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# Francó's Church

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### CHAPTER V

#### TE DEUM

On February 7, 1937, Franco's troops and Mario Roatta's battalions entered Malaga victoriously. To bless that moment, and the new order that was going to follow it, Balbino Santos Olivera returned to his Episcopal seat. Bishop of Malaga since August 5, 1935, he had been able to escape anticlerical persecution by finding refuge in Tangier. Don Balbino was the typical integrationist Bishop who had already been prominent before the military rebellion because of his sermons and anti-republican messages. His return was apotheotic: Te Deums, thanksgiving masses, processions and a solemn lecture directed at the ministry, the dignitaries of the Falange, and the civil authorities.

Also apotheotic and spectacular was the adhesion of Santos Olivera to "National Catholicism", that mixture of extreme nationalism and religious integration that impregnated every corner of Franco's Spain, the Spain of the Catholic Church. As the war progressed, Catholicism gained ground by force of arms, imposing itself with guns and bombs on the forces of revolutionary atheism that had to submit before the victor. First in Malaga and later in all the other Republican cities, the arrival of Franco's troops was celebrated with Te Deums, with the Catholic rituals that provided unity to all the reactionary forces. The bishops raised an arm in salute at civil-military events, blessed the weapons, stirred the troops, and encouraged the persecution of the defeated. They, the priests, the religious, and the Catholic faithful, felt liberated by the rebel army and, above all, by the glorious Generalissimo Franco, the "providential genius" that was freeing them from the Republican and atheist catastrophe.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The triumphant entrance of Balbino Santos in Adela Alfonsi "La recatolización de los obreros en Málaga, 1937-1966. El nacionalcatolicismo de los obispos Santos Olivera y Herrera Oria", [The re-catholization of the workers in Malaga, 1937-1966. The National-Catholicism of Bishops Santos Olivera and Herrera Oria] *Historia Social [Social History]*, 35 (1999), p. 119. I also follow Matilde Eiroa, *Viva Franco. Hambre, racionamiento, falangismo [Long live*

Thus emerged Franco's Church; a Church that identified with him, that admired him as Caudillo, as sent by God to reestablish the intrinsic co-dependency of traditional Spanish culture and Catholic faith. "The similarity between the current moment and the start of the rule of the Catholic Kings is incredible" wrote Félix G. Olmedo in 1938: "The same religious feeling, the same idea of social Christian justice, the Spanish way, the same providential feeling towards the war, the same love for Spain and for everything that is genuinely Spanish, the same awareness of value, the same faith in our historic destiny and in our civilizing mission; even the same language together with the same signs and emblems of that period: Imperial Spain, the yoke, the arrows, the eagles, all the same".<sup>2</sup>

That religious feeling, that "social Christian justice, the Spanish way", that re-catholicization by way of arms did not contemplate reconciliation, forgiveness for the defeated. The unconditional surrender of the enemy, the triumph of "the City of God", would arrive accompanied by a rhetoric and a practice drenched in militarism, nationalism and Catholic triumphalism. Glory for the victors and bitter memories for the vanquished. A total and definitive victory over the forces of evil. With supernatural protection from the disciple James, Santa Teresa or the Virgin Mary. Religion and politics fused in the Medieval ceremony that took place on May 20, 1939 in the Church of Santa Barbara in Madrid when the Caudillo, under the intense gaze of Cardinal Gomá, placed his conquering sword at the feet of the Saintly Christ of Lepanto.

#### To conquer with divine protection

During the war, the narrative of the victories of Franco's army resulting from supernatural protection acquired unexpected strength. This did not cease during the dictatorship, because Franco acquired a taste for this simple and efficient recipe. In the year 1937 he arrived already laden with miracles. The Italian Hispanist Giuliana de Febo remembers that during the occupation of Malaga province, a soldier from the "National" army found the left hand of Saint Teresa in the abandoned suitcase of the Republican colonel José Eduardo Villalba. The hand, preserved in a silver reliquary and adorned with valuable rings, had been removed from the Carmelite convent of Ronda. The Seville newspaper ABC trumpeted the extraordinary nature of the recovery and, on February 20, it published two large photos of the "extremely valuable relic". Since the relic had been profaned by the Reds and by the Republican military chief it was necessary to perform "an act of atonement" that was celebrated in Salamanca a few days after the find. The ceremony ended with a blessing of the multitude, performed with the relic which was then exposed for four days to public veneration. Later it was given to Generalissimo Franco who from that very moment always felt guided by the "Saint of the Race".

Franco's soldiers entered Madrid on March 28, the birthday of the Carmelite saint. A few months after the end of the war, because of this miraculous

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*Franco. Hunger, rationing, the Falange movement]. Málaga, 1939-1942, Artes Gráficas Aprisa, Málaga, 1995, pp. 81-82.*

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Gonzalo Redondo, *Historia de la Iglesia en España 1931-1939 [History of the Church in Spain 1931-1939], p. 405*

coincidence, Franco's secretary asked the Bishop of Malaga for the Generalissimo to be the definitive destination of the hand of the saint because "it is certain that the Mystical Doctor (...) is delighted to have *Her Hand* at the side of the Caudillo who, with God's help, has set himself the task of reshaping a new Spain that would link with the Imperial Spain of the time of the saint.

The Bishop of Malaga had already decided to return the relic to the Ronda convent but, as he wrote in his letter of reply, "in light of the vehement desire of his Excellency to retain it in his possession, to continue to provide it with that fervent and devoted homage in the intimacy of his home" he happily withdrew that decision and was "overwhelmingly pleased that such a great treasure of my diocese should provide spiritual comfort to our most honorable Caudillo". May the saint, said the bishop, guide his steps in peace with the same fortune that she had guided them during the war.

The hand of the Saint of the Race stayed in the chapel of the Palace of the Pardo for almost four decades providing "spiritual comfort" to the Caudillo and guiding his steps. After the death of the dictator, his widow and his daughter returned the relic to the Ronda convent, together with the Great Decorated Cross of Saint Ferdinand, symbol of military heroism, that had been bestowed on Franco at the victory parade of May 19, 1939. The Decorated Cross and the relic of Saint Teresa were to be together for all posterity so that there would never be any doubt of the tight relation between the saintly relic and the Spanish savior.

Extraordinary things also occurred in each one of the cities that were conquered by Franco's army; they turned themselves into "sacred spaces" where, as Giuliana de Febo observed, processions and celebrations, acts of reparation and thanksgiving followed one after the other. "Each recovered sacred object is converted into a concrete sign of the divine assistance to the Crusade". Relics were appearing everywhere and were restored to the National Heritage after having been desecrated by the revolutionaries. Some of them were "notable" like the "uncorrupt body" of Saint Isidro, patron saint of Madrid, whose authenticity was confirmed in May of 1939 by a deed executed by notary. When the relic of the "Holy Face" was returned to the town of Jaen, even Franco underscored the "purifying" strength of the recovery. Everything was due to a divine punishment, something that the general would repeat on many occasions; divine punishment for a "twisted life" and an "unclean history". In this case the "sacred jewel" had returned "because God had wanted it to", although one had to continue to be vigilant: "That under his protection our faith be reborn but that on God's path we may have men with more courage and women with less lipstick".<sup>3</sup>

Those were words of the Caudillo who, nevertheless, wasn't the only one who skillfully managed religious references. His companions in arms also resorted to Providence with the same regularity. For example General Antonio Aranda loved to feel himself protected by Saint James the Apostle. On November 6, 1937, after the end of the Asturias campaign and during the cleanup of the defeated Reds, Aranda went to prostrate himself in front of the Saintly Apostle

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Giuliana di Febo in *La Santa de la Raza [The Saint of the Race]*, who provides a precise assessment of the meanings of those sacred spaces and who has provided all the information regarding the hand of Saint Teresa (pp. 63-71).

