

MARCHING TOWARDS THE *CRUZADA*:
DOUGLAS JERROLD'S ROAD TO
NATIONALIST SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

The Spanish Civil War pitted British Christians against each other in an intense battle for the hearts and minds of the public. Generally speaking, Roman Catholics in the United Kingdom favoured the insurgency of General Francisco Franco, who promised to restore the disestablished Catholic Church to its perch of privilege from which the socialist government had removed it and end the violent anticlericalism which had ravaged religious personnel in Spain. Perhaps no English Catholic played a more central role in the almost daily war of words in the secular and religious press than Douglas Jerrold (1893-1964), a lay publicist, novelist, and amateur historian whose Tory sentiments and disillusionment with liberal democracy and the course of modern civilisation in general permeated his writing. In the present article, which traces Jerrold's political thought through his fictional and nonfictional work, it is demonstrated that his advocacy of Franco's Nationalist forces was not merely a knee-jerk response to the anticlericalism of 1936 but virtually an inevitable consequence of his commitment to what he termed the "Counter-Revolution" as a means of restoring his vision of an earlier era.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 has never ceased to fascinate historians of Christianity, politics, and other topics in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Many British scholars have understandably focussed their attention on aspects of their country's involvement in that conflagration, not least how the course of violent events in Spain affected life on the home front. To considerable numbers of Britons, the war did not seem particularly far removed. From the outset it received a massive amount of coverage in the press; *The Times* carried news from Spain almost daily. Strictly speaking, a policy of neutrality prevailed at Whitehall, but this did not prevent a vast amount of ink from being slung and money spent in efforts to sway British public opinion. The sustained efforts to sway popular perceptions of events in Spain bore a bumper crop of fruit, much of it intensely bitter. "For many,

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it became the supreme moral issue of their time", wrote K.W. Watkins in his detailed study, *Britain divided. The effect of the Spanish Civil War on British public opinion*.² The Oxford literary scholar Valentine Cunningham observed in 1986 with regard to British literary repercussions:

In no war before this one had the means of propaganda been used on so massive a scale. This was the war in which the military importance of forces not visible on battlefields got open recognition.³

Tom Buchanan's more recent *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* sheds light chiefly on political dimensions of the subject but, like the previously mentioned studies, leaves most of the religious terrain undisturbed.⁴ In an earlier study, however, Buchanan devoted a chapter to the response of the Roman Catholic working class in the United Kingdom to the war.⁵ One can safely predict that the breadth of British interest in Franco's *Cruzada* against the anticlerical Leftist government in Madrid will continue to prompt scholarly investigations into neglected or underexplored dimensions for many years to come.

A relatively large number of British *littérateurs* (few of them, to be sure, of Catholic persuasion) either lent their pens to the Republican cause in Spain or took up arms in its defence. Such names as W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and George Orwell come to mind. On the other hand, the catalogue of prominent English Catholic intellectuals who supported Franco and sought to sway public opinion in favour of Republican Spain also reads like an excerpt from a *Who's Who* of literary achievement and Catholic journalism. It includes *inter alia* Evelyn Waugh, Douglas Woodruff, Michael de la Bedoyère, Hilaire Belloc, Edmund Blunden, and the subject of the present article, Douglas Jerrold. As we shall see, by no means did these sons of the Church of Rome stand alone; many Anglican and, apparently, a considerably smaller number of Free Churchmen, both clergymen and lay people, joined in the call for support of Nationalist Spain. It should be borne in mind that although the British government, like its counterparts in many other European countries, maintained a policy of neutrality with regard to the war in Spain, much of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church,

2 K.W. Watkins, *Britain divided. The effect of the Spanish Civil War on British public opinion* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1963), p. 13.

3 V. Cunningham (ed.), *Spanish Front. Writers on the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. xx-xxi.

4 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

5 T. Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 167-195.

from Pius XI and Pius XII on down, stood squarely in the Nationalist camp and lauded Franco's insurgency as a heroic means of saving Christianity not only in Spain but also, by extension, in Europe generally.

That these Christians advocated an avowedly right-wing cause at a time when threatening noises were emanating with increasing volume from the Third Reich seems particularly ironic when viewed from a much later perspective after the Franco regime has been relegated to the historic scrap pile of political oppression. As recently as 1999, for example, English scholar Kevin L. Morris asked in a lengthy, two-part article published in the Dominican journal *New Blackfriars*:

How could cultured Catholics be even partially attracted to Fascism: what did they see to admire in it, and what were the conditions which permitted and provoked them to find good in it?⁶

The question could, of course, be extended across a broad multid denominational front, for Franco enjoyed the support of many Britons who had no affinity to the Church of Rome. But neither with regard to British Christians generally nor the specifically Catholic component of the nation's religious landscape has it ever been fully answered.⁷

No Roman Catholic layman occupied a more central position in the war of words that was fought in the arena of the British media than Douglas Jerrold. He was an extraordinarily prolific editor, essayist, novelist, and historian who early on established his pro-Franco credentials not only in words but, by his own testimony, through his instrumental role in assisting the future *Generalissimo* launch his insurgency in 1936. Church historians and other scholars have written surprisingly little about this key figure. It is my intention in the present article to take steps towards redressing that neglect. The emphasis will be on tracing the unfolding of Jerrold's political thought, paying particular attention to its religious underpinnings, and identifying those elements of it which led this prominent Roman Catholic to lend his unqualified support to the Nationalist cause in Spain. It will be demonstrated that long before the assaults of anticlerical mobs on Spanish Roman Catholic religious personnel gained extensive publicity in *The Times* and galvanised their co-religionists in the United Kingdom Jerrold had occupied an ideational and ideological position which made his own eventual support of Franco inevitable.

