶ “Open Letter in Reply to Spanish Hierarchy's Recent Views of War,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1937, 12.

IV.

A mere ten days after the publication of the American Protestants' open letter, a group of some 175 American Catholic clergymen and miscellaneous laypersons issued a bitter riposte, again published in the *New York Times*. Prior to scrutinizing the content therein, it must be noted that this bloc, ostensibly representative of American Catholicism as a whole, could not countenance being upstaged by the assailants of their denomination, and so assembled twenty-five more signatories for the purpose of strengthening their retaliatory missive. Moreover, they seemed particularly interested in ensuring that only the very best and brightest of the American Catholic intelligentsia, the opinion-shapers of their sect, signed the document. Indeed, their list of signatories includes over twenty presidents and deans from numerous American universities, colleges, and seminaries, an approximate number of individuals occupying professorial posts, and, in an amazing display of professional solidarity, nearly eighty editors and managers of Catholic publications from all around the nation.

While their response dwelt briefly upon the primarily religious interpretation of the conflict, as originally established by their Spanish brethren, they also felt a natural compulsion to pick up the gauntlet of “Americanism,” which had seemingly been cast at the feet of American Catholicism by their Protestant countrymen. Herein one might discern a continuation—and even an intensification—of the quarrelsome domestic discourse on the “civil religion” of the United States in respect to the civil war in Spain.

Positing that the Spanish strife had been grossly misrepresented, these Catholics

insisted emphatically that the general understanding thereof had been perverted by the non-Catholic American press through a pronounced lack of anything even remotely resembling an objective, adequately nuanced presentation of the conflict. Naturally, such a charge indicted both the the secular and Protestant presses on the count of open partisanship in favor of the Republican Loyalist cause. Given the dominant influence of these (rather generalized) presses, it had become an unfortunate contemporary reality that the balance of the American public had been induced "...to favor the Madrid government and to condemn outright those who were immediately designated as rebels."¹⁸⁷ They argued that the dynamics of the struggle had been rendered more glaringly apparent as the war raged into the latter half of 1937, and that therein had been created an opportunity for a genuine reappraisal of either belligerent coalition then active in Spain. Striking at the vital center of the issue, these select Catholics immediately declared their support for the Spanish Nationalists, heralding the rightist alliance as the collective champion of "civic and religious freedom for all men."¹⁸⁸

Wasting neither space nor ink, this formidable group of eminent Catholics immediately registered their profound disgust with the statement issued to their suffering Spanish coreligionists from the camp of American Protestantism. They not only denounced the contrarian interpretation of the contest in Spain as misinformed and irresponsible, but further accused the Protestants of malicious intent, in that their position

¹⁸⁷ "The Reply of 175 Catholic Clergy and Laymen on Protestant Letter on Spain," *New York Times*, October 14, 1937, 20.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

“...[had] also tended to create a species of religious war in the United States.”¹⁸⁹ While obviously a tremendous exaggeration of the rhetorical skirmishes in which the conflicting denominations of American Christianity had engaged over the Spanish Civil War, such an assertive comment evidences the depth of passion that the debate had engendered in this supposedly representative section of the American Catholic intelligentsia. In any event, the counter-response sought to defend the essential consonance of Roman Catholicism with the principles of “Americanism,” while simultaneously challenging the ostensible foes of the Church with a similar volley of searching criticism.

In reality, the Catholics believed that the test had been put to their denominational antagonists. How, they demanded, could these self-appointed delegates of American Protestantism endorse a governmental regime that had been founded upon the predominant participation of dangerously radical socialist, communist, and anarcho-syndicalist elements, and which further had actively pursued a relentless campaign of anti-Christian persecution since its fraudulent ascent in February, 1936. How, in short, could American Protestantism “...champion a regime that [had] consistently violated in theory and in practice the fundamental principles of liberty and democracy guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States?”¹⁹⁰

After having thus established such a framework, which obviously incorporated a number of the elements critical to the infrastructure of the American “civil religion,” the Catholic clergymen reinforced the argumentative foundation previously established by

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

their Spanish brethren. Namely, they reaffirmed that the Nationalist uprising represented a justifiable strike against the malevolent forces of Bolshevism and anarchism, as embodied in the Popular Front coalition. Although the Catholics' rejoinder tended to disregard certain inconvenient, anti-democratic statements made by the Spanish hierarchy, it nevertheless attempted to inject a certain element of "Americanism." Indeed, they insisted that the treacherous conspiracy impelling the Popular Front government sought only to usurp the liberty afforded to the people of Spain by the institutions of the Second Republic. To that effect, the Catholics seized upon the prelates' declaration of the insurgency as an "armed plebiscite," and applauded it as being in keeping with the most noble principles of the American revolutionary experience:

"The citizens of Spain...were justified by the right of self-defense in rising up against a malign power that was surely and inevitably destroying their country. Those who would deny them the exercise of this inalienable right would with equal logic have denied to the American people in 1776 the exercise of their inalienable right to rebel in arms against a government which suppressed their liberties."¹⁹¹

Here the Catholic signatories obviously attempted to craft a thematic corollary between the American War of Independence and the Spanish Civil War. To complete this dramatic narrative of interpretation—however curious it may have been—one needed to substitute the patriotic thirteen colonies with Nationalist Spain to fill the role of the protagonist; similarly, the villainous British Empire had to be replaced by the Popular Front (with, of course, the "imperial" might of the Soviet Union lurking just behind it). However, the Catholics did not attempt to overburden this image. To have done so would

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

have necessitated the portrayal of Soviet intervention and the Loyalists' deployment of the Comintern's International Brigades as essentially "Hessian" in complexion; yet that would have perhaps suggested the troubling notion of leaving the heroic roles of the Marquis de Lafayette and the Baron von Steuben to Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany.

Yet, for this heightened exposition on the heady precepts and "sacred" iconography of Revolutionary America (or, rather, on the national "civil religion"), the representatives of American Catholicism could not seem to totally escape from the religiously-oriented interpretative framework established by their Spanish counterparts. Citing the words of Paul Claudel, former French ambassador to the United States, they posited that:

"It is impossible to understand the Spanish Revolution...unless one sees it not as an attempt at social construction as in Russia, with the idea of substitution one order for the other, but an enterprise of destruction, long prepared and guided, particularly against the Church."¹⁹²

As had the Spanish Catholics before them, the Americans strongly emphasized the elements of early Republican anti-clerical secularism, which had metamorphosed into repressive anti-religious brutality under the auspices of the communist-directed Popular Front.

However, while their sentiments definitely echoed those of the Spanish hierarchy, even a cursory reading of the American Catholics' letter would suggest that they recognized a great deal more importance in the ideological frameworks than conflicting

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

in Spain. This may have been, of course, a defensive maneuver against the Protestants' broadside; after all, the Catholics necessarily had to marshal their counter-arguments on the rhetorical battlefield of their adversary's choosing. Whatever the case, they concluded by brooking absolutely no compromise with their opponents. They did not waver in their conviction that the administration of the Popular Front stood as a perverse Soviet connivance and that the Loyalist military apparatus represented the vanguard of a revolutionary Red Army for the pending Bolshevization of Spain. Meanwhile, the Nationalists exemplified the patriotic cause of God and Country, the insuperable will of the Spanish people, as transmitted through the anguished plea of the valiant prelates of the Church. Collectively, theirs betokened the true spirit of liberty then struggling to emerge in Spain, for the Nationalists championed:

“...the principles enunciated by George Washington and the founders of the American Republic and embodied in our democratic laws and institutions: the freedom to worship God in peace, freedom to educate one's children according to the dictates of one's conscience, freedom from the interference and tyranny of foreign States and alien agitators.”¹⁹³

Any potential analyses of the American Catholics' response notwithstanding, one must acknowledge that the Protestants did not invoke the iconography of the national “civil religion” to nearly this extent. Whether culling forth these “sacred” principles demonstrated either the fundamental strength or weakness of their contextual translation of the Spanish turmoil is, again, a matter of individual interpretation.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

V.

Brief in duration though it may have been, the series of articles which appeared in the columns of the *New York Times* in Autumn, 1937 must have served to inform the general reading public as to the intensity (if not the mere existence) of this contemporary denominational conflict in the United States. Meanwhile, this peculiar war of words continued apace in the pages of the various organs of the nation's religious press.

Even as the Spanish prelates' appeal passed before the eyes of the American public for the first time on 3 September, 1937, the respected Catholic publication *Commonweal*, published a brief editorial on the controversial topic of the Spanish war. This particular piece discusses the position of Cardinal Isidro Gomá y Tomás, the Archbishop of Toledo and the Primate of Spain—certainly the highest-ranking member of the Catholic clergy to survive the violent anti-religious campaign in that troubled country. Gomá y Tomás, in adhering to the Catholic interpretative line, emphatically denied that the struggle in Spain had anything to do with the competing tyrannies of atheistic communism versus totalitarian communism. Rather, the war stood as the crucial modern struggle between antithetical civilizations, the first tilt of the final duel between the spiritual bankruptcy of Marxist materialism on the one hand, and the redeeming grace of Christianity on the other. Leaving no question in respect his prejudices, the Primate situated himself firmly within the Nationalist camp, those so-called “fascists” who wielded the holy sword in the name of most Catholic Spain.

Closing on a note of tempered frustration, this article confirmed that the opinions

of Gomá y Tomás represented the authoritative Catholic position in Spain, at least as far as hierarchical preeminence had been concerned. And, being such, *Commonweal* believed that the Primate's irreproachable word should have contributed to the general efforts of the Catholic press to awaken the American public to the true dimensions of the war in Spain.¹⁹⁴

Only by the next week's issue, however, did *Commonweal* recognize the existence, to say nothing of the importance, of the Spanish clerics' missive. The news-sheet restated the arguments set forth in the prelates' letter: that the Church had in no wise been culpable in fomenting the war, that the Church faced a malevolent opponent who sought to occasion its extinction, that the Nationalist revolt had been a preemptive measure against an impending Marxist revolution, and so forth.¹⁹⁵ When taken together with the previous editorial, the discussion of this, the truly “authoritative” Catholic position on the Spanish strife could only have served to sharpen the sense of rectitude entertained by some of the more zealous Catholic elements in the United States.

Indeed: as in *Commonweal*, so in *America*. By 11 September, 1937, this weekly newspaper noted that the Vatican had afforded *de facto* recognition—and therefore moral subscription—to the legitimacy of the cause of Nationalist Spain. Its editorial staff also acknowledged the existence of the joint pastoral letter and further insisted upon the document's significance as the only reasoned, dignified (and ostensibly truthful) statement to have emerged in respect to the Spanish conflict. To that effect, the paper

¹⁹⁴ “Week by Week: the Paramount Issue,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 3 September, 1937, 429.

¹⁹⁵ “Week by Week: the Spanish Bishops,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 10 September, 1937, 447.

insisted that the dictates of conscience should require every responsible thinking American to review and contemplate the clerics' missive.¹⁹⁶ It hardly needs to be stated that *America* obviously believed that this plaintive letter from distant Spain would serve to win more American supporters to the pro-Nationalist camp.

Presumably, hardline Catholic publications like *America* would have liked to have seen a greater prevalence of opinion like that demonstrated by one A. F. McGovern, whose letter saw publication in the 17 September edition of *Commonweal*. He wrote of the Spanish Loyalists and their international supporters as being not unlike the pro-British Loyalists and their Tory masters in the American Revolution: that is, of course, those who stood as the enemies of the true cause of liberty. Meanwhile, the Spanish insurgents, in spiritual consonance with the bygone American upstarts, represented the side of intelligence and dignity, of God and Country—with Franco as their man-on-horseback, their twentieth-century Washington. As freighted with elements of the national “civil religion” as this sentiment might have been, McGovern still partially leaned upon the clerical insistence that the Spanish Civil War stood as a fundamentally religious conflict between the competing civilizations of communism and Christianity.¹⁹⁷

This particular facet of the Catholic argument found more support in an article entitled “Further Processes in Spanish Sovietization” in *America*. The author believed that no true Christian soul who also bent the knee before the altar of democracy should

¹⁹⁶ “Chronicle: Spain,” editorial, *America*, 4 September, 1937, 520.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 11 September, 1937, 530.

¹⁹⁷ Authur Francis McGovern, “Communications: Spain,” letter to the editor, *The Commonweal*, 17 September, 1937, 479.

either condone or support the Loyalist cause—Moscow's most obvious marionette in the international communist conspiracy against the Faith in the pursuit of global ascendancy for its heretical creed. Contrarily, the article denounces the oft-repeated calumny against the Church for situating herself amidst the “fascists.” Returning to the Spanish clerics' assertion, the author reiterates that the Church's alliance with Nationalists had first been borne from the necessity of self-preservation; nevertheless, the Church had come to recognize and bless the banners of the insurgents, those crusaders for God and Country.¹⁹⁸

Though the September, 1937 edition of the *Sign* did not (or more likely had been unable to) acknowledge the appearance of the Spanish prelates' appeal, it remained in lockstep with its sister publications. As to the Nationalist movement, of course, the magazine retained the uniform Catholic stance of it being the champion of the spirit of Christian civilization and humanitarianism.¹⁹⁹ For the ostensible respectability of Loyalist cause based upon its “anti-fascist” credentials, as asserted by many non-Catholic publications, the editorial staff of the *Sign* had little patience. Rather, they believed (not without justification) that the aegis of “anti-fascism” could be extended to cover a veritable menagerie of non-rightist political affiliations, but that the whole apparatus stood definitively as a contrivance for the international expansion of communist influence. Moreover, as universally inclusive as the general anti-fascist movement pretended to be, it would not suffer the membership of any elements even remotely critical of the Soviet Union or of communism in general. And as for the charges leveled

¹⁹⁸ William J. Benn, “Further Processes in Spanish Sovietization,” *America*, 25 September, 1937, 585-586.

¹⁹⁹ “Categorica: the Real Spain,” editorial, *The Sign*, September, 1937, 70-72.

by the anti-fascist camp against the Roman Catholic Church for her supposed sympathy with militaristic fascism, this same editorial stated plainly that it had merely been exploited as a convenient outlet for virulent anti-Catholic prejudice.²⁰⁰

Almost as if to punctuate the collective sum arguments offered by the disparate Catholic publications in the Autumn of 1937, the September edition of the *Sign* also featured a curious article, essentially approximating a contemporary “human interest” story. Entitled “Two Funerals,” and penned by noted foreign correspondent W. P. Carney, this piece purported to tell the story of one E. M. Alonso, a physician who had been dragooned into medical service at the front with the Loyalist forces. Although he had initially been an ardent supporter of the Republic and the Popular Front, the doctor apparently grew disgusted with the routine nature of violent revolutionary intemperance that attended the Loyalist cause. Despairing at the prospect of any sort of rational system of governance emerging from the anarchic Left, and living in perpetual fear of being denounced as a covert “fascist” agent for his inability to save more “anti-fascist” lives, Alonso stole into Nationalist territory where he could breathe more freely.²⁰¹

This story, to be sure, has a certain ring of authenticity, given the range of well-documented excesses perpetrated by radical leftist elements throughout the war. On the other hand, a close reading of this version of the refugee's tale—it having been reported by a foreign journalist, and therefore hearsay—might seem to raise suspicions against its almost too-neat formulation as a microcosmic glimpse into the supposedly unrelenting

²⁰⁰ “Current Fact and Comment: the Anti-Fascist Front,” editorial, *The Sign*, September, 1937, 67.

²⁰¹ William P. Carney, “Two Funerals,” *The Sign*, September, 1937, 83-85.

and irredeemable sadism of the whole of the Loyalist camp. Perhaps, indeed, such suspicions might be carried to the point where one would probably not be too far afield in attributing to this testimonial certain echoing qualities more generally applied to the sensationalist propaganda, the “atrocities stories” of the Great War. Whatever the case, this textual recreation Alonso's harrowing experience served to accentuate without discrimination the generic characteristics of frothy-mouthed radicalism that ostensibly animated the Loyalist coalition opposite the supposedly stainless dignity of the Nationalist movement.

By the following month's issue, however, the *Sign* acknowledged the appearance of the Spanish prelates' letter and duly lent it credence as the resounding voice of Catholic Spain. Commenting likewise, the magazine's editorial staff underwrote the justice of the Nationalist uprising as in accordance with Catholic orthodoxy on the grounds of “resisting an unjust aggressor,” in this case being a defiant reflex to stand against the forces aligned against Christian civilization itself.²⁰²

This wholly Christian “Spirit of the New Spain,” indeed, had been what certain of the magazine's correspondents had believed to be the motivating force behind the Nationalist movement. Catherine de Hueck, for example, wrote of her extended visit to insurgent Spain and found there a nation in arms, battling for deliverance for itself and

²⁰² “Current Fact and Comment: Spanish Bishops' Pastoral,” *The Sign*, October, 1937, 133.

“Current Fact and Comment: Resisting an Unjust Aggressor,” *The Sign*, October, 1937, 133.

“Current Fact and Comment: A Case of Directed Anarchy,” *The Sign*, October, 1937, 133-134.

