

Notes on the Death of Franco

Murray Bookchin

1976

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Franco and Mass Murder | 3 |
| Batch Executions | 4 |
| The Franco Smash | 5 |
| Illegality Advantageous to CP | 9 |
| Anarchism Prospers Again | 10 |
| U.S. Props Fascism | 11 |

Death normally invites eulogy—even for a Mafia capo. Accordingly it is not surprising that the death of Francisco Franco summoned up the usual tribute from the acolytes of “relevancy”—a genre of people who are likely to praise any dictator from Stalin to Franco for “modernizing” their countries and ushering them into the “industrial age.” In the case of El Caudillo, Nixon happened to lead the pack. He praised Franco as “a loyal friend and ally of the United States...who brought Spain back to economic recovery and “unified a divided nation through a policy of firmness and fairness toward those who had fought against him.” At the other end of the spectrum, according to some press accounts, unmeasured numbers on both sides of the Spanish frontier opened their wine flasks and got drunk. I suspect that immense section of Spanish public opinion is reflected by those young Madrilenos who, when asked by American television interviewers why they filed past the coffin, bluntly declared that they wanted to see if the “old fascist” was really dead.

There is a comfortable conclusion toward which all sectors of-opinion are likely to converge, notably that Franco’s death “spells the end of an era.” That Franco may be the “last” of the “old fascists” whose personalities gave a face to the cold technocratic fascism of our own era has some truth, although Franco’s “personality” could accurately be dismissed as one shade of gray painted on another. In terms of his personality, the man was a deadening blank. The point seems to be that Franco provided a “face,” in contrast to present-day bureaucrats who are indistinguishable from the machines they operate. The regime could name *avenidas* after him and saddle his diminutive figure on marble horses in nearly every city in Spain. What could well rescue his reign from the opprobrium it deserves is forgetfulness, not forgiveness. A loss of a sense of history is perhaps the greatest support that could underpin the cult of “relevancy.” It is this forgetfulness, equaled only by the ignorance that has settled around the Spain of the thirties, that may well salvage the name of Franco and exalt his impact on Spanish society.

Franco and Mass Murder

Let me stress that if Francisco Franco was denied a place beside Hitler and Stalin as one of history’s most terrifying mass murderers, it was only because of the demographic limitations imposed upon him by the Iberian peninsula. Hitler had the hundreds of millions of Europe from which to collect his mountains of corpses; Stalin, the many tens of millions in Russia. Franco was limited to 24 million people. According to Gabriel Jackson, a liberal historian of the so-called “Spanish Civil War,” some 800,000 died out of those 24-million between 1936 and 1945. The figure may well have been as high as a million.

The “Red Terror” imputed by many historians particularly to the Spanish anarchists (for whom Jackson has neither sympathy nor understanding) is belied by Jackson himself in a brief but telling sentence. “In Catalonia and the Levant the anarchists arrested many a landlord and monarchist on the assumption that he had probably backed the uprising, but most of these people were released when the evidence, and the testimony of villagers who had known them for years, indicated they had nothing to do with the uprising.” By contrast with the admittedly inflated figure of 20,000 executions which he places in the republican zone, Jackson observes that the “largest single category of deaths were the reprisals carried out by the Carlists, the Falangists, and the military themselves. Physical liquidation of the enemy behind the lines was a constant process throughout the war. The Nationalists had, by definition, far more enemies than the revolutionaries: all members of Popular Front parties, all Masons, all officeholders of UGT or CNT unions

or of Casas del Pueblo, all members of mixed juries who had generally voted in favor of worker demands. The repression took place in three stages. At the outbreak of the war, the arrest and wholesale shootings corresponded to the revolutionary terror in the Popular Front zone; but there were a great many more victims because such arrests and shootings were officially sanctioned and because so large a percentage of the population were considered hostile. In the second stage, the Nationalist Army, conquering areas which had been held by the Popular Front, carried out heavy reprisals in revenge for those of the revolutionaries and in order to control a hostile populace with few troops...In the third stage, which lasted at least into the year 1943, the military authorities carried out mass court-martials followed by large-scale executions.” 1

