

## THE ARMED IRONHET

The figure of President Roosevelt, whose greatness only future centuries can justly measure, will remain in history as the highest and most consoling symbol of the decisive role which moral forces play in the final outcome of political strife.

For twenty years the stupid masters of politics who held forth from every rostrum taught our fascinated young people that politics and morals have nothing in common. Morality was barely tolerated in private life, as a product for home use, which it was bad taste to show in the open. But in public life and particularly in international relations, anyone who spoke of honesty and justice was stamped with the infamous epithet of "moralist", and when the sanctity of treaties and solidarity among peoples were maintained, these knowing and unprejudiced young people spoke triumphantly of "masculine deeds" and "historical necessity".

It was actually the blind, inane "political realism" of these adventurers, one of whom once said, "It is easier to conquer a kingdom than to change an automobile tire," which led Italy to the catastrophe. They went as far as war equipped only with cynical commonplaces in which they thought they had distilled the quintessence of Machiavelli. They were convinced that the English, "the people who eat five meals a day," would not give up their esse in order to fulfill their international obligations. Their refined clairvoyance showed them that the English were disposed only to fight "until the last Frenchman had fallen." And then it was the turn of America, a rich and self-contented people, concerned only with money and business. What interest could the Americans have in shedding blood in the European conflict? They would stand by impassible at the slaughter, and afterwards would offer to lend their capital to the victor.

This was the political credo of Mussolini, of that great statesman who was always right, but who was really only a poor man among whose many merits history will recognize one pre-eminent above all the others, his immense and unbelievable stupidity.

But Roosevelt knew his people, and, more than that, he knew the profound nature of the men. He knew what flame of faith was smoldering under that feverish "Americanism" which only to those ignorant of history could seem a materialism incapable of sacrifice. This great president knew that to transform his disarmed country into a great armament factory, into an immense army camp, it would be enough to evoke the great Christian ideals from which puritan America arose. This was his great work as benefactor of humanity, to transform the religious faith of his people into political force and military power, to remind his people that when it is a question of defending those great ideals common to all men, to which the United States owes its liberty, ease, wealth, well-being, peace, life itself no longer count, and one sacrifices without turning back.

"To love right more than peace." This was the credo with which Wilson brought America into the first war. For a second time these millions of rich and happy men whose individual interest would have counseled them to remain peacefully at home as spectators, protected by the justified isolationism of privileged beings, voluntarily left their families and their goods and crossed the ocean to Europe to die for an ideal. They have been here in Europe for four years, and they continue to die by the thousands, not for themselves alone but for all the world--even for Italy.

What force drives them to this sacrifice, if it is not those great moral principles of which Roosevelt, from the time of his very first

speeches, wished to be the prophet?

In the early days the word prophet was applied to him in derision. His simple, calm eloquence made the masculine warriors who belittled "disarmed prophets", laugh until they cried. They thought that it was enough to have prepared their arms in hiding, to be able to consecrate the murder of the spirit with impunity. But Roosevelt, by his luminous role in world history revealed their infamy, and more important, their tragic error. He was the victorious champion of idealism against political realism, or, better, among the politicians of all time he was the most realistic, because he demonstrated with the victory of the Allies that in the supreme political alliances moral forces are the only reality.

He was a disarmed prophet who spoke of liberty, humanity, justice, and from these words, as if by a miracle, sprang arms.

When he died he left to the world a victory won by the arms that arose from his prophecy, and the enemy arms, the arms without a prophet, were broken. Roosevelt, the armed prophet.

IL FONTE, May, 1945.