The Sign's comment further denies any charge that the anti-religious violence in Spain had been strictly spontaneous; rather, it was believed that the attacks on the Church had been “a case of directed anarchy.” From the Catholic view, this indicated a characteristic fingerprint of communist infiltration and manipulation.

for all Christendom. While the author admitted that a certain degree of blame for the conflict could be laid at the doorstep of the overly regressive conservative elements of Spain, she nevertheless insisted, in typical Catholic fashion, upon the Nationalist bloc as being representative of the very best of the nation. De Hueck wrote that the movement stood as the only instrument that could effectively offset the designs Red Moscow had for Spain. Further, Franco's proposed system of governance—the supposedly benign, ambiguously Fascist-like “corporate state”—would stand as an iron bulwark against future communist encroachment into Western Christendom. And, perhaps seeking to allay the fears of those unconvinced by the Catholic interpretation of the Spanish scene, the author sought to assure her audience that the underlying complexion of the Nationalists' political ideology did not draw nearly so much influence from either the Italian or German variants of totalitarian nationalism as had been so anxiously suggested by other contemporary observers.²⁰³

America, too, maintained this pattern into October, 1937, even if it did seem to contradict the general “non-fascist” interpretation of Franco's rebels held by other American Catholic publications. Earlier that autumn, the paper had dispatched a correspondent to Nationalist Spain, one N. Belmonte, who had secured an audience with Generalissimo Franco himself. Truly a notable accomplishment, the interview provided *America* with what could only be interpreted as the authoritative justification for the

²⁰³ Catherine de Hueck, “The Spirit of the New Spain,” *The Sign*, October, 1937, 153-157. This assertion never minded the fact that the idea behind the Spanish “corporate state” contained something more than vague echoes of the Fascist program in Italy.

rising, coming as it did from the very fount of the movement. As had the Spanish prelates before him, Franco established his staunchly pro-Republican credentials and insisted upon his belief that it had never been the province of the Spanish military apparatus to entangle itself in the wranglings of the political arena. However, as the misruled Republic careened toward anarchy—most particularly after the Popular Front, clearly a Soviet manufacture with revolutionary intentions, had acquired power—a natural caveat against that apolitical conviction had been found. Thus the reasoning followed that the insurrection Franco inherited stood as a campaign to rescue a nation wallowing in the sanguinary chaos instigated by Red provocateurs bent on executing the will of a certain hostile foreign power.²⁰⁴

Interestingly enough, Belmonte's article indicated that Franco offered little, if any, indication of battling on behalf of the Faith against the great Satan of Moscow; with her, rather, he dwelt upon the political interpretations of the struggle. To the Nationalist chieftain, the battle for dominance of Spain primarily represented a chapter in the mortal struggle of civilization against the ill-bred barbarity of rootless Marxism. Secondly, of course, the war stood a fight to save the nation from the bottommost depths of acute and destructive disorder. To this end, his cause had been forced to accept succor from whichever hands had offered it, but in no wise did that mean that Spain would become an outpost of the contemporary regimes in either Italy or Germany. Indeed, Franco asserted that his victory would preserve and restore the “heritage of Spain” foremost, though that

²⁰⁴ Nena Belmonte, “General Franco Rescues New Spain,” *America*, 2 October, 1937, 604-606.

objective would necessitate the establishment of a temporary military dictatorship as the immediate precursor to what he labeled an authoritarian “corporate state.”²⁰⁵

As October began to wane, both *America* and *Commonweal* began to couple their blandishments of Franco's movement with outraged incredulity over the Protestants' reply to the Spanish pastoral letter. *Commonweal*, with measured sobriety, indicated that such an inflammatory response merely demonstrated that those Protestant leaders who had affixed their names to the offending document had been “thoroughly and completely hoodwinked on the real issues of the Spanish Civil War.”²⁰⁶

Meanwhile, *America* reacted with more marked severity. In its turn, the paper demanded answers from the 150 signatories and pondered whether the opinion expressed in the open letter represented the wider attitudes of the whole of American Protestantism in respect to the conflict in Spain and to the Catholic Church. If this were true, remarked the editorial staff, then it could be put down as yet another episode in the sordid legacy of anti-Catholic bigotry in the United States, and would further tarnish the ideals of tolerance and the liberty of conscience for which the nation ostensibly stood. And, like *Commonweal* before it, the editorial staff of *America* stated that the true significance of

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Indeed, while de Heuck's article in *The Sign* insisted that Franco's “New Spain” would not be fascist, or even fascist-inspired, Belmonte's piece appears to be almost total contradictory. On this note, however, one might add that Belmonte also provided pieces for the *Commonweal* (“Life in Nationalist Spain,” 15 October, 1937, 567-568) and the *Sign* (“Journal of a War Correspondent,” November, 1937, 199-202 ; “My Side of Hell, December, 1937, 275-279) that appear to have been intended to serve almost as propaganda ballads for the work being done behind Nationalist lines by the Falange's *Auxilio Social* to prepare the ground for the anticipated new social order; these pieces discussed nothing of the notion of a coming military dictatorship or corporate state.

²⁰⁶ “Week by Week: Two Opinions,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 15 October, 1937, 561.

the war, the “real issues” of the contest which had so totally escaped the Protestants, could be summarized as a question of communism versus Christianity, of tyranny versus civilization.²⁰⁷

Responding similarly, the following month's issue of *Sign* opened with a scathing editorial invective from the pen of Father T. Maguire against the Protestants' open letter. While first accusing the signatories of being possessed of a not altogether unexpected strain of putrid anti-Catholic bigotry, the author leveled the charge of their being, at the very least, co-opted dupes of the insidious Red propaganda machine; for all their sallies against the alleged excesses of the Nationalist insurgency, the Protestants had little but adulation for the “democratic” Loyalist coalition while ignoring its obvious domination by dangerous revolutionary elements. According to the author's interpretation, what should have been considered as the most concerning aspect of the Protestants' statement, endorsed as it had been by leading figures on that side of the schism, was the impression it gave of “reveal[ing] the value in which Protestant clergymen...hold their religion.”²⁰⁸

And, furthermore, that the Protestants:

“...[were] of the pure-blooded American type who bubble over with patriotic fervor at the mention of our American Revolution. They imply that it was glorious to revolt against taxation without representation. But they are amazed and alarmed that men should resort to arms to protect their civil and religious liberties and their most cherished institutions.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 16 October, 1937, 26-27.

²⁰⁸ Theophane Maguire, “Blind Leaders,” *The Sign*, November, 1937, 195.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

A contemporary issue of *America* featured a piece of correspondence that reinforced the questions asked by Maguire—namely whether or not the Protestants' letter stood as representative of the whole of American Protestantism. In closing, the letter quotes the words of Christ to respond to the seeming apostasy of the Protestants over their stance against the Church in Spain: “These people honor Me with

From a militantly Catholic perspective, these could hardly be considered to be unfair charges—especially as the Church in Spain had ostensibly been targeted for liquidation on the orders of a reprehensible governmental regime, which pretended to liberal democracy while in reality being a Soviet construct, a device in the hands of communists and anarchists to further the cause of world atheism. From that assumption, then, it would not be a difficult leap to assume that in their declaring solidarity with the Loyalist cause, the Protestants were siding with the swelling forces of anti-religion. In fact, Maguire elucidated such a train of logic against the Protestants, lamenting that while “they [had] definitely and publicly committed themselves,” such a revelation carried the benefit demonstrating to observant American Catholics that American Protestantism (or, more realistically, some vague and unquantified segment of it) could not be counted upon as allies in the monumental struggle of Faith against Godlessness.²¹⁰

J. A. Toomey, writing for *America*, believed very much like his colleague from *Sign*, although he sensed a kind of larger, communist-directed propaganda conspiracy in the American press that extended far beyond the Protestants' volley against the Spanish prelates and seemed willing, even eager, to assign the status of victim to the Catholic Church in the United States and around the world. For his part, the author specifically

their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.” (6 November, 1937, 113-114).

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

For an interesting opinion on the supposed anti-Catholic bigotry of American Protestantism, ostensibly amplified as a result of the civil war in Spain, see *America* (4 December, 1937, 202-203). The author, actually a Protestant, wrote that virulent radicalism had steadily risen in the Protestant intelligentsia, that their creed had been infused with pro-communist sympathies which, as a result, had become increasingly anti-Catholic—nearly to the point of excusing the butchery of the Church altogether.

nominated the case of what he considered to be the unjustified and unjustifiable misrepresentation of the civil war in Spain and the rough treatment afforded to the ancient Church in that unhappy country by the several organs of the American media. Though the press had delivered innumerable thrusts against the Church for its support of the rebellion (which, after all, had been conceived as the only way to forestall the “reddening of Spain”), it had worked tirelessly to dilute public notions of unseemly radicalism within the Popular Front and to render the Loyalist enterprise more palatable by portraying the coalition as being made up entirely of respectable, freedom-loving democratic republicans.²¹¹ Either the unwitting participation or outright complicity of sections of the American press in this vast and insidious plot, Toomey contended, only furthered the determined march of uncompromising atheism that had been violently dismantling the Faith in Spain, but that the latent power of the Catholic laity could be leveraged to redirect the press onto the path of righteousness.²¹²

Especially among its contemporaries, *America* could not seem to let the dust from the inter-denominational duel settle. Rather, the editorial hierarchy of the publication and its contributors seemed more keen than ever to flog away at the eternal bogeyman of communism, both as it existed in the United States and abroad. For example, the remaining weeks of November, 1937 featured editorials and articles on such subjects as:

²¹¹ John A. Toomey, S. J. “Pointing a Finger at Press Propaganda,” *America*, 6 November, 1937, 105-106. This must also be considered alongside a piece of correspondence that later appeared in *America* which asserted that it was grossly improper to accuse the entire non-Catholic American press apparatus of being in the pay of Moscow. And, further, that coverage of the Spanish Civil War was not necessarily warped intentionally by the American media, but rather that information pertaining to the course and conduct of the war was poisoned at the source. (“Press Propaganda, 27 November, 1937, 185)

²¹² *Ibid.*

Loyalist Madrid's red-festooned commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution, the return of two treasonable International Brigadiers from Spain, the attitude of disgust on the part of prominent American socialist leader and POUM sympathizer S. Baron in respect to his investigation of communist domination and manipulation of the Loyalist cause, and the entrance of a Popular Front organization onto the American political scene in the form of the Farmer-Labor Party.²¹³

As 1937 entered into its final month, there appeared to be something of a slight decrease in the focus on the Spanish conflict amongst the Catholic publications, though each featured small pieces in respect to it. One such article in *Commonweal*, for instance, discussed the circulation of carefully tailored Loyalist propaganda in the United States, which originated from the respective Red commissariat of Barcelona (and, one would assume, from those situated in Madrid and Valencia), and which, in turn, issued forth from the Republican embassy in Washington and from more subterranean outlets. Of course, from the contemporary interpretation of the inflexible Catholic partisan, any such pro-Loyalist literature, regardless of how it might be attired in the raiment of liberal democracy, could by then only be interpreted as a component of the massive Soviet conspiracy to sow misinformation and engender bewilderment—for the task of the propagandist is to lie and to lie in enormity—as a method to foment or stoke

²¹³ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 13 November, 1937, 122-123.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 20 November, 1937, 146.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 27 November, 1937, 171.

Robert A. Graham, S. J., “Popular Front Party Enters the Political Arena,” *America*, 27 November, 1937, 174-175.

revolutionary crises.²¹⁴

Most alarming to certain contributors to *America* appeared to be the seeming reality that such devious propaganda actually found a substantial degree of resonance with the middle class intelligentsia, the natural defenders of liberalism. This being more particularly true if the propaganda erected romantic analogies linking the American Revolution and the contemporary “war of Independence” in Spain, and most especially true if it also bore heavily implications that all those who did not support the Loyalists in the struggle against reactionary tyranny were scarcely liberal democrats, but were actually fascist in their sympathies—an odious charge no good liberal could abide, making him or her a far easier target to manipulate by radical agitators.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ “Editorials: Propaganda,” editorial, *The Commonwealth*, 10 December, 1937, 169-170.

This editorial also denounces certain leagues “against War and Fascism” or “for Peace and Democracy” as being, whether wittingly or not, conduits for Soviet propaganda—a charge not particularly without factual basis, as history has demonstrated. Similar charges were also leveled by short pieces featured in *America* (11 December, 1937, 223, 225-226), though they again focus upon the “tincturing” of the American news media with pro-Loyalist propaganda rather than upon propaganda issued directly from diplomatic outlets and certain civilian agencies.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Gault MacGowan, “Fascism Is the Target for Communist Artillery,” *America*, 18 December, 1937, 244-245.

“Editorials: the Masked Enemy,” editorial, *America*, 18 December, 1937, 253-254.

VI.

Differentiated by theological sectarianism though it may have been, this representative section of contemporary American Protestantism remained wholly unsympathetic to the Catholic position in respect to the Spanish Civil War, even if some of the organs of the generalized Protestant press had been slow to recognize the significance of the Spanish hierarchs' appeal.

Remarkable amongst its contemporaries, in fact, the *Christian Leader* demonstrated an acuity lacking among its other contemporary publications. A mere day after the appearance of the Spanish prelates' letter in the *New York Times*, the paper printed an article concerning what the author, one G. Seldes, believed to be the intertwined factors of fascism and religion in the civil war. Scarcely bothering to veil his sentiment, the author had little but disdain for what he believed to be the proclivity of a certain Christian denomination to arouse unnecessary parochial division over the specious question of religion as it pertained to the conflict. Indeed, he wondered whether the famous dictum of Samuel Johnson might be amended to substitute "religion" for "patriotism" as being the last true refuge of the scoundrel. After a trip to six various European nations, Seldes came away with the impression that the lines between progress and reaction were starkly drawn across the water; meanwhile, "...America is the only country...where a war whose causes are social and economic has been turned by obscurantists into a religious issue."²¹⁶

²¹⁶ George Seldes, "Spain Fights Fascism, Not Religion," *The Christian Leader*, 4 September, 1937, 1135-1136.

While clearly a broadside against the hierarchy of the Spanish Catholic Church (and probably those who subscribed to the claims made in their missive), the author's attack also went on to emphatically deny that any truth whatsoever existed in the prelates' position that the Popular Front government existed only as a formality to disguise communist domination, or that the real seat of Republican power lay within the walls of the Kremlin. Yet on the other hand, Seldes wrote that little complexity existed in the Nationalist rebellion: it stood exposed as a naked attack on democracy, a bid made by the forces of backwardness to establish a fascist (or perhaps fascist-esque) state or, at the very least, one grounded in reactionary traditionalism.²¹⁷ By this, one could reasonably infer that by this he merely meant Catholicism.

Secondly, he wrote that the reports of atrocities against the Church had been systematically exaggerated without denying the essential reality of violence perpetrated against the Church. Rather, he denied charges that such violence existed as an immediately contemporaneous phenomenon and insisted that such incidents had an ancient tradition in Spain, very often erupting from socio-economic frustrations of the lower classes and its conception that the established Church represented a substantial contributor to their eternal submersion. In any event, wrote Seldes, the outbursts of violence could be attributed to mostly isolated incidents of mob action executed by the

Seldes was an investigative journalist with a remarkable career; he focused primarily on European issues between the world wars. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, he reported on the conflict over the course of its entire duration, but held an obviously pro-Republican bias.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

This position, so vehemently defended, might suggest that the Soviet designs for Spain, as distilled in *Spain Betrayed*, had, as intended, hoodwinked at least certain segments—for this was precisely the version of events that they meant the international press of the bourgeois democracies to convey.

irresponsible radical fanatics beyond the control of the government in the chaos which followed the uprising. The same could not be said to be true of Franco's movement, which the author wrote as having acted with precise considerations to inflict brutality.²¹⁸

Seldes concluded his article by emphasizing that the chief antagonists of the true spirit of modern Spain were the twinned evils of medieval clericalism and militarism, and that the thinking Catholics of Europe had come to the realization that the Spanish conflict represented not a war of religion, but rather an episode in the class struggle—and that the Spanish Church had betrayed her secret trust and had aligned with the forces of black reaction and militaristic fascism for purely self-interested reasons.²¹⁹

The *Christian Century*, for its part, did not acknowledge the Spanish hierarchs' letter until nearly the end of September, 1937. Characteristically, the Protestants of this “undenominational” periodical hurled stones at the statement, denouncing it as grossly misrepresentative and deliberately untruthful, particularly in its portrayal of Republican Spain as being nothing but an instrument of Moscow, while none dwelt in the rebel camp but saints and patriots. This, the editorial asserted, stood as definitive proof of the reactionary tendencies of the Catholic Church in Spain, born of a jealous love of privilege and power that had been inculcated over centuries. Concluding on a vaguely threatening note, the *Century* promised something almost like an authoritative response from the hold

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Here one might suggest that Seldes' conception of the Nationalist movement, being the pairing of clericalism and militarism do not find particular congruence with what some scholars have attempted to define as the “fascist minimum.” See *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, ed. Stein Ugelvik Larsen, et al. (Oslo: *Universitetsforlaget*, 1980).

of American Protestantism.²²⁰

In the meantime, however, this paper focused on emphasizing that the continued Nationalist triumphs in Spain, particularly the seizure of the valuable port of Santander in northern Spain, had been achieved only through force of Italian arms.²²¹ Similarly, the editorial staff continued to nurture their then-ingrained habit of worrying that the war in Spain had the potential to ignite a larger conflict. Specifically, it had been not unreasonably posited that because the Nationalists' totalitarian allies had risked a great deal and had already incurred substantial expense to ensure the victory of the insurgent Right in Spain that they would risk a general war before suffering a potentially devastating loss of prestige by reneging on their Spanish commitments. This could be considered to be no less plausible because rumors also flew that they had been promised certain economic and territorial concessions from Franco, pending his victory.²²²

As to the idea of the American “civil religion” or the “liberal-democratic tradition,” as it developed in the discourse of the Spanish crisis, the final September edition of *Christian Century* featured an article on the “Tragedy of Spain,” wherein the author described his journey to the traditional “backwater of Europe,” but there he discovered a new Spain being constructed by a romantic, ill-disciplined, but nevertheless “great-hearted” people.²²³ The author expressed great sympathy for the democratic people's revolution of the Left in Spain, locked as it was in mortal battle against the

²²⁰ “Letter of Spanish Bishops Elicits Strong Replies,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 29 September, 1937, 1187-1188.

²²¹ “Italy Hails Santander as Italian Victory,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 8 September, 1937, 1091.

²²² “Will the Spanish Blaze Spread,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 15 September, 1937, 1126-1127.

²²³ Sherwood Eddy, “The Tragedy of Spain,” *The Christian Century*, 22 September, 1937, 1163-1165.

historically repressive oligarchy of the degenerate and obsolete aristocracy, the military officer corps, and the high Church (itself being the most noxious of the offenders). Though admitting that the Loyalist coalition included a not insubstantial communist presence, the author insisted that Spanish communists had never been of the Bolshevik brood, and that they had renounced their revolutionary imperatives in favor of statesmanlike cooperation within the Republican political infrastructure. Finally waxing romantic, the author wrote that the struggle of Spain represented a continuation of the strife-wrought heritage of democracy and independence, a legacy reaching back to those heady days of 1776, 1789, and even unto 1917.²²⁴

By the following month, Seldes's article, "Spain Fights Fascism, Not Religion," previously featured in the 4 September issue of the *Christian Leader* had been reprinted in the *Christian Evangelist*. Adding only the subtitle "Some Facts for Misled Americans," the reappearance of the article in unaltered form probably served as a convenient, agreeable way for the editorial staff of the publication to acknowledge the prelates' letter and might also be interpreted, in however slight a way, as a small glimmer of the essential solidarity of Protestant opinion in relation to the Spanish war.²²⁵

More rounded than Seldes's sentiment, however, was that of R. T. House, who commented on Spain's "holy war" in the 6 October issue of *Christian Century*. Rather

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

Eddy elaborates by saying that while the battle in Spain represented a battle for independence, much like that fought by the revolutionary American patriots, the abuses being confronted by the people of Spain, heaped up over centuries, were immeasurably more odious.

²²⁵ George Seldes, "Spain Fights Fascism, Not Religion: Some Facts for Misled Americans," *The Christian Evangelist*, 7 October, 1937, 1274-1275.

than taking sides in what had clearly become a passionate issue, even in the United States, the author wrote that partisanship had blinded supporters of their respective sides' shortcomings. Catholics believed that God had spoken in Spain and that the rebels wore blessed armor in a modern crusade; liberals and radicals, for their part, seemed eager to swallow leftist propaganda and to dismiss the questionable conduct (if not organized sadism) of the Loyalist factions as a necessary evil in the fight against reaction, itself a kind of holy war. House argued that if cold light of disinterested reasoning were applied to the belligerent factions active in Spain, then the moral allies of both sides would be forced to realize that precious little justice existed in either, and that Loyalists and Nationalists alike heartily deserved condemnation.²²⁶

Several miscellaneous articles regarding the war in Spain aside, very little mention of the Protestants' reply to the Spanish hierarchy or, indeed, of the Catholics counter-riposte to the Protestants' thrust could be found in these columns of the Protestant press. The 13 October edition of *Christian Century* merely mentioned in passing the appearance of the letter signed by the 150, assigning responsibility for the tract to G. E. Shipler, editor of the *Churchman*, an Episcopalian fortnightly. Otherwise, this mention simply reiterated the editorial position that the Church in Spain only had itself to blame for the particularly violent iteration of contemporary Spanish anti-clericalism. Agreeing, the 16 October issue of the *Christian Leader* commented likewise.²²⁷ Addressing the

²²⁶ Roy Temple House, "Spain's 'Holy War,'" *The Christian Century*, 6 October, 1937, 1228-1229.