6 K. L. Morris, "Fascism and British Catholic writers 1924-1939: Part 1", *New Blackfriars*, LXXX, no. 935 (January 1999), p. 32.

7 For an initial response to Morris, however, see the letter by Barbara Wall, "Correspondence", *New Blackfriars*, LXXX, no. 939 (May 1999), pp. 258-260.

One does not require a particularly fertile imagination to find the roots of Jerrold's advocacy of Franco and the Spanish Nationalists embedded partly in the soil of his social and religious upbringing, although as we shall see shortly international political developments also played key roles in shaping his commitment to the anti-socialist cause on the Iberian Peninsula. His family of origin was solidly bourgeois but not particularly wealthy. Jerrold's father's paternal grandfather, Douglas William Jerrold, was a relatively prominent mid-Victorian man of letters who wrote for the musical theatre and *Punch*. Jerrold's own father, Sidney Dominic Jerrold, was a district auditor. The last of the lineage was born at Scarborough in 1893 and attended Westminster School, where he performed sufficiently well to be sent up to Oxford in 1911 with the intention of being trained as an historian. Unlike many of the other intellectually prominent English Roman Catholics of the early twentieth century, Jerrold was a birthright member of the Church of Rome.⁸ It is probably virtually impossible to ascertain how pious his family of origin was. In his autobiography, which he wrote while in his mid-forties, he suggested that his parents' religious affiliation was merely nominal and resisted any facile categorisation of them on spiritual, social, or political grounds:

My parents belonged essentially to no group, no 'set', no church, no class. They were not members of the bureaucracy, nor of 'society', neither were they apostles of Catholic action or members of the middle-class defence organisation.⁹

By his own account, Jerrold was a moderate liberal during at least the first two decades of his life, although at that time he did not have particularly strong political leanings. Furthermore, his religious faith allegedly informed neither his nascent ideological nor that of his family of origin. His father, he recalled, was a Gladstonian Liberal but, in Douglas's recollection of Edwardian England,

it was, indeed, very far from fashionable among Catholics in those days to suggest that Catholicism entailed any specific view of social or political questions.

During his final year at Westminster the younger Jerrold professed "Liberal opinions", but what these specifically were to the future Tory at that

8 C. Petrie, "Jerrold, Douglas Francis". In: E. T. Williams and C. S. Nicholls (eds.), *The Dictionary of National Biography 1961-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 585; D. Jerrold, *Georgian adventure* (London: Collins, 1937), pp. 54-62.

9 Jerrold, *Georgian adventure*, p. 28.

time remains unclear. In any case, after going up to Oxford in 1911 he briefly attended meetings of both the Canning Club and the Russell and Palmerston Club but did not become active in either. This lack of commitment, Jerrold later suggested, was typical of that era, when “the intelligentsia were still far and wholesomely removed from the political stage”.¹⁰

Like many other Oxonians of his generation, Jerrold suspended his studies to take up arms against the Central Powers. The Great War affected him in several respects. He participated in the Gallipoli campaign and subsequently fought in France, where his left arm was severely injured in 1916. After the war Jerrold served as a naval historian and wrote well-regarded volumes in this capacity. The truncation of his formal education may have had a dilatory effect on Jerrold’s argumentation and writing. At times he evinced brilliance, but often he made assertions about vital matters without adducing adequate evidence to substantiate them, thereby giving some of his essays and books a half-baked flavour. Finally, the Bolshevik Revolution, one of the most consequential byproducts of the war, created a spectre of proliferating communism which haunted Jerrold and countless other conservatives of his generation. His essays about political developments in Spain and the significance of the war there testify boldly to the impact which the threat of Marxism made on his thought.

2. THE NECESSITY OF FREEDOM

Like many of his English Roman Catholic contemporaries such as G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, and Evelyn Waugh, Jerrold was disillusioned with the course of European political and cultural history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and with many aspects of modernity in general, although it must be added that he also partook of much of what his age offered. By 1938 Jerrold could summarise his anti-modernist views in a book of slightly over 300 pages titled *The Necessity of Freedom. Notes on Christianity and Politics*. This volume contains many keys to its author’s political and cultural philosophy which motivated his stance on the Spanish Civil War; indeed, one can hardly comprehend the underpinnings of Jerrold’s perception of the modern world without reference to his presentation of them in these pages.

Jerrold laid down the fire in his prefatory remarks, in which he declared, revealingly enough,

From time to time I have been asked to comment from the Christian standpoint on current events, tendencies and ideas.