If one adds 100,000 “battle casualties”—a loose phrase that often included the execution of prisoners—to the 20,000 executions in the republican zone, the Francoists may have systematically slaughtered close to 700,000 people and possibly as many as 880,000. Following Franco’s military victory in 1939, the slaughter began in earnest. It continued unrelentingly up to the early forties, when Franco, courting the Allies after Hitler’s retreats in Russia, began to reduce the executions. Possibly as many as 300,000 people were executed in this five-year period.

I know of no account of this carnage more compelling and dramatic than Elena de La Souchere’s “when time stood still” in her deeply perceptive work *An Explanation of Spain*. In Madrid alone, five permanent courts-martial tried prisoners in “batches” of 25 and 30. Accusations were merely perfunctory, based primarily on charges of membership in a leftist organization or participation in public office rather than supportable “atrocities.” The percentage of those...accused, rightly or wrongly, of ‘blood crimes’ was minute,” notes Souchere. Following an admonitory harangue by the military prosecutor, the defense was allowed a “brief collective plea.” Then the entire group was sentenced (usually to execution) without the military judges so much as leaving the hearing room.

Batch Executions

“A number of prisoners spent months and sometimes even years on death row and, two or three evenings a week, were submitted to the anguish of hearing their names on the roll call of men to be executed the next morning. In Madrid during the first two years of the regime, there were at least three hundred men in every ‘batch.’ The condemned spent their last night in the prison chapel, standing, kneeling, or seated on the stone floor. At dawn, their hands were tied behind their backs and the lower parts of their faces were bound with rubber muzzles so that during their last trip, their chants and huzzahs! for the republic would not incite people to riot. Then they were hustled into trucks and taken to the cemetery where, in the chill fog of early morning, soldiers with sleep-heavy eyes waited and held their machine guns ready. In single file the condemned walked across a sort of gangplank, its wood already battered by previous machine gun fire. When the gunners had again polished off their task, officers with heavy revolvers leaped here and there over the every-which-way bodies, to deal the coup de grace to those still breathing.” 2

This is the story of the “face” of Francisco Franco, the story we are requested to forget, to bury with Franco’s own corpse in the “Valley of the Fallen.” In my view it takes a conventional Marxist as well as a Fascist to exculpate horrors of this kind in the “higher name of history.” One may reasonably ask how many millions were slaughtered in much the same fashion by the

Russian Bolsheviks, the Chinese Maoists, the soft-spoken Ho, and the volatile Castro. Nor can we exculpate the liberals, figures like Thiers who, as early as 1871, provided a strategic model for Franco by withdrawing from Paris when his position proved to be untenable and returning with a conquering army not to achieve victory but to enact a bloody “final solution” to the century-long unrest of the Parisian sans-culottes. Franco followed an identical policy. Having failed to capture the major cities of Spain in July, 1936, he shifted the thrust of his rebellion from a typical military pronunciamiento to outright military conquest. The social movements that had played so creative a role in Spanish history for nearly 70 years were to be utterly uprooted and destroyed. This was no ideological or institutional act; its goal was outright extermination of every militant, even every focus of unrest.

The Franco Smash

Forgetfulness also threatens to conceal the fact that the “Spanish Civil War” was above all a sweeping social revolution—in Burnett Bolloten’s words, a revolution “more profound in some respects than the Bolshevik Revolution in its early stages” and, I would be inclined to add, in any of its stages. It was primarily an anarchist revolution, whether guided by massive anarcho-syndicalist organizations such as the CNT-FAI or the result of 70 years of anarchist agitation. Franco smashed this movement. Whether it had the resilience to return in anything resembling its original form after the blood-letting it suffered would now be idle speculation in view of the changed social conditions in Spain.