“to give thanks for the total liberation of our beautiful Northern lands”. As documented in the *Boletín eclesiástico* [Ecclesiastical Bulletin] of that diocese of November 30, the archbishop of Santiago, Tomás Muniz, accompanied the general “and now the baton of General Aranda is in the hands of the Apostle, together with his pilgrim’s staff”.

After his triumphant entry into reconquered Teruel almost 3 months later, on February 22, 1938, the same General Aranda, chief of the Army Corp of Galicia, once again invoked the supernatural protection of James in a telegram sent to his friend Tomás Muniz: “the soldiers of Galicia have today entered Teruel, protected and guided by that most venerated Apostle James. With me they request your Excellency’s blessing that we would wish you would come to grant personally”.<sup>4</sup>

The significance of the worship of James is unmistakable. James was “Matamoros” [Moor Killer], the victor over the unbeliever in the Reconquest. On a white horse and with his sword extended, the apostle occupied a special place in Spanish religious tradition and in popular worship. With the battle cry “For Santiago and the glory of Spain”, against the Muslims, the great Spanish nation had been forged, so it is not surprising that during the Civil War, a “just and necessary war”, a crusade against the infidel, the myth in its religious and patriotic dimension should be re-launched. With his protection, Christian Spain would defeat “the new Saracens”.

The ceremony of the offering to the apostle, created in the mid-17th century and suspended in 1931 by the socialist republican government, was reestablished by the decree law of the State Technical Committee [Junta Técnica del Estado] on July 22, 1937. Three days later in a solemn offering, General Fidel Dávila, representing Franco, gave the “invocation” and Cardinal Gomá the “response”. Dávila, who at that time was pressing the Basque separatists hard, evoked the breakup of “Spanish unity” because of the action of the forces of “secular atheism” and “Jew-creating Masons” and exhorted the apostle to be a guide to the “phalanx of crusaders” that were “creating Spain anew”. In a more elaborate speech, Gomá asked James for peace, a “Christian” peace without hatred “because we know the magnanimous heart of the Generalissimo”.<sup>5</sup>

Thanks to God, with the invaluable help of James and the warmth of the magnanimous heart of the Generalissimo, the Republican cities were falling one after another, liberated from the “barbarous captivity of the Reds”, in the midst of civil-religious manifestations blessed by bishops, priests and members of religious orders. José María Pemán, half poet half monk, also said it in his *Arengas y crónicas de guerra* [Harangues and chronicles of the war], published in 1937: “the fires of Irun, of Guernica, of Lequeitio, of Malaga or of Baena, are like the burning of stubble to leave the land fertilized for a new

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<sup>4</sup> Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz* [To win the war, to win the peace]. p.169.

<sup>5</sup> Gonzalo Redondo, *Historia de la Iglesia en España 1931-1939*, pp. 321-323 and Giuliana di Febo, *La Santa de la Raza*, source of the significance of the worship of James and its reoccurrence during the Civil War (pp. 43-46)

crop. Spaniards, we are going to have a smooth and flat land to joyfully fill with Imperial stones”.<sup>6</sup>

Imperial stones with the Spanish flag, “the glorious, the one and only”, that started to wave in the summer of 1937 “in the Cantabrian breeze” with the step-by-step conquests of Vizcaya, Santander and the Red zone of Asturias. On June 19, the industrious city of Bilbao was “reintegrated into civilization and order” according to the war dispatch of the occupiers. A few days later, on July 1, when taking possession of the town hall, the then Falangist, José María de Areilza, included himself with fervor in the patriotic and murdering environment of the times: “Let it be really clear: Bilbao has been conquered by the force of arms. No agreements and posthumous gratitude. There have been, certainly there have been victors and vanquished. Spain, One, Great and Free has triumphed. That horrible sinister nightmare called Euskadi, which was the result of socialism on one side and Basque stupidity on the other, has fallen forever. Vizcaya is once again a part of Spain *through pure and simple military conquest*”.<sup>7</sup>

Spain, One, Great and Free, also triumphed a few months later in the first half of the year 1938, in the eastern regions of Aragón and in the provinces of Lerida and Castellon. They were lands of revolution and anticlerical persecution where a “catholic restoration” was apparently needed to recover after the slaughter of priests and monks, so as to spiritually reorganize the area and to rebuild the devastated churches. It was necessary to replace religious objects, to send priests to those villages which had been “de-christianized” by revolutionary atheism, not an easy task because many of those priests were Basques and Catalans who were not wanted in that Spain, one, great and free. Rigoberto Doménech, archbishop of Zaragoza had already warned: “I cannot have Catalan priests here; there is a feeling against them that would make their ministry not only useless, but counterproductive. Half the diocese destroyed by the emissaries from Catalonia keeps everyone on tenterhooks”.<sup>8</sup>

The religious revitalization reached the smallest corner of the conquered lands with the change of street names, the restoration of public worship, the reestablishment of religious teaching at schools and the return of the crucifix. In the first meeting of the first Franco Government on Thursday February 3, 1938, it was decided to “revise” all the secular legislation of the Second Republic; thus, as a result of derogatory decrees, one law after another fell, from the Civil Matrimony Law to the Law of Confessions and Religious Congregations of June 1933 that marked the culminating point of separation between the Catholic Church and the Republic.

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<sup>6</sup> José María Pemán, *Arengas y crónicas de guerra [Harangues and chronicles of war]*, Cerón, Cádiz, 1937, pp. 94-95

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Gonzalo Redondo *Historia de la Iglesia en España 1931-1939* p. 288. Regarding Areilza and the “redemption” of Bilbao from the “rotten Reds” and the “rotten ‘Basquery’”, it is addressed by Michael Richards in *Un tiempo de silencio. La guerra civil y la cultura de la represión en la España de Franco, 1936-1945 [A time of silence. The civil war and the culture of repression in Franco’s Spain, 1936-1945]*, Crítica, Barcelona 1999, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in José Andrés-Gallego *la Iglesia en la España contemporánea 1936-1998 [The Church in contemporary Spain 1936-1998]*, p. 36

To Cardinal Gomá, primate of the Church of Spain, that first Franco Government appeared very good, with people as marvelous and as Catholic as Tomás Domínguez Arévalo, count of Rodezno in the Ministry of Justice and Pedro Sáinz Rodríguez in the Ministry of National Education. As soon as the government was set up, Gomá sent a report to Cardinal Pacelli in which he expressed his conviction that in Spain they were on the eve of “a legal renewal of everything that referred to matters of the Church in its different aspects”.<sup>9</sup>

The legal renewal was so fast that on the last day of June, 1938, José María Yanguas Messía assessed the “catholicity” of his Government in his speech of presentation of credentials as ambassador to the Holy See, asserting that “it has already returned the crucifix and religious education to the schools, has repealed the law of civil matrimony, has suspended divorce, has restored the Society of Jesus in civil law, has recognized in official documents the personality of the Catholic Church as a perfect society, has decreed civil and social matters, including the sanctity of religious festivities and has given Worker’s Charters an authentically Catholic and Spanish approach”.<sup>10</sup>

The Church had to be grateful and happy in the face of so much restoration work done by such a Catholic government. And it was. In the first place, it was happy with the “glorious Caudillo” who was already considered to be, without any doubt, “the providential man chosen by God to raise Spain” as stated in the *Catecismo patriótico español* [Spanish Patriotic Catechism] that the Dominican Ignacio G. Menéndez-Reigada published in Salamanca in 1937. General Franco is “magnanimous” and has a great sense of justice, Cardinal Gomá repeated over and over again in his reports to the Vatican. And even the Pope, Pius XI, prayed every day for him. So he was told by the same Gomá in a letter that he sent Franco on May 17, 1938: “The Supreme Pontiff has told me to tell General Franco that he sends a very special blessing for him and his family and that every day he commends him to God because he knows that in so doing, he is praying for the good of Spain at the same time”.<sup>11</sup>