10 Jerrold, *Georgian adventure*, pp. 23, 26, 57, 67.

The singular reference cannot be overlooked; to this conservative, a variety of valid Christian positions on these matters simply did not exist. Clearly, as an historically inclined intellectual Jerrold believed that a morally and culturally superior age had once existed in Europe but that it had begun a precipitous decline a century and a half earlier with the onset of the French Revolution and its impact throughout much of Europe on many dimensions of life. Ripples emanating from the violently anti-monarchical upheaval against the *ancien régime* in France had gradually eroded the stability of life in one land after another, undermined the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, the family, and other institutions, empowered the masses, and, eventually, led to the Bolshevist Revolution which, he feared, would be the death-knell of what remained of European civilisation. Fortunately, Jerrold believed, right-wing political movements on the Continent constituted what he dubbed the "Counter-Revolution", a term obviously echoing the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century. He was certain that he was living at a critical juncture of European history, one in which these two general ideological currents were opposing each other in a fight to the death. "The battle between the ideas of 1789 and those of the Counter-Revolution will be fought to a finish in the lifetime of many now living", Jerrold predicted without reserve, "and the results of the struggle will be decisive in Europe for several generations". He was less bold in prognosticating the details of the envisaged struggle. "Will its eponymous hero prove to be Lord Baldwin, Pope Leo XIII, Pope Pius XI, Herr Hitler or General Franco?" he asked rhetorically, tipping his conservative hand in the process.¹¹ *The Necessity of Freedom* evidently embodied an understanding of history which had been evolving in Jerrold's mind for many years. We shall return shortly to how his presentation of certain perceptions in this book relates directly to Jerrold's view of the Spanish Civil War.

3. FICTION AS A VEHICLE OF CONSERVATIVE CONCERN

During the latter half of the 1920s Jerrold turned to fiction as a vehicle for expressing his disillusionment with the prevailing post-war materialism of British society and his concern about the future of Christian civilisation in Europe. Precisely why the young editor did so is not clear; his autobiography, in which he did not mention either of his novels from this period, sheds no light on the matter. Both texts, however, illuminate vividly how Jerrold

11 D. Jerrold, *The necessity of freedom. Notes on Christianity and Politics* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1938), pp. v-vii.

perceived the functioning of his principles in contemporary life, and particularly the latter of the two seems in retrospect to foreshadow developments which would soon come about in Spain, not least with regard to relations between church and state, and may well have confirmed Jerrold's certitude that he had understood exceptionally well the trends of the times in this respect.

The truth about Quex appeared in 1927.¹² Fairly well crafted, it is a bitter attack on the morals and materialism of the English bourgeois in the wake of the Great War. In brief, Jerrold follows the career of a man named Quex from a lowly position as a seedy clerk in an old family business in Edwardian England to a relatively vaunted status as a captain of industry during the 1920s. He evinces considerable commercial success but exploits other people without compunction and cannot earn the respect of those around him who assay men with touchstones other than the colour of their money. What emerges most vividly from *The truth about Quex* is an indelible image of Jerrold's disgust with what he clearly perceived as the moral and spiritual degeneracy of his own age. "There is hatred in every line of 'The Truth about Quex'", wrote an anonymous reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* who lauded Jerrold's manifest dexterity with the pen of fiction:

In his descriptions of Quex's post-war adventures, Mr. Jerrold writes with a controlled and artistic savagery that is worthy of Mr. [Hilaire] Belloc at his best. Mr. Jerrold obviously meant to leave his readers with uncomfortable feelings, and he is a good enough writer to have succeeded.¹³

Jerrold's second work of fiction, a Ruritanian novel which appeared in 1930, was *Storm over Europe*.¹⁴ As will be seen later, it is a crucial text for understanding its author's disillusioned perception of the course of modern European history and especially the precarious situation of the Roman Catholic Church. The plot of this contemporary fantasy unfolds in a minuscule, imaginary land called Cisalpania, which is sandwiched between Hungary and Russia. No real country really corresponds to Cisalpania; in a purely geographic sense it bears some resemblance to Moldavia, though culturally it is a composite land which symbolically represents much of Europe. Straddling East and West, it is an amalgam of mediaeval remnants and modernity. Moreover, the Cisalpanians in Jerrold's cast of characters are a gallery of ethnic pluralism bearing French, Slavic, Germanic, Dutch, Italian, Hungarian and En-

12 London: Ernest Benn, 1927.

13 Anonymous review of *The truth about Quex* in *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 1,346), p. 836.

glish surnames. Many belong to the Roman Catholic church, historically the official religion of Cisalpania which still wields considerable public influence through its state-supported schools. Jews and Protestants also inhabit the country, as do free-thinkers. An undercurrent of anticlericalism flows through the population. Since a revolution of 1913 which overthrew its monarchy, the government has been moderately democratic, though not nearly liberal enough to fulfil the vision of Leftists of various hues.

