

# RAMIRO LEDESMA



# Ramiro Ledesma Ramos

## *La Conquista del Estado*

*La Conquista del Estado* signifies **The Conquest of the State**. The name is an homage to the Italian fascist magazine *La Conquista dello Stato* published by German-Italian Kurt Erich Suckert under the name Curzio Malaparte (his surname being Italian for "bad/evil side" - a play on Napoleon's surname of Bonaparte, which meant "good side"). *Conquista del Estado* was a National-Syndicalist newspaper founded by Ramiro Ledesma Ramos as a way to bridge the gap between Spanish nationalists and the syndicalists of Spain's largest trade union, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (National Jobs Confederation). It was published solely in 1931 and lasted 23 issues.

The same year that Ramos began publishing *La Conquista del Estado*, he combined his small organization based around his publication with fellow National-Syndicalist Onésimo Redondo Ortega's **Castillian Junta for Hispanic Action** to found the **Juntas for National-Syndicalist Offensive** (JONS). Three years later, in 1934, JONS merged with Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera's **Spanish Falange** to form the **Spanish Falange and Junta for National-Syndicalist Offensive** (FE-JONS). As one of the movement's foremost leaders, he designed the movement's crest and coined the mottos *Arriba España* (Forward, Spain!) and *Una, Grande y Libre* (United, Strong, and Free), which became national mottos in Francoist Spain.

In 1935, Ledesma left FE-JONS due to his political differences (Ramos was more leftist, and the ideas he published in *La Conquista del Estado* differ - significantly in some cases - from the Falange's platform) with Primo de Rivera and formed a small group called **The Free Fatherland** (*La Patria Libre*) that opposed the Falange on ideological grounds. Upon the outbreak of war in 1936 he was trapped in Republican-controlled Madrid, executed, and thrown into a makeshift grave. He later became a mythical figure (along with Primo de Rivera) in Francoist Spain.

Below are English translations of the original texts of *La Conquista del Estado*.

# ISSUE #1: 14 MARCH 1931\_\_\_\_\_

## ARTICLE 1: OUR POLITICAL MANIFESTO

### AUTHOR: THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

#### **To the readers**

As we publish the first issue of La Conquista del Estado, our ideological and tactical declaration can be none other than the political manifesto of the same name that has spread throughout the whole of Spain during these last couple weeks.

#### **Our Political Manifesto**

A small group of Spanish youth today prepares to intervene in the world of politics in an intense and effective way. They do not concern themselves with issues other than the noble and tenacious preoccupation for the vital questions that affect their country. And, certainly, the guarantee that they represent the voice of these times, and that their political conduct is born out of the necessity to confront today's difficulties. Nobody can avoid affirming that Spain today is experiencing a political, social, and economic crisis so dangerous that it needs to be faced and resolved with the utmost courage. No pessimism or desertion should be tolerated in the face of this threat. Every Spaniard that is not able to place himself with necessary greatness before the events that are to come is obligated to evacuate the front lines and permit the brave and firm Falanges to replace him.

The first great anxiety that relates to public responsibility on the minds of every Spaniard is the warning that Spain – the State and the Spanish people – have lived for almost three centuries perpetually fleeing from their own identity, disloyal to the unique values of Spain – unbelieving in their very existence, and, therefore, in a suicidal state of self-denial of such seriousness that it places Spain on the very edge of historical decomposition. In this way we have lost our collective pulse. We have disconnected ourselves from our collective destiny, without the capacity or valor to extirpate the atrocious short-sightedness that, until now, has characterized every preceding attempt at national resurgence. Today we are in the most propitious crossroads that any people could ever have dreamed for. And as we warned that the men of the usual politics, the monarchists and republicans, the groups who follow them and the dispersed elements that to this day have been the deciders of major decisions, are not able to separate themselves from the mediocre contextures of the old State, we, on their margins, in front of them, beyond them, without the lateral divisions of Rights and Lefts, but of objectives and foundations, initiate a revolutionary movement in support of a radically innovative State.