Inextricably bound to Franco’s victory, however, was the aid he acquired from the Spanish Communist Party. It is impossible to write the biography of Franco, to give an account of his “National Movement,” or to explain his success without stressing the counterrevolutionary role of Stalin and the Communists in Spain. From the murder of Andres Nin in a secret Stalinist prison to the Communist execution teams who shot wounded anarchist militiamen during the Battle of the Ebro, the history of the Communists has been marked by such a ruthless commitment to counterrevolution that it bears comparison only with Ebert and Noske in Germany. The comparison was made in the most cutting fashion by Camillo Berneri, one of the most widely respected Italian anarchists of his day, shortly before he too was killed by Stalinist agents in May, 1937, in Barcelona.

In time some of us came to realize that the Communist Party’s activities formed perhaps the most Spanish fascism. To place the party on the “left” had marked our deference more to symbolism, rhetoric, and tradition than to political reality. What now boggles my mind is how little this harsh fact is understood today within and, far less excusably, outside of Spain. The emergence of a neo-Stalinism so widespread that it can enrapture contributors to WIN as well as the hacks who write for the Guardian is evidence of a “forgetfulness” much closer to stupidity than to a lack of memory. As if the verdict of Spain were not enough, a recent verdict from Portugal might seem to suffice for years to come. “The Communists have let us down again,” bitterly declared a leftist journalist in Lisbon after the recent military uprising, “as they let the rest of the left down in Chile after the coup.”³ It is time to recognize that this is neither “treachery” nor “betrayal” but the consequences of a totally misplaced belief in the revolutionary nature of authoritarian “socialism” as such. The Communist Party in every country of the world is no more on the “left”

than Franco's Falange; it can no more be "red-baited" than the followers of George Wallace or Ronald Reagan.

To speak frankly, however, I strongly fear that this verdict will not suffice. It is understandable that the Spanish people, who have been denied access to their own history, will see in the well-financed and well-organized Spanish Communist Party a lever for social change. But it is utterly unforgivable that American and European radical intellectuals, particularly those who profess a non-authoritarian approach; so readily surrender their moral probity with each change in the political winds as to reinforce the illusion that the Communist parties are socially redeemable. 4 Here the cult of the "relevant" and the "contemporary" betrays itself as the lack of an organic insight in which the background of events is seen as much a part of the future as the present.

Franco's victory in 1939 did not form the prelude to the Second World War as the-historians tell us. It marked the definitive end of the classical working class revolutions which began in 1848 with the June insurrection of the Parisian proletariat. Step by step, each major European country exhausted this heritage, a heritage from which traditional anarchism and socialism derived their hopes and their theoretical equipment. In France, all the later fireworks notwithstanding, the heritage ended with the fall of the Commune in 1871. Thereafter, the French proletariat never seriously challenged the established order as a class, however theatrical its participation in the events of the thirties and the sixties. Indeed, as a class its activity was siphoned into institutionalized parties and unions, organizations to which it has been obedient for more than a century. Eventually, it was not Thiers and his executioners who were to bring the revolutionary heritage of the French working class to an end, but the advent of modern large-scale industry and the powerful discipline it exercised upon the workers themselves.

In Germany, this era was almost certainly over by 1920, revealing itself in the assimilation of the Social Democratic and Communist parties to the capitalist system. In Russia, the era ended with the crushing of the Kronstadt sailors in 1921. America, the center of large-scale industry and mass production-par excellence, never even rose to the level of a labor party, much less an insurrectionary proletariat.

Militancy and violence should never be confused with revolutionary behavior and revolutionary action. The American class struggle has been militant enough, but rarely has it evolved to the level in which sizable numbers of workers were to challenge the social order itself. Indeed; never has it risen to the level of consciousness where self-activity could yield the promise of self-management which we associate with a libertarian socialist society.

Spain alone carried the classical tradition well into our own century. Here, every classical working class' movement, indeed almost every revolutionary sect, played out its programmatic role with guns in hand. Each exhibited its possibilities and limitations within the traditional framework that had been created by the 1840s. With the collapse of the Spanish revolution a full history of proletarian socialism—whether syndicalist or Marxist, libertarian or authoritarian—came to an end.