²²⁷ "News of the Christian World: Clergymen Answer Spanish Bishops," editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 16 October, 1937, 1274.

publication of the American Catholic response, the *Christian Century* would only merely acknowledge its publication briefly and summarize its content thus: Catholic luminaries charged Protestants of merely rehashing irresponsible charges made against the Spanish Church that had been thoroughly discredited and they had grown concerned that American Protestantism had sided with a Red-hued regime grounded in and committed to diabolical heresy.²²⁸

During the final two months of 1937, the substantive volume of pieces specifically relating to the Spanish Civil War (and, indeed, to that autumn's public eruption of the Americanized Catholic-Protestant discourse) dwindled slightly in these representative Protestant publications. However, these papers continued to feature items which actively criticized what their contributors interpreted as the pro-fascist proclivities of the Roman Catholic Church and other miscellaneous fear-mongers of the anti-communist stripe.²²⁹

In fact, the *Christian Century* featured no real articles on the Spanish crisis during

²²⁸ "Church Leaders Criticize Spanish Bishops," editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 16 October, 1937, 1314.
²²⁸ "News of the Christian World: Catholics Reply to Protestant Protest on Spain," *The Christian Century*, 20 October, 1937, 1308.

Until the end of October, 1937, the *Christian Century* would also feature a number of minor editorials and articles on the war: one on the "mirage" of international neutrality in respect to the Spanish war ("Neutrality in Spain Is Still a Mirage," 20 October; 1284-1285), another on the question of the specific number of Italian auxiliaries in action in that war-torn country ("Italy Admits Having 40,000 Troops in Franco's Army," 27 October, 1317), and another, almost an exercise in paranoia, warning liberal Protestants that no matter how noble Catholic social action may appear, one must not forget the comfortable alliance the Church always seems able to reach with fascism, the unholy of unholies to the contemporary liberal mind (D. A. Saunders, "Liberals and Catholic Action, 20 October, 1293-1295).
²²⁹ By late 1937, one can demonstrate that, at least in these publications, while some interest continued to be focused upon the Spanish war, more was coming to be centered upon speculation as to what Hitler's next move would be, the escalation of the Sino-Japanese conflict, as well as upon Roosevelt's apparent shift away from isolationist policy (as made public in his famous Chicago "Quarantine Speech" of 5 October, 1937).

the month of November, merely brief editorials lamenting the continued ineffectiveness of the Non-Intervention Committee, summarily reporting this institutional condition as working for the exclusive benefit of the insurgent faction and its foreign abettors, however certain other participant nations might be discomfited by this reality.²³⁰ S. E. G. Priestley, writer for the *Christian Leader*, wholly agreed with such sentiments, adding that Italian and German involvement in the civil war did not necessarily come from a genuine sense of fascist or “anti-communist” solidarity with the Spanish rebels, but rather out of the knowledge that the conflict could be leveraged as a pressure point for coercive negotiations with both France and Great Britain.²³¹ The editorial staff for this publication evidently thought this to be a reasonable scenario, and furthermore warned that it could hold dire consequences in the immediate future. Specifically concerned about the nations of South America, the *Leader* held that the ostensible crusade of “anti-communism,” so readily trumpeted by the Spanish rebels and their totalitarian allies could easily encourage the intrepid little tyrants of that continent to hoist hastily-sewn white banners and await international fascist assistance to install and entrench unwelcome fascist or reactionary regimes in the Western Hemisphere.²³²

²³⁰ “Non-Intervention Negotiations Are Getting Nowhere in Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 3 November, 1937, 1349.

“News of the Christian World: British Policy Praised, Blamed,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 10 November, 1937, 1398-1399.

“Franco Begins to Send Italians Home,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 17 November, 1937, 1411-1412.

²³¹ S. E. Gerard Priestley, “Fasces and Swastikas,” *The Christian Leader*, 6 November, 1937, 1453-1454.

²³² “These Leagues against Communism,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 20 November, 1937, 1476-1477.

“The Dictatorship in Brazil,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 27 November, 1937, 1509.

For similar concerns slightly closer to home, see Harvey Campbell's “Say It with Riots!” in the

Editorial commentary on the international dimensions of the war aside, however, there were some reverberations of the inter-denominational debate in the Protestant press; some even revisited the theme of the “civil religion.” For example, the 9 December issue of the *Christian Evangelist* briefly discussed the findings of J. T. Whitaker, special correspondent to the *Chicago Daily News*. On a journey into Nationalist Spain, the journalist discussed the conflict with a officer on Franco's staff who, in marshaling chilling language of the fascist variety, advocated a policy of extermination in Spain. According to this soldier, up to one-third of the Spanish population (in fact all those “rats” who sympathized with the Republic) would, for the sake of necessity, be ground beneath the wheel of this great political culling to ensure that control of the country passed forevermore into the hands of the “right people.” While this, too, has something of the ring of “atrocities stories” from the Great War, the commentator from the *Evangelist* interpreted it with marked seriousness:

“This officer, if he had lived in 1776, would have talked about the 'rats of Valley Forge' and would have argued for their extermination. Americans who sympathize with Franco are the lineal descendants of the Tories who sabotaged Washington and supported Benedict Arnold. If the people who voted for a republic in Spain are rodents, their opponents might well be characterized under a familiar species of the feline family which has a more or less malodorous reputation.”²³³

Christian Century (24 November, 1937, 1450-1451), for a brief examination of what the author believed to be a sort of Quebecois clerical-fascism, which also claimed “anti-communism” as its doctrine.

²³³ Frederick D. Kershner, “As I Think on These Things: Rats,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 9 December, 1937, 1553.

See also: H. S. Tigner's “I Am Ashamed of Us: the Mind of a War Resister” in the *Christian Leader* (4 December, 1937, 1544-1546). While really more about the author's shifting stance from one of total pacifism to one of willingness to forcefully confront the evils of a troubled world, he specifically nominates the war in Spain as the titanic struggle between democracy and fascism or, as he more interestingly illustrates it, between St. George and the Dragon.

Finally, then, and as a parting shot to the Roman Catholic Church for the year 1937, the *Christian Century* printed an article entitled “the Catholic Heresy” by K. P. Reinhold Niebuhr, the eminent theologian and intellectual. In this piece, the author lambasted the Church, stating particularly that it had become “daily more apparent that the Catholic Church [had] cast its lot with fascistic policies.”²³⁴ Furthermore, he mocked the justification with this moral alignment of one of the world's great religious institutions with fascism on the grounds that the alternative extremism, communism, meant to destroy religion entirely. To Niebuhr, such reasoning had severe structural weaknesses. He questioned whether the stated anti-religious ethic of communism should be considered any worse than the intention of fascism to opportunistically co-opt religion, particularly the Christian faith, force it to submit to party discipline, and bastardize it to the point of essential nihilism.

In this piece, the author specifically selected the Spanish Church and its hierarchy as being the most obviously guilty of this “Catholic heresy,” which he defined as the self-representation of the Church as being *the* infallible, Earth-bound manifestation of the Kingdom of God when, in reality, it remained a thoroughly human institution—and therefore susceptible to all manner of human failings. In the case of Spain, for example, Niebuhr cited that the Church in that country had traditionally indulged in temporal selfishness, nurturing intimate connections with the ruling class of a rigid feudal social order as it had. And, with respect to the prelates' missive, he echoed the opinion voiced in

²³⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Catholic Heresy,” *The Christian Century*, 8 December, 1937, 1524-1525.

the Protestants' open letter of October by writing that it never seemed to have occurred to the Spanish hierarchs that the profanation of the Church did not necessarily come from a place of Marxist-inspired anti-religious hatred. Rather, perhaps lacking imagination, they never considered the possibility that such violent passion against the Church might have been the expression of the common Spaniard against what he identified as the human organization that had been historically allied with the forces of oppression.²³⁵

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

This article quickly shifts from being a screed against the Roman Catholic Church to being a celebration of liberal Protestantism, which the author considered to be the only bulwark against totalitarianism, including the spiritual totalitarianism of the Vatican—though admitting that Protestantism did have its own set of faults. Furthermore, Niebuhr's article would receive a response in the following week's edition of the *Century* ("The Protestant Heresy," 15 December, 1937, 1550-1552). This piece would, however, focus more on what its author perceived to be the arrogance of Protestantism, which the Spanish Civil War had only elevated to new heights of sanctimoniousness.

VII.

There ended the discourse on the Spanish Civil War in these but few diverse organs of the American Christian press for the year 1937. The evidence presented above would seem to indicate that as the flames of conflict continued to consume unhappy Spain, the dimensions of the war mounted to almost bewildering complexity, especially to foreign observers—and particularly to those in the United States. Facing an increasingly incomprehensible scenario of “internationalized” civil strife in a foreign land, certain segments of the American public (distinguished, in this case, by denominational affiliations) came forward with contrasting interpretative frameworks with which either side attempted to cast the Spanish war in more familiar, or “Americanized,” terms. These separate models were predicated upon what might be described as the American “civil religion,” that peculiar litany of all that is “sacred” to the experience of the United States as a revolutionary experiment and as a democratic republic. In fairness to both factions, both American Catholics and Protestants were able to marshal relatively well-crafted and effective, though overly emotional and unreasonably idealized, arguments for their chosen avatars in the war based upon their congruence with the ideals of “Americanness.” In other words: always were the Nationalists or the Loyalists, according to their respective champions, represented as being the inheritors of the most noble tradition of the revolutionaries of 1776, while their antagonists were billed as the contemporary incarnation of immortal tyranny. Always were the Nationalists or the Loyalists, according to their respective champions, fighting

the good fight of liberty, of democracy, and of common decency. And so forth.

One can, of course, indicate the appearance of the Spanish prelates' missive in the *New York Times*, belated in appearance though it may have been, as being the catalyst for this phenomenon and the subsequent Catholic-Protestant debate that it inspired within the columns of the same eminent national publication. Shortly thereafter, however, this inter-denominational conversation reverted its erstwhile channel of the religious press, where editors and contributors were content to hurl stones at one another. All this did, perhaps, was to exacerbate and intensify the inter-denominational discourse on the significance of the civil war in Spain, producing a great deal of heat and smoke, but little light as to the actual truths of the struggle or the justice of either belligerent coalition. Both American Catholics and Protestants, by the end of 1937, merely continued to talk past each other to the effect of contributing to the spinning of tires in an essentially undifferentiated morass of facts and opinions, conjecture and reality.

Chapter 3: “The Tyranny of Semantics”

Early Winter, 1938 – Summer, 1939

The Denouement of the Spanish Civil War and the

Last Considerations of the Catholic-Protestant Dialog in the United States

“...Fallacy creeps in when a word comes to stand for an ill-defined object, or for a loose generalization, or for an abstraction that is not recognized as one, or for an object or concept blurred or obscured by an emotional coloration or an established reaction pattern that has become inseparable from the word. ...Having decided that communism—or fascism—is a hideous monster ready to devour civilization, we have a convenient label by which to damn any other program that seems objectionable.”²³⁶

I.

From the rise of the Leftist Popular Front government in Spain and the subsequent inception of the Nationalist insurgency in 1936, the desperate conflict in that country had been a crucial topic of passionate discussion in the American Christian press. However, throughout 1938 and into 1939, the Spanish Civil War began to fade in importance in the American Christian press.²³⁷

The reasons for this relative de-emphasis on the dramatic Spanish struggle are at once multifarious, and yet simple. In the estimation of the respective staffs of these papers and their contributors, Spain had by that time ceased to be the critical arena of Europe. Indeed, it seems as if they believed that if a general war had not broken out over the Spanish question by the time the war approached its second anniversary, it was not likely to at all. During this period of time, of course, the Continent experienced other emergent issues which were considered to be much more pressing and which held more

²³⁶ “The Tyranny of Semantics,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 9 March, 1939, 296-297.

²³⁷ As will be demonstrated below, this phenomenon would be far more remarkable in the columns of the representatives of the American Protestant press.

potential to become flashpoints. For example: the general expansion of Hitler's *Reich* with the *Anschluss*, the crisis over the Czech Sudetenland, the capitulation at Munich, the German seizure of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, Italy's invasion of Albania, the escalation of European rearmament, and, finally, the rumblings over the Polish issue, and so forth.²³⁸

And yet, even though there would be somewhat less content on the Spanish Civil War than there had been previously, these Catholic and Protestant newspapers would, by and large, maintain their partisan fidelities on the befogged conflict as it was fought to its bitter conclusion, and as it continued to demonstrate the comparable evils of both sides and, indeed, the ultimate evil of modern warfare itself.²³⁹

²³⁸ S. E. Gerard Priestley, "Watchmen, What of 1938?," *The Christian Leader*, 1 January, 1939, 22-23. "The Predicament of Peace," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 9 February, 1939, 168-170.

To the Protestant papers particularly, the expansion of Hitler's Germany was construed as incremental steps toward his covetous goal of the Soviet Ukraine *lebensraum*, as laid out in *Mein Kampf*. More so than the Catholic journals, the Protestant publications would exhibit a keen interest in East Asian affairs, for Protestant missionary efforts were increasingly imperiled by Japanese aggression.

See, amongst innumerable others:

Lewis S. C. Smyth, "Aggression Pays No Dividends," *The Christian Evangelist*, 2 June, 1938, 616-617.

M. Searle Bates, "Searle Bates Describes Nanking Under Japanese," *The Christian Evengelist*, 2 June, 1938, 625.

²³⁹ Though again peripheral to the emphasis of this study, this period was marked by continued bewildered disappointment on the part of the Protestant papers for what they considered to be the vain self-immolation of the Soviet experiment as Stalin's continued his purge, destroying the "Old Guard" of the Revolution and many of its best, most talented minds. Many contributors began to more frankly question whether that country had ever really been the friend of liberty and democracy, especially as it seemed to them that the "Stalinist Constitution" was a farce and that the elections of 1937 had been a rigged affair and an unqualified travesty.

II.

For their part, the Protestant newspapers seemed to appreciate, however grudgingly, that by 1938, the shadows were lengthening for the Spanish Republic after Franco's Nationalist movement formally established a civil government, but most especially after his brilliant Teruel offensive, which penetrated to the blue waters of the Mediterranean, summarily cutting the remainder of Republican territory in two. In the opinion of the staff of the *Christian Century*, the success of Franco's military maneuvers had only been made possible through a fresh surge of aid from his unscrupulous allies.²⁴⁰ At the same time, however, the Spanish Civil War had begun to recede as the flashpoint for all Europe and, accordingly, these papers began investing more attention in the successive crises faced by the Continent as they arose, most of which were instigated by Germany, and, furthermore, those created in East Asia by the ambitions of Japan.²⁴¹ The

²⁴⁰ "Franco Gets New Help for Quick Drive to Victory," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 6 April, 1938, 420.

"Loyalist Spain Split by Franco," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 27 April, 1938, 516.

Otherwise, this paper would report that while the insurgency had formed a governmental cabinet, it contained little but "fascist" representatives, and Franco retained dictatorial control. Still more ominously, said cabinet included a position for a "minister of corporations," which seemed to have been inspired by Italy's corporative Fascism. Finally, Franco's government had made it a priority to cultivate relations with the Vatican, presumably being an indicator as to the future relations between Church and State in Spain.

"Insurgent Spain Sets up a Civil Government," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 16 February, 1938, 197.

"Spanish War Enters Final Phase," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 30 March, 1938, 388-389.

²⁴¹ "The Predicament of Peace," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 9 February, 1938, 168-170.

Jean Beaven Abernethy, "Is Youth to Be Betrayed Again?," *The Christian Century*, 2 March, 1938, 271-272.

"Which Way to Peace," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 24 March, 1938, 335-336.

Particularly concerning about these two evils (and, to an extent, including the Spanish war itself), according to these journals was the increasingly hard-line attitude taken by some citizens, even to the point of their urging for the immediate revision of American neutrality laws—in respect to the war in Spain, the leveling of crippling economic sanctions against the "aggressor nations" and their allies, and

essence of this decrease in the interest in the developments in Spain might be best embodied in a piece authored by one S. E. G. Priestley, who offered in early 1938 that “with the Spanish Civil War gradually ceasing to contain the potential causes of a major world crisis...Europe looks with anxiety and fear at the gathering clouds which hang heavy and dark over Central Europe.”²⁴²

Indeed, 1938 would not be long advanced in days before these Protestant publications were reporting on the latest Hitlerian triumph: the annexation of Austria, his homeland, into the greater *Reich*. To the *Christian Century*, it seemed as if the “Bohemian corporal,” already bestriding Europe, would ride his cresting wave on to new victories, and that it seemed likely that Czechoslovakia would be his next objective. Yet, on the other hand, the staff of this paper also believed that such limitless expansion would not be tolerated, especially by Great Britain—for German domination of the mainland would have been as abhorrent to British authorities as would Italian suzerainty over the Mediterranean. The latter of these two fears the *Century* held to be a potentiality, pending the conclusion of the Spanish conflict in the favor of Franco's Nationalists.²⁴³

even isolated suggestions of outright military intervention.

²⁴² S. E. Gerard Priestley, “Thunder over the Danube,” *The Christian Leader*, 15 January, 1938, 75-76. This author would be rather prescient in his concerns for what fresh crises 1938 might yield, including the then-emerging issue of the German-Austrian *Anschluss* and the potential danger posed by the question of the Sudetenland. He also predicted the diminishing international power of London and Paris.

²⁴³ “The Day of the Dictators, editorial, *The Christian Century*, 2 March, 1938, 262-263.

See also:

“Hitler Would Destroy Nations to Build a Racial Empire,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 9 March, 1938, 292-293.

“Europe Picks Up the Pieces,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 9 March, 1938, 293-294.

“Hitler over Europe,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 17 March, 1938, 310.

“Herr Hitler Promised,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 19 March, 1938, 355.

Not long after the *Anschluss*, these few papers began to worry over Hitler's next target. One I. Domonkos, writing for the *Christian Leader*, suggested the multi-ethnic muddle of Czechoslovakia as the primary candidate for victimhood. In this case, the author wrote that however wildly the dictator might gesticulate in his harangues that all those of German blood deserved to live on German soil, his true aim in what then seemed to be his intention to undermine Czechoslovakian territorial sovereignty was his desire to obtain the valuable industrial infrastructure of that country to further expand his war machine.²⁴⁴

Yet, despite the unquestionable de-escalation of the international primacy of the contest in Spain, these Protestant publications continued to express interest in it for the same reasons that had been established during the previous months, primarily in that a sister democracy faced destruction and an innocent people enslavement under a “fascist” regime—and that it had been to the eternal shame of the free world that it had not aided Spain in her hour of greatest need.²⁴⁵ While this period would feature comparably little

“Europe's Master,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 23 March, 1938, 358-359.

John C. de Wilde, “Austria: a Summary and Forecast,” *The Christian Leader*, 2 April, 1938, 435-436.

²⁴⁴ Imre Domonkos, “Hitler over Czechoslovakia,” *The Christian Leader*, 2 April, 1938, 432-433.

See also:

“Notes from the Nofrontier News Service: Hitler's Next Move,” editorial, in *The Christian Leader*, 4 June, 1939, 722.

