

SPAIN

Causes of the Civil War

A SPANISH CORRESPONDENT writes :—

Many people believed at the beginning of the war in Spain that it would be of short duration. However, the war continues and it is difficult to foresee how long it will last. To-day the world is beginning to understand that the reasons for this cruel struggle must be very deep-seated.

At the beginning of the Republican régime those who were well informed knew that sooner or later the tragedy would burst forth. Ever since the distant days of the Catholic Kings, when the Moors and the Jews were expelled from Spain, the nation has followed a downward path. That famous queen who helped the Genoese navigator who discovered America was the origin of the decadence of Spain. In order to pay the nobles for the help lent to her in men and money for the conquest of Granada the Catholic queen took the land from the people and delivered it to the lordship of the nobles. Andalusia, a prosperous region, was in fifty years reduced to poverty—on the one side great landed proprietors, on the other a people in moral and material destitution. On her death-bed the queen realized the great injury which had been done, and in her famous last will and testament she begged and prayed that the ownership of the land should be restored to the communes or municipalities. This last wish was not complied with. "It is easy to find the way into hell, but not to come out again."

During the reign of her daughter Juana, Cardinal Cisneros opposed the alienation of more lands to the nobles with their insatiable appetites. The struggle was terrible but the Cardinal was able to maintain it until the succession of Charles V, grandson of the Catholic queen, who devoted himself to satisfying the insatiable appetite of the nobles and took away the communal lands of Castille and Estremadura, delivering these two regions to poverty as his grandmother had done with Andalusia.

This Charles V, born in Germany, was a terrible scourge to Spain. Her treasury was despoiled to carry on continuous wars and her commerce was ruined. Never before were so many monopolies and privileges created. The decadence continued under the following kings. The people lived like slaves, and Spain fell into the greatest poverty.

Some forty years ago there began in Spain a struggle to remedy this great poverty by restoring to the people the lands that had formerly been theirs, but all these efforts were unsuccessful. The governments were dominated by the nobility. Whenever a law was passed which might have been prejudicial to them they had it annulled.

Some six years ago, at its birth, the Republic introduced the law for Agrarian Reform which gave land to the people, and within a few days there broke out the military rising of Sanjurjo, a general in the service of the dukes and the great landed proprietors. This rising was broken. Its object was to destroy the Agrarian Reform law.

With the Republic the nobles remained and continued to exercise their power. The Conservatives won the elections (in 1933) and the first thing they did was to suppress the Agrarian Reform law. When the Left returned to power, within two months they passed the law relating to communal estates, by which the communal properties which had been taken from the people during the nineteenth century would have been restored to them. Within four days of the passing of this law there broke out the new military rising which has made Spain the scene of a great tragedy. The people won legally at the ballot-box. The Government of the Republic is a legitimate Government and ought to win. All over the world an attempt has been made to prejudice the legitimate Government by calling it a Bolshevik Government, but this is untrue. The majority is Republican. To-day it accepts the help of Communists and Socialists, but the Spaniard will never accept tyranny of anyone. The Spaniard loves individual liberty as the most precious of treasures. The Republic is in the right and it has strength behind it as well. It struggles for an ideal. What it strives for is

certain. Republican Spain will have neither serfs nor feudal lords. In Spain we believe in liberty of trading. Our hope is out of this conflict to find a new path which will lead a noble people to the splendid goal which it struggles and offers its life to attain.