The Church and the government were mutually seducing each other in that environment of “verbal incontinence”, of “drunken imaginings of imperial glories”, according to Feliciano Blázquez. A fanatic clerical literature developed, pitting Dominicans and Jesuits as rivals for the love of Spain and its undefeated Caudillo.<sup>12</sup> “The Caudillo is like the incarnation of the Homeland and he has the power received from God to govern us” wrote Menéndez-Reigada in the *Spanish Patriotic Catechism*, which anticipated the rosary of catechism that would be published in the early postwar years. The Caudillo as the Governor, Spain “providentially placed by God in the center of the world” and, for good measure, the Spanish language as “the language of

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<sup>9</sup> “Informe del Primado al Cardinal Pacelli” [Report of the Primate to Cardinal Pacelli], February 2, 1938, in María Luisa Rodríguez Aisa *El cardenal Gomá y la guerra de España* [Cardinal Gomá and the Spanish war], pp. 295-296, who also provides information regarding the different exchanges between the primate and the Count of Rodezno, Minister of Justice “regarding the proposed repeal of Republican legislation referring to religious matters”.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Alfonso Álvarez Bolado *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*. p. 254

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in María Luisa Rodríguez Aisa *El cardenal Gomá y la guerra de España*, p.305

<sup>12</sup> Feliciano Blázquez, *La traición de los clérigos en la España de Franco. Crónica de una intolerancia (1936-1975)* [Treason of the clerics in Franco’s Spain. A chronicle of intolerance (1936-1975)], Trotta, Madrid, 1991, pp. 38-39.

future civilizations, because English and French that might have been able to share this function are such wasted languages that they are heading for a total dissolution”.

Spain went back to being Catholic, one, great and free, “saintly and happy”, said Florencio Cerviño, bishop of Orense at the start of 1938 when there was already confidence in a quick victory of the Christian troops. It was necessary to place “God and his objects in everything”, as “our elders” had done, wrote Cardinal Gomá. Place God in the laws, in the house, in the institutions and in the heart. A job for everyone: priests, legislators, teachers and parents. And by any means possible: “through the spoken and written word, through pages and books, through spectacles and graphics, through any procedure of diffusion of the human thought, touching all the springs of the human soul. Didn't the godless do exactly that to eliminate him?”

Placing God everywhere set Catholicism “full steam ahead” to create “the great Fatherland”. But it was not going to stop there. One also had to jettison the “false intellectual idols” and purge the libraries, added Enrique Pla y Deniel, bishop of Salamanca, in his pastoral letter of May 1938, “especially the popular and even the scholarly and pedagogic ones, through which so much broken and poisonous merchandise had been introduced in recent years”.<sup>13</sup>

The Church asked for all that and much more from the governing body in return for the support given to the uprising and for the blessing of the genocide undertaken against Republicans and revolutionaries. Above all, the “spiritual reconstruction” took place through the schools, because of the presence in the Ministry of National Education of a good and Catholic man, Pedro Sáinz Rodríguez, under the attentive vigilance of Cardinal Gomá. “Disdain for our history is over”, said Sáinz Rodríguez in a circular to the Primary Education Inspectors which he sent at the beginning of March of 1938. Also, a few months later a report from the Technical Consultancy Department of that same ministry showed the path that the reorganization of public education in Barcelona had to follow, the same one that had already been drafted in many other places: “The schools must have crucifixes, pictures of the Head of State, national flags and a few brief notices with symbols and synthetic captions that place in the children's mind the idea that a new Spanish State is being formed and with it the concept of Fatherland that until now they were unaware of”.

Recovering religious education, teaching religion to the children “that tomorrow will be husbands, fathers and heads of family” became an authentic obsession, above all in the last months of the war, with the Reds at the point of surrender, and in the immediate postwar period. The spring of 1939, the

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<sup>13</sup> Pastoral letter of Enrique Pla y Deniel, “Los delitos del pensamiento y los falsos ídolos intelectuales” [The crimes of thought and false intellectual idols], quoted in Alfonso Álvarez Bolado *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*, p. 292. Florencio Cerviño's phrase appears in Antonio Fernández “La Iglesia española y la guerra civil” [The Spanish Church and the civil war], *Studia Historica*, vol III, 4 (1985), p.61. Gomá's quotes come from his work *La España heroica. Ascética de nuestra guerra* [Heroic Spain. Asceticism of our war], Gráficas Bercausa, Pamplona, 1937, pp 37-38.

spring of victory, was prodigious in re-catholicization orders and decrees coming from the Ministry of Education.<sup>14</sup>

The ravages caused by the anticlerical persecution, the verification of the sacrileges and assassinations of the clergy committed by the Reds were the only black marks that stained the happiness that the Church felt towards the military conquest of Republican territory without agreements or any form of mediation. But the Church gained benefits even from those items, taking advantage of the enormous emotional impact caused by the memory of the assassinated martyrs. The ritual and the mythology that was set up around those martyrs gave it even more strength and presence among those who were going to be the victors of the war, it annulled any hint of sensibility towards the vanquished, and it stirred the vengeful passions of the clergy which did not die down for many years. As we will see, in this field the Church of Franco was also a Church of revenge.

A lot of cemeteries and outlying lands where clerics had been assassinated were fenced in, as in Barbastro, “because the land is sanctified and drenched with the blood of martyrs”. These pieces of land would serve to remind future generations of the cruel persecution and of the “profound lesson that anyone who separates themselves from the Catholic Religion ends up being a traitor to God and to the Fatherland”.<sup>15</sup>

The decree from the Office of the Chief of State of November 16, 1938 proclaimed a national “day of mourning” on November 20, every year, in memory of the death by firing squad of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera in 1936, and established “with prior agreement of the ecclesiastical authorities”, that “on the walls of each parish Church there would be an inscription containing the names of its Fallen, either in the present crusade, or as victims of the Marxist revolution”.<sup>16</sup>

That was the origin of the placing of plaques commemorating the “Fallen” in churches. Even though nothing was said on the subject in the decree, all the inscriptions ended up being headed with the name of José Antonio, a sacred fusion of the dead for political and religious causes, “martyrs of the Crusade”, all of them. Because, as Aniceto Castro Albarran, the magistrate canon of Salamanca, wrote in his *Guerra Santa* [Holy War], all the victims of the “Russian barbarism” were religious, and not only the clerics: “they included the most notable Catholics, the most pious people, the most apostolic ‘rightists’, in summary, all those whose martyrdom exclusively meant religious hatred and persecution of the Church”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Circulars from the Ministry and religious recovery in the *Boletín Eclesiástico del Arzobispado de Burgos* [Ecclesiastical Bulletin of the Burgos Archbishopric], March 22, 1938 and April 16, 1938. The Technical Consultant report on teaching in Barcelona, signed in Vitoria on January 16, 1939 is quoted by Borja de Riquer in the prologue of the study of Francisco Morente, *La escuela y el Estado Nuevo* [The school and the New State].

<sup>15</sup> “Acta de la Comisión Gestora de Barbastro” [Minutes of the Administrative Commission of Barbastro], April 16, 1938 (documentation provided by Ester Casanova).

<sup>16</sup> Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para Ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*, pp. 324 and 348.

<sup>17</sup> Aniceto de Castro Albarrán, *Guerra Santa. El sentido católico del Movimiento Nacional Español* [Holy War. The catholic direction of the National Movement], Editorial Española, Burgos, 1938, p33.



The other dead, the Reds and the defeated, did not exist. Neither alive nor dead, because either the death was not registered or the cause of death was falsified, events in which priests had a very significant responsibility. Just as it had done from the start in the zone occupied by the rebel military, the Church hushed up the extermination that followed the occupation of Republican cities and villages by Franquist troops, incited the persecution and denounced and gave away the heathen, who deserved maximum punishment. The ringing of bells, the joy at the “liberation” shown in so many processions, acts of atonement, solemn masses and Te Deums, once again impeded the hierarchy, the religious and the most pious Catholics from hearing the shots of the firing squads, noticing the return of the “hot” terror or the cold-blooded murders that showered Malaga, Bilbao, Santander, Gijon, Lerida and all the other places. The blood of its martyrs, the only blood that it recognized, clamored for vengeance. For the rest, neither pity or pardon.