This second piece wondered whether the next blow from the German hammer would fall upon a bewildered France, or if it would be another step in the so-called *Drang nach Osten*. Yet another comment from the *Leader* would opine that Hungary might be the next nation to be assimilated into the emerging Nazi empire.

“Among the Nations: What Next in Hungary?,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 11 June, 1938, 753.

²⁴⁵ Indeed, their conviction that fascism represented the greatest danger to civilization would only be reinforced during the coming months. And although a portion of the commentators would stand firm upon their twinned positions of neutrality and non-intervention, there would be a growing bloc of opinion that held that the time had come to confront the fascist and militarist brigands of Europe and

discussion on the merits of the embattled Leftist government of Spain, or, indeed, the progress of the war itself, these newspapers at least managed to produce glowing reviews of the ongoing relief efforts in that country administered by (Protestant) American organizations, even if they only dealt with the programs established in what little remained of the Republic.²⁴⁶

But where these newspapers could no longer offer positive comment on the prospects for “their side,” they could at least find solace in attacking the Roman Catholic Church on the question of its commitment to the “democratic tradition.” Again, one must take this position to have been one adopted in response to what appeared to be American Catholics' uncompromisingly pro-Nationalist position on the Spanish war, which had been thoroughly couched in anti-communist sentiment. The *Christian Leader* would attempt to shame the American branch of the Church and its Roman authorities for its attempt to “[do its] level best to convince the American people that the government of Spain is 'dangerous' and that lovers of liberty should show their sympathy and support to Franco,” as he apparently stood as a defender of Christendom against the encroaching blight of communism.²⁴⁷ While this editorial comment would fairly recognized that

Asia.

²⁴⁶ Alfred C. and Mary W. Jones, “War Relief in Spain,” *The Christian Leader*, 5 February, 1938, 179-181. Interest in this topic would more precisely focus upon the seemingly insoluble problem of the mass of wretched refugees who had, in fleeing from the undulating battle lines, greatly overburdened the capacity of the government and various relief organizations to feed, clothe, and otherwise care for them.

²⁴⁷ “Democracy in Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 19 February, 1938, 228-229.

A later piece would further discuss “Spanish Church Politics,” in which J. L. Davies had apparently discovered that, according to a certain Spanish Catholic catechism, it had been delineated as a “mortal sin” to vote liberal.

“Notes from the Nofrontier News Service: Spanish Church Politics,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 19 March, 1938, 368.

neither belligerent faction held any true claim to absolute virtue, and acknowledged that there certainly existed an element of undesirable radicalism within the Loyalist camp, it nevertheless asserted that the cause of the Spanish government more closely represented the ideals enunciated in the American Declaration of Independence, a definite echo of the “civil religion” debate of the previous year.²⁴⁸ Whatever the actual attitudes of the various branches of the Roman Catholic Church, its clergy, and its faithful, such anti-communist militancy, of course, would be interpreted by these weeklies as veiled sympathy for fascism. An assessment of this sort, while somewhat sensational, might be considered reasonable, for from the earliest days of his post-Great War political activism, Mussolini's own platform had strongly emphasized anti-communism.

Assuming thus, S. H. Fritchman, writing for the *Christian Leader* would summarily denounce this perceived relationship between a generalized ideology of fascism and the Church as ludicrous and impossible to maintain for, at the bottom of the matter, “fascism and Christianity [could not] combine.”²⁴⁹ Not only did organized religion require an atmosphere of freedom, which fascism totally denied its subjects, but the ideology also sought to bring glory unto itself by way of the sword, a practice contrary to Christian teachings. Further commentary by contributors to the *Leader* would offer that in no wise could any good Christian soul countenance the inhumane tactics employed by the Spanish Nationalists, that ostensibly Catholic-fascist combine, which

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Stephen H. Fritchman, “Fascism and Christianity Cannot Combine,” *The Christian Leader*, 5 February, 1938, 175.

included the aerial bombardment of defenseless civilian centers.²⁵⁰

In spite of this heated anti-Catholic antagonism, and as the noose slowly tightened around the doomed Republic, there remained genuine curiosity as to the role of the Church in the coming regime; such would be commonplace in the Protestant press. The *Christian Century* believed that the Spanish Church had gained a unique chance to redeem itself, and that, given the appropriate change in spirit, it could act as a force for moderation and progress. But, by that same token, it had also been afforded an opportunity to return to her reactionary traditions and oppress yet further generations of Spaniards, which would inevitably result in the repetition of the contemporary cycle of bitterness and violence.²⁵¹ F. D. Kershner, of the *Christian Evangelist*, took a more markedly pessimistic view as to the future of the Church in that country, believing that ancient institution to be impatiently waiting for the restoration of its privileges and a chance at vengeance.²⁵² The *Christian Leader's* S. E. G. Priestley would comment likewise, believing that with the impending fall of the Republic, another light had gone

²⁵⁰ Frederick M. Eliot, "A Military Maneuver," *The Christian Leader*, 2 April, 1937, 434-435.

This piece, reprinted from the *Christian Register*, sought to underscore the notion of fascism as being fundamentally incompatible with Christianity, but that somehow officials of the Catholic Church still generated excuses for it, especially where Spain was concerned. Citing Cardinal O'Connell of Boston, the author attacked this clergyman for his insistence that the bombing of civilian targets by the Nationalist coalition stood as a legitimate military practice and not, as Eliot asserted, directed cruelty. Interestingly, the *Christian Century* would report in June that the Nationalists' dastardly campaign of aerial bombardment against civilian settlements had not been contained to Spain: rumors coming from France suggested that insurgent military aircraft, likely crewed by Italians or Germans, had bombed French villages. And, oddly enough, the *Christian Evangelist* would editorialize upon this abhorrent tactic, specifically in respect to the Sino-Japanese conflict, but would leave the question of Spain out of the discussion.

"French Towns Bombed by Planes from Spain," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 15 June, 1938, 748.

"Bombing Civilians," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 16 June, 1938, 667.

²⁵¹ "The Spanish Church Gets Another Chance," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 13 April, 1938, 454-455.

As pro-Loyalist and generally anti-Catholic as the *Century* had been throughout the course of the conflict, the journal hoped that the Church would serve as a sort of counterweight to offset possible Italian or German manipulation after the war ended, but also that it might serve as a moral conscience to prevent the Franco from engaging in a campaign of bloody reprisal.

²⁵² Frederick D. Kershner, "As I Think on These Things: Are the Christians Pharisees?," *The Christian Evangelist*, 14 April, 1938, 419.

Frederick D. Kershner, "As I Think on These Things: "A Roman Catholic Pacifist," *The Christian Evangelist*, 16 June, 1938, 669.

out in Europe and that Franco's Spain, in which the Church would most certainly be participatory, would be the “Spain of yesterday and not tomorrow.”²⁵³

The Spanish war, then, had obviously retained a significant degree of interest in the Protestant press, but coverage upon it shrunk as emerging crises took hold of Europe with the expansion of Hitler's *Reich* and his seemingly insatiable appetite for the acquisition of new lands. Nevertheless, the conflict in Spain remained important, for the papers appreciated that, while it might have no longer held as great of a potential to be a flashpoint for another major war, there were still substantial geopolitical and strategic considerations bound to its outcome. All the while, the partisan fidelities of these particular newspapers remained essentially unshaken, even if they did seem to realize that the eleventh hour had arrived for the embattled Spanish Republic and its motley array of Loyalists. And so, too, did they continue their narrative on the “fascist” aspects of the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁵³ S. E. Gerard Priestley, “Spain—Yesterday and Tomorrow,” *The Christian Leader*, 14 May, 1938, 616-618.

III.

On the part of the American Catholic press, journalistic interest in the Spanish Civil War endured, unsurprisingly, in much the same fashion as it had throughout the conflict. Into the last phase of the war, these representative publications hailed, perhaps somewhat jeeringly, the impending victory of the Rightist rebellion and the ostensible salvation of their Church in Spain while continuing to vilify the Loyalist cause as Soviet in design and apocalyptic in purpose. The applause for what increasingly appeared to be the coming of Franco's triumph grew ever louder, ostensibly due to two factors: his decisive drive to the Mediterranean through Teruel during the early months of 1938, isolating Catalonia from Castile, and the preliminary processes to the extension of formal diplomatic relations and eventual recognition of Nationalist Spain by the Vatican by late May of that year.²⁵⁴

More markedly, however this same period demonstrated a definite increase in the amount of content devoted to illuminating the subversive menace of international

²⁵⁴ "Chronicle: Spain," editorial, *America*, 8 January, 1938, 328.

"Seven Days' Survey: the Wide World," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 4 March, 1938, 520.

"Chronicle: Spain," editorial, *America*, 5 March, 1938, 520.

"Seven Days' Survey: the Wide World," editorial, in *The Commonweal*, 1 April, 1938, 632.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 16 April, 1938, 26-27.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 30 April, 1938, 74.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 28 May, 1938, 170.

Arnold Lunn, "Redeemed Spain," *America*, 18 June, 1938, 247-248.

As a curious aside on the latter topic, these Catholic publications would express incredulity at the revelation that approximately sixty members of the United States' Congress sent a letter of greeting and solidarity to the "Red Parliament" in Barcelona, which they naturally considered to be a gross and outrageous impropriety. Many of these statesmen would later claim that they had given their signatures in ignorance, or else that they had been forged or acquired through trickery.

"Week by Week: the Trend of Events," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 11 February, 1938, 423.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 12 February, 1938, 434-435.

"Editorials: January 30, 1938," editorial, *America*, 12 February, 1938, 445.

"Week by Week: the Trend of Events," *The Commonweal*, 18 February, 1938, 451.

communism, which these papers and their contributors believed to be gradually, subtly expanding in influence, even unto the shores of the United States. These newspapers seemed determined that their respective readerships should share their convictions (which seemed at times to border on the pathological), even to the extent that bearded Bolshevik bomb-throwers lurked beneath every bedstead. Apparently meaning to demonstrate this, *America* would run a pair of editorial comments, which related the experience of one of the journal's own editors, who suffered an attack by a pro-Loyalist—and therefore presumably pro-communist—picketeer armed with an “iron cane” while attending a reception held on behalf of visiting Catholic Spaniards by Catholic Americans.²⁵⁵

While the following year would witness a disturbing increase in the activities of the pro-Nazi German-American *Volksbund*, these Catholic journals would find far more the fear in the habits of CPUSA and its allies, which had apparently transformed in 1938. J. E. Westfield, reporting *America*, would comment on a mass meeting at Madison Square Garden in March, which attempted to appropriate the rhetoric of “Americanism” in the party's assault on fascism.²⁵⁶ Still others would comment on the continue efforts of that organization, abetted by its assorted allies and miscellaneous dupes, to foster a domestic Popular Front-esque movement in the United States, tamper with the nation's policy of neutrality, and, pointedly, to lift the Spanish embargo.²⁵⁷ Their anxieties would only be

²⁵⁵ “Editorials: Congratulations,” editorial, *America*, 18 June, 1938, 252.

“Editorials: Intimidation,” editorial, *America*, 18 June, 1938, 253.

²⁵⁶ J. Edgar Westfield, “Communist Hymn Resounds in Madison Square Garden,” *America*, 12 March, 1938, 534-535.

Similarly, a major theme of the rally was solidarity with the Loyalists of Republican Spain.

²⁵⁷ John E. Kelly, “World Revolution's Objective,” *The Sign*, April, 1938, 552-553.

exacerbated by the extension of the “brotherly hand” to American Catholics by E. Browder, secretary of CPUSA, that they might reconcile with the revolutionary movement and join in the common struggle against fascism and reaction.²⁵⁸ More specifically, this would be in relation to an address and subsequently published pamphlet, entitled “A Message to Catholics,” published under the auspices of the Workers' Library Publishers (New York, June, 1938). In it, as stated, Secretary Browder wished to make inroads toward Catholic-communist understanding and friendship. He declaimed at length upon the commonality of spirit in politics and social justice shared between the two groups. And, in respect to the Spanish crisis, it seemed as if Browder hoped to convince American Catholics that only the upper Spanish clergy had joined in supporting the Rightist insurgency, that the communist party fought for the liberty of the impoverished Catholic souls of that country, and that it did not in any way seek to destroy their ancient Faith.²⁵⁹ This would naturally elicit a derisive response, as contributors to these publications cautioned against communists bearing gifts.²⁶⁰

In any event, these newspapers also seemed to have believed that the contemporary swelling of American anti-Catholic bias had been fueled, at least in part, by

Gault McGowan, “The Popular Front Is Baloney,” *America*, 2 April, 1939, 606-607.

“Points and Lines: Neutrality—Then and Now,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 13 May, 1938, 75-76.

“Spanish Embargo,” editorial, *America*, 14 May, 1938, 132.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 21 May, 1938, 146-147.

“Week by Week: the Trojan Horse,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 10 June, 1938, 169.

²⁵⁸ Gerard Donnelly, S. J., “Secretary Browder Extends a Brotherly Hand,” *America*, 18 June, 1938, 244-245.

²⁵⁹ Earl Browder, *A Message to Catholics* (New York: Workers' Library Publishers, Inc., 1938), 3-15.

²⁶⁰ Gerard Donnelly, S. J., “Secretary Browder Extends a Brotherly Hand,” *America*, 18 June, 1938, 244-245.

David Goldstein, “Come into My Parlor Says the Communist Spider,” *America*, 25 June, 1938, 274-275.

the supposedly ballooning power of the Comintern and its efficient propaganda apparatus. And they would undertake the counter this phenomenon in a manner most fitting for organs of a free press.²⁶¹ First, there would arise a campaign, proposed by T. Maguire (then executive editor of the *Sign*), designated as the “Catholic Minute Men.”²⁶² This effort, in brief, would seek to organize teams of Catholic letter-writers on a nationwide basis; these specialized correspondents, making vigilance their code, would undertake to combat anti-Catholic “propaganda” in the wider American press.²⁶³ Then, shortly thereafter, *America* took up the call, announcing its intention to hold a “Bias

²⁶¹ Anthony Clifford, “What Democracy?,” *America*, 8 January, 1938, 321-322.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 8 January, 1938, 339.

“The Free Religious Press,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 4 February, 1938, 393-394.

Robert L. Otto, “Silent Paralysis Creeps Slowly over Us,” *America*, 5 March, 1938, 508-509.

“Current Fact and Comment: ‘Liberal’ Catholics,” editorial, *The Sign*, June, 1938, 645-646.

Benjamin L. Masse, “Christian Liberals—to Whom Are They Allied,” *America*, 11 June, 1938, 226-227.

The Catholic emphasis here would be against those “liberals” who had undertaken to attack the Church with their perpetual intonation that it was “the enemy of democracy,” or otherwise that it comfortably communed with fascists of any description. And, moreover against those “emancipated,” contrarian Catholics who sided against the established position of the Church, particularly on the issue of the conflict in Spain.

²⁶² Theophane Maguire, “Catholic Minute Men,” *The Sign*, January, 1938, 323.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

Theophane Maguire, “Promote the Catholic Press,” *The Sign*, February, 1938, 387.

Joseph F. Thorning, “Adventures of a Catholic Minute-Man,” April, 1938, 519-522.

Theophane Maguire, “The Press Clean-Up Campaign Grows,” *The Sign*, May, 1938, 579.

J. A. Toomey, writing for *America*, agreed with the need for such action to be taken; he believed that the twenty million Catholic souls of the United States should not stand by while the secular, Protestant, and presumably Jewish press hurled their defamatory harpoons at their Church. Other publications seemed in general agreement about the ostensible problem of anti-Catholic propaganda, which had almost certainly been aggravated by the discourse on the nature of the civil war in Spain and the mutually hostile interpretations thereof.

John A. Toomey, S. J., “Catholic Cooperation Can Free the Secular Press,” *America*, 22 January, 1938, 364-365.

See also: “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 5 February, 1938, 410-411.

“The Free Religious Press,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 4 February, 1938, 393-394.

Contest,” beginning in March of that year.²⁶⁴ This paper encouraged its readers to select articles from the more notable national publications, as well as from their local press, that contained notes of anti-Catholic bigotry, whether overt or subtle. There were to be a number of cash prizes awarded to those who sent in the most offensive pieces. No fewer than three of the nine prizes, including second place, went to individuals who provided clippings of articles which were vociferous in their denunciation of Franco's Nationalists and the Church which ostensibly supported his particular strain of “fascism.”²⁶⁵

Obviously, then, neither of these efforts should be considered apart from the developments surrounding the Spanish Civil War. As to the campaigns undertaken by *America* and the *Sign*, the *Commonweal's* D. Hayne would urge a more reasoned response to this apparent anti-Catholic “propaganda,” offering that caustic, knee-jerk backlash would only cause the non-Catholic press to further solidify its impressions of the Roman Catholic Church, especially its Spanish branch, as being allied with fascism.²⁶⁶ But this stood as only one example of the *Commonweal* acting the deviant

²⁶⁴ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 19 February, 1938, 458-459.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

John A. Toomey, S. J., “Bias! Bias! Our Contest Now Opens,” *America*, 26 February, 1938, 484-485.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 5 March, 1938, 602-603.

John A. Toomey, S. J., “Planned Vigilance to Make the Press Fair,” *America*, 26 March, 1938, 578-579.

John A. Toomey, S. J., “Judges Dive into a Vast Sea of Clippings,” *America*, 23 March, 1938, 58-59.

John A. Toomey, S. J., “The Bias Contest Had a Photo Finish,” *America*, 7 May, 1938, 104-105.

²⁶⁶ Donald Hayne, “An Ingredient Sadly Lacking,” *The Commonweal*, 6 May, 1938, 42-43.

Yet, on the other hand, the *Sign* would continually discuss Franco's movement (probably more correctly) as being more in the traditionalist vein than in the fascist mold, but its contributors never wavered in their conviction that the Popular Front stood as an entirely communist conception. Even so, one cannot entirely escape from certain “fascist” vestiges therein, as the Rightist platform for national reorganization was predicated upon “vertical syndicates,” which distinctly echoed the “corporate” infrastructure of the Italian progenitor of the ideology

See: Aileen O'Brien, “In Peaceful Spain,” *The Sign*, February, 1938, 396-398.

amongst its sister publications. In April, 1938, the weekly underwent significant changes in ownership, attended by a reorganization in its editorial staff. M. Williams, the founder and, since 1924, executive editor of the newspaper would step down from his position. He would, however, retain his own weekly column of opinion.²⁶⁷ During this transitional period, the journal would “affirm and reaffirm” its stance of fundamental opposition to totalitarianism in any form, whether of the Left or the Right.²⁶⁸

Yet this same transformational period would witness a new official editorial position adopted in respect to the conflict in Spain. In a statement from late June, the newly reorganized *Commonweal* would admit that the discussion of the Spanish Civil War in the United States had devolved into little more than polarized partisan bickering, which had been distinguished “more for its heat than for any light cast upon the significance of events,” a reality made worse due to the fact that little, if any, reliable information had ever come out of bloodied Spain.²⁶⁹ To the staff of this newspaper, there had been little to admire in either belligerent coalition: one identified, at least partly, with the evils of the revolutionary Soviet regime; the other espoused malodorous totalitarian doctrines of reaction similar to certain other regimes condemned by the Church. In

Aileen O'Brien, “Navarre: Salt of the Earth,” *The Sign*, March, 1938, 462-465.

