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THE ESSENCE OF FASCISM

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VICTORIOUS FASCISM is not only the downfall of the Socialist Movement ; it is the end of Christianity in all but its most debased forms.

The common attack of German Fascism on both the organisations of the working-class movement and the Churches is not a mere coincidence. It is a symbolic expression of that hidden philosophical essence of Fascism which makes it the common enemy of Socialism and Christianity alike. This is our main contention.

All over Central Europe Socialist Parties and trade unions are being persecuted by the Fascists. But so are Christian Pacifists and Religious Socialists. In Germany National-Socialism is setting up definitely as a counter-religion to Christianity. The Churches are suffering oppression, not for some unchristian rivalry with the secular power, but because, in spite of all compromise with the world, they have not ceased to be Christian. The State is attacking the religious independence of the Protestant Churches, and, when they succeed in asserting their independence, it calmly proceeds to secularise society and education. Even the Roman Church is under heavy fire in Germany. There is reason to doubt whether the Lateran Treaty in Italy has fulfilled her expectations. Where she seemingly holds her own, as in Austria, her position is both politically and morally more than precarious.

Our picture may seem to over-stress the importance of the German developments and to ignore the fact that the

struggle between Fascism and the Churches is far from general. Undoubtedly, the Roman Church follows a different line of policy in different countries ; and even in one and the same country the attitude of the various Christian communities to the Fascist Party State varies. In the encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, the Pope opened an avenue of compromise with Fascist sociology ; though this happened before the victory of National-Socialism, it left no doubt about the direction in which Rome was eventually prepared to take its bearings on the future. Its experiment with a kind of Catholic Fascism in Austria proves this conclusively.

But these instances of the Catholic will to compromise seem rather to enhance than to diminish the significance of the German Church conflict, the seriousness and the reality of which should not be underrated. It bears out our conviction that it is to National-Socialism we must turn to discover the political and philosophical characteristics of full-fledged Fascism. Parallel movements in other countries are but comparatively undeveloped variants of the prototype. Italian Fascism, in spite of Mussolini, has no distinctive philosophy of its own ; indeed, it is almost characterised by a deliberate lack of it. Corporative Austria is marking time. Only in Germany has Fascism advanced to that decisive stage at which a political philosophy turns into a religion. National-Socialism is, indeed, almost as far ahead of Italian or Austrian Fascism as Socialism in Soviet Russia is of the tentative Socialist policies of Labour Governments in Central Europe.

But, even so, there are objections to using the German Church conflict as a proof of the inherent antagonism of Fascism to Christianity. There is, for one, the patent lack of identity between Christianity and the Churches ; secondly, the traditional feud between the Socialist Movement and the Churches on the Continent.

Undoubtedly, it would be impossible to argue that he who attacks the Christian Churches is attacking Christianity. Only too often has the opposite been true in the