A crisis begins to unfold in 1930 when one member of the cabinet, an ambitious and opportunistic soul who bears the Dutch surname Ruysdael, unexpectedly leaves the coalition government, thereby forcing a general election. Amid threats by Ruysdael and his Marxist allies to terminate public support of the Catholic schools and possibly even demand that the priests take an oath of loyalty to Leftist principles, the leader of the small Royalist party, Ferdinand D'Alvarez, perceives an opportunity to stir up a defensive conservative reaction, especially in the much less modern eastern provinces of the republic. Accordingly, he travels to Paris, where the dowager pretender to the Cisalpanian throne, Princess Natalie, lives as an increasingly senile alcoholic. He and his cohort disingenuously conceive a scheme to present the old lady's nurse, an attractive young Frenchwoman named Dolores de Litry, as her daughter and thus heir to the throne of Cisalpania should a monarchy be restored there.

Engaging in endless intrigue with other Royalists who despise their Marxist adversaries and, in some cases, sincerely wish to protect the prerogative of the Roman Catholic Church, D'Alvarez, who more than any other character in *Storm over Europe* serves as Jerrold's spokesman, cobbles together a plan for an armed revolt in the eastern provinces. At one stage an ally comes to Paris to arrange for the purchase of large numbers of firearms and ammunition. In the meantime, the Left handily wins the election, Ruysdael becomes head of government, and a Leftist cabinet succeeds the coalition which had preceded it. In tandem with Jewish and other non-Catholic colleagues in his administration Ruysdael launches his campaign on the Church of Rome, a move which initially enjoys considerable support among the citizens. In the minds of the most radical elements, one goal is the eradication of all religious influence in Cisalpania in favour of a scientifically inspired, secular society. Opponents of the ecclesiastical establishment initially enjoy some measure of success. Priests are murdered, and nuns are assaulted. The conservative reaction is inevitable, however. Royalists, with the active support of the Church, establish a military cadet programme to

14 London: Ernest Benn, 1930.

train young men for an eventual seizure of power. The *coup d'état* proceeds successfully within months of Ruysdael's victory at the polls. Appealing to the deeply ingrained conservatism and religious fervour of the inhabitants of the eastern provinces, the Royalists capture first that region of Cisalpania, then the capital, Histoja, which lies in the more progressive west. A hostile crowd storms Ruysdael's residence, and he falls victim to a bullet fired by someone in the throng. Dolores becomes the Queen of Cisalpania, and D'Alvarez the head of its government. The *civitas Dei*, it seems, has triumphed over naïve secular Utopianism.

Storm over Europe was apparently a manifestation of Jerrold's vision for turning back the clock of the modern world and restoring what he regarded as essential values and institutions of European civilisation. Particularly revealing in this regard are many of the lengthy and implausibly detailed discourses which his spokesman D'Alvarez delivers during conversations with other Royalists. To a considerable degree they read like adaptations of essays which Jerrold would have written in nonfictional publications. In one representative example of this, D'Alvarez summarises his perception of the linkage between radical politics and the vulnerability of the Roman Catholic Church during a conversation with one of Cisalpania's two cardinals. Jerrold applies the fear directly to his own country:

I believe that, even in England, the Radicals will fight to the last to prevent genuine religious instruction in the schools, and English Radicalism is the most conservative and middle-class thing in Europe. Candidly, I can't explain why Ruysdael and his people hate the Church, except by assuming that they know that the Church is more powerful than they are, and that you can never stage a drastic social revolution till you've broken the hold of the Church over the individual. That hold begins in the school.¹⁵

4. POLITICAL POSITIONS IN THE EARLY 1930S

The decade of the 1930s, the "age of anxiety" when Europeans increasingly believed in the virtual inevitability of another major war on the continent and many were convinced that the conflict would attain global dimensions. Owing to the persistent economic woes gripping not only the British economy but also those of most other countries, the apparent general ineffectiveness of the governments of Stanley Baldwin in coping with both domestic and foreign woes, and disappointment with the League of Nations as an

15 Jerrold, *Storm over Europe*, p. 93.

instrument for defusing international crises, Britons at most points of the political compass became disillusioned with many of their institutions and perceived a general crisis for Western civilisation. Some turned to political radicalism of the Left or the Right; the British Union of Fascists as well as socialist organisations within and outside of the Labour Party flourished. Pacifism of various hues also came to the fore of public attention during the 1930s. Jerrold's reactions to specific crises in Europe and his attitude towards the general drift of contemporary European history reveal much about his eventual — and, arguably, inescapable — support of Franco.

A shift in Jerrold's career at the beginning of the decade proved crucial with regard to the format and frequency of his responses. In mid-1930 he assumed the editorship of *The English Review*, a challenging position he held for six years. No longer anonymously sequestered in an editorial office at a publishing house, Jerrold was compelled every month to take a much more direct, public stance on issues of the day, and it was a rôle he apparently assumed with great zest. Under his leadership, that monthly journal became a prominent vehicle for publicising unabashedly conservative views, most of which harmonised with Jerrold's personal stances on current issues, although there were also occasional dissenting pieces. Jerrold's rhetorical style was often biting; in the words of his close friend and foreign affairs editor at *The English Review*, Sir Charles Petrie, "he was not an easy man with whom to work" and "he had a tongue like an asp, and he could be extremely rude". This colleague attributed Jerrold's temperament in part to the chronic pain he endured from his war wound,¹⁶ but one suspects that a tendency to see matters in simplistic black and white categories in which those who were not for him were necessarily against him as well as frustration with the course of events he was virtually powerless to alter may also have been factors.