Owen B. McGuire, “Spain Transformed,” *The Sign*, May, 1938, 603-606.

Francis X. Connolly, “Spain's New Charter Based on Vertical Syndicate,” *America*, 7 May, 1938, 98.

²⁶⁷ “Week by Week: the Commonweal,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 1 April, 1938, 620.

Michael Williams, “Views and Reviews,” *The Commonweal*, 15 April, 1938, 690.

Previously owned by the Calvert Publishing Corporation, this journal bought itself out and then re-established itself under its own company: the Commonweal Publishing Company, Inc.

²⁶⁸ “Week by Week: Affirm and Reaffirm,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 15 April, 1938, 674.

Michael Williams, “Views and Reviews,” *The Commonweal*, 15 April, 1938, 690.

²⁶⁹ “Civil War in Spain and the United States,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 24 June, 1938, 229-230.

essence, the leading writers for the *Commonweal* felt as if no good choice existed between comparable evils, and announced that, thenceforth, the publication would do its best to encourage attitudes of “positive impartiality.”²⁷⁰

Meanwhile, Williams, the former editor of the paper would comment on this piece. He applauded some elements of it, but lamented its content on the whole—for under his direction, *Commonweal* had adopted a strong pro-Nationalist stance. However, he recognized his limited power to change the position of the publication after his resignation, and did not wish to muddy the waters further by pursuing his version of the narrative; nevertheless, he rejected “positive impartiality,” in favor of his established, reductionist simplification of the conflict in Spain as being one between Bolshevism and Christianity.²⁷¹

Apart from the apparently paired issues of communism and anti-Catholicism, interest dwelt upon wider international events as these publications began to perceive, however slowly, that Spain had ceased to be the point of greatest danger in Europe, especially after the *Anschluss* in March, 1938. And, as with the Protestants, many

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

This bold statement might have been inspired, in part, by the thoughts of J. Maritain, the eminent French Thomist scholar, which had been printed in the *Commonweal* earlier that year. This individual would warn Catholics against unwarranted over-enthusiasm for Franco, urging them not to champion his cause as a Crusade, and to refrain from praising him as a Christian leader before his conquest was complete. For only after would his true characteristics as a leader, whether good or ill, were revealed. This would naturally elicit some strong responses from the journal's readership, most of whom were enraged at such sentiments questioning the Nationalist chieftain.

See: J. C. Eustace, “Maritain Looks at Franco,” *The Commonweal*, 4 February, 1938, 402-404.

“Communications: Maritain Looks at Franco,” letter to the editor, *The Commonweal*, 20 May, 1938, 102-103.

“Communications: Maritain Looks at Franco,” letter to the editor, *The Commonweal*, 10 June, 1938, 183.

²⁷¹ Michael Williams, “Views and Reviews,” *The Commonweal*, 24 June, 1938, 241-242.

contributors would enumerate the Sudetenland, if not the whole of Czechoslovakia, as the next target for absorption into the *Reich*.²⁷²

But, exhibited thus, the evidence indicates that the conflict in Spain, the issue of international communism and its attendant dangers were more or less all-consuming to these few Catholic newspapers. Summarily, they were tardier than their Protestant counterparts to respond to the escalating tensions in other parts of Europe as Hitler made further strides toward his dream of imperial domination over a significant portion of the Continent. This was, perhaps natural, as questions of the Faith and of the Catholic denomination were still enmeshed in the Spanish war, which they seemed to have felt obliged to lend further commentary. Moreover, this might also have been due to the strength of non-Catholic opinion in the United States on the foreign civil war, which many Catholic writers believed to have trended increasingly toward anti-Catholicism.

²⁷² "Comment," editorial, *America*, 26 March, 1938, 578-579.

"Current Fact and Comment: the Swastika over Europe," editorial, *The Sign*, April, 1938, 516.

"Between War and Peace," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 29 April, 1938, 4-5.

Aileen O' Brien, "Franco Has No Debt Either to Germany or Italy," *America*, 14 May, 1938, 129-130.

Michael Williams, "Views and Reviews," *The Commonweal*, 20 May, 1938, 101-102.

Danubicus, "The Coming of the Fourth Reich," *The Sign*, June, 1938, 657-660.

Even so, these Catholic journals also realized that the issue of Spain still involved complicated questions of geopolitics, especially where the Mediterranean was concerned. In any event, some insisted that Franco owed nothing to either Italy or Germany, and that he would not allow the stability of the region to be compromised.

IV.

For the latter half of 1938, and as the second anniversary of the civil war passed, the contributions of these Protestant newspapers to the discourse on the declining Spanish war, including the general Catholic factor, and wider world events did little to alter their established narrative on those respective topics.²⁷³ Yet even while the Republic seemed doomed to defeat, there lingered some slight degree of enthusiasm for its cause, which some still believed to be “fighting for the future of Spain.”²⁷⁴

On the larger stage, the discussion of the Spanish struggle remained somewhat de-emphasized in importance, particularly in its latent potential to spark another general European war. However, there were some briefly-expressed concerns over the enraged promises of the Republican Loyalists to retaliate for the insurgents' targeting of ostensibly unarmed civilian centers. These threats were not directed against non-military settlements located inside Nationalist territory; rather, the violence they intended were to be directed against the nations where the Nationalists' auxiliary forces had originated—that is, of

²⁷³ “Mars Celebrates Two Anniversaries,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 13 July, 1938, 859-860.
“News of the Christian World: Spanish Revolt Anniversary,” *The Christian Century*, 10 August, 1938, 972.

This second item also reported on another pro-Loyalist rally at Madison Square Garden, wherein one Rev. M. O’Flanagan, an Irish Catholic priest spoke on behalf of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, declaring it to be the duty of good Catholics to support the Spanish Republic. Meanwhile, members of a certain “Catholic Truth Society” distributed handbills outside the arena, which declared O’Flanagan to be a suspended priest in bad standing with the Church.

²⁷⁴ Gregory Vlastos, “Fighting for the Future of Spain,” *The Christian Century*, 28 September, 1938, 1156-1158.

This article mostly deals with the celebration of the educational efforts in what remained of Republican Spain. In this particular instance, Barcelona’s *Institute Obrero* was the subject of discussion, being one of the many “workers’ colleges” established by the government. The author of this article wrote not only of the curriculum of these schools, which was “broadly anti-fascist” (what, one wonders, exactly does that mean?), but also of the heroism of the faculty and students, who had laid down their books and had taken up rifles to join in the foundering Ebro offensive.

course, Italy and Germany.²⁷⁵ Contrarily, and perhaps as a result of these sensationalist claims, the *Christian Evangelist* reported that in Spain there still existed more than a glimmer of a spark that could ignite a wider conflict. But more than the bombing of innocent Spanish settlements (and the supposed attacks mounted against French villages by Nationalist air forces), the *Evangelist* worried more over the British dynamic: stories had surfaced that rebel aircraft had been attacking her merchantmen.²⁷⁶ Amidst this fear, there would be some brief coverage on the struggling efforts of the Non-Intervention Committee to reach some sort of compromise to cut off all foreign intervention in Spain. The *Christian Century* believed this to be an exercise in the realm of fantasy: two years of working toward this very objective had demonstrated the depth of international interest in the conflict and that, in any event, none of the interloping nations could be trusted to withdraw, even if by October of that year the tide of ostensible foreign invasion appeared to be ebbing.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ "Spanish Threat of Reprisals Causes a Sensation," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 6 July, 1938, 836.

²⁷⁶ "Is a World War Imminent?," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 7 July, 1938, 740-741.

The *Evangelist* acknowledged that Great Britain had more strategic interest in the Spanish contest than any other nation (perhaps apart from France), and was therefore more likely to get more involved in that struggle to ensure that it ended advantageously, whatever her commitments to the laughable Non-Intervention Committee.

²⁷⁷ "Friends of Spanish Contestants Agree and Procrastinate," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 20 July, 1938, 885.

"Franco Rejects Great Britain's Proposal," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 7 September, 1938, 1051-1052.

"Is There a Chance of Compromise in Spain?," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 19 October, 1938, 1253-1254.

Other pieces would, again, articulate rumors of the collusion of British politicians, financiers, and businessmen with Franco (and, more importantly, Fascist Italy) for the success of his rebellion for the purpose of insuring their respective, various interests in that country and in the Mediterranean.

See: Frederick D. Kershner, "As I Think on These Things: Non-Intervention," *The Christian Evangelist*, 1 September, 1938, 933.

Frederick D. Kershner, "As I Think on These Things: Why the Spanish War Goes On," *The Christian*

Similarly, there would be an increasing level of discussion on the topic of American neutrality and non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, which had apparently become distasteful to a growing number of citizens. In early August of that year, the *Christian Evangelist* reported on a rather strange incident to this effect: the White House received two postcards, allegedly the largest in existence, bearing the signatures of some 5,000 individuals who would have had the government of the United States lift its embargo against Republican Spain, which they collectively considered to be a “shameful discrimination against a people fighting for world peace and democracy.”²⁷⁸

Otherwise there would be somewhat more commentary on the attitudes of appeasement that had so enraptured the fearful governments of Great Britain and France— which had already allowed for the creation of an enormous German continental empire—and speculation on the topic of where German jackboots might next march that might trigger a general war.²⁷⁹ This paired discussion would also naturally dovetail with the question of American neutrality in respect to general European affairs. The general consensus on the former topic seemed to be that with Hitler's aggressive posturing toward

Evangelist, 3 November, 1938, 1214.

“Anglo-Italian Pact Put into Effect,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 16 November, 1938, 1388-1389.

²⁷⁸ “Inter-Church News: World's Largest Postcards,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 4 August, 1938, 834.

A further article in the *Christian Leader* would comment on the national Neutrality Act in place, which had been invoked in the case of the Spanish Civil War, but had been ignored in respect to the conflict in the Far East, for which it had been intended. The other would be written about the American League against War and Fascism, which had then changed its emphases to being “for Peace and Democracy,” buy which, as ever, argued for the international defense of the Spanish Republic and for direct action to be taken against the “aggressor nations.”

[Editorial], “Notes from the Nofrontier News Service: That Strange Neutrality Act,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 20 August, 1938, 1012-1013.

William B. Spofford, “Safeguarding Democracy,” *The Christian Leader*, 1 October, 1938, 1188-1189.

²⁷⁹ “Can German Be Appeased?,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 6 July, 1938, 838-839.

Czechoslovakia over the issue of the Sudetenland, and Germany's concerted effort to encourage pro-German agitation on the part of K. Henlein's Czech National Socialist Party, he had made his intentions fairly obvious to these Protestant journals.²⁸⁰

This anxious uncertainty over the Czech problem would, of course, be answered by the Autumn of 1938, following the Munich Agreement of September. These newspapers recognized this event as a historic watershed and would collectively condemn its outcome (essentially entailing the willful abandonment of an innocent democratic nation) as perhaps the greatest example in the shameful legacy of diplomatic capitulation in the face of fascist bullying on the part of Great Britain and France. Many contributors to and, indeed, the respective staffs of these publications believed that this folly would only briefly forestall a reckoning of blood and tears.²⁸¹

F. D. Kershner, ever vociferous, wrote in agreement with the former British Prime Minister D. L. George, who had fervently expressed his disappointment with the readiness of the Chamberlain government to give in to the demands of a tyrant, which

²⁸⁰ "Another War Scare," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 18 August, 1938, 884.

"The Protection of Minorities," editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 13 August, 1938, 979-800.

"Peace or War?," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 7 September, 1938, 1054-1056.

Vera Micheles Dean, "Understanding Our World: New Storm over Czechoslovakia," *The Christian Leader*, 10 September, 1938, 1096.

"Hitler's Peace," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 21 September, 1938, 1118-1119.

"A Tragedy Is Played in Europe," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 22 September, 1938, 1939-1040.

²⁸¹ "Hitler Bestrides Europe," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 28 September, 1938, 1150-1152.

"On the Edge of the Abyss," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 5 October, 1938, 1184-1185.

"Peace or an Armed Truce?," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 6 October, 1938, 1095.

"Europe after Munich," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 12 October, 1938, 1124-1126.

Frederick D. Kershner, "As I Think on These Things: Tragedy," *The Christian Evangelist*, 13 October, 1938, 1122.

Sherwood Eddy, "The Critical Hour," *The Christian Century*, 19 October, 1938, 1258-1260.

"Our Horrible Indifference to Wrong," editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 29 October, 1938, 1299.

Henry Wilder Foote, "An Armistice Day Meditation on the Price of Peace," *The Christian Leader*, 19 November, 1938, 1413-1414.

had led to the “British flag becoming the jest of nations.”²⁸² Following the conference at Munich, this author would offer further disdain for Chamberlain and the policy of appeasement as a whole, as well as his developing belief that the time for such moral cowardice had passed; duty bound the democracies to stand together against the fascists and say “no more.”²⁸³ But the question of Spain would not be entirely divorced from the contemporary proceedings in Central Europe. Significantly, as the Czech crisis approached its tipping point, the *Christian Century* would report that Franco had rather hastily declared that his Spain would be neutral in a general European conflagration, a pronouncement which this paper interpreted as an unqualified slap to the faces of his benefactors in Italy and Germany.²⁸⁴

Outside of the realm of geopolitics, religious interest in the Spanish conflict, and

²⁸² Frederick D. Kershner, “As I Think on These Things: Lloyd George, the Hero,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 28 July, 1938, 813.

²⁸³ Frederick D. Kershner, “As I Think on These Things: They Could Be Stopped,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 13 October, 1938, 1122.

Frederick D. Kershner, “As I Think on These Things: After All, We Were Mild,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 1 December, 1938, 1317.

The *Christian Century* would comment likewise. By the Autumn of 1938, there would emerge much more discussion in the columns of these journals on the potential of the United States to join in some sort of alliance with Great Britain and France against the emboldened fascist powers.

“Playing with Diplomatic Fire,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 14 September, 1938, 1086-1087.

²⁸⁴ “Franco Would Be Neutral in a European War,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 12 October, 1938, 1219-1220.

Outside of Europe, these newspapers would maintain their heightened emphasis on the conflict in China and the attendant dangers posed to missionaries, the organization of civilian relief efforts, and the debate over American neutrality—which many believed to have abetted Japanese belligerence. By the latter half of 1938, they would report that the distant war in East Asia had gone badly for the invading Japanese Empire as the vastness of China threatened to swallow its armies, while the prolonged struggle created an increasingly unendurable strain on its domestic economy. There would also be rumblings of deteriorating relations between the Soviet Union and the Japan, complete with border skirmishes in contested areas.

“Is a World War Imminent?,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 7 July, 1938, 740-741.

Stephen J. Corey, “The Outlook for Missions in China,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 21 July, 1938, 790-793.

“Bread and Bombs,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 30 July, 1938, 943-944.

in the world at large, endured. There would be a massive, outraged response to the meteoric escalation of the anti-Jewish campaign inside the *Reich* following the assassination of vom Rath in Paris and *Krystallnacht*. And there would continue the familiar rhetoric of criticism against the Roman Catholic Church, which many writers believed to have surrendered every last vestige of spiritual fortitude by wearing a mask of anti-communist zealotry, which only concealed the reality that it stood as an authoritarian construct that propped up unjust systems and promoted fascism—the most egregious example of which could have been found its unwavering support of Franco's Nationalist Spain.²⁸⁵ F. D. Kershner, in typical fashion, agreed with such sentiments. He wrote that a “real problem” existed with the very fabric of the Catholic Church when, in Detroit, the local Council of Catholic Organizations had been working relentlessly to suppress the works of E. Hemingway, ostensibly for his unapologetic sympathy for the Loyalist cause in Spain.²⁸⁶ This, to this author, represented a crime against the freedom of expression and that no institution, not even one as venerable as the ancient Church, should be able to “penalize” those who held views contrary to its own—for such was the

²⁸⁵ Ernest M. Whitesmith, “Spiritual Courage,” *The Christian Leader*, 16 July, 1938, 885-887.
“News of the Christian World: Communists Ask Catholic Truce,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 10 August, 1938, 971.
This second piece dealt with the aforementioned address and subsequently published pamphlet entitled “A Message to Catholics,” delivered by E. Browder, party chief of CPUSA. The *Century* seemed rather amused by this, noting great disgust amongst American Catholics, as though Browder's could make them immediately dismiss the undeniable violence visited upon the Church in other nations. Nevertheless, the evidence presented thus far have indicated that these Protestant journals agreed with Browder's thesis and more—that is, that the Roman Catholic Church was an ally of fascism.

²⁸⁶ Frederick D. Kershner, “As I Think on These Things: A Real Problem,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 18 August, 1938, 885.

“essence of fascism.”²⁸⁷

Considering the above, it should have been of little surprise that the comments and articles published by these journals at the conclusion of 1938 were exceedingly dismal. The Spanish Republic faced imminent defeat, seemingly forsaken by those who it should have had as its allies and the democratic Czech government had been deserted, sold to an unpredictable dictator for a moment's peace. Indeed, the European aggressor nations had gained further, virtually unimpeded victories with the promise of more to come in the future, the armies of the Japanese Empire continued to maraud across China, and, to these papers, it seemed a logical conclusion that the world once again teetered upon the brink of yet another catastrophic conflict.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ Robert C. Dexter, “And They Call This Peace,” *The Christian Leader*, 17 December, 1938, 1540-1541).
“Retrospect,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 28 December, 1938, 1598-1600.
William Robinson, “Munich and After: the Political Situation in Great Britain,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 29 December, 1938, 1418-1420.
“Reasons for Hope in 1939,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 31 December, 1938, 1588-1589.

V.

For these Catholic publications, the remaining half of 1938 reiterated much of the established narrative on the Spanish Civil War. By this phase of the conflict, Franco's Nationalists were capitalizing on the decisive advantages afforded to them following the Teruel offensive, and were slowly capturing Loyalist territory (with the ultimate objectives of Barcelona, Valencia, and Madrid). The Republic appeared to be in its death throes—even if, as the Catholics believed, the “Reds” administering the government and their puppeteers in the Kremlin refused to admit it.²⁸⁹ The editorial staff of *America* would even note what it believed to be the beginning of a tidal shift in American opinion in favor of Franco, ostensibly because it had become increasingly evident that his coalition would emerge triumphant from the struggle, but most especially after the Loyalists' catastrophically-botched offensive across the Ebro River (from July until November of that year).²⁹⁰ And also, in the view of the *Commonweal's* J. A. Magner, that more American citizens had decided to embrace Franco might have been attributed to the extension of *de facto* recognition to Nationalist Spain.²⁹¹

In short, circumstances allowed for these Catholic journals to demonstrate a more marked degree of optimism than they had previously: the faction they had championed seemed to be marching inexorably toward a total victory, and the Spanish “Reds” were

²⁸⁹ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 9 July, 1938, 314-315.

“Chronicle: Spain,” editorial, *America*, 9 July, 1938, 328.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 6 August, 1938, 410-411.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 15 October, 1938, 26-28.

²⁹⁰ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 20 August, 1938, 458-459.