As in France, modern industry with its concomitant shifts in population from the countryside to the cities, its reformist working class, its merger with the state, its use of economic controls, its fostering of a technocratic sensibility and hierarchical mentality, and its wide commercial base—all have combined to change Spain more profoundly in the past decade than in the past century.

The extent of these changes can be 'measured by the occupational shifts within the Spanish population itself. Spain, as seen through the picaresque novels of its traditional authors or the

hazy eyes of romantic tourists, has long been categorized as a hopelessly pre-industrial nation, almost as though a traditional national temperament could perpetually surmount fundamental economic realities. This vision might have had some validity as recently as 1960, when agriculture was still the country's major activity, embracing nearly 42 percent of the population. Within a mere span of twelve years, the shift from rural to urban occupations has been spectacular. By 1972, only 27 percent of the Spanish people were involved in agriculture and the trend is still downward.

By far the overwhelming majority of Spaniards are now engaged in industrial production, construction, service activities, managerial tasks, professional work, commerce, and governmental responsibilities. The gross national product has been increasing at a rate of about seven to eight percent annually. Foreign investment in Spain is enormous.

Despite the recent economic slump which reduced the labor force in the American auto industry by one-third, Ford continued to invest some \$350 million in its installations in Spain. As one State Department official recently observed: "Spain is now one of the most heavily industrialized nations in the world."

The shift in Spain from agriculture to industry and commerce has created an entirely new constellation of social forces with new political, cultural, and temperamental realities. Spain now possesses a substantial managerial class, more American in its outlook than Hispanic. The *abricijo* is giving way to the handshake; the *siesta* to the luncheon.

Surrounding this managerial class is a supportive army of salesmen, technicians, statistical analysts; advertising legmen, accountants, bookkeepers, secretaries, typists, receptionists, and clerks—all oriented toward the Spanish version of the "American dream" of upward mobility and suburban amenities. The susceptibility of this sector to social radicalism is likely to be minimal, if non-existent; it is liberal at best and by no means totally bereft of authoritarian proclivities. It may desire a more democratic form of government in which to voice its interests, but certainly one that is moderate, prudent, and well-tamed.

Such a sector did not exist on a large scale in the thirties. As a sizable part of the urban population, it is the most significant buffer to "extremism." The new managerial class and the aspirants that follow in its wake form the mass base for a constitutional monarchy or a republic and would in themselves be sufficient to cushion the shockwaves that plunged Spain into social revolution forty years ago.

More enigmatic than the managerial sector is the Spanish working class—the class that still forms the great hope of the thirties' generation on both sides of the Pyrenees. Except for the Basque region, it would have been difficult by present-day standards to regard this class as fully industrialized forty years ago. In Barcelona, the textile workers who were to fill the ranks of the CNT were largely employed in shops of less than a hundred workers owned as family concerns.

Often, the most radical of these workers were of recent rural backgrounds, at most a generation removed from a peasant or craftsman status. A marked tension between the intimacy of the *pueblo* and the anonymity of the city, between work regulated by the seasons and work regulated by the clock, exacerbated the ubiquitous material misery that burdened Spanish life and evoked a fiery, intensely libertarian response.

Not surprisingly, Madrid, a city composed of bureaucrats, retailers, and craftsmen had a predominantly Socialist "proletariat." The construction workers in the capital were mainly anarcho-syndicalists. The Barcelona workers, on the other hand, were mainly anarcho-syndicalists; the more privileged railroad workers and the skilled machinists in the repair shops tended even in

Catalonia toward the Socialists. One could clearly delineate between a hereditary proletariat and a transitional one—the former drifting into Socialist unions, the latter into anarcho-syndicalist ones.