Spain's political and social crisis has its origin in the very conception on which the current State is articulated. Everywhere the efficiency of the liberal bourgeois State – which the French Revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century imposed on the world – is crumbling, and the people today debate the great difficulty of making way for a new State, in which all their valid fulfillments will be possible. We head towards political action with the concrete ambition of projecting over the nation the silhouettes of this new State. And to impose it. Such a task requires, most importantly, the aptitude to separate ourselves from the destructive, failed

myths. As well as the will to join ourselves, like a great people, to the double purpose that today characterizes nations: on one hand, the contribution to the collective spirit of our Hispanic uniqueness, and on the other, the conquest of technological means, the mobilization of the economic forces, victory over materialist interests, and social justice.

The central tenets of our movement will be the following:

### **Supremacy of the State**

The new State will be constructive, creative. It will supplant individuals and groups, and total sovereignty will reside in it, and only in it. The sole interpreter of what the collective interests of the people are shall be the State, and through this they will achieve abundance. It is the duty of the State, in turn, to realize all the values of political, cultural, and economic natures that are found amongst the people. We will defend, therefore, Statism, a State that can obtain maximum efficiency. The form of the new State ought to be born of it and be a product of it. When we in a very serious and focused manner attempt a deep subversion of the political and social contents of our people, the questions that allude to simple models are not sufficiently important to interest us.<sup>1</sup> When we speak of the supremacy of the State we mean to say that the State is the highest political force, and that the greatest crime against civility would be to put one's self in opposition to the new State. Since the civility – civil coexistence – is something that the State, and only it, makes possible. Nothing, nothing at all, over the State!!

### **National Affirmation**

Against the disjointed interior that we feel today, we raise the flag of national responsibility. We take responsibility for the History of Spain, accepting the most unique national foundation of our people, and affirming the Spanish culture with imperial desire. A people can do nothing without a previous and radical exaltation of itself like historical excellence. May every Spaniard know that if a geological catastrophe were to destroy the Peninsula or a foreign people submits us to slavery, fundamental values cease being realized in the world! More than ever, modern life is difficult, and it is necessary to return in search of courage to the elementary sentiments that maintain encouragement in tense abundance.<sup>2</sup> The national and social senses of our people – a people ecumenical, Catholic – will be this: The world needs us, and we must be in our place!

### **University Exaltation**

We are, in large part, college students. The University is for us the supreme organ – creator – of cultural and scientific values. Peoples without universities remain on the margins of superior production. Without culture there is no flexing of spirit, like without science there would be no technology. Intellectual greatness and economic preeminence are impossible without an investigative and antibureaucratic University.

### **Regional Structuring of Spain**

The primary importance of Spain is not Madrid, but the provinces. Our most radical intention will consist of understanding and articulating the vital capacities of the provinces. Discovering their myths and launching them towards their conquest. Placing them before their most prosperous dimension. That is why the new State will admit as an indispensable foundation of its structuring the complete and full autonomy of the Municipalities. Therein lays the magnificent Spanish tradition of cities, towns, and villages as living, fertile organisms. There is no possibility of economic triumph nor of efficient administration without the autonomy we have alluded to. The autonomous Municipalities would then be able to structure themselves into large confederations or regions delimited by a margin of

economic or administrative requirements, and, certainly, under the sovereignty of the State, which will always be, like we earlier stated, indisputable and absolute. To revitalize the regional sentiments of Spain, there is nothing better than submitting the regions to a rebirth that is realized under the protection of current, firm realities.