²⁹¹ James A. Magner, “The Church and Fascism,” *The Commonweal*, 1 September, 1938, 462-464.

soon be routed. But yet their contributors would continue to play upon the dangers of international communism, insisting that even where it had failed to wash over Spain, the Red tide threatened to engulf the United States, given the development of the proper set of conditions.²⁹² Here, again, there would be an absolute wealth of articles on the topic of the apparently pervasive efforts of native agitators, foreign infiltrators, and their culpable dupes to manipulate and mislead American public opinion for the combined interest of: fostering both pro-communist sympathy and anti-fascist hatred, reinforcing solidarity with the Spanish Loyalists, and undermining isolationist neutrality for the sake of leading the nation into some grand anti-fascist military alliance with the European democracies in combination with the Soviet Union, where it did not belong..²⁹³ These efforts, *America* opined, also extended into Hollywood and liberal literature circles.²⁹⁴

²⁹² J. Edgar Westfield, "America Was Built for Communists to Capture," *America*, 2 July, 1938, 298-299. "Week by Week: the Soft Answer," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 15 July, 1938, 309.

J. E. Kelly, contributing to *America*, thought that the failure of Moscow to successfully expand into Western Europe (specifically into Spain and France), in combination with the massive internal purges, Stalin's regime had weakened itself unto instability and desperation, perhaps even to the point of quickening the pace of agitative subversion, if not terrorism, in the United States.

See: John E. Kelly, "The Eyes of Moscow Fasten on the West," *America*, 12 November, 1938, 126-127.

²⁹³ John C. LeClair, "Is Foreign Propaganda Trying to Swing the Country," *America*, 16 July, 1938, 344-345.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 27 August, 1938, 482-483.

M. J. Hillenbrand, "Our Neutrality Policy Needs Repairing, Not Junking," *America*, 3 September, 1938, 514-515.

"Week by Week: Is Isolationism on the Wane," editorial, in *The Commonweal*, 16 September, 1938, 513-514.

"Categorica: Anti-Fascist Bandwagon," editorial, *The Sign*, October, 1938, 184.

John M. Loughran, "Layman to Laymen," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 28 October, 1938, 13-15.

Arnold Lunn, "The Technique of Confusion," *The Sign*, November, 1938, 209-212.

"The President and the Spanish War," editorial, *America*, 3 December, 1938, 204-205.

Joseph B. Code, "Spanish Propaganda Floods the United States," *America*, 10 December, 1938, 220-221.

²⁹⁴ "Comment," editorial, *America*, 23 July, 1938, 362-364.

G. M. Godden, "White-Collar Readers Invaded by Leftist Books," *America*, 6 August, 1938, 414-416.

Thomas J. Fitzmorris, "Films for Democracy—New Medium for Popular Front," *America*,

Similarly, *America* reported that it had been due to the efforts of these penetrators, CPUSA, and its front organizations, that so many American volunteers had illegally traveled to Spain to fight alongside the Loyalists, a fact seemingly confirmed by W. P. Carney, of the *New York Times*, who visited a forlorn POW cage in Nationalist territory. There he interviewed a number of young men who had served in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion (of the larger XV International Brigade). They apparently confirmed the truth behind these suspicions of communist influence in the phenomenon of pro-Loyalist American volunteerism.²⁹⁵

Indeed, Catholic commentary on these subjects during this period remained nearly identical to what it had been during the previous months of the conflict: pro-Nationalist, pro-Franco, mixed with fervent anti-Loyalist sentiment, which these publications insisted to be perfectly congruent with the most fundamental sort of anti-communism (and perhaps anti-radicalism). However, it will be remembered that the *Commonweal* broke the apparent lockstep of Catholic opinion after that newspaper underwent reorganization. After June, 1938, its staff asserted that the Spanish issue had been so befogged with

17 December, 1938, 248-249.

Here one hardly need mention the continued outrage at E. Browder's "Message to Catholics," which would continue to face criticism as an "outstretched hand that grasp[ed] only to destroy."

J. Edgar Westfield, "Communist Effrontery Designs New Trojan Horses," *America*, 17 September, 1938, 560-561.

²⁹⁵ "Chronicle: Spain," editorial, *America*, 23 July, 1938, 376.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 3 September, 1938, 506-507.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 29 October, 1938, 74.

By this point in 1938, the men of the Lincoln Battalion began returning to the United States. *America*, of course, had nothing but disdain for these volunteers, whom it considered to be traitorous criminals for so desecrating the name of that great American president in service to a toxic cause. The journal would also attach sentiments of anti-Semitism and xenophobia to its opinion. Its staff claimed that the returning militiamen were "mostly Jewish," or otherwise "foreign-born riff-raff," who were aligned with the domestic communist movement in the United States, which existed to slavishly serve Moscow.

propaganda, and otherwise so generally misunderstood, that the only logical position for foreign observers to adopt—especially citizens of the United States—should have been one of absolute, “positive impartiality.”²⁹⁶

This stance naturally aroused an uproar from the newspaper's peers. *America* offered commentary to the effect that the *Commonweal* had reached absolutely false conclusions in respect to the war in Spain, regardless of the courage its staff might have had in voicing a contrary opinion. Criticizing further, this editorial went on insist that the Spanish issue could be explained in far simpler terms than the new staff of the *Commonweal* believed to be the case. While taking pains to de-emphasize the religious dynamic, *America* maintained its established position that the Republican government, under the direction of the Popular Front, existed only as a transitional stepping-stone to a genuine, atheistic Soviet-style state. The Nationalist rebellion, on the other hand, rose as a “native Spanish protest to a tyranny that had become unendurable and that was becoming permanent.”²⁹⁷ Yet the author(s) of this piece could not yet move entirely away from the religious interpretation of the conflict, illuminating Franco as a Christian soldier and statesman, who offered Spain rejuvenation based upon “Catholic,” and not fascist, principles.²⁹⁸ Therefore, in this publication's considered opinion, it had been inexcusable for the shuffled staff of the *Commonweal* to implore “positive impartiality” in respect to the Spanish Civil War when the choice for that country teetered between the misery of

²⁹⁶ “Civil War in Spain and the United States,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 24 June, 1938, 229-230.

²⁹⁷ “The *Commonweal* and the Spanish War,” editorial, *America*, 2 July, 1938, 292-293.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

vassalage to the alien ideology of Moscow, or the reinstatement of a sane social order grounded in centuries-old tradition.²⁹⁹

As for the *Commonweal* itself, its staff would note a wide variety of opinions in respect to the editorial that had aroused such fury in *America*. In mid-July, the publication would acknowledge the receipt of a great number of letters which had made it difficult to gauge the sum reaction of its readership to the article in question, indicating a certain ambivalent uncertainty in Catholic opinion on the Spanish question and the paper's suggestion of impartiality.³⁰⁰ A few wholeheartedly supported the suggestion, admiring it as a "refreshing breeze," while others seemed discomfited, if not disgusted by it, and yet still others clung to the idea of the Spanish struggle as a battle in the "holy war" against the Great Satan of Moscow.³⁰¹ But despite all of the negative commentary, the

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

America and its contributors would continue to insist on this interpretation as the conflict passed its second anniversary, which the publication celebrated as the commencement of the counter-revolution which would be Spain's salvation. Otherwise, it would later report, without citation, that the entirety of the American Catholic Press rebuked the position of the *Commonweal*. The *Sign*, for its part, would continue to trumpet the virtues of "Americanness" to be found within Franco's coalition.

"Current Fact and Comment: Franco and the American Rebels," editorial, *The Sign*, July, 1938, 708-709.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 16 July, 1938, 338.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 23 July, 1938, 362-364.

"Current Fact and Comment: Catholics and Spain," editorial, *The Sign*, August, 1938, 4-5.

John LaFarge, S. J., "While Spain Burns They Strum Impartiality," *America*, 20 August, 1938, 462-463.

Owen B. McGuire, "Catholics Should Be Neutral!," *The Sign*, September, 1938, 74-77.

Francis X. Connolly, "The Fascist State Is Not Emerging in Spain," *America*, 24 September, 1938, 580-582.

Francis X. Connolly, "Spain Renews Itself in the National Movement," *America*, 22 October, 1938, 52-54.

³⁰⁰ "Communications: Spanish Letters," letters to the editor, *The Commonweal*, 15 July, 1938, 324-325.

Or, perhaps more precisely, an ambivalent uncertainty amongst all those who took the *Commonweal*.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Once again, this demonstrates the falsity of the notion of any monolithic quality to Catholic opinion in the United States.

Commonweal would maintain this stance of “positive impartiality,” or the examination of the evidence of contemporary world problems beneath the cold light of reason, thereby stripping them of “emotional mythology and partisan odium.”³⁰²

Conversely, however, there would be indications of significant initial success on the campaigns proposed and staged by the *Sign* and *America*. The latter noted that, following its own “Bias Contest,” there had been a definite upsurge in Catholic opinion for some greater form of action to address the ostensible anti-Catholic bias in the American media. Further, that weekly asserted that this bigotry had grown ever more insistent in its claims of harmony between the Church and fascism during the previous two years (a development obviously in connection to the civil war in Spain). Even though events in that country had led the Church to face terrible persecution, it did not receive the emphasis that it deserved, especially considering the contemporary coverage on the anti-Semitic barbarism in Hitler's *Reich*. The *Commonweal* would at least agree on this point, as would its former editor, M. Williams.³⁰³

³⁰² “Week by Week: Impartiality and Neutrality,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 2 September, 1938, 458.

³⁰³ “Week by Week: the Church in America and Dictatorship,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 15 July, 1938, 310.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 30 July, 1938, 396-397.

Michael Williams, “Views and Reviews,” *The Commonweal*, 18 November, 1938, 99-100.

“Week by Week: Disturbing the Peace,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 25 November, 1938, 116-117.

“Current Fact and Comment: Nazis Prepare Their Doom,” editorial, *The Sign*, December, 1938, 260.

“Current Fact and Comment: 'Gentlemen' of the Press,” editorial, *The Sign*, December, 1938, 261.

“Week by Week: Indignation Plus,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 2 December, 1938, 141-142.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 3 December, 1938, 194-195.

“Comment” editorial, *America*, 10 December, 1938, 218-219.

Francis X. Talbot, “The Catholic Church Has Battled for Christ,” *America*, 31 December, 1938, 295-297.

“Persecution and False Liberalism,” editorial, *America*, 31 December, 1938, 300-301.

Further, one should be remiss in not mentioning a peculiar series of articles that had already been

With all this, one might fairly arrive at the conclusion that there seemed to be a certain difficulty in these Catholic journals in seeing beyond the Spanish conflict to wider, and far more troubling, European development. Indeed, Spain and communism, as ever, seemed to endure as the absorbing problems of the day, even if some of these publications managed to relate that there still existed a great deal of importance in the Spanish arena in relation to international strategic relations, still a particular concern for Britain's maritime lifeline to her empire and a nearly encircled France.³⁰⁴ Nevertheless, there would still be some spotty reporting on the wider world, including a rather belated recognition of the Czech crisis, the subsequent sacrifice of the Sudetenland, and even some on the trouble in the Far East, where Soviet and Japanese interests were poised to clash. On the former development, many Catholic commentators lamented it as tragic, but necessary, outcome to avoid the cataclysm of war. Others did not think that the Munich conference had solved anything, for they had learned all too much about Hitler to believe that his appetite for eastward conquest had been sated. But there would be universal worry over the neutralization of the democratic powers of Europe as they stood dumbfounded, frightened, and helpless as the German dictator's gambles paid dividends. These happenings seemed, at least, to hint at an awakening in the Catholic press to the

appearing in the *Sign* by one A. O'Brien, which might be slotted in under the heading of "counter-communist" propaganda. This special correspondent reported incidents from Spain, portrayed as true, that meant to demonstrate the ultimate Christian righteousness of the Nationalist cause and, respectively, the abysmal emptiness of the Loyalists' apparent Godlessness. See the pieces from: (July, 1937, 741-743). (October, 1937, 141-144). (March, 1938, 462-465). (May, 1938, 583-587). (July, 1938, 730-732). (November, 1938, 215-218). (January, 1939, 347-350).

³⁰⁴ "Week by Week: Peace for Spain," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 19 August, 1938, 418-419.

Robert Sencourt, "British Policy toward Spain," *The Commonweal*, 11 November, 1938, 66-67.

shifting of the diplomatic center of gravity away from Spain and toward Central Europe.³⁰⁵

As demonstrated, Catholic emphases remained almost exactly the same as they had been over the previous months of 1938 and, indeed, throughout the course of the strife in Spain—albeit perhaps with an increased focus on the issue of communism, fascism, and the Church. This, against, might have been considered only only natural. However, there also seemed to be something of a desire on the part of the Catholic journals to wave the impending defeat of the “Red” cause at the hands of “their side” in the face of their adversaries in the secular and Protestant presses. And again, to reiterate, Spain endured as something of an all-consuming problem, even as developing crises threatened to engulf the whole of Europe.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ “Week by Week: Battles and War,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 12 August, 1938, 398-400.
“Week by Week: the Franco Reply,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 2 September, 1938, 458-459.
“Week by Week: the Flight of the Minister,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 23 September, 1938, 544.
“Week by Week: the Czechs and Europe,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 30 September, 1938, 569.
Michael Williams, “Views and Reviews,” *The Commonweal*, 7 October, 1938, 612-613.
“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 8 October, 1938, 2-3.
“Chronicle,” editorial, *America*, 8 October, 1938, 15-16.
“Week by Week: Pause after Munich,” *The Commonweal*, 14 October, 1938, 625-626.
Hans Anscar and C. O. Cleveland, “Europe—Two Conflict Forecasts,” *The Commonweal*, 21 October, 1938, 662-663.
George N. Shuster, “Mr. Chamberlain's Dove,” *The Commonweal*, 21 October, 1938, 664-666.
On this note, the Catholic newspapers, particularly *America*, were overjoyed that the Soviet Union did not receive an invitation to participate in the Munich talks; they saw this as a positive development in which the Russian colossus would be increasingly isolated and friendless—otherwise, any major conflict would only be manipulated by that country for the benefit of the revolutionary cause.

³⁰⁶ “The Passing Year,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 30 December, 1938, 256-258.
John LaFarge, S. J., “Of Peace and Conflict through Both Hemispheres,” *America*, 31 December, 1938, 292-294.

VI.

The first quarter of 1939 would witness the denouement of the Spanish Civil War. By March of that year, both Great Britain and France would recognize the legitimacy of the insurgent government; by the first of April, the conflict would be resolved in favor of Franco's Nationalist coalition, prompting the United States to follow suit. Protestant coverage on the struggle correspondingly declined as these few publications were forced to reconcile with the agonizing, piecemeal collapse of the faction that they had so heartily championed—a defeat which they would naturally interpret as a body blow to “democracy,” a further advance for the forces of fascism, and yet another unsettling tremor in a world poised upon the precipice of war. The occasion allowed for retrospection. The staff of the *Christian Century*, in particular, wrote that history would demonstrate that the decisive moment of the conflict would not be delineated as the then impending fall of both Barcelona and Madrid, but rather as the moment when Great Britain and France allowed Italy and Germany to make Franco's cause their own. And, whatever the future held for Spain, those two capitulating nations would have to face the immediate strategic consequences of an ascendent “fascist” Spain, presumably under the tutelage, if not domination, of both Mussolini and Hitler.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ “If Barcelona Falls,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 1 February, 1939, 143-145.

See also: “In a Nutshell,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 4 February, 1939, 173.

“Loyalist Catalonia Shrinks in Area,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 8 February, 1939, 173.

“The Curtain Falls on Catalonia,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 15 February, 1939, 203.

“Settlement in Spain Cannot Be Long Delayed,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 1 March, 1939, 267.

“Spanish Rebels Are No Longer Rebels,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 8 March, 1939, 309.

“General Maija Heads Spanish Loyalists,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 15 March, 1939, 339-340.

“The Spanish War Is Ended,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 5 April, 1939, 435.

Waning as it was, and though wider European events continued to take precedence, the battle in Spain remained an object of some attention; these Protestant journals would concern themselves with three particular aspects of the war. The first would be the continued, and, indeed, intensified attack on the United States' legal position of neutrality. A growing segment of the American public then believed that that the policy had been nothing if not destructive, perhaps as much as appeasement had been, and were then urging for an official revision so that the nation might take greater steps to contain the "aggressor nations." This line of thinking also extended to the war in Spain. Even as the hour grew late for the Spanish Republic, some still seemed to believe that it could be rescued with the immediate rescission of the embargo against that country and, further, that Franco's effort would crumble instantly if the United States could eliminate the flow of external aid to his faction by way of a stout naval blockade.³⁰⁸

"Peace in Spain," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 6 April, 1939, Pg. 359.

The *Christian Century* still managed a degree of optimism, having faith in the ability of Great Britain to simultaneously maintain the Mediterranean *status quo* while also potentially being able to detach Franco from his fascist allies through the leveraging of British economic muscle. On the other hand, the staff of the *Christian Leader* argued that the United States, Great Britain, and France should formulate a concerted policy of economic isolation against Franco's Spain. They offered that such would oblige the fascist powers who helped install him to bear the entire burden of keeping his regime afloat.

Commenting further, they also believed that this could potentially have the added benefit of crippling the offensive capabilities of both Italy and Germany.

"Preparing for Mussolini's Next Move," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 22 February, 1939, 238-239.

"No Arms for Franco," editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 8 April, 1939, 321.

³⁰⁸ "The Attack on the Neutrality Law," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 18 January, 1939, 76.

"Spanish Rebels Advance with New Italian Aid," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 18 January, 1939, 77.

"Spanish War at Most Crucial Stage," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 25 January, 1939, 109.

The *Christian Evangelist* would agree, printing a quote from an article featured in *The Nation*, which offered that if the Republic had been able to purchase armaments from more widely abroad, then the war could have been turned in its favor, and that the international "device" which prevented it from doing so, of which the United States had been a participant, was an atrocity of the modern age. And the *Christian Leader* would have a correspondent (presumably affiliated with the North American

There would be, of course, varying degrees of response to this sentiment, especially as it seemed that this attitude had penetrated to the highest levels of the American government. Particularly horrifying to the *Christian Century* would be President Roosevelt's address at the opening of the 76th Congress, in which he expressed his desire to more the nation further along in the direction of rearmament, internationalism, and interventionism—in the interest of preserving religious liberty and democracy against those in the Old World who would destroy them. The paper reasonably editorialized that such appeals should have only elicited bitter memories of 1917.³⁰⁹ Yet others would suggest that the world had become such an unfriendly, unstable, and even dangerous place that perhaps the time had then come to forthrightly reassess the state of the American military apparatus and her role in world events.³¹⁰

Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy) who, being “on fire about Spain,” urged the publication to declare solidarity with the Loyalists. While the paper refrained from doing so, it nevertheless proclaimed its anti-fascist credentials and regarded the cause of the Spanish government as essentially American. F. D. Kershner, of the *Christian Evangelist*, also agreed with these sentiments. “Views and Comments: Lift the Embargo,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 5 January, 1939, 2. M. W. J., “On Fire about Spain,” letter to the editor, *The Christian Leader*, 7 January, 1939, 20. Frederick D. Kershner, “As I Think on These Things: Shades of Seventy-Six,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 16 March, 1939, 276.

³⁰⁹ “Invitation to a Holy War,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 18 January, 1939, 78-80.

The *Christian Evangelist* generally agreed, offering editorials that worried over the potential for the United States to get sucked into the frenzy of the contemporary arms race and contribute to the eruption of a war. For its part, the *Christian Leader* thought likewise.