Without pardon

There was not the slightest hint of pardon in Malaga. After its occupation by the Franquist and Italian troops, Bishop Balbino Santos Olivera filled the city with Te Deums, religious ceremonies, sanctification of Christian martyrs, purification of the profaned sites and re-catholicization projects. The Bishop was concerned about the religious ignorance of the defeated, which he expected to resolve with catechism classes and the administration of sacraments and with the reconstruction of the family and Catholic matrimony. But not a single word of condemnation of the extermination of the defeated or of piety towards those that Franco’s “great sense of justice” pointed to as guilty emerged from his mouth.

There would have been no lack of work for don Balbino, if he had wished to pay attention to that delicate subject. At least fifteen hundred people were assassinated in the following months, in the jail, in the cemetery, “taken for a walk” at night. Between February 8, 1937 and April of 1939, 819 women and 4,168 men were taken to the provincial prison - and these numbers do not include those who were detained in the other jails of the province and in the concentration camps. Bodies that disappeared and were never registered. Entries that repeated items like “wounded by firearms”, “suffocation by compression”, “fracture of the base of the cranium”. In summary, the return of the “hot” terror.

But there was much more. From February 6, many tens of thousands of citizens, men, women, old people and children started a genuine rush towards Almeria to avoid the raids and reprisals of the conquerors, and were bombarded by the Air Force and the naval vessels *Cervera* and *Baleares*. The road was covered with dead and wounded and many families lost their children in the flight. Around 40,000 people managed to reach Almeria, a small city with hardly 60,000 inhabitants that had to take on, without any resources, that avalanche of refugees. The number of dead that is suggested in what Doctor Norman Bethume called *El crimen del camino de Málaga-Almería* [The crime on the Malaga-Almeria road] is over 3000, though good sources that would allow a meticulous count have not been found. Leaving

aside the numbers, there is still the testimony of one of the most tragic episodes of the Civil War: “the Calvary of Malaga to Almeria, the merciless crime...” written by Rafael Alberti.<sup>18</sup>

“The more insensible and cruel one showed oneself to be, the more one was considered to be on the side of Franco” commented Gumersindo de Estella on June 13, 1938 in her diary. The Capuchin monk who provided spiritual comfort to those in the Zaragoza jail was a witness to how the prison was filled even further with hundreds of detainees proceeding from the Republican regions of Aragón, recently conquered by Franco's troops. “In many individual cells there were eighteen prisoners” and beatings “happened daily, cruelly delivered by capos who usually were prisoners who had been condemned to many years of jail time for common crimes”.

Father Gumersindo was also a witness to how the repression settled old land, personal and business disputes, leaving those who reported a crime free to act as they wished. The rightists with families that had been murdered by the revolutionaries clamored for revenge, often encouraged by the new priests in those villages recently liberated from the revolutionary nightmare. On October 27, 1938, a prisoner attempted suicide by running into a wall when he heard his sentence in the chapel. “Those executioners are not going to kill me” were his last words. Instead of trying to treat him, they took him with the other six prisoners condemned to death that day, “and once they laid him on the ground they shot him in the head with a pistol”.

One had to be cruel and insensible because Franco and his military companions in crime had made it clear from the beginning of 1937 that they were not going to accept any mediation to end the war, “only an unconditional surrender”. Franco told this to Gomá in June of 1937 so that the primate, by then already a good friend of the Generalissimo, would transmit the message to the Holy See. He would neither accept an agreement nor did he have to change anything regarding the supposed hardness with which the military treated the enemy “because nobody was condemned without due process and all was done according to the rules of the military code”.

And Gomá believed this. Or he had to believe it so that the others would also believe it. “General Franco is magnanimous” he used to say to those who doubted. Because he really knew him, having interceded before him so that after the conquest of Bilbao “the repression would be as gentle as possible” especially towards priests, so as to avoid the repetition of the “horrible” scene of catholic priests killed by catholic military personnel following the fall of Guipúzcoa.<sup>19</sup>

One year later, Franco's opinion regarding possible mediation was repeated endlessly. “Those who want mediation are, consciously or unconsciously, serving the interests of the Reds and the hidden enemies of Spain (...) Our justice could not be more serene or more noble; its generosity is only fenced in

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<sup>18</sup> Numbers from Málaga and the Málaga-Almería road in Antonio Nadal, *Guerra civil en Málaga [Civil war in Malaga]*, Arguval, Málaga, 1984, pp 190-191, and Encarnacion Barranquero, *Málaga entre la guerra y la posguerra. El franquismo [Malaga between war and postwar. Franquism]*, Arguval, Málaga, 1994, pp 203-229

<sup>19</sup> Efforts to mitigate the repression of priests in María Luisa Rodríguez Aisa, *El cardenal Gomá y la guerra de España*, pp. 222-223; Franco is “magnanimous” p. 229; and the declaration of Franco to Gomá regarding the “unconditional surrender” p. 170.

by the supreme interest of the Fatherland; no type of mediation could make it more benign". On October 18 and at the start of November, 1938, almost at the conclusion of the long battle of the River Ebro, he said the same thing to the Reuter's agency correspondent: "the clear and definitive victory of our army is the only solution for Spain to survive (...) and the only aim is: the unconditional surrender of the enemy".<sup>20</sup>

Neither mediation nor pardon. The entire military spoke endlessly of a process of "cleansing", as if one had to "purify" Spain from "ill bodies". Furthermore, there were many ecclesiastics, bishops, people in religious orders, and priests who went very much further in the defense of assassinations and injustice. "We are at the hour of victory. Then will come the hour of convincing. Convincing the defeated and helping the victorious to forge a great Spain for an immense God", Martín Sánchez-Juliá, Director of the Acción Católica Nacional de Propagandistas [National Catholic Action of Propagandists], was already thinking by April 1, 1937. Pacification by arms at the point of a sword. That was the peace that had to arrive.<sup>21</sup>

From the pulpits one could hear thunderous voices asking for the extermination of the opponents. We know this thanks to the reliable testimonies of Gumersindo de Estella, of the then priest of Alsasua, Marino Ayerra, of Georges Bernanos, of Antonio Bahamonde, or of Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana, secretary of the Court of First Instance of Burgos who "attested" and told of his experiences from Paris after fleeing from "Nationalist Spain". In that Castilian city that so smelled of incense and righteous assassination from July of 1936, the preacher of the Church of Mercy asked for an implacable punishment for the enemies of God: "With those people you have to be, we all have to be, like fire and water... there cannot be any forgiveness for the criminal destroyers of the churches and murderers of sacred priests and religious people. May their seed be rubbed out, evil seed, seed of the devil. Because truly, the sons of Beelzebub are the enemies of God".<sup>22</sup>

All the attempts to end the war by means of a negotiated peace failed. They were promoted by Manuel Azaña, president of the republic, and even received favorably by the Vatican in the spring of 1937, at the same time that Franco was asking Gomá to circulate abroad a collective missive from the Spanish Episcopate to "place truth where it belongs, fulfilling at the same time patriotic work and historical cleansing", that is to say to "disprove" the "false and tendentious" information that was available and that was so hurting "the good name of Spain and the Church". No one in Franco's Spain wanted to talk of "coexistence", of "continuing to live together so that the nation would not perish", as Azaña requested in Valencia on July 18, 1937, one year after the start of that "terrible war, war on the body of our very fatherland".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*, pp 318, 319.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in José Ángel Tello, *Ideología política. La Iglesia católica española, 1936-1959* [Political ideology. The Spanish Catholic Church], p. 85

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

<sup>23</sup> Azaña, "Discurso en la Universidad de Valencia [Lecture at the University of Valencia]", July 18, 1937, in *Los Españoles en guerra [Spaniards at war]*, Crítica, Barcelona, 1977, pp. 74-75, though the piece about "terrible war..." is from the "Discurso en el Ayuntamiento de Valencia Lecture at the Valencia town hall", January 21, 1937 (p. 19).