### **Syndicalist Structure of the Economy**

The makers of bourgeois liberal State could not have suspected the economic models that were going to appear in the future. The first clear test of our industrial and technical civilization's character will be Marxism. We will fight against the materialist limitations of Marxism, and we must overcome it; but not without recognizing it the honors one grants a predecessor, dead and finished in its first shocks. The industrial economy of the past one hundred years has created powers and social injustices that the liberal State is incapable of going against. To correct this, the new State will impose a syndicalist structure on the economy, to protect industrial efficiency, but destroy every nature of **morbid supremacies**<sup>3</sup> that exist. The new State cannot leave its economy to the simple pacts and commerce that flow between the economic forces. The syndication of the economic forces shall be obligatory, and at all times abided by the highest levels of the State. The State will discipline and guarantee at all times production. The equivalent to a considerable promotion of work.<sup>4</sup> There is still much more to be done in support of an authentic and fruitful Spanish economy, like the fact that the new State will break the neck of the frightening and tremendous agrarian problem that exists today. By means of the expropriation of the landowners. The expropriated lands, once nationalized, should not be redistributed, since that is equivalent to the old and baneful liberal solution, but transferred to the peasants themselves, so that they can cultivate them, under the intervention of the autonomous municipal entities, and with a tendency for communal or cooperative development.

From the brief summary above we deduce our dogma, to whom we will be loyal under our ends. And it is this:

1<sup>st</sup> All power will correspond to the State.

2<sup>nd</sup> There are only political freedoms within the State, not above the State or against the State.

3<sup>rd</sup> The most important political value that resides in man is his capacity for civil coexistence within the State.

4<sup>th</sup> Radically overcoming Marxist theory and practice is an imperative of our times.

5<sup>th</sup> Against the communist society and State, we put forward hierarchic values, the national ideal, and economic efficiency.

6<sup>th</sup> Affirmation of Hispanic values.

7<sup>th</sup> Imperial diffusion of our culture.

8<sup>th</sup> The creation of an authentic Spanish university system. There will take root the ideological supremacies that constitute the latest developments in science and technology. And also the finest in culture and art. We have to emphasize this in our ideal in support of a great University.

9<sup>th</sup> The intensification of popular culture, using the most effective means.

10<sup>th</sup> The eradication of regional forums that aspire a sense of political independence. The large regions or regional confederacies, due to the Municipality initiative, should deserve, on the contrary, all of our attention. We will encourage vital and modernized regions.

11<sup>th</sup> Total and integral autonomy of the Municipalities in the proper and traditional functions of their domain, which are of an economic and administrative nature.

12<sup>th</sup> Syndicalist structure of the economy. Objective economic policy.

13<sup>th</sup> Promotion of work.

14<sup>th</sup> Expropriation of the landowners. The expropriated lands will be nationalized and turned over to the Municipalities and peasant syndicalist entities.

15<sup>th</sup> Social justice and social discipline.

16<sup>th</sup> Fight against the Pharisaical pacifism of Geneva. Affirmation that Spain is an international power.

17<sup>th</sup> Exclusive revolutionary action until we achieve a triumph of the new State in Spain. Methods of direct action against the old State and the old political-social groups of the old regime.

### **Our Organization**

We are born endowed with revolutionary efficiency. That is why we do not look for votes, only for a bold and valorous few. We look for groups of militant youth, without hypocrisies in the face of a rifle and discipline ready for war. Civilian soldiers ready to demolish the bourgeois framework and the anachronism of a militarized pacifism. We want a politician with military sense, responsibility, and will for struggle. Our organization is structured on a foundation of syndicalist cells and political cells. The former are composed of ten individuals, that belong, as the name indicates, to the same union or syndicate. The latter, by five individuals of diverse professions. Both shall be the base units that will have voice and power in the party. In order to join a cell it must be understood that you are between 18 and 45 years of age. Older Spaniards would not be able to participate in an active way in our Falanges. The organization of syndicalist and political cells that will constitute the basic elements of our actions shall begin immediately throughout Spain. Our link uniting us is the dogma that we have earlier presented, which ought to be accepted and comprehended in its entirety in order to strengthen us. We move towards victory and we are the Spanish truth. Today begins the new publication of our newspaper, La Conquista del Estado, which will at first be weekly but will be made daily as soon as possible. Support and entries, as well as solicitations for further details, should be addressed to the president, to our offices, at Dato Avenue, 7, floor D, Madrid. They must be signed with complete clarity and include the name, age, profession, and address.