Jerrold, like Petrie, wrote frequently about British foreign policy during the 1930s, and a consideration of this dimension of his political thinking also has a bearing on his ultimate support of Franco. In February 1932, for example, Jerrold declared in *The English Review* that

the only living issue in world politics to-day is between the Christian social organization and economic materialism, between a society based under God on the dignity and responsibility of the individual, with the family as its basic unit, and a society which places the State above the family and equality above liberty and which, because it denies God, does not hesitate to degrade man to the level of machine.

16 Petrie, "Jerrold, Douglas Francis", pp. 585-586.

Perceiving a grotesque outline of Britain's possible future in Spanish socialism of that time, he feared that if

we ever get such a society in England, the advocates and free speech and the right to self expression will be the first to suffer - as they are finding in Spain to-day.¹⁷

Jerrold tended to express his views of British foreign policy in generalised terms which emphasised culture as much as politics or military tactics. He could thus comment in August 1933 that

we have to recapture first our own belief in the just authority of our Government, and then so act as to restore this belief throughout our Empire. ... The march of civilization is the march not of armies, but of civilizing ideas, and the decay of civilization is heralded by the spread of false and disruptive ideas.¹⁸

There can be no doubt that during the mid-1930s he clung to the Victorian notion of a "white man's burden" *vis-à-vis* other countries. Indeed, in commenting on the passing of one enthusiastic imperialist, Jerrold judged that

Kipling's creed assumed a civilising mission divinely ordained and to be discharged only by divine guidance. Translated into terms not of English economic imperialism but of European Christian civilisation, it is a creed of which the world today is in sore need.¹⁹

5. ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL FASCISM

Jerrold's unfolding attitudes towards Hitler, the Third Reich, and the British Union of Fascists during this period are particularly relevant to a consideration of his position on Franco and the Nationalist insurgency in Spain. It must be emphasised at the outset that the strident editor was never an unqualified supporter of Fascism in its British, Italian, or German manifestations. Jerrold did share common ground with Fascist leaders, however, in both their mutual rejection of socialism and their alarm at the general course of modern history. Indicative of this dimension of his perception of

17 D. Jerrold, "Current Comments", *The English Review*, LIV, no. 2 (July 1932), p. 115.

18 D. Jerrold, "Current Comments", *The English Review*, LVII, no. 2 (August 1933), pp. 118-119.

19 D. Jerrold, "Current Comments", *The English Review*, LXII, no. 2 (February 1936), p. 139.

contemporary events in Germany and their significance on the wider political chessboard of Europe, he consequently took to task Robert Dell, who in August 1933, i.e. some five months after the accession of the National Socialist Democratic Workers' Party to power, supposedly wrote an article in the *New Statesman* calling for British support for German communists in their struggle against Hitler. "Dell says openly that 'the new invasion' (the Nazis have been guilty, it will be observed, of the unparalleled crime of invading the government of their own country of which they form the incontestable majority), 'of the barbarians must be mastered and repulsed, and it can be mastered only by force'", scoffed Jerrold. "Englishmen of a decent stamp are, therefore, at the moment, easy game in the revolutionary campaign, of which the focus has passed from Spain to Germany". He retorted that the overthrow of the Third Reich would be a "disaster" but added that "in its present shape it inspired little confidence in its constructive abilities".²⁰ This incident revealed not only Jerrold's tolerant attitude towards right-wing governments as bulwarks against Marxism but also something of the carelessness that too frequently characterised his writing. The article in question was not written by Robert Dell at all, but by Ernst Henri, who is clearly identified as its author.²¹

There can be little doubt that Jerrold perceived some value in Hitler's governance of Germany beyond its obvious value as a buffer against the expansion of communism. In June 1934 Jerrold urged readers to consider an article which his friend, Sir Arnold Wilson, had written for *The English Review* about his recent observations in the Third Reich.²² That Tory Member of Parliament had spent a fortnight there in May 1934 and subsequently conveyed his enthusiasm without reserve. Evidently Wilson had seen in Germany what he wanted to see. An active Anglican, he had found the Roman Catholic cathedral in Berlin full and been no less gratified to see the pews of a Protestant church in the German capital similarly packed. An erstwhile missionary who was a member of the *Sturmabteilung*, i. e. the Nazi party's armed wing, had commented disparagingly to him about comments which the Bishop of Chichester and other critics of the Third Reich

20 D. Jerrold, "Current Comments", *The English Review*, LVII, no. 3 (September 1933), p. 229.

21 E. Henri, "The Revolutionary Movement in Germany", *The New Statesman and Nation*, VI, no. 128 (New Series), pp. 153-154, and Ernst Henri, "The Revolutionary Movement in Germany. II", *The New Statesman and Nation*, VI, no. 130 (New Series), pp. 207-208.

