

# APOSTLES OF FASCISM<sup>1</sup>

## A SERIES OF EXCERPTS

BY CHARLES FRAVAL

FASCIST propaganda in France has risen to the dignity of a literature, incorporated not only in newspapers and magazines, but also in books, characterized for the most part by rhapsodic rhetoric and militarist appeal. One of these, *Les Combattants*, by Jacques Arthuys, in its dedication thus apostrophizes France's Unknown Soldier. 'We refuse longer to be submerged in this universal baseness. Everything that is great is vilely aspersed. Everything that is petty is exalted. Whatever safeguards society is destroyed. The navy is going to the dogs. The army is neglected. Spiritual forces are ridiculed.'

Confessing that the *Combattants* cannot hope to win elections, this author declares that it is useless for them to seek seats in Parliament or to organize simply for defense. They must go further. 'The *Combattants* regard with equal indifference or contempt all pre-war politicians, who retain the souls of slaves. Who of them is entitled to our admiration — Poincaré, the traitor? Millerand, who abandoned his post when the editor of a Radical-Socialist paper snapped his fingers? M. Blum? M. Herriot? M. Cachin? No — a thousand times no! Let them return to the oblivion that they merit. We must seize power. And let us not mince words in saying this. To seize

power does not mean that our cleverest members shall contrive to enter the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate and then pull strings to get Cabinet portfolios. That would be a farce. Parliament corrupts all who enter it. The fighter and the politician have nothing in common. . . . To seize power in our sense is not only to exercise political influence, it is to be the State. . . . And the way to do this is by organized force.'

Another and abler preacher of Fascist tactics, Georges Valois, Léon Daudet's coadjutor on the Royalist paper *L'Action Française*, has published a book on this subject entitled *La Révolution Nationale*. He reviews briefly the political history of France during the World War, and argues that her victory, which he attributes solely to her own courage and resources, was made possible by setting up a virtual dictatorship under Clemenceau — an action that he characterizes as 'a revolution approved by an immense majority of the French people.' Therefore, he says, in the present crisis: 'We demand the abdication of the bourgeoisie as a governing class — as it believes itself to be, though erroneously in fact. . . . Mistress of the State, or apparently mistress of the State, the bourgeoisie has become corrupted.' His theory is that the proper function of the common people is to serve and obey the born ruler, the fighter. 'Col-

<sup>1</sup> From *L'Ère Nouvelle* (Paris Radical daily), November 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30

bert was a citizen. A fighter-king appointed him Prime Minister. The fighter and the citizen made an admirable pair; but the fighter was head of the Government, and Colbert was his second.'

Valois would set up a 'national government,' — he implies that no parliamentary government is truly national, — which shall be 'the complete negation of the political, economic, and social philosophy of the nineteenth century.' He describes the revolution he advocates as 'much more than a change of régime by which a monarchy will replace the republic. A national revolution must have a national leader, but it will go beyond putting an hereditary prince in place of a president and leaving liberal institutions in existence.' Instead, it will create an hierarchy consisting of an organized élite which will rule the people as its superior intelligence dictates and not necessarily as the people wish.

Communism and Fascism, divergent as they may be in social ideals and economic doctrines, are identical in tactics. Valois recognizes this: 'In the North, Bolshevism; in the South, Fascism! Fascism and Bolshevism are an identical reaction against the bourgeois and plutocratic spirit. Bolshevism and Fascism alike draw the sword against the financier, the oil king, the pork-packer, who think themselves masters of the world and want to organize it according to the law of money, according to the output of automobiles, according to the philosophy of swine, and to convert the people to a policy of dividends. Both agree in their appeal to force, but Slavic Bolshevism has seized arms to make the accumulated wealth of the Roman world its booty. Latin Fascism has seized arms to protect her producers. . . . Fascism and Bolshevism

are brothers in their common contempt for the bourgeois régime. They are enemies because their strongholds are in the opposite ends of Europe. . . . Moscow wants international revolution so that she may overrun our frontiers. We want national revolution that we may live in peace in our own land.'

Still another preacher of this new gospel is Camille Aymard, editor of *La Liberté*, who has just published a book entitled *Bolchevisme ou Fascisme, Français, il faut choisir!* According to the author, only one choice is open to the people of France. 'Bolshevism or Fascism? That is the implacable dilemma that confronts your generation. That is the question that dominates your destiny. Like the enigma propounded to Œdipus by the Sphinx, you must answer it or perish.' A little later he exclaims melodramatically: 'Citizens of France, do you know what awaits you? Do you know that it is revolution?'

Among the causes of the revolution he predicts is the popular discontent caused by France's post-war disillusionment. 'Unscrupulous politicians — as practically all politicians are — chose to dope the nation with a dream they knew to be false, to let the country walk like a somnambulist into any abyss that might await her.' He then asks why France is indeed slipping into an abyss just when the rest of Europe is recovering. 'As we review the history of the Continent since 1918, we are forced to recognize that only those countries that have resorted to a dictatorship have been able to recover from the ruin of war and to work out their own salvation. Austria, brought to the brink of destruction by her futile parliament and Socialist follies, appealed in despair to the League of Nations to save her, and the League sent her a dictator in the person

of a Dutch burgomaster. . . . When Germany wavered between Bolshevik revolution and a monarchist restoration, the Republic conferred dictatorial powers on General von Seeckt and the country was saved. We behold Hungary, under the dictatorship of Admiral Horthy, rising from the devastation that war and Bolshevism brought upon her. Turkey has struggled to her feet, to the pained astonishment of England, who believed her powerless and moribund, with the aid of Mustapha Kemal's firm hand. Last of all, a Fascist dictatorship has saved Italy from social and economic chaos.' Salvation for France, therefore, is to be found in 'the modern form of order — Fascism.'

Even these direct actionists have their critics who accuse them of being too tolerant of popular institutions. René Johannet, editor of the Royalist

*Revue Universelle*, reproves Camille Aymard for 'anticipating in the régime regenerated by Fascist ideals that he hopes to see France adopt even an attenuated perpetuation of a representative system of government. No, indeed; that farce has lasted too long. . . . Fascism, still in the cradle, is only beginning to find itself. But having once turned its back on the ballot box, it will never return to that device. In this respect Primo de Rivera's Directory, which has abolished even the pretense of a parliament, is better than Mussolini's Government, which is still plagued with a parliamentary opposition, albeit reduced and emasculated. Let us rather look forward to a government not based on elections but on coöptation, in which the able men at the top will recruit their ranks from candidates of their own selection.'

## FASCISM IN FRANCE<sup>1</sup>

BY A PARIS CORRESPONDENT

FOR more than a year the Liberal and Radical press of Paris has raged against Italian Fascism, on the assumption that it threatens seriously parliamentary institutions even in France herself. This hostility cannot be explained by international Socialism's hatred of Mussolini's Government, for middle-class papers have joined actively in the campaign.

To be sure, the French have several reasons for distrusting or disliking Italy. Gascony is being flooded with

<sup>1</sup> From *Kölnische Zeitung* (Conservative daily), November 24, 25

Italian immigrants, who are given a lukewarm welcome. For many of them are political refugees who promise eventually to contribute more to the Communist vote in France than to that of any other Party. Not even the trade-unions are friendly to the new arrivals. Added to this, Italy's domestic wrangles have caused unpleasant incidents among Italians living in France, such as the recent raid of the Corsari della Morte upon the Fascist Club in Paris.

As a result of this growing bitterness, the French Cabinet, at the instance of