-The Organizing Committee

## Notes

- Not sure about the translation for this sentence. [*Cuando de un modo serio y central intentamos una honda subversión de los contenidos políticos y sociales de nuestro pueblo, las cuestiones que aludan a meras formas no tienen rango suficiente para interesarnos.*]
- Not sure about the translation for this sentence either. [*Más que nunca la vida actual es difícil, y hay que volver en busca de coraje a los sentimientos elementales que mantienen en tensa plenitud los ánimos.*]
- Emphasis in original.
- Might be a typo in the original copy. I believe the sentence is part of the preceding one, and ought to be separated by a comma and not a period

**ISSUE #1: 14 MARCH 1931\_\_\_\_\_**

**ARTICLE 2: POLITICAL LIFE\_\_\_\_\_**

**AUTHOR: RAMIRO LEDESMA RAMOS**

## **Political Life**

### **The Parliamentarian Catastrophe**

The anxiety to legitimize all the powers of the State led a core group of old politicians to propose the current formula. What legitimacy is it that they claimed? It seems appropriate and of great interest to ask ourselves this, since in modern Spain the slightest of confusions becomes major overnight. If something is magnificent in Spanish life today, it is the brave collective stubbornness that avoids new forces. We must respect that courage, and in the end trust it even in the most decisive moments. Not just in Spain, but throughout the world, the historical means of Power are in crisis, and everywhere the current victories are legitimized and created, achieved in spite of our time.

Spain has now happily entered a legitimizing period, and the first thing we must prevent is for the old organizations to control this period. It would be a humiliation for the Spanish if, having before it a collective problem as serious as this, of the same kind that is found in the other great European powers, the creation of an efficient State; they fall back on the failed myths and return to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in search of pathetic formulas to save them. We repeat, it would be a humiliation.

There are, undoubtedly, two Spains locked in battle, a fight they are committed to only because of the confusion that is prevalent today. On one side, old liberal Spain, an exhausted septuagenarian, legislatively short-sighted, where the current difficulties are resolved disinterestedly in the halls of Parliament. Against this is young Spain, born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not appreciative of jurisprudent and rhetorical sensibilities. Loyal, therefore, to his time, and represented in his courage and his fists. The youth will be communists or they will be fascists, we don't know which one, but either way they will most certainly be authentically Hispanic and modern.

Luckily, the constitutionalist block has found itself without the power to govern. It would've been a sad display to have heard the discourses of Mr. Melquiades<sup>1</sup> and the laughter of all the idiots who remain in that dilapidated hut.<sup>2</sup> Spain cannot be left at the mercy of a joke of nature, a joke that has permitted the half dozen honorable gentlemen that make up Parliament to reach 80 years of age. Because if they need something to 'make up,' it is a circulatory system.<sup>3</sup>

The continuation of the Spanish Parliament would signify the surrendering of the Hispanic destiny to the older generations. Accepting that generation's grudges, its prejudices, and its traumatic experiences. We must stop this, and we don't consider it very difficult to arrive at agreement on this topic with all the other authentically young and new forces of the country.



## **The Socialist Crisis**

It is not important whether or not the Socialist Party will split or not. More important is to warn how, because of a rapid turn towards the interests of bourgeois, Spanish socialism has defiled its Marxist origins which had empowered them during this decadent phase. The socialist process is the same everywhere. Its revolutionary capacity in an economic sense repudiated, it attempts to capture the role of interventionist in bourgeois circles, as a means to supplant the leftist liberal forces of their functions.

Perhaps it was Spanish socialism, among of all of those in Europe, which had until now remained the most loyal to Marxist ideology. It did not suffer the test of the Great War, where the socialist spirit suffered its most frightening blows. Indeed, it always struggled in a singular fashion against the older parties, and it managed to rise out unspoiled from among them.

Today, in the presence of the legitimacy question, the socialists have not been able to put forth even a single small position that differs from the other republican bourgeois groups. The recent resignations and the words of the party leaders commenting on them reveals this. Moreover: if there is somewhere where the republican propaganda pushed by the socialists is distinguished and has distinguished itself, it is in its efforts to dissuade the masses from focusing their attention on social issues. The revolutionary ability of socialism is reduced, interestingly, in the exact moments where it believes itself to be most revolutionary. Its impetus becomes invalidated, since potential militants will simply obey a call, if there is one, offering them a new economic model, although very hardly new, since it would only satisfy the whims of the bourgeois.