22 D. Jerrold, "Current Comments", *The English Review*, LVIII, no. 6 (June 1934), p. 653.

had made. To the true believers whom Wilson had interviewed, *der Führer* was nothing less than a saviour of organised Christianity. “But for Hitler ... there would, as in Russia, be no Church of Christ in Germany to-day”, one unidentified Christian had told this English visitor. Wilson also spent nearly an hour in a private conversation with Hitler and left the Chancellery clearly impressed with certain personal attributes of his host:

He has many sides to his character, including a keen appreciation of art and architecture. Loyal to those who stood by him in dark days, but profoundly attached to peace; capable of rising to great heights, but to-day reserving his great strength and authority for the tasks of the near future.

Wilson then ventured far out on thin ice and boldly sought to predict how Hitler would be regarded in the future:

We all remember the day when Signor Mussolini was described in an English paper as “The Mad Dog of Europe,” and the cartoons depicting him and Hitler in a manner which has done us lasting harm abroad. We remember, too, that Hindenburg’s election was regarded in some quarters as a proof of the incurable turpitude and unabashed militarism of an unrepentant people. To-day Mussolini is an elder statesman and Hindenburg a bulwark of peace. Hitler, too, will soon become a venerable figure, yet another volcanic peak among a wilderness of scrubby hills.²³

Jerrold had relatively little to say about Mussolini and Italian Fascism, but at times he became moderately defensive of the foreign policy which *il Duce* was following and, concomitantly, critical of the League of Nations’ handling of this vexing matter, not least with regard to Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, which he did not unconditionally endorse but nevertheless found understandable. In December 1935 he and five like-minded Conservatives wrote a lengthy letter to *The Times* arguing that Italy

did not receive in 1919 the colonial mandates that she might have expected in view of the Treaty of London in 1915; that for the last 15 years her delegates at Geneva have warned Europe of the possibility of an explosion if nothing effective were done to meet her problem of an expanding population and deficient raw materials, and that her colonies in Eritrea and Somalia have repeatedly suffered from raids from across the Abyssian frontier.²⁴

23 Sir A. Wilson, “Germany in May”, *The English Review*, LVIII, no. 6 (June 1934), pp. 696-697, 699-700.

24 “Letters to the Editor. The Abyssian Dispute” (D. Jerrold, *et al.* to *The Times*), *The Times*, 6 December 1935, p. 12.

On the home front of turbulent British politics, Jerrold did not veil his admiration of Fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley, a disillusioned erstwhile Conservative who espoused dictatorial rule as the only feasible answer to the international economic crisis. Two years after the founding of the British Union of Fascists, Jerrold took to task Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin for his attacks on that movement and its leader. The new party should be given a fair chance to express its policies in detail, he insisted.

If these aims, once clearly defined, prove to be unsound, the question of methods need not be argued. If on the other hand they prove to be sound, the fact that Fascism is committed to sweeping constitutional changes will tell quite as much in its favour as against it.²⁵

A month later, in June 1934, Jerrold judged that Fascism “can, if it be well served, progress steadily in the right direction” but conceded that “there is nothing in the system which *guarantees* movement in any particular direction, or, indeed, any movement at all”. He still wanted to know whether the envisaged “British Fascist State is to be Christian or secularist, whether it is to be free trade or protectionist, rationalizing or distributist, [and] deflationist or expansionist”, and thought it prudent to reserve judgement until answers were forthcoming before forming a firm opinion as to whether Fascism could be seriously considered as “an alternative government” for the United Kingdom.²⁶ An unambiguous, comprehensive statement of policy was not forthcoming. Nevertheless, in Jerrold’s eyes, Mosley remained for several more years clearly a man of action and a populist who had the potential for making a decisive difference in the course of modern history. “He is very un-English in his dislike of forms and red-tape and of the slow progress nowhere in particular which fills up the lives of Kensington and Belgravia”, judged Jerrold in 1937. He allowed that Mosley was “not a great thinker, and he is not an organiser at all” but nevertheless respected him as a “great orator” whose talent as a speaker only John Strachey could challenge. Furthermore, Jerrold admired Mosley for “telling the truth as he sees it, and he is one of the few people in England who are even trying to do so.” It seemed to this Catholic observer of current events that “you cannot be even half-informed about what is really happening in Europe if you do not read Mosley’s papers”.²⁷

25 D. Jerrold, “Current Comments”, *The English Review*, LVIII, no. 5 (May 1934), p. 528.

26 D. Jerrold, “Current Comments”, *The English Review*, LVIII, no. 6 (June 1934), p. 649.

27 Jerrold, *Georgian adventure*, pp. 323-324.

6. LAUNCHING THE RHETORICAL ASSAULT ON THE SPANISH REPUBLIC

By his own admission, during the 1920s and early 1930s Jerrold “followed the chequered course of events in Spain ... with a very half-hearted interest”, but the fall of the monarchy in April 1931 and exile of the powerful King Alfonso aroused him from his previous indifference to Spanish politics. In the autumn of 1931 Jerrold conversed with the dethroned Bourbon (whose wife, Victoria, was a granddaughter of the British monarch of the same name) for four hours and

heard enough to convince me then of the absolute truth of the King’s view, that he had been deliberately faced by a minority with the threat of a civil war, just precisely as the Church had been attacked two months later on the charge of creating an organised clerical opposition to the new Republic.²⁸