“We, the People,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 19 January, 1939, 76.

“No Blank Checks for Armament,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 28 January, 1939, 80.

³¹⁰ William E. Shelton, “A Survey of World Trends,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 12 January, 1939, 34-35.

Frederick D. Kershner, “As I Think on These Things: What Would We Do?,” *The Christian Evangelist*, 19 January, 1939, 78.

“Foreign Policy and Public Opinion,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 8 February, 1939, 175-177.

By that April, Roosevelt had issued a message to Italy and Germany, which laid responsibility for the maintenance of world peace at their thresholds. Meanwhile, he continued to shift the United States into the Anglo-French camp, a truly bold maneuver, considering the enduring strength of American isolationist sentiment.

“Europe and Our Neutrality,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 6 April, 1939, 535-537.

Secondly, these newspapers would demonstrate a continued interest in the administration of relief in war-ravaged Spain. There would be significant discussion on a bulk purchase of American wheat by the Surplus Commodities Corporation, which turned the excess foodstuff to the Red Cross, which then shipped it to Spain through the Maritime Commission; thence it would be organized for distribution via the American Friends Service Committee. The discourse would be extended beyond the effort to aid those inside suffering Spain. These Protestant journals also highlighted the plight of hundreds of thousands of refugees who had been forced to flee over the jagged Pyrenees into France. There they had been quarantined, essentially incarcerated, in a network of concentration camps. Apart from the misery and squalor of such living conditions, there also existed the danger that these souls would be deported to a Franco-dominated Spain to an uncertain fate.³¹¹

Finally, the matter of religion as it pertained to the Spanish conflict (and, indeed, to world developments at large general) merited continued discourse in the columns of these Protestant weeklies.³¹² This interest would primarily focus upon the significant

“The Message to Hitler and Mussolini,” editorial, in *The Christian Leader*, 22 April, 1939, 368.

“Mr. Roosevelt Intervenes,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 26 April, 1939, 535-537.

³¹¹ “American Wheat for Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 4 January, 1939, 3.

“News of the Christian World: American Quakers Aid Spanish Families,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 4 January, 1939, 38.

“Bok Award Is Given to Quaker Leaders,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 307-308.

“Don't Forget the Spanish Refugees,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 1 April, 1939, 297.

These Protestant publications were vociferous in their support for the Spanish outcasts. They believed that the democracies had made Franco's victory possible, and that duty and decency bound them to support the victims of his rebellion.

³¹² This, of course, included the increasingly abhorrent anti-Semitic hysteria inside Hitler's *Reich*.

See: “The Reply to Germany,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 7 January, 1939, 3.

“The Plight of the Jews,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 23 February, 1939, 195-196.

changes in the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church with the passing of Pius XI in February of that year, and the subsequent election of Cardinal E. Pacelli as the papal successor, who would be styled as Pius XII. These Protestant newspapers would commemorate the life and service of the deceased Pontiff, but could not resist the opportunity to level censure against the Church that the occasion provided. Even while acknowledging Pius XI as a lover of peace, the *Christian Century* attacked what it believed to be the eternal spiritual arrogance of the authoritarian Church and that cleric's own relationship to Fascism in Italy and, indeed, in Spain.³¹³ The *Christian Evangelist* would opine likewise, asserting that his influence had been crucial to the collapse of Republican Spain.³¹⁴

And, as for the new Pope, there would be a great swelling of keen Protestant interest in this prince of the Roman Catholic Church after he had gained the Chair of St. Peter. They, amongst others, wondered if he could (or would) leverage the massive power of his office on the emerging order in Spain, especially as it seemed apparent that Franco's intent for the immediate future included a campaign of arbitrary "punishment" for any and all who did not take up arms for his insurgency. These publications expressed their hopeful wish that the weighty moral influence of the Pontificate would at least

³¹³ "Pope Pius XI," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 22 February, 1939, 239-241.

"Pope Pius XII," editorial, *The Christian Century*, 15 March, 1939, 342-343.

³¹⁴ "Pope Pius XI," editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 16 February, 1939, 171.

Meanwhile, the commentary from the *Christian Leader* would be far more subdued.

See: "Pope Pius the Eleventh," editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 18 February, 1939, 151-152.

In respect to the ascending Pontiff, these publications seemed to be convinced that, due to the fact that he had formerly served as the Vatican's secretary of state, Pius XII would likely maintain the *modus vivendi* established with the Mussolini's regime and, indeed, with "fascism" in general, including the Spanish variant which had, by then, nearly gained total national dominance.

temper the venom of what appeared, by the early Summer of 1939, to be the development of a modern Inquisition.³¹⁵

Apart from the Spanish conflict, on the other hand, there would be far more discussion on wider world events, particularly where Europe was concerned. There would be commentary on the seizure of the remainder of Czechoslovakia as German aggression reached a new peak, ostensibly a further step toward realizing Hitler's vision as laid out in *Mein Kampf*. This would be followed closely by the escalating clamor in Germany over the problem of Poland and Danzig as relations between those two countries descended into new realms of unpleasantness and, soon thereafter, the Italian invasion of Albania. As a consequence, the democratic powers of Europe had pledged to defend Polish sovereignty while shifting more definitely toward a war footing—even to the extent of considering the Soviet Union as a potential ally to once again encircle the Teutonic menace with foes.³¹⁶ Nevertheless, the *Christian Leader* managed to demonstrate a little

³¹⁵ “Pope Pius XII,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 9 March, 1939, 250.

“Pope Pius the Twelfth,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 11 March, 1939, 223).

“What Kind of Peace in Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 22 March, 1939, 374-375.

“The Spanish War Is Ended,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 5 April, 1939, 435.

“Can the Pope Stop a Massacre?,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 12 April, 1939, 467.

“Will the Pope Check Franco's Reprisals,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 19 April, 1939, 499.

“Franco Reported to Be Executing Thousands,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 14 June, 1939, 755.

This fear was due to the earlier publication of a certain document from the Nationalist camp, entitled the “Law of Political Responsibilities,” which had been interpreted as a rather broad, vague, and entirely elastic provisional outline for the said “punishment” of anyone who might be considered offensive or otherwise undesirable to the reactionary order.

³¹⁶ “Sequel to Munich,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 23 March, 1939, 299.

“Democratic Powers Are Disillusioned,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 29 March, 1939, 403.

“Triumphal Entry, 1939,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 30 March, 1939, 323-324.

“Tragic Europe,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 5 April, 1939, 439-440.

“Threat and Counter-Threat,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 12 April, 1939, 471-473.

“Is War Near?,” editorial, *The Christian Evangelist*, 13 April, 1939, 383-384.

“What Will Russia Do?,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 19 April, 1939, 503-505.

hope in an atmosphere which increasingly appeared to be tainted with notions of the inevitability of war: despite his previous triumphs, this paper believed that with each fresh victory, Hitler further over-extended himself, which would ultimately be his undoing.³¹⁷

There essentially concluded the Protestant coverage on the Spanish Civil War. The evidence presented above indicates that interest in the waning conflict remained, though perhaps rather subdued and resigned to the defeat of the Republic as it became more obvious that it would not survive. Even so, the Protestants never wavered in their faith to the Republic. Similarly, they remained convinced that had it not been for Italy, Germany, and the Roman Catholic Church—paired with the moral cowardice of the world's democratic nations—the Nationalist rebellion would not have prospered unto victory. And as the Spanish crisis continued to slide into a position of relative unimportance, their attentions would be focused upon the ominous rumblings from the Continent as the black clouds of war gathered above it.³¹⁸

“The Hitler Speech,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 6 May, 1939, 415.

As Hitler rode his cresting wave from victory to victory, the Protestant publications also worried about what to them seemed to be the budding of a nascent fascist movement in the United States. *The Christian Century* ran an article by one A. J. Smith, which detailed a large rally staged by the German-American *Volksbund* at Madison Square Garden, at which the Stars and Stripes flew alongside the swastika, and all beneath a gigantic portrait of Washington. The author did not think that this was anything to be ridiculed, for it had been from such seemingly insignificant seeds that fascism had arisen in Italy, Germany, and, indeed, Spain. (This analogy, however, might not have been entirely appropriate). Alson J. Smith, “I Went to a Nazi Rally,” *The Christian Century*, 8 March, 1939, 320-322.

³¹⁷ “What Hitler Dares,” editorial, *The Christian Leader*, 25 March, 1939, 271-272.

This editorial offered further that Hitler would meet his Waterloo before the gates of Moscow.

³¹⁸ “Who Won the Spanish Civil War,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 14 June, 1939, 756.

“Pope Hails Christian Triumph in Spain,” editorial, *The Christian Century*, 21 June, 1939, 787.

Pius XII seemed at once to disappoint the Protestant journals' hopes and yet to fulfill their worst ideas of the Roman Catholic Church as he “hailed [the] Christian triumph in Spain” as a God-ordained victory.

VI.

The early months of 1939 would prove to be the concluding phase of the Spanish Civil War. During this time, the Nationalist rebels closed in on Barcelona, finally capturing it in late January of that year. This signal victory forced many of the last significant holdouts of the collapsing government, including the Stalinist puppet J. Negrín and the communist firebrand D. Ibárruri (“*La Pasionaria*”), to flee north, over the Pyrenees, and into France. Franco then turned his attention to the business of eliminating pockets of resistance and capturing Madrid, where the last vestige of Republican legitimacy laid; this he eventually did, bringing the conflict to an official close by 1 April, 1939.³¹⁹

Due to these developments, the Catholic journals increased the tempo of their pro-Franco drumbeat, demanding that the time had come for the government of the United States to formally recognize his fledgling administration. This resolution would be reinforced by March, as the publications would acknowledge that some twenty other nations, including Great Britain and France, had already done so. Moreover, they would insist upon expedited recognition due to the fact that Spain had always exerted great cultural and social influence over Latin America, and, therefore, it would have not been a

³¹⁹ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 7 January, 1939, 314.

“Chronicle: Spain,” editorial, *America*, 21 January, 1939, 376.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 28 January, 1939, 386-387.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 4 February, 1939, 410-411.

“Chronicle: Spain,” *America*, 11 March, 1939, 543-544.

“Chronicle: Spain,” *America*, 18 March, 1939, 568.

“Spain Multiplies Its Revolutions: Who’s Red Now?,” editorial, *The Commonwealth*, 24 March, 1939, 591-592.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 1 April, 1939, 602-603.

prudent diplomatic decision to unnecessarily provoke Franco into unfriendliness. But while they would express moderate consternation that the American government had not embraced the emerging reality of an ascendant Nationalist Spain, these Catholic newspapers would express what appeared to be a tone of mocking condescension toward the relative silence of the non-Catholic press in the United States on the topic of the impending demise of “Red” Republican Spain, which they attributed to frustration and shame. In any event, these few Catholic circulars would have their desire of American recognition of Franco's government fulfilled very shortly after his battered forces marched into Madrid.³²⁰

Further, they would criticize the petulant hypocrisy of certain segments of American society which had previously supported relief work in Spain—but when the insurgency's triumph became virtually assured, had reversed course and demanded that all aid be cut off immediately. These representatives of Catholic opinion would express incredulity that the same individuals and organizations who had endeavored to promote the Loyalist cause and insist upon international support for the doomed Spanish government would then have the audacity to beg, even demand, clemency from Franco. According to *America*, the *Sign*, and some of their contributors, the Nationalist chieftain

³²⁰ “Editorials: American Recognition of Spain,” editorial, *America*, 4 February, 1939, 420-421.

“Editorials: Recognize Franco,” editorial, *America*, 18 February, 1939, 468.

“Comment,” editorial, in *America*, 25 February, 1939. (Pg. 482-483).

“Chronicle: Spain,” *America*, 4 March, 1939, 520.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 11 March, 1939, 530-531.

“Comment,” *America*, 18 March, 1939, 554-555.

Joseph B. Code, “New Spain Merits—Demands Recognition by U.S.,” *America*, 1 April, 1939, 604-605.

“Recognition,” editorial, *America*, 15 April, 1939, 11.

had the right and, indeed, the duty to mete out stern punishments to those responsible for tearing Spain asunder, and that leniency would have only set that country up for future revolutionary upheavals.³²¹

Such a necessity would, to these Catholic papers, be made obvious following the capture of Barcelona (and, later, Madrid). There would be published a number of shocking stories regarding how those cities had festered under the increasingly desperate—and correspondingly violent—“Red” regime. For example, *America* would feature a horror story, apparently related by an escaped “eye-witness” from Spain, telling of the destruction wrought by the radicals and their hostile, alien ideology in that unfortunate country. It would include what had by then become typical of Catholic descriptions of Republican Spain: chaos, squalid misery, and so forth. But this tale would also discuss the fear engendered by the SIM (*Servicio de Información Militar*), the government's internal secret service. That organization had been inspired (and partly established) by the Soviet NKVD in August, 1937 in the aftermath of the “May Days,” operated under a similar doctrine, and employed equally brutal tactics.³²² Conversely,

³²¹ “Comment,” editorial, *America*, 11 February, 1939, 434.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 18 February, 1939, 458.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 4 March, 1939, 506-507.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 22 April, 1939, 26-27.

“Current Fact and Comment: Franco and His Enemies,” editorial, *The Sign*, May, 1939, 582.

Owen B. McGuire, “The New Spain,” *The Sign*, May, 1939, 620-622.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 24 June, 1939, 242.

Among this number there would be some 450 American Protestant clergymen who besought the Pontificate to extend a hand of merciful guidance over Franco, to moderate his actions in victory.

See: John A. Toomey, “In Answer to 450 Who Signed,” in *America*, 22 April, 1939, 28.

³²² C. F. Carsley, “Democracy in Spain under the Hammer and Sickle,” *America*, 28 January, 1939, 388-390.

This account of an essentially “Bolshevized” Spain would be further reinforced in an article in the *Sign*

however, there would be a great deal of space and ink expended on the success of Franco's initial efforts at restoration and reconstruction, which were working wonders to heal the corruption. Also these Catholic newspapers remained convinced that, despite what others were saying, his Spain would not be dominated by either Italy or Germany, and nor should his movement have been considered "fascist," as it more precisely represented a more benign form of Catholic-based traditionalism. Spaniards, they insisted, were too deeply Catholic to long tolerate anything that approximated fascism, which tended to make a deity out of the State.³²³

With these elements considered, it should have been no surprise that the Catholic publications continued to rail against international communism, just as they had throughout the course of the conflict (the volume of which, it will be remembered,

that June, purportedly relating the adventures of an American communist in Spain. This piece would contain all of the rhetoric that had been stated before: that the American *brigadistas* were recruited through CPUSA and its fronts, that the professions of liberty by Republican authorities were for international public consumption, that the appropriation of American symbolism had been cynically manipulative, and so forth. And, inside "Red" Spain itself, this author would confirm the rumors of the atrocities of the miniature Stalinist state: the absolute domination of the communist commissariat and its secret police (after the May Days of 1937), the atmosphere of oppressive suspicion, the arbitrary arrests, the concentration camps, the routine executions, and so on.

See: William G. Ryan, "American Communist's Adventure in Spain," *The Sign*, June, 1939, 647-650.

"Chronicle," editorial, *America*, 24 June, 1939, 256.

³²³ "Barcelona Again Returns to Spain," editorial, in *America*, 11 February, 1939, 435-438, 448.

Gault MacGowan, "Festering Barcelona as the Stooge of Stalin," *America*, 11 February, 1939, 439-440.

"After Barcelona," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 10 February, 1939, 439-440.

"Current Fact and Comment: Franco Stands on His Record," editorial, *The Sign*, March, 1939, 454.

"Current Fact and Comment: Recognition of Nationalist Spain," editorial, *The Sign*, April, 1939, 517.

Francis X. Connolly, "You Fear about Franco? Consider Some of the Facts," *America*, 8 April, 1939, 628-630.

"Points and Lines: Spanish Reconstruction," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 14 April, 1939, 691.

Daniel Sargent, "Madrid: The City That Was Drugged," *America*, 20 May, 1939, 124-125.

Vidal Fueyo, O. P., "Spain Looks at Our Democracies," *America*, 27 May, 1939, 152-153.

Daniel Sargent, "Burgos Typifies the New Spain," *America*, 10 June, 1939, 200-201.

increased into 1938). In early January, *America* would feature an article that seemed to reassert the Catholics' fear that the enemy was already within the gates, waiting to enact another Spanish crisis in the United States. Entitled “Red Tactics on Fourteenth Street,” author J. Doherty discussed the “first attack against the Catholic Church in America” by those sinister souls in solidarity with the Spanish Loyalists.³²⁴ Finally unmasking their revolutionary hatred, apparently the fuel of the Popular Front, pro-Loyalist Americans in New York had attacked individual Catholics; later, they would picket a Catholic sanctuary which had come out as pro-Nationalist, denouncing its congregation as “fascists.” The church itself would be defiled with the crimson emblem of the hammer and sickle. Further, extortion and even violence had been leveraged against pro-Nationalist business leaders in that same area—and those who did repent faced reprisal.³²⁵

Otherwise, while significantly less sensationalist, these papers maintained their narrative on the “subversive” activities in the United States, especially regarding the clamor to rearm, align with the European democracies and the Soviet Union, lift the Spanish embargo, and begin a concerted campaign of anti-fascist action to redress the balance of the Old World. *America* believed these efforts had grown frantic to the point of becoming totally transparent, and that that most radical segment of American society

³²⁴ John Doherty, “Red Tactics on Fourteenth Street,” *America*, 7 January, 1939, 318-319.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

Note that here, again, Catholics were still having to defend their Church against accusations of fascism, which appeared to have been coming from all directions, but, at the time, there were not unsubstantiated fears that they would have to defend it against actual physical attacks as well.

See also: Michael Williams, “Views and Reviews,” *The Commonwealth*, 10 February, 1939. 435-436.

should have, by then, been thoroughly discredited. To that journal, such peoples only sought to promote conflict, in this case global, as a mechanism to excite revolutionary turmoil, just as they had done in Spain.³²⁶ The editorial staff of the *Commonweal* did not exactly take such a view, but nevertheless worried over what it perceived to be the increasingly belligerent stance of the United States' government in respect to foreign relations, particularly where Germany and Japan were concerned. It believed that Roosevelt's government had undertaken to engage in subtle, but dangerous, forms of diplomatic and economic warfare against those "aggressor nations." That weekly, as well as the *Sign*, lamented this reality—in addition to American rearmament and the nation's friendly advances toward Great Britain and France as those countries reached out for a possible alliance with the Soviet Union—as only aggravating a world already tense from an apparently impending war.³²⁷ As a result, the Catholic papers grew ever more

³²⁶ "Current Fact and Comment: Straw Man or Menace?," editorial, *The Sign*, January, 1939, 324.
"Comment," editorial, *America*, 14 January, 1939, 338-339.
John V. Hinkel, "Keep the Embargo on Munitions for Spain," *America*, 14 January, 1939, 340-342.
"Comment," editorial, *America*, 21 January, 1939, 362-363.
John V. Hinkel, "Popular Front Forces Unite to Lift Arms Embargo," *America*, 21 January, 1939, 366-368.
John V. Hinkel, "Genesis of Conference to Lift the Embargo," *America*, 28 January, 1939, 390-391.
"Editorials: We Want No War!," editorial, *America*, 28 January, 1939, 397.
"Comment," editorial, *America*, 4 February, 1939, 410-411.
See also: "Current Fact and Comment: Straw Man or Menace?," editorial, *The Sign*, January, 1939, 324.
"Current Fact and Comment: American Arms for Spain," editorial, *The Sign*, February, 1939, 389).
"Current Fact and Comment: Champion of Democracies," editorial, *The Sign*, March, 1939, 453.
John E. Kelly, "Trotsky versus Stalin after the Spanish Defeat," *America*, 17 June, 1939, 220-221.