On that subject Cardinal Gomá was another military man who rejected any peace that wasn't instituted by armed force. Even as primate of the Church of Spain and official representative of the Holy See until October 1937, he advised the Vatican not to collaborate with attempts to achieve an armistice, advice that was also backed in Rome by Ledóchowski, the Jesuit Superior General. Very few ecclesiastics, so few that they were never heard, showed disagreement with this position.

Any discordant voices came from outside, from French Catholic intellectuals such as François Mauriac or Jacques Maritain who, scandalized by their enormity of the crimes blessed by the Church, created the French Committee for Civil and Religious Peace in Spain. But the Spanish Catholic Church was terrified of the possibility of change of course, a return to the Republic and its anticlericalism at the very moment that, thanks to the sword and the cross, Imperial Spain, one, great and free, was returning “with its Catholic laws, its Catholic teaching, its Catholic morals and its Catholic Church as the only official church”. The very moment that “male communism” and “female communism”, as Manuel González, bishop of Palencia called them, one with “guns and flaming torches”, and the other with nothing, “no stockings on their legs or sleeves on their arms..., nor shame in their face nor a single serious thought in their heads” was being torn down.<sup>24</sup>

There would be Catholic laws, Catholic teaching, Catholic morals, with the Catholic Church as the only official church, without the slightest concession to the cultural and religious pluralism that took root in Spain in the first decades of the 20th century. Because of that there was no possibility of “continuing to live together” in that resuscitated Spain that eliminated the “sons of Beelzebub”. Just like fire and water. The Christ and the Antichrist were fighting on Spanish soil.

Christ won. Without any possibility of a negotiated peace, the peace of the cemetery, the peace of the consolidation of the regime of terror without further war, arrived. All of Catalonia fell exhausted at the feet of Franco's troops in hardly a month, in the midst of religious and patriotic exultation. In mid January of 1939 they entered Tarragona. At the doors of the cathedral and facing an infantry company with full military honors, the military governor received the key of the cathedral. He opened the door and José Artero, the officiating priest, the canon of Salamanca from the military department for the recovery of objects of worship, ritually sprinkled holy water on those who entered, singing the antiphons and the miserere of liturgical reconciliation. According to the report of *Diario Español* of January 24, Artero “gave a speech of deep Spanish sentiment”. If we believe the statement of the then seminarist Salvador Ramón, as reproduced by Hilari Ragner, Canon Artero's Spanish sentiment was so deep that he said, very loudly, clearly inspired by

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*, pp. 133-134. Discordant voices in Juan María Laboa, “World Catholic reaction”, in “The Civil War”, *Historia 16*, vol 13, 1986, pp. 111-112. The “arrangement” that the Holy See would not collaborate in any mediation to end the war is communicated by Gomá to Monsignor Pizzardo on May 25, 1937, in a letter quoted by María Luisa Rodríguez Aisa, *El cardenal Gomá y la guerra de España*, p.167.

the occasion: “Catalan dogs! You are not worthy of the sun that shines on you!”.<sup>25</sup>

One week later, on Sunday January 29, after the fall of Barcelona, an enormous open air mass was celebrated in Catalonia square, presided by General Juan Yagüe, the conqueror. General Álvarez Arenas told Dionisio Ridruejo, the new military governor: “This is a city that has sinned to a very great extent, and that now must be sanctified. Altars must be installed in all the streets of the city and mass must be said continuously”. The troops of the army of Navarre of General José Solchaga Zala led the official entry into Barcelona. In the words of the British military attaché in Burgos, “the Navarre soldiers are taking the lead, not because they fought better, but because they're the ones who have the most fierce hatred” towards Catalonia and the Catalans.<sup>26</sup>

In his account of the “revolution and the terror” in Barcelona, Francisco Lacruz declared sententiously that “the shadowy slavery of the city had ended”. Its inhabitants had sinned so badly that the vision that the Catalan capital offered its liberators was “Dantesque”: “hunger, suffering and terror had converted it into a population of living dead, hallucinatory beings, spectral”. The surviving inhabitants came out to greet the victors, “starving, aged...” finding strength from weakness. “The terrible Red years that have no dimension, that lack a measurement in time, that are like centuries, like infinite periods, have passed over them”.

This was nothing like the terrestrial paradise that George Orwell had painted. It was a “gigantic vessel of putrefaction” over which “Sovietism like a thousand year horror” had passed. It was necessary to satisfy the hunger of those who were starving, recover the “will to live”, the “tenacious and lasting hard-working drive of this great Spanish city with a glorious history” and punish all those responsible for the “Red dictatorship”.<sup>27</sup>

As Michael Richards has pointed out recently, the occupation of Catalonia “was conceived in pathological terms”. A doctor and friend of Franco from the times of the Moroccan war, Victor Ruiz Albéniz (“El Tebib Arrumi”), recommended in the *Heraldo de Aragón* [Aragon Herald] of February 4, 1939, a “biblical punishment (Sodom and Gomorrah)... to purify the Red city, the seat of anarchy and of separatism..., as the only method to extirpate those two cancers with implacable thermal cauterization”. Ramón Serrano Súñer, Minister of the Interior of that first Franquist government created on January 13, 1938, also knew how to treat that “secessionist virus” the ailment of Catalan nationalism: “today we have Catalonia at the end of our bayonets”, he declared to the *Noticiero Universal* [Universal News] on February 24, 1939: “The matter of physical domination is of short duration. I

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<sup>25</sup> Hilari Ragner, “The Catholic Catalans”, in “La guerra civil [The civil war]”, *Historia [History]* 16, vol 13, 1986, pp.78-79.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Michael Richards, *Un tiempo de silencio [A time of silence]*, p. 46. Álvarez Arenas’ quote in Ronald Fraser, *Recuérdalo tú y recuérdalo a otros [Remember it yourself and remind others]*, volume II, p. 263.

<sup>27</sup> Francisco Lacruz, *El Alzamiento, la revolución y el terror en Barcelona [The Uprising, revolution and terror in Barcelona]*, pp. 264-265.

am sure that the moral incorporation of Catalonia into Spain will happen as quickly as the military incorporation”.<sup>28</sup>

Moral integration was a task for the Catholic Church, the ideal spiritual pursuit for the occupation of a land devastated by the “harshest” religious persecution in history. Miguel de los Santos Díaz y Gomara, bishop of Cartagena, the same one that wanted the gospel to flower in the breaches opened by canons, was named apostolic administrator of Barcelona, and in his first “Pastoral greeting” he added his two cents to the theory of the “cancer” suffered by Catalan society: “Open your eyes well and be convinced of the error of your ways, those seduced by the false bait of secessionist independence, who consciously or unconsciously allied themselves with such perfidious enemies of that which is most saintly and sacred”.<sup>29</sup>

Also mistaken was the Archbishop of Tarragona, Francesc Vidal i Barraquer, who was forbidden to return to his see by Franco’s government. The Spanish ambassador to the Vatican, Yanguas Messía, communicated this to Cardinal Pacelli on January 29, 1939: “it is not the Government which declares itself incompatible with Cardinal Vidal y Barraquer; it is the cardinal who has declared himself to be incompatible with Spain. He already declared this incompatibility with his old maneuvers in favor of a Catalan and anti-Spanish Church; he declared it again when he wouldn’t sign the ‘Collective letter’ from the Spanish episcopate; finally he declared it with his undeniable concomitances and links with the Red Committee based in Barcelona until the liberation of the city. He cannot return to Spain and it is important to resolve, for the good of the Church and the State, the unavoidable problem established by this reality”.