The socialist crisis is universal and is the equivalent of it turning into an instrument that the bourgeois uses to obtain leverage against the State. And which, if the bourgeois are successful, is the extreme opposite of Marxism. The socialists can do whatever they want; but it would be interesting if they were to realize what is happening. Indeed, if a Marxist does realize it he knows exactly where to go. And it isn't the socialist lines.

## **The Intelligentsia**

Politics is pure action and pure efficiency. He who doesn't believe this is far from being a politician. In the manifesto for intellectuals written by Mr. Ortega y Gasset<sup>4</sup> there is, at the very least, the complete rectification of everything that has been written until now on the relationship between an intellectual and politics. Eight months after the document is released in Spain for the masses in the defense (or the destruction) of the current regime, surges a refined intellectual that accepts this contest very much like people before him understood it.

The document, in perfect prose, remains completely removed from the universal political realities of this century (terrible thing in a philosopher). It includes a romantic effort to elaborate some sort of Rousseauian<sup>5</sup> State, national and everything, which is the most pathetic vision of the future that exists today. I very much admire Ortega as a professor – and even as a creator – of philosophy. Despite that, he also seems to me a weak politician without the valor to recognize the power of the new political stripes that still do not have any ideological stamp whatsoever. This is a radical defect, one that completely invalidates the political action of a single person. In addition to this, Ortega has always been in the orbit of the old politics, and he is still entirely dedicated in critiquing it. This is why he hasn't escaped

the old problems, and why, even after twenty years, he has not arrived at a better answer for them. The current situation escapes him, which is the pulse-pounding heart of the people. That old politics tendency to follow has caused, in a tremendous paradox, Ortega to walk the same path as the old politicians. He becomes responsible for their grudges, their prejudices – accepting them – and this most certainly is equal to “becoming their cousin” (as he recently said).

The manifesto is born out of the intention to imbue in the intelligentsia a sort of political enthusiasm. What is going to happen with this effort is that our good school teachers are going to be distracted from their work and start to think of themselves along with Ortega as the redeemers of the people. Probably by means of rhetoric and lyrical daydreams. Clearly, like it says in the manifesto, from the “active and sincere presence of a generation whose blood ferments the substance of the future.” We believe in the valorous dimension of this generation that he alludes to; but we also believe that the fact that it is valorous will immunize it against efforts as romantic and ineffective as this.

To say, as Ortega writes, that fascism and communism are dead ends, is simply the equivalent of turning your back on the times, along with an absolute blindness for today’s values. The document itself is inoffensive and is the most important topic that has been placed in circulation as of late. Anyone can subscribe to it, without compromise for anyone or anything. The only thing of concern is its republicanism. But whether in Spain, or outside of Spain, this cannot be a crime. Perhaps the complete opposite. In conclusion, it certainly demonstrates; the Republic can go when it pleases.

R. Ledesma Ramos

## Notes

- Melquíades Álvarez González-Posada was a conservative Spanish politician and supporter of the Republic. He is a leading member of Parliament and turned 65 in 1931 (and is definitely one of the “old” politicians Ramos despises), the year this article was written. González was in Madrid in 1936 when the Civil War broke out, and is arrested and murdered by leftist militia despite his continued support for the Republic.
- Ramos is referring to Court Palace, the site of Spanish Parliament as “that dilapidated hut.”
- This is a humorous comment poking fun at the age of the politicians. It doesn’t translate well into English.
- José Ortega y Gasset was a Spanish philosopher. He published in 1930 *The Revolt of the Masses*, his only venture into political philosophy. It is a scathing critique of the nature of populist movements (particularly communism, fascism, and syndicalism) and populist agitators and provides suggestions to educators on how to neutralize such movements. It is also his most famous work. He fled to Argentina at the beginning of the war, returning in 1948 to found the Madrid Institute for the Humanities.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the primary philosopher of the French Revolution and the writer of *The Social Contract*, which outlines the basis and the framework for classical republicanism.