³²⁷ "Week by Week: Whither Our Foreign Policy," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 13 January, 1939, 309.
"Week by Week: Embargoes and Boycotts," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 13 January, 1939, 309-310.
"Week by Week: Tighten and Give," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 27 January, 1939, 366.
"The Policy of the United States: Arms, Barter, and Threats," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 21 April, 1939, 702.
"New Neutrality Legislation on the Way: Flexibility and the Arms Trade," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 9 June, 1939, 169.

determined to keep the United States neutral and isolated, especially as it appeared that Roosevelt and the Congress considered supporting the dying Republican cause, late though the hour was, in a bid to shift national policy toward interventionism and internationalism.³²⁸

Here, again, the Catholic press tended to cast the blame for the above phenomena on the activities of the Comintern, CPUSA, their overlapping front organizations, and their agents.³²⁹ The fronts and those openly affiliated with them could be dealt with, for they were mostly visible and their loyalties could be confirmed by the messages they preached. But, as before, these Catholic newspapers expressed far more concern in the impressive ability of communist infiltrators and their fellow travelers to dupe unsuspecting, otherwise innocent and well-intentioned people, into serving their cause of building pro-communist sympathies and constructing a domestic Popular Front

Albert Lynd, "Russia and the 'Crisis,'" *The Commonweal*, 23 June, 1939, 233-235.

See also: "Current Fact and Comment: Our American Foreign Policy," editorial, *The Sign*, February, 1939, 388.

"Current Fact and Comment: Uncle Sam and Europe," editorial, *The Sign*, April, 1939, 516.

"Current Fact and Comment: Who Wants War?," editorial, *The Sign*, May, 1939, 644-645.

"Current Fact and Comment: Russia—Gain or Loss?," editorial, *The Sign*, May, 1939, 645.

³²⁸ "Current Fact and Comment: Lifting the Spanish Embargo," editorial, in *The Sign*, January, 1939, 325.

"Week by Week: Embargoes and Boycotts," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 13 January, 1939, 309-310.

"Week by Week: Tighten and Give," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 27 January, 1939, 366.

"Chronicle: the Administration," editorial, *America*, 21 January, 1939, 375-376.

"Chronicle: the Congress," editorial, *America*, 21 January, 1939, 375.

"Comment," editorial, *America*, 25 March, 1939, 578-579.

"Current Fact and Comment: If War, Leave Us Out," editorial, *The Sign*, April, 1939, 516.

William Thomas Walsh, "In Neutrality Our Strength," *The Sign*, April, 1939, 519-521.

"Current Fact and Comment: Our President and Europe," editorial, *The Sign*, May, 1939, 580.

³²⁹ Even as it had increased during the previous year, the Catholic journals maintained their heightened level of paranoia as to the depth of communist penetration, even going as far as to accuse the American Student Union as a false front, an outpost of the Comintern.

See: John Eoghan Kelly, "Little Red Schoolboys," *America*, 14 January, 1939, 344-345.

movement in the United States.³³⁰ It had been, after all, Lenin's dictum to “build communism with non-communist hands.”³³¹

Yet, for all this anti-communist fixation, Catholic interest dwelt on other contemporary issues, the first being the issue of religion. Naturally, of course, these publications would discuss the death of Pope Pius XI and the transitioning of papal power into the hands of his successor, Pius XII. The latter Pontiff would maintain the policies of his precursor, and would hail the springtime victory of Franco's Nationalists as an essentially Christian victory.³³² And, secondly, even with the developments inside Spain

³³⁰ Farrell Schnering, “Mr. Duper Communist Flatters Mrs. Wealthy White,” *America*, 21 January, 1939, 364-366.

Robert E. Curda, “Fertile Soil for Seeds of Subversion,” *America*, 28 January, 1939, 415-416.

“Chronicle: Russia,” editorial, *America*, 25 March, 1939, 592.

Farrell Schnering, “Innocents and Travelers Hold Conferences for Reform,” *America*, 13 May, 1939, 100-101.

Here there still continued some discussion on the “outstretched hand” offered to Catholics by E. Browder. Predictably, the commentary would be derisive. There would also be some concern over another rally staged by CPUSA at Madison Square Garden, preceded only briefly by the aforementioned meeting of the German-American *Volksbund* at the same venue.

Charles Owen Rice, “Debating the Outstretched Hand,” *The Commonweal*, 20 January, 1939, 351-353.

“The Bund Takes the Garden: Nazis at Home,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 3 March, 1939, 505-506.

“The Communists in the Garden: Lack of Public Interest,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 10 March, 1939, 535-536.

³³¹ See: V. I. Lenin at the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). (27 March, 1922—2 April, 1922.)

³³² “Editorials: Pius XI,” editorial, *America*, 18 February, 1939, 468.

Nicholas Murray Butler, *et al.*, “Three Appreciations of Pius XI,” *The Commonweal*, 24 February, 1939, 482-483.

George N. Shuster, “The Pope of the People,” *The Commonweal*, 24 February, 1939, 483-485.

“Comment,” editorial, *America*, 11 March, 1939, 530-531.

“The World Greet the New Pope: Pius XII Reigns,” editorial, *The Commonweal*, 17 March, 1939, 561.

The *Commonweal's* M. Williams actually attended Pius XII's coronation and would, on his return journey, spend some time in Nationalist Spain. Otherwise, on the religious issue, there would be some continued discussion on the notion of “positive impartiality,” which had been forwarded by J. Maritain and adopted by the *Commonweal*. That publication would feature an interview with the eminent scholar, who would elucidate upon why he had adopted his stance, apparently specifically in relation to the Spanish war. He, for one, believed that the rebellion of 1936 could not be justified by Catholic standards, for it brought about a far greater evil than that of which it sought to redress. The philosopher had high hopes for the future of Spain, but cautioned against a militarized Catholicism as one of the

and within the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church, these publications managed some meager discussion of the events of the wider world. There would be brief acknowledgment of the German seizure of what remained of Czechoslovakia in the *Commonweal*, but comparably less said about this fresh act of Hitler's aggression elsewhere.³³³ On that same note, there would be a recognition of the heightening of tensions following the Italian invasion of Albania, which that same newspaper believed to be a further step toward Mussolini's ambition of dominating Yugoslavia, Greece, and the whole of the Mediterranean.³³⁴ The developing crisis of Poland, too, received some slight degree of commentary, though far less than it had in the Protestant papers.³³⁵

The evidence above indicates that, without much surprise, the question of Spain retained a great deal of interest in the Catholic press, especially where it intersected with the problem of international communism and domestic subversion within the United

potential tools that Franco might employ. A certain Father Bruehl would offer likewise. Otherwise, the publication would receive more pieces of correspondence that would add to the variety of opinions on its amended position. On the other hand, the *Sign* would continue to condemn it.

See: "An Interview with Jacques Maritain," in *The Commonweal*, 3 February, 1939. (Pgs. 398-402).

"Communications: Civil War in Spain," letters to the editor, *The Commonweal*, 3 February, 1939. (Pgs. 407-408).

"Current Fact and Comment: Impartiality on Spain Condemned," editorial, *The Sign*, March, 1939, 453-454.

"The Great Cemeteries under the Moon: Approach and Conclusion," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 3 March, 1939, 508.

³³³ "A Nazi Dessert Course: Eastern Express," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 24 March, 1939.

"Chronicle: Spain," *America*, 25 March, 1939, 592.

"The European Situation: the Stop-Hitler Drive," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 31 March, 1939, 617.

"Our Most Urgent Business: The Values of War," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 31 March, 1939, 617-618.

"Fire Burn and Cauldron Bubble: Madrid Rome Danzig," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 7 April, 1939, 645.

See also: "Current Fact and Comment: Europe in Perpetual Crisis," *The Sign*, May, 1939, 580.

Douglas Woodruff, "Europe: Home of Crises," *The Sign*, May, 1939, 583-587.

³³⁴ "The Status in Europe: Heightening the Tension," editorial, *The Commonweal*, 21 April, 1939, 702.

³³⁵ Roger de Craon Poussy, "Poland and the Axis," *The Commonweal*, 21 April, 1939, 709-711.

States. Simultaneously, denominational developments (most pointedly with the passing of Pius XI and the ascent of Pius XII), might have blinded these periodicals to the emerging realities in Europe as the Italian and German dictators claimed fresh victories and appeared determined to play their dangerous game, subsequently forcing their enemies to adopt ever more belligerent stances, all of which incrementally increased the pressure on the trigger of war.

VII.

This final phase of the Spanish Civil War, unsurprisingly, saw but little variation in the opinions and interpretations offered by either the Catholic or the Protestant presses of the United States. By and large, the respective publications from each maintained their established, entrenched positions. The Catholic journals mostly remained adamantly pro-Nationalist, while the Protestant publications determinedly defended the Republic; they would defend them for the same reasons that they had stated since even before Franco's uprising and the commencement of martial hostilities.³³⁶ Insisting that the Rightist rebellion stood as a justified uprising against an illegitimate, hostile, Soviet-directed government, the Catholic newspapers ever championed it as a bulwark against the spread of the atheistic communist blight and the defender of Christian civilization. And flawed though it might have been, the Protestant papers continued to assert that the embattled Spanish government stood as one of the last flickering lights of liberal democracy in Europe, finally and tragically extinguished beneath the swelling tide of fascism.

³³⁶ Excepting, of course, the *Commonweal* and its "positive impartiality."

A Brief Conclusion and Summation

In considering the evidence presented over the previous three chapters of this thesis, one can reach a number of suggestive conclusions in regard to the respective opinions of the American Catholic and Protestant presses on the Spanish Civil War. With little variation, and with but few exceptions, the selected representatives of either segment of the American Christian press maintained their interpretations on that highly controversial conflict. On either side, the selected publications came out early in favor of the Spanish Left or Right—months before the battle had in fact been joined.

Given the turbulent nature of contemporary Spanish politics and the intensity of anti-clerical conviction with which the political Left in that country assailed the Church, even from the rise of the Republic in 1931, it should not have been surprising that American Catholic opinion tilted heavily toward the Right. Indeed, the contentious elections of 1936, which gave rise to the Popular Front, would prove to be the genesis of the not altogether inaccurate narrative that such a political confederation stood as nothing more than a thinly veiled manufacture of the Comintern, a puppet of the Kremlin, and a malignant force bent upon fomenting revolutionary upheaval. This opinion on the part of the American Catholic press, as demonstrated by those few examples, seemed only to be reinforced as the immediate aftermath of the political season found Spain awash in uncontrolled and perhaps directed chaos.

As the attacks against the Right and the Church mounted, the Catholic papers expressed greater sympathy with those co-sufferers and, when the rebellion erupted in the

summer of that year, claimed moral solidarity with it. Their reasoning might be explained thus: that the Spanish government had been seized by an inherently evil force, impelled by atheistic Marxism and Bolshevik barbarism, which was determined to assault Western Civilization and Christendom itself in most Catholic Spain. The uprising, therefore, would be conversely defined as a patriotic movement of true-hearted Spaniards to whom the heinous abuses of the government had become too numerous to endure. But, early in the conflict there would also be strong religious connotations affixed to the insurgency, primarily in that it existed as something of a modern Crusade or *Reconquista* to reclaim that country from the heathen infidels.

The religious fixation naturally endured throughout the course of the struggle, but it would decline in emphatic importance as the Catholic journals and most of their contributors began to understand and agree upon the impropriety of insisting on the “holy war” interpretation. Rather, the focus would increasingly be directed on the blight of international communism as it continued to exist in the Soviet Union and as miniature communist states threatened to blossom forth in Spain, in France, and even in the United States.

Yet at the other end of the discourse, the American Protestant press held absolutely contrary views on Spanish politics and that nation's civil struggle in nearly every way. Rather than condemning the Popular Front as a revolutionary conspiracy, they instead praised it as a democratic construct, peacefully built to take back the governmental apparatus away from the reactionary regime of 1933 and to once again set

Spain back upon the path of progressivism. And as for the pre-war suffering inflicted upon the Right and the Church, those few representatives of American Protestant opinion maintained that it had been thoroughly earned, as those targeted forces had colluded together for centuries to repress the mass of common Spaniards, to keep them bound to feudal subservience and mired in medieval superstition.

After the outbreak of the revolt in Spain, the Protestant publications would reiterate this narrative—that the reactionary Right and the traditionalist Church had risen to seize what they so arrogantly believed to be their God-ordained position in society—but would quickly add that it had been organized by a certain fascist component. Those Protestant publications correlated the Spanish crisis to wider European events and would delineate it as another swelling of the fascist tide. Indeed, they insisted that the adherents to the curious Spanish iteration of the ideology had been emboldened by the virtually untrammelled successes of Italy and Germany and would, pending their victory, contribute to something far more menacing than the Catholics' Red bogeyman: the “fascist internationale.”

Such would be their stance throughout the course of the war in Spain, even as it became increasingly evident that the Republic and its Loyalists were doomed to a tragic defeat. All this would be blamed, of course, on the interference by the fascist powers, the moral credence lent to the insurgency by the topmost authorities of the Roman Catholic Church, and, not least, to the cowardly failure of the Western democratic nations to render aid to the beleaguered Spanish government.

The climax of this Catholic-Protestant discourse in the United States, and perhaps its most interesting feature, would develop during the Autumn of 1937 and would play out until the end of that year. Lacking, it seems, the prerequisite ability to develop a nuanced understanding of a conflict so fundamentally foreign and confoundingly complicated, either side attempted to do so through the familiar lens of “Americanism.” In short, both the Catholics and Protestants sought to attribute such traits to “their” respective Spanish factions that befitted the revolutionary and democratic heritage of the United States. On the part of the Catholics, the Nationalist rebellion stood as a revolt against the unconscionable tyranny of an oppressive government, a repetition of the glorious days of 1776. Conversely, the Protestants maintained that the cause of the Republic and the Popular Front represented the hatred of backwardness and the fire of democracy that burned in the hearts of all humankind. To them, it was the the very passion that demanded the American patriots of old strike for their independence against the imperial domination of Great Britain. For the Spanish context, the Protestants merely substituted the ancient, repressive oligarchy of the aristocratic elite, the military officer corps, and the Roman Catholic Church for the English.

But to judge the stances of the American Catholic and Protestant presses, as highlighted by those few examples, historical inquiry requires that one be as objectively fair as possible. Either side championed its chosen belligerent coalition with little qualification, and neither was willing to admit the unique faults and failings thereof. Both the Nationalist and the Republican Loyalist camps sheltered rather unattractive elements,

both received the majority of their materiel and moral assistance from unpalatable foreign sources that sought to manipulate the Spanish contest to their respective interests, and it certainly could not have been said of either cause that they aligned with “Americanism,” even in a vague sense. Neither was willing to admit that the war in Spain was far more tinted with gray ambiguity than they had allowed for, and neither was willing to abandon the static, quixotic idealism that they had invested in it.

Both, moreover, might be also be accused of a degree of intolerance and bigotry, whether they were conscious of it or not. The Spanish Civil War seemed to enable the American Protestant publications to give voice to that classic anti-clerical, anti-Catholic hatred; those selected publications constantly intoned that the conflict had definitely proven the Church to be the mortal enemy of liberalism and democracy. On the other hand, the Catholic journals seemed to be guilty of a kind of reactionary backlash against any progressive cause that contained even the slightest hint of communist approval or influence. That the Protestants had proclaimed solidarity with the Spanish Republic meant that they were the allies or agents of world communism and, *ergo*, an abettor of evil.

In a final estimation, the best, most intelligent, and perhaps most Christian stance that those projectors of American Catholic and Protestant opinion might have taken was offered by Jacques Maritain and which was later adopted by the *Commonweal*: that of “positive impartiality.” However, the struggle was too emotionally and ideologically charged for that. It was representative of the tensions of the time and of the troubles that

had yet to come. Both the Catholics and the Protestants took it as such and could not help interpreting it based upon their own prejudices and convictions. But one must never forget that the essential realities of the conflict escaped them and, indeed, that none of them spoke Spanish.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Newspapers and Magazines:

America: a Catholic Review of the Week
(New York: The America Press)

The Christian Century
(Chicago: The Christian Century Company)

The Christian Evangelist: National Weekly of the Disciples of Christ
(St. Louis: Christian Board of Education)

The Christian Leader
(Boston: Universalist Publishing House)

The Commonweal: A Weekly Review of Literature, the Arts, and Public Affairs
(New York: Calvert Publishing Corporation)
(New York: Commonweal Publishing Company, Inc.)

The Sign: a National Catholic Magazine
(Union City: Passionist Missions)

Monographs:

John Dos Passos, *The Theme is Freedom*
(New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1956)

Merwin K. Hart, *America: Look at Spain*
(New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1939)

George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, (New York: Harcourt, 1952)

Ronald Radosh, Mary R. Haback, and Grigory Sevostianov, ed., *Spain Betrayed*
(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)

Secondary Sources:

Monographs:

Michael Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War* (Second Edition),
(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*,
(New York: Penguin Books, 2006)

Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*
(Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955)

Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counter-Revolution*,
(Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991)

James W. Cortada, *Two Nations over Time: Spain and the United States, 1776-1977*
(Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978)

Wayne H. Cowan, ed., *Facing Protestant-Roman Catholic Tensions*
(New York: Association Press, 1960)

Cecil Eby, *Between the Bullet and the Lie: American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War*,
(New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969)

Cecil Eby, *Comrades and Commissars: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War*,
(University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007)

George R. Esenwein, *The Spanish Civil War: A Modern Tragedy*
(New York: Taylor and Francis, Inc., 2005)

Andrew W. Greeley, *The Denominational Society: A Sociological Approach to Religion*
(Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1972).

Andrew W. Greeley, *An Ugly Little Secret: Anti-Catholicism in North America*
(Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1977)

Allen Guttman, *The Wound in the Heart: America and the Spanish Civil War*
(New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Macmillan Company, 1962)

Allen Guttman, *American Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War*
(Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1963).

Carlton J. H. Hayes, *The United States and Spain: an Interpretation*
(New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1951)

Ernest Hemingway, *The Fifth Column and Four Stories of the Spanish Civil War*
(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969)

Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
(New York: Scribner, 1940)

Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941*
(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966)

John J. Kane, *Catholic Protest Conflicts in America*
(Chicago: Regnery, 1955)

Judith Keene, *Fighting for Franco: International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War* (London: Hambledon Continuum: 2007)

Robert Moats Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues: 1919-1939* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1958)

Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

Robert A. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left: the Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pegasus, 1969)

Russell E. Richley and Donald G. Jones, ed., *American Civil Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974)

Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006)

Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan)

F. Jay Taylor, *The United States and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971)

Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961)

Dominic Tierney, *FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

Richard P. Traina, *American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968)

Peter Wyden, *The Passionate War: the Narrative History of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983)