Yanguas told Vida i Barraquer personally that Franco’s government “found itself obliged” to forbid his entry into Spanish territory, in a conversation that they had in Rome on February 16. It would be better, blurted Yanguas, for him to accept “the consequences of your behavior (...) your activities at a distance, both past and present, on a subject, the unity of the Fatherland, that is so essential to the National Movement and regarding which there can be no type of transaction”.

Always the Fatherland. The religious and material conquest demanded physical punishments, assassinations and the legislative dismantling of the Republican period. The Republican troops withdrew to the French frontier in disarray. According to Manuel Azaña’s description, “the rout reached an immeasurable magnitude. A maddened throng of people blocked the highways and byways, spilling over the shortcuts looking for the frontier (...) The human stopper was fifteen kilometers long on the road (...) Some women miscarried in the ditches. Some children died of cold or were trampled...”. The bombs and machine guns of the Franquist aviation caused many injuries and deaths.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Richards, *Un tiempo de silencio*, p. 45

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Hilari Ragner, “El Nacional-catolicismo [National-Catholicism]”, in *Barcelona Any Zero. Història gràfica de l’ocupació de la ciutat [Barcelona Any Zero. Graphical history of the occupation of the city]*, eds. M. Risques, F. Vilanova and R. Vinyes, Museu d’Història de la Ciutat, Barcelona 1999, p. 104. What follows on Vidal i Barraquer, on p. 102.

<sup>30</sup> “Carta a Ángel Osorio [Letter to Ángel Osorio]”, in *Obras Completas [Complete works] III*, edition Juan Marichal, Oasis, Mexico, 1967, p.539.

Revenge against Red Catalonia revived the “hot” terror with firing squads *in situ* without prior trials and before the real start of the “surgical operation” set in motion by the machinery of the military jurisdiction. From the occupation of Catalonia until the total triumph of Franco's army, fifty days of chaotic anti-Catalan behavior took place, in the form of beatings, humiliation of Red women, sacking and destruction of libraries, and assassinations of those who “had blood on their hands” and could not escape. British diplomats, in an assessment made two years later, felt that the “treatment received by the Catalans is worse than that suffered by the victims of the German Gestapo and the Italian OVRA”.<sup>31</sup>

With the fall of Barcelona and the total conquest of Catalonia, the Republic was agonizing. The governments of Great Britain and France finally officially recognized that of Franco. Manuel Azaña resigned as president of the Republic. The coup of Colonel Segismundo Casado worsened the situation. It started a desperate and costly fratricidal fight in that dying Republic and didn't achieve any “honorable peace” but only an unconditional surrender, providing the result that Franco, the military, the civil authorities and the Catholic Church had consistently demanded, the annihilation of the Republican regime and its supporters.

There still is the drama of Alicante. Around fifteen thousand people, among them military chiefs, Republican politicians, fighters and civil population, were packed in the port. The Italians arrived in the city before most of the multitude could embark on French and British boats. Many of those captured were executed on the spot. Others preferred to commit suicide rather than to be victims of the Franquist repression.

“The Red Army captive and disarmed”, the war was ending with the total triumph of Franco's “National” troops. On the very day of the “liberation” of the capital, Leopoldo Eijo y Garay, bishop of Madrid, published his pastoral letter “The present hour”: “In the shadow of the blessed yellow and red flag, bequeathed to us by our parents, and under the protection of our heroic soldiers and voluntary militia, now enjoying the peace that with such will, with such anxiety we have wished for you and which we have asked God to give you”. The war had been necessary and inevitable because “Spain could not be saved through ordinary methods”, and “the present hour” was, no more no less in the entire world, but, “singularly” in Spain, “the time for settling humanity's accounts with the political philosophy of the French Revolution”. One had to pray for the persecutors of the Church, because they were going to need it, and for the “glorious Caudillo, provided to Spain by God”, for whom he requested “as much light and divine assistance as he wanted, which is like saying as much as is required for the needs and the glory of Spain”.<sup>32</sup>

Catholicism and the Fatherland fused together, liberated by the redeeming cross. “Do Catholicism” and “don't be afraid that it might be an anachronistic cure”, Cardenal Gomá had said two months earlier: “with it you will make the Fatherland, one, great, free, since nowadays the triple adjective pleases us”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Richards, *Un tiempo de silencio*, p. 229, note 151.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Gonzalo Redondo, *Historia de la Iglesia en España 1931-1939*, pp. 603-605

<sup>33</sup> Gomá's Pastoral letter, “Catholicismo y Patria” [Catholicism and Fatherland], February 5, 1939, in Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*, pp. 410-416.

The Church was mad with happiness, with the “immense gratitude that an innocent victim feels towards a generous defender”, as the Bishop of Gerona, José Cartaña stated to English and French journalists. Between the Church and Franco's government there was no relation other than that demanded by “Catholic doctrine and Spanish tradition”. And the episcopate, while supporting the liberating army, had paid attention to fulfilling its “sacred mission, begging for blessings for the defenders of God and the Fatherland's cause”.<sup>34</sup>

As we know it was not only blessings that they were begging for. But it wasn't going to be the Church that rained on the party after what it had cost, after the calvary suffered in the Republican zone, after having worn, day and night, the “clerical mask” to hide the extermination committed by the military almost three years earlier.<sup>35</sup> Moments of festival, Te Deums, resurrection of Spain and of the honor of the martyrs of the crusade, to the “fallen for God and for Spain”. The assassinated Reds, deserving their fate one thousand times over, were truly dead. Of the others, beaten but still not dead, they would be taken care of by the “magnanimous and Christian” justice of Franco.

“So it's back, then, once again!” wrote the ex-priest Marino Ayerra from his exile, when summarizing what the triumph of the Church and Franco meant: “To the heroic times of Imperial and Catholic Spain!”, “To noble titles, to privileges and perquisites!”, “To the unity of faith, to the Inquisition, to the old censorship!”, “To the separation of classes, to the opulence of some and the misery of others!”, “To the peace of order, to obey and to be quiet!”.<sup>36</sup>

#### “The triumph in the City of God”

A few hours after announcing that the Red Army was captive and disarmed, the Generalissimo received a telegram from Pius XII, previously Cardinal Pacelli, who had been elected pope on March 2 of the same year after the unexpected death of his predecessor Pius XI on February 10: “Raising our heart to the Lord, sincerely grateful for Your Excellency's much desired Catholic victory in Spain. We sincerely wish that this beloved country, having reached peace, return with new vigor to its ancient and Christian traditions that made it so great”.

It deserved nothing less. A victory like that deserved an apostolic blessing, and Franco was really grateful: “Intense emotion caused by paternal telegram from Your Holiness on occasion of total victory of our armies, that in heroic Crusade have fought against enemies of Religion of the Fatherland and of Christian civilization. The Spanish people that has suffered so much, also

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<sup>34</sup> Agustín Sebastián Ruiz (a Benedictine monk from Silos), “La Iglesia y el Movimiento Nacional. Aspecto religioso de la guerra de España” [The Church and the National Movement. Religious aspect of the Spanish war], in *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana*, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 1944, pp. 1551-1573.

<sup>35</sup> “Clerical mask”, an expression of José Bergamín, *Detrás de la cruz [Behind the cross]*, quoted in Frances Lannon, *Privilegio, persecución y profecía [Privilege, persecution and prophecy]*, p. 250.

<sup>36</sup> Marino Ayerra, *No me avergoncé del Evangelio [I was not ashamed of the gospel]*, p. 325



raises, with Your Holiness, its heart to the Lord who delivered his grace, and asks for his protection for the great work to come”.

Cardinal Isidro Gomá was another one who could not miss out on the round of congratulations. From Pamplona he reminded Franco on April 3 “with what interest I joined with your aims from the beginning; how I collaborated with the great task with my meager strength, within my role as Prelate of the Church; you have never been short of my prayers and those of my priests”.

