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## FRANCISCO FRANCO AND THE DECLINE AND FALL OF SPANISH FASCISM

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In the years 1936-1939 a ruthless civil war raged in Spain between the left-wing Republican government and nationalist rebels supported by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. When the cities of Barcelona and Madrid finally capitulated to the rebel armies in 1939, General Francisco Franco, commander-in-chief of the nationalist front, became dictator of Spain until his death in 1975. Franco's rule in its early years was characterized by many similarities to the fascist dictatorships of Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini, but although supported by the Spanish fascist party and brought into power with support from fascist regimes, Franco was not, as is often claimed, "the last surviving fascist dictator after the end of World War II."<sup>1</sup> Franco's rule was violent and reactionary but not fascist.<sup>2</sup> Understanding why this is true is crucial to the understanding of fascism as more than merely an updated, more radical version of traditional, nineteenth-century right-wing authoritarianism. Fascism was a movement that manifested itself in a form totally separate from, not merely more radical than, traditional conservatism.

Spain's government under Franco was a despotic apparatus of repression and terror but always heavily reliant on the

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military, Church, and social elite, unlike fascist states which relied on party and security organs for control. Franco never allowed fascist ideology to dictate his foreign or domestic policy, and frustrated the hopes of