Both what Jerrold and many other conservative observers perceived as the increasingly chaotic state of Spanish society and threats to the status of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain convinced him that a crisis which menaced Europe generally was looming. “The merest schoolboy knowledge of history should have taught us that Spain in chaos means war in Europe”, he wrote in 1937, “and chaos was already apparent and must continue”. During the early years of the Spanish Republic, Jerrold increasingly saw in its political morass a microcosm of the ideological struggle then being waged on a grander European scale. The possibility of tensions in Iberia triggering a general war on the continent seemed more plausible:

For, as the Spanish tragedy progressed, it became obvious that a conflict was being prepared in that unfortunate country which would, in one sense at least, be decisive for Europe. The apostles of militant Communism meant to establish control of the west as of the East, and if they succeeded before we were awake, that was the end.

Jerrold explained that

there, in Spain, were the necessary bases in the Mediterranean for the second and last of the League Wars, the war against Central Europe, the war for revolution, the war to end the peace.²⁹

Jerrold’s foreign affairs editor at *The English Review* beginning in 1931, Sir Charles Petrie, evidently played an instrumental rôle in his superior’s

28 Jerrold, *Georgian adventure*, pp. 353, 357.

29 Jerrold, *Georgian adventure*, pp. 360, 364.

war of words against radicalism in Spain. This son of the English nobility, two years younger than his superior, was like him, an Oxonian who had fought in the Great War and shared his interest in European history, about which he began in the late 1920s to write what would eventually be many books. Unlike Jerrold, however, he was a Presbyterian and a divorcé. This amateur historian was also an inveterate Iberophile who wrote extensively about *inter alia* the annals of the monarchy in Spain. At some point in the early 1930s Petrie suggested to his senior editor the formation of, in Jerrold's words, a "committee to study and get full reports of Spanish affairs". The Marqués del Moral, one of numerous Spanish noblemen then living in exile in the British isles, was "the energising factor" in this endeavour. Petrie's cohort could hardly have been accused of soliciting opinions from an ideologically broad spectrum of Spaniards; in his memoirs Jerrold mentioned King Alfonso, the Duke of Alba (who would serve as Francisco Franco's representative in England), and conservative politician Calvo Sotelo as chief informants. Shaped by this kind of right-wing brain trust, Jerrold recalled, the committee sought to overcome what he dismissed as the "shattering and stupendous ignorance" of the English public about Spanish affairs. Their task, he wrote retrospectively in 1937, had been made all the more challenging by the alleged bias of the British press, which Jerrold regarded as politically blind, not least because, in his view, of its "toleration of the Moscow racketeers", i.e. the Lenin and Stalin regimes in the Soviet Union. To his dismay, in Fleet Street "editors were willing enough to listen. They would even on occasion print a few facts. But no 'propaganda'".³⁰

Consequently, Jerrold, with the assistance of the Marqués del Moral and Luis Bolín, the London correspondent of the Spanish monarchist daily newspaper *ABC*, sought to shape British opinion in 1933 by transforming a "brilliant" booklet written by Calvo Sotelo into a volume of approximately 150 pages titled *The Spanish Republic. A Review of Two Years of Progress*. Issued anonymously, this book is a scathing indictment of the socialist regime in Spain. As Jerrold noted triumphantly a year after the outbreak of the civil war, it "was read and never answered".³¹ It was, however, reviewed, in some quarters quite critically. At *The Times Literary Supplement*, for instance, a critic thought a disclaimer in the book's foreword that it "is not prompted by any political motives" was both disingenuous and contradicted by the tone and content of page after page of the text. He also took to task the unknown author for accusing Manuel Azaña, the scholarly premier of the Spanish Republic, of being "incompetent to pronounce a construc-

30 Jerrold, *Georgian adventure*, pp. 361-363.

31 Jerrold, *Georgian adventure*, pp. 361-362.

tive opinion on a single subject of national importance” and pointed out that six months earlier *The Times Literary Supplement* had carried a review of that Spanish socialist’s 700-page tome, *Una Política*, which “contains many serious thoughts seriously expressed”. Furthermore, the author of *The Spanish Republic*, he alleged, had also erred in asserting that a law of 17 May 1933 had confiscated the “entire property” of Roman Catholic priests, nuns, and monks and forbade them from teaching or engaging in commerce. On the other hand, this reviewer praised the volume for containing “an immense amount of matter lucidly compiled and set forth” and judged much of the information therein to be sound. He predicted that several chapters of *The Spanish Republic* would “rouse the indignation of all Liberal-minded leaders and make them wonder how the Republic leaders came to act so foolishly as well as anti-constitutionally”.³²

7. DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO FRANCO’S INSURGENCY

By June 1936 as public violence, particularly against Catholic religious personnel and the destruction of churches mounted in Spain, preparation of the stage version of *Storm over Europe* to be performed in the West End that November were well underway. To its author, recalling how his spokesman in that novel, Ferdinand D’Alvarez, had assisted in facilitating the purchase of arms in Paris for the monarchist coup in leftist Cisalpania and orchestrating the transformation of Dolores de Litry into the heir to its throne while verbal and physical assaults on Christianity increased in that fantasy republic, the thrusting of the incipient Franco insurgency into his office in London must have seemed like a providential case of life imitating art. A Spanish friend of Luis Bolín, looking as if he “had ridden across the sunburnt yellow plains of the Tagus straight into my room”, strode in and announced that Bolín had encouraged him to appeal to Jerrold as ostensibly the only man in London who could assist him. “I want fifty machine guns and half a million rounds of S. A. ammunition”, he declared. A fortnight later Bolín and another Spaniard in London met with Jerrold and requested his help in arranging the recruitment of an English operative and three blondes to fly with Bolín on very short notice to Morocco to assist in Franco’s uprising. To their surprise, the editor assured them that he could meet their needs, and within twenty-four hours he solicited the participation of one of his friends, retired Army major Hugh Pollard, as well as Pollard’s nineteen-

³² Review of “Anonymous”, *The Spanish Republic. A survey of two years of progress*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 1648 (31 August 1933), p. 568.

year-old daughter and her friend Dorothy Watson who would pose as English tourists and thereby provide cover for Franco's journey from the Canary Islands to Morocco, the first stage of the insurgency which touched off the Spanish Civil War. In his memoirs, Jerrold recalled his role in arranging the successful participation of Pollard and the young females in the revolt and indicated that it had been a decisive contribution to the launching of the Nationalist military cause.³³ Bolín subsequently met Pollard in Sussex on 8 July and hired a De Havilland Dragon Rapide, piloted by an initially unsuspecting former officer of the Royal Air Force, Captain William Henry Bebb, for the journey. The party flew from Croydon via France, Portugal, and Morocco to Gran Canaria a few days later.³⁴ This key British intervention in Spanish political history was not forgotten; after the end of the civil war, both Bebb and Pollard received the Knight's Cross of the Imperial Order of the Yoke and the Arrows, while Misses Pollard and Watson were decorated with the medal of that order.³⁵

8. CONCLUSION

Jerrold would continue to lend his support to the Nationalist cause throughout the war. He played an instrumental part in founding in London the Friends of Nationalist Spain in 1936 to counter the establishment of the pro-Madrid Friends of the Spanish Republic in December of that year³⁶ and remained active in that organisation until Franco's victory in 1939 allowed it to be renamed the Friends of Spain in England on 29 March.³⁷ Jerrold frequently contributed articles to *The Tablet* and other periodicals advocating the Nationalist cause, and on occasion he wrote letters to *The Times* predictably defending Franco's forces in such matters as the controversy surrounding the bombing of Guernica. In 1937 Jerrold also joined the stream of British war-time visitors to Spain.³⁸ Like most of the others, he visited only the side which he favoured and returned to the United Kingdom with more deeply entrenched opinions which he continued to propagate. It should be emphasised that Jerrold's propagandistic endeavours were aimed at public

33 Jerrold, *Georgian adventure*, pp. 367-374.

34 H. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1962), p. 119.

35 P. Preston, *Franco* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 135-139, 143n.

36 "Friends of the Spanish Republic", *The Times*, 16 December 1936, p. 11.

37 "Friends of Spain in England", *The Times*, 30 March 1939, p. 16.

38 "Foreign troops in Spain. Size of Nationalist Army" (Douglas Jerrold to *The Times*, 18 1937), *The Times*, 22 March 1937, p. 8.

opinion both within and outside the Roman Catholic Church; there is no evidence that he sought to sway government policy with regard to Spain or that he challenged the general policy of non-intervention in the war. Indeed, when a reviewer of *The Necessity of Freedom* imputed such an aim to him in *The Times Literary Supplement*,³⁹ Jerrold denied it vociferously. His position, he contended, was that

non-intervention, however necessary it may be in practice, cannot be defended as a Christian principle as being good in itself.⁴⁰

In this, as in many other matters, he never seems to have wavered. As Charles Petrie wrote in his biographical article, he was quite capable of changing his opinions but not his fundamental principles.⁴¹

The scarlet threads running through his thought which pertained most directly to Spanish politics were his consistent hostility to the revolutionary spirit of the modern world, especially in its Marxist manifestations, and his vision of a "Counter-Revolution" in which a Monarchist, Catholic traditional social order would be restored for the salvation of European civilisation. Given these articles of political and cultural faith, Jerrold's support of Franco was a foregone conclusion. This English publicist's Catholic faith unquestionably provided some of the fuel for his fiery rhetorical campaign against Republican Spain, but his cultural and political conservatism also contributed mightily.

Keywords

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39 "A Champion of Intervention", *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 1893 (14 May, 1938), p. 326.

40 D. Jerrold to *The Times Literary Supplement*, undated, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 1897, (11 June, 1938), p. 402.

41 Petrie, "Jerrold, Douglas Francis", p. 585.