Because of that, Gomá felt that he had “a special right to participate in your joy at these moments of definitive triumph”. Spain and its Church might have “been buried for ever but nevertheless God, “who in Your Excellence has found a worthy instrument for his providential plans towards our beloved Fatherland”, had avoided it happening. God and the Fatherland would repay “the glorious Spanish Army” and “specially” Franco for “the colossal efforts that they have had to make to reach the climax of the enormous enterprise”. They would repay it “with the love of the people” and with “long years of life to go on working in peace as you have done in war.”

The words of Gomá turned out to be prophetic, a type of curse on defeated Spain that had to suffer the “long years of life” in the peace of the Caudillo. Franco used his answer, signed in Burgos on April 11, to praise “the quiet martyrdom that the representatives of our faith suffered” and to give thanks for the “spiritual assistance” of the Church that “at a time of greatest worldwide incomprehension, served notice of our spiritual reserves and of the true feelings of the National Movement”. He would also repay the Church for that collaboration with a privileged position in the “just, patriotic and Christian formula” that he was in the process of putting into effect.<sup>37</sup>

The Church and the regime that emerged victorious from the war were having “their honeymoon”, in the words of Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, while the cemeteries, the jails and the French concentration camps filled up with Reds. A honeymoon with unmistakable signs of lasting, as well as being blessed, and this time in a big way, by the famous radio message that at 10 AM on April 16, Pius XII directed to “Catholic Spain”. The Pope issued congratulations “for the gift of peace and of victory”, confirmed the religious character of the war, remembered the bishops, priests, members of religious orders, and the faithful “who in such a large number had sealed with blood their faith in Jesus Christ and their love for the Catholic Religion” and asked everyone to follow “the inculcated principles of the Church, proclaimed with such nobility by the Generalissimo, of justice for crimes committed and benevolent generosity for those who are misguided”.

“Justice for crimes committed and benevolent generosity for those who are misguided” was a way of saying the same thing that, passively and actively, the Spanish bishops had been saying all along: that some were guilty, others were fooled, and all would be treated with the appropriate blade of the “magnanimous” justice of Franco. In reality, what really mattered - and this is what Pius XII was saying - was that “providential designs” had once again manifested themselves upon “heroic Spain”, a nation chosen by God from time immemorial that had just given “the proselytes of materialistic atheism of our

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<sup>37</sup> Exchange of telegrams between Pius XII and Franco and messages between Gomá and Franco in Gonzalez Redondo, *Historia de la Iglesia en España, 1931-1939*, pp. 607-608

century the most sublime proof that above everything can be found the eternal values of religion and the spirit”.<sup>38</sup>

Franco and Gomá were enthusiastic with the message, with the faith that the Holy See showed in that half of Spain and in its redeemer. At the request of the Vatican, the message was written by the Jesuit priest Joaquín Salaverri, a Galician from Mondoñedo, professor of History of Dogmas in the Pontific Gregorian University. He discussed the text with the Pope and managed to include the term “victory” in the first paragraph, a word that Pius XII wanted to omit. Salaverri heard the radio message from the Gregorian University on the morning of April 16 with around fifty Spaniards and Hispanics. “Magnificent” they said: one could not ask for more; it is the golden brooch of the religious Spanish gesture”. That was the opinion of the majority of the Spanish clergy, those responsible for the fact that the recently concluded three-year war had adopted right from the start a religious meaning, that of a crusade against the “new Saracens”.

In Rome there was also a Te Deum and a “reception in honor of the victorious end of the war” organized by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, future Paul VI, celebrated on April 12 in the Jesuit Church of Gesú with the participation of the College of Cardinals and the Secretariat of State of the Vatican.<sup>39</sup>

On May 19, 1939, one hundred and twenty thousand soldiers marched in front of their Caudillo as a “triumphant army and people who became an armed militia” in a political-military apotheosis ceremony in which Spain, according to the report of *ABC* of the following day, showed “to the world the power of the weapons that forged the New State”, that of the “second reconquest”. In the opinion of Paul Preston, the display served “to identify Franco with Hitler and Mussolini, to associate him with the great medieval warriors of Spanish history, and to humiliate the defeated Republican population”.<sup>40</sup>

Before the ceremony, General José Enrique Varela, as a delegate from the Government, and “in the name of the Fatherland”, bestowed on the Generalissimo the Great Embroidered Cross of San Fernando, the highest decoration instituted during what's known as the war of Independence of 1808 that was only bestowed on the King “or on he, that in his absence, exercised executive power”. Many town councils had requested the bestowing of that Great Cross on Franco, the redeemer and liberator of the Spanish nation. General Francisco Gómez Jordana y Souza, count of Jordana, Vice President of the Government and Foreign Minister, read the text of the decree which justified the granting of the highest honors given “by the high-ranking knights” to the Caudillo, “who with magnificent seriousness gave an account of the ending of the campaign in the historic dispatch”.

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<sup>38</sup> I quote it just as it appears in the *Boletín Eclesiástico del Arzobispado de Burgos*, May 10, 1939.

<sup>39</sup> Information regarding Salaverri, Te Deum in Rome and “honeymoon” in Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*, pp. 405-406.

<sup>40</sup> All the information that follows regarding the military procession comes from Giuliana di Febo, “Franco, la ceremonia de Santa Bárbara y la ‘representación’ del Nacionalcatolicismo” [Franco, the ceremony of Santa Barbara and the representation of National-Catholicism], in Xavier Quinzá Lleo and José J. Alemany, eds., *Ciudad de los hombres, Ciudad de Dios. Homenaje a Alfonso Álvarez Bolado [City of men, City of God. Homaje to Alfonso Alvarez Bolado]*, SJ., Pontific University of Comillas, Madrid, 1999, pp. 463-464. The quote of Paul Preston in *Franco*, p. 365.

Franco, sitting on the raised platform on Castellana Street, was wearing a military uniform with the blue shirt of the Falange and the red beret of the Carlists. The parade was headed by General Andrés Saliquet. For five hours, all of those who had contributed to the victory and to filling Spanish territory with blood passed by: the Italian blackshirts, the Falangists, the Carlists with their crosses, the regular troops, the Foreign Legion and the Moorish mercenaries. Not absent either was a symbolic exhibition of Andalusian young men mounted on horseback. General Von Richtofen of the Condor Legion closed the parade. A number of planes wrote the words “Viva Franco!” [Long Live Franco] in the sky. In his speech, Franco made very clear his determination to remove from the map the political forces defeated in war and to be always on the alert against “the Jewish spirit that allowed an alliance of the great capital with Marxism”.

The army, the aristocracy and “the people who became an armed militia”, reminiscent of Catholic traditionalism but also reflecting fascist ideology, travelled hand in hand in the glorification of Franco. The King, Alfonso XIII, also contributed to the show. He sent Franco a letter of congratulation for his victory, in which he supported granting the Great Cross and which he signed “at your disposal, as always, to cooperate in any way I can in this difficult task, with certainty that it will triumph in the end and will take Spain to the summit”.

That day of victory of 1939 was also celebrated in all schools with “patriotic conferences” that, according to the instructions of the Ministry of National Education, should address and discuss the “necessity and meaning of the Spanish Crusade”, “the culminating deeds of the War of liberation” and “the Caudillo of Spain, as the architect of Victory and Savior of the Fatherland”.<sup>41</sup>

The following day of the military parade, both the crusade and the Caudillo became pure religious theater in the archaic and medieval ceremony that took place in the Church of Santa Barbara, which had been ordered to be constructed in the XVIII century by Barbara of Braganza, wife of King Ferdinand VI. It was a regal church with luxurious marbles and mosaics and was located in the center of Madrid, in a district where the aristocracy and the upper middle classes lived. In the opinion of Giuliana di Febo, the author who has best brought out the symbolism and the atmosphere of those celebrations, the simultaneous nature of the victory parade and the “surrender of the sword” at Santa Barbara, demonstrated “a wish to take ownership of all urban spaces, both in the military-political arena and in the religious one”.<sup>42</sup>

It was eleven in the morning of May 20 when Franco arrived at the Salesas square to the sound of pealing bells. Portraits of Franco and enormous tapestries decorated the surrounding buildings. He was accompanied by the Moorish guard, and dressed in a captain general’s uniform, on which stood out the Great Decorated Cross of San Fernando, a blue shirt and red beret. According to the reports of the time, collected by Giuliana di Febo, Franco moved towards the door of the Church walking on a large carpet that extended from the presbytery, via the exterior steps of the atrium, to the street, in the

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<sup>41</sup> Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*, pp. 399-400.