The Spanish workers of the seventies are increasingly the creatures of multinational corporations—in part, too, emigre workers who have been employed by giant industrial enterprises in France and Germany. Despite the arduous nature of their work and the comparatively low wages they earn, they are in a very significant sense a part of the industrial bureaucracy of modern-day capitalism.

Unlike the old patronal system which imparted a “face” and a certain comprehensibility to Spanish capitalism, the modern corporate structure is anonymous and totally bereft of human scale. To the Barcelona workers of the thirties, “collectivization” with its concomitant system of self-management at the base of the economy had an authentically personal character.

The popularity of anarcho-syndicalist doctrines stemmed in no small measure from its tangibility and relationship to everyday experience at the workplace. The Barcelona workers of the seventies, by contrast, live in a comparatively atomized world of industrial gigantism where “nationalization” is likely to seem more “realistic” and the concept of a workers’ state more appropriate to the prevailing economy than a stateless society.

Which is not to say that I regard the dissolution of Spanish society into the multinational corporate world as the least evidence of “social progress.” Quite to the contrary, I have no ecological or social reason for viewing this development as anything other than a profound retrogression that would serve only to reinforce hierarchy, centralization, state-control, and eventually replace the terror-ridden but overt fascism of the Franco dictatorship by the “friendly” but concealed fascism of a technocratic dictatorship.

But the fact of this change must be introduced into our estimate of Spain’s future development if we are not to cloud our vision with illusory hopes. Vincente Romano, in a rather naive introduction to a volume of documents by the Spanish workers’ commissions, stresses that “any future federation of Spanish labor unions will have to abandon the old divisions which existed before the Civil War and will have to include all workers without distinction as to their political or religious beliefs.”

This view is grossly misleading. If it reflects any significant tendency within the commissions themselves, it would replace the intensely political unionism of the Spanish proletariat once so rich in its idealism and sense of social commitment, by the “pure-and-simple” economistic unionism of the American proletariat, so deadening, bureaucratically stultifying, and hopeless in its social prospects.

The differences between the Socialist UGT and the anarcho-syndicalist CNT in the thirties were serious enough. The tragedy is that these differences were not carried far enough—that the CNT, with a naivete that often slipped into a gross betrayal of its own principles, surrendered its revolutionary goals to the cause of “proletarian unity.”

If the Spanish workers follow the path of “unity,” economism, and organizational centralization, they will behave no differently than the working class elsewhere. Organizational “unity” on this basis will serve only to institutionalize them as pillars of a multinational corporate society, however militantly they struggle for their practical day-to-day interests. Their organization will no longer presuppose a radical change in society; rather, it will presuppose precisely the opposite: a struggle with capitalism, not against it.

This kind of struggle is intrinsically a negotiable one that occurs within the parameters of the prevailing social relationships. As to the pre-capitalist rural origins of the proletariat, they will disappear with the pueblo itself. Agribusiness lies as much in store for Spain as it does for France—and with the development of agribusiness, the erosion of the peasantry as a force for social revolution.

Illegality Advantageous to CP

A “unified” Spanish labor movement had already become the cry of the CNT in the last months of the “Spanish Civil War.” To the degree that it was achieved, it benefited neither the anarcho-syndicalist segment of the labor movement nor the Socialist, but primarily the Communist. Today, a “unified” Spanish labor movement would almost certainly be controlled by the Communist Party.

Another harsh fact must be faced concerning Spain: by nearly every account available, the Spanish Communist Party is the best organized as well as the best financed political movement in Spain. Its membership has been estimated to be as high as 80,000 and is almost certainly not less than 30,000.

Membership in an illegal organization has a very tenuous meaning, to be sure, and the Communists have notoriously inflated their membership figures in all their parties. But there does seem to be widespread agreement, even among opponents of the Communists, that no political organization in Spain has comparable power and resources.

Illegality itself confers this advantage on the Communist Party, just as it serves to impart a democratic, nearly anarchist character to the Workers’ Commissions. The communists command resources from abroad that other potentially larger illegal organizations clearly lack. Their position is also enhanced by the aura of power that emanates from their affiliations with the “Eastern Bloc” in Europe, even though the largest of the two Communist parties in Spain opposed the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia and probably has very little access to Soviet resources.

Centralized, fairly well-knit, and “efficient,” the Communists offer an image of considerable power, an image that is not without attraction to many Spaniards who have been taught to respect power by the dictatorship itself. By contrast, the Workers’ Commissions (which are by no means controlled by the Communists) must adopt decentralized forms of organization and loose, highly democratic structures if they are to maintain the widespread adherence they enjoy in Spain—structures which political parties prudently avoid as too libertarian.

Between the comparatively well-organized Communists and the loosely organized Workers’ Commissions, the Socialists, republicans, constitutional monarchists, and nationalistic parties live in a contradictory reality. Centralistic in theory, they carry on an ill-organized existence in reality.

Accordingly the Communists have been buoyed to the top of the illegal political world of Spain—and I must emphasize the word “political” because the Workers’ Commissions and the anarchists face an entirely different situation—precisely because of the dictatorship, not despite it.

Considering the size of the managerial, professional, and white collar sectors of Spanish society, I strongly doubt if the Communists would be nearly as strong as they are today if organizations that appeal to the middle classes were free to function in Spain. It remains supremely

ironical that Franco's "crusade against communism" has ultimately done more to establish the Communists as the largest political grouping in Spain than any other single factor apart from Russian "aid" during the 1936-39 period.

The Workers' Commissions are large, anarchic in structure, and too naive in their attitude toward hardened politicals like the Communists to realize the dangers that are implicit in their cry for "unity." They do not profess to be a substitute for an institutionalized trade union federation.

In the event that they were legalized, they would become a battleground for conflicting social movements, such as the Communists, Socialists, Catholics and anarchists.

The Communists, who are often mistakenly believed to "control" the commissions, reportedly have been very much discredited due to the party's failure to support the recent Basque general strike. The Socialists seem to have much less influence among the Spanish workers than the press has led us to believe, although they and the Communists would seem to be the most likely heir of the commissions—in short, a French-styled union movement, rhetorically radical, but pragmatically reformist and bureaucratic.

At the present time, however, the traditional PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party, to use the official name of the organization) is in considerable disarray and its capacity to influence Spanish events depends heavily upon its legalization.

Anarchism Prospers Again

The great unknown in Spain is the size and influence of the anarchist groups. The American press and the respectable anti-Franco juntas that have been soliciting governments and the public for financial assistance are patently unwilling to acknowledge any anarchist presence in Spain until evidence of anarchist activities literally explodes in the form of dramatic atentados. Even anarchists abroad had begun to despair that the memory of an immense anarcho-syndicalist movement in the 'thirties had any meaning for Spain in the 'seventies.

As recently as a few weeks ago, the most pessimistic accounts I heard denied the very existence of an anarchist movement in such traditional centers of anarchism as Barcelona and Zaragoza. Occasional actions by Spanish anarchists seemed to be little more than episodic events, carried off by small desperate groups which had filtered in from France.

There is now evidence that this image is inaccurate. Recent police roundups of scores of anarchists reveal that the size and certainly the influence of the movement has been greatly underestimated. Although I have heard enough conflicting opinions to wonder whether this movement is very large or very small, I am quite convinced from the police arrests that an indigenous substrata within Spain nourishes anarchist activity and organization.

It would indeed be surprising that a CNT or at least CNT nuclei do not exist in Spanish factories and villages. Acknowledgment of CNT activity appears even in Workers' Commission documents I have read. It is also clear that the anarchist movement in the "interior" is very fragmented in terms of its ideology and practice. It is divided between the exiles abroad and the "illegals" in Spain; between "old timers" and youth; between those who emphasize propaganda and others who demand action; between libertarians who feel that many Marxian concepts can no longer be ignored and the adherents of a largely moral anti-authoritarianism. Finally, it is divided between those who wish to retain anarcho-syndicalist doctrine in all its orthodoxy and

individuals who believe that traditional anarchism and Marxism must be transcended by a new form of libertarian socialism.

The divisions between the exiles and indigenous groups or the old and young are themselves quite traditional and occurred throughout the history of the anarchist movement in Spain. The need to perpetuate orthodoxy or transcend it in the face of historic social developments—this, quite aside from the old battle between revolutionary purism and reformist accommodation—is the most interesting of all. Owing to the illegal nature of the movement, it is difficult to determine whether the trend away from orthodoxy is nourished by Maoist or New Left influences.

Unlike other western European countries, Spain has had only a superficial contact with the New Left concepts of the sixties. The illegality of workers' organizations and the political character of many strikes has made the Spanish Left highly working-class oriented. Critiques of the labor movement so common in the United States are not readily accepted by Spanish revolutionary organizations.

Enormous significance is attached to the working class in changing Spanish society—not merely by left and center organizations but even by “enlightened” sectors of the bourgeoisie which see an institutionalized labor movement as a safety valve in preventing an avoidable class war. Accordingly, the primary reform in Spain is seen to be not merely the legalization of “responsible” political parties, but more significantly, “responsible” trade unions. I suspect that even a well groomed syndicalist federation would be acceptable, a federation that would almost certainly render a militant revolutionary anarchist movement inconsequential.

U.S. Props Fascism

The greatest single prop to the Franco dictatorship has been the United States and the American people remain more deeply implicated in Spanish developments than any other in the world. American aid rescued the dictatorship during its most difficult period in the fifties when the peninsula moved closer to revolution than at any time since 1936. American investments and tourism nourished the dictatorship throughout the sixties. American military bases in Spain remind the people that the regime has reserves over and beyond its police and armed forces upon which it can call in the event of any decisive crisis.

Indeed, American and Spanish military forces have trained together and vague clauses in the military agreements between the two countries allow for armed American intervention in Spanish internal affairs. Visits by Nixon and Ford have reinforced Franco's sagging prestige in precarious periods of the dictator's rule.

Today, the one feature that vitiates any meaningful analysis of Spanish conditions is a gnawing sense of uncertainty. We know from the foreign press that popular resistance occurs daily and on a widespread scale. But the true relationship of forces within the army, the church, the working class, the middle classes, the national groups, and the resistance organizations has been effectively obscured by the regime.

As long as the free expression of ideas is forbidden all the strata that compose Spanish society and the groups that profess to speak in their name do not even know their own strength and influence.

This sense of mutual ignorance, sustained partly by the legitimation the United States gives to the regime, represents a very explosive factor in Spanish social development. It makes any

effort to venture a prognosis about the course of events virtually impossible. In the course of this labyrinthine “transition”, Spain could well take a bloody turn—by no means one that would favor the Left—that could not have been foreseen a few years earlier. The conviction which I developed during a visit to Spain some eight years ago, notably that the people had been-too embittered by the slaughter of the thirties to slip into civil war, is no longer a certainty. A friend well informed on Spanish conditions reminds me that sixty percent of the Spanish people today have no memory of the conflict.

Militancy has replaced restraint among young Spaniards and the restless national groups. It would be wrong to believe that a bloody clash within Spain is impossible. The Spaniards are no longer the defeated people of the forties, nor do the warnings of the-previous generation carry any weight in the formulation of popular decisions.

Tempo is now everything. The ticking of the clock has replaced the “proverbial” tolling of the bells. With each passing week, grim frustrations are turning into aggressive anger. It would be ironical indeed if Spain, a country in which elementary bourgeois freedoms would probably suffice to remove the threat of a popular uprising, exploded in revolt—not because the regime, following in Franco’s footsteps, acted too forcefully, but because it acted too late.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright



Murray Bookchin
Notes on the Death of Franco
1976

Retrieved on 26th October 2020 from www.fifthestate.org and www.fifthestate.org
From Fifth Estate #268, January 1976 and #269, February 1976

usa.anarchistlibraries.net