<sup>42</sup> I continue to description of this ceremony made by Giuliana di Febo in “Franco, la ceremonia de Santa Bárbara y la ‘representación’ del Nacionalcatolicismo”, pp. 465-473

midst of a gun salute and a chorus of “flechas” [a youth organization], as well as the female section singing *Cara al Sol* [Face to the Sun] accompanied by Ramón Serrano Súñer. “His walk under the arc of palms from the Levante – swaying in the hands of the “flechas” with the red berets and blue shirts-- give the event a biblical flavor.”

Waiting at the door were the religious and military authorities, the Government, bishops, archbishops, the cardinal primate Isidro Gomá and many ambassadors, among whom was the Papal Nuncio, Monsignor Gaetano Cicognani. There, to receive him, was the Bishop of Madrid Leopoldo Eijo y Garay who offered him his ring and a crucifix to kiss.

Once inside, while the national anthem was playing, Franco approached the altar under a canopy carried by members of the Government, an honor reserved until then to the Holy Sacrament and to kings. The Church of Santa Barbara was decked out for the occasion with the most representative symbols of the history of the religious-military fusion that National Catholicism intended to recover. The Holy Arc with the relics of Pelayo, the mythical character of the first reconquest, had been brought from the Oviedo Cathedral. The chains of Navarra, conquered in the victory over the moors at Las Navas de Tolosa, circled the presbytery. Franco was also surrounded by other relics: the lantern of the vessel that was captained by Juan de Austria in the battle of Lepanto and the votive lamp of the Gran Capitán.

Accompanied by select members of the public, with uniforms and decorations, “severe” dress suits and “ladies and young women”, their heads covered with Spanish lace and “lofty” combs, Franco, the military chiefs, and the political and ecclesiastical authorities heard the Te Deum and Mozarabic songs of the 10th century sung by the Benedictine choir of the monastery of Silos, led by the warrior monk Justo Pérez de Urbel.

In the prayer and the benediction that followed, Franco was exalted as a Caudillo-King, a victorious savior. Seconds later he entered the presbytery and deposited his sword at the feet of the Holy Christ of Lepanto, brought expressly for the ceremony from the Barcelona Cathedral. The act, writes Giuliana di Febo, “sanctions the consecration and auto-consecration, both political and religious, of the charismatic leader and at the same time alludes to the older alliance between the cross and the sword as a symbol of the alliance between the throne and the altar”.

The ceremony ended with Franco’s “imploration” and Gomá’s blessing, consummated with an “effusive hug” between the two individuals. Franco reaffirmed the “just holy war” against the “enemy of the truth in this century”. Gomá requested divine protection for the Caudillo, “as well as for the people whose regime has been granted to you”.

Franco left the Church under a canopy. Once in the square, photographers captured his face, full of emotion, “that could not contain tears”. He was leaving the ceremony endowed with absolute power, an artifice of a second reconquest that linked in time with the victorious epics of the first. That's how it was perceived by the reporter of *Arriba* the following day: “We are in the great, fortunate, victorious infant days of a new State, of a resurrected Fatherland, of a renewed history. This infancy, perfectly includes Caesar,

Charlemagne, our Emperor... After the Victory, the Church, the Army, the People, have all consecrated Franco as Caudillo of Spain”.

The Church, that right from the start had offered all its services to the military rebels, prostrated itself with its entire liturgy, at the feet of the victorious Caudillo, hero of the second reconquest, creator of the new State. On June 6, Cardinal Gomá told Franco in a letter that he had handed over the “historical sword” to the chapter of the Toledo Cathedral, so that it could be displayed there together with other “extremely precious votive offerings (...) incontrovertible witness of the greatness and the religious nature of our beloved Spain”.<sup>43</sup>

The Bishop of Salamanca, Enrique Pla y Daniel, also wanted to add himself to the celebrations. On September 30, 1936, one day before the exaltation of Franco to the position of “Chief of Government of the State”, he had made public his pastoral document “The two cities”, a legitimization in writing of the military rebellion and of the war as a crusade, after other bishops had already done the same in previous weeks in a more spontaneous and less deliberate manner. On May 21, 1939, once the crusade was over, with the corresponding bloody bath of the unfaithful, the day after the reception of the victorious Caudillo in the Church of Santa Barbara, Pla signed his other great pastoral letter: “The triumph of the City of God and the Resurrection of Spain”.

The year of the victory was also the year of the “Resurrection of Spain”, after three years of “Holy Crusade, not only for God and for Spain, but to defend Christian civilization in the world”. In addition, for Spain it also meant a second reconquest: “The first started under the protection of Our Lady of Covadonga against the Islamic wave that arrived from Africa. The second started under the protection of Our Lady of Africa who called on the Caudillo, and ended with the flight of the Communists and their allies across the Pyrenees”.

After the inevitable run-through of the martyrs and the derogation of lay legislation by the “National Movement”, Pla demanded reparations for “the extremely grave injustice of the suppression of the budget of Worship and Clergy” and “the injustices committed against the Church in the economic field in the last two centuries”.

The war was over. “God with his Divine Providence provided us with a Caudillo of indomitable faith, eminent intelligence and hard-working will.” What was left was to win “a victory of a lasting and consoling peace”, a “second Victory” that would complete “the triumph of the City of God and the Resurrection of Spain”.<sup>44</sup>

With so much triumph and resurrection, the Church was overjoyed, crazy with happiness in that month of flowers -- full of pilgrimages, of symbolic returns of Virgins to their sacred places, of acts of amends and processions. It was a total regeneration of the new nation created in the battle against evil, the achievement of a Catholic denomination of the State, the fascistization of the sacred, the sacralization of fascist politics, the “despotism of the military and

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Gonzalo Redondo, *Historia de la Iglesia en España 1931-1939*, p. 628, who also dedicates a large section to the Santa Barbara ceremony, pp. 623-630.

<sup>44</sup> The quotes are from the copy of the pastoral letter that appeared in the *Boletín Eclesiástico del Arzobispado de Burgos*, September 15 and 20, 1939.

the clerics”, as Barcala, one of the characters in Manuel Azaña’s *La velada en Benicarló* called it.

The war had ended. And with it ended the political and class war, the parliamentary system, the lay Republic, and revolutionary atheism, all the demons buried by Franco's victory at arms with divine protection. What was missing was the “second victory”, the one that would give the Spanish Catholic Church the most important privileges in its history. Apparently, to use the accurate description of Manuel Azaña, it was all “sabers, chasubles, military parades, and homages to the Virgen del Pilar”.<sup>45</sup> But beyond appearances, rhetoric and ceremonies, there were many other things: the reformist project of the Republic, and everything that that form of government meant was swept away and spread out over the graves of thousands of citizens; the workers’ movement, its organizations and its culture, were all systematically eliminated in a process that was more violent and lasting than was suffered by other European anti-Fascist movements. That was also the meaning of the “surgical operation on the social body of Spain”, demanded with such vehemence by the franquists, the owning classes and the spiritual witch doctors.

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<sup>45</sup> Manuel Azaña, Notation of October 6, 1937 (“Cuaderno de la Pobleta” [Pobleta notebook]) in *Memorias políticas y de guerra II [Political and war memories]*, Crítica, Barcelona, 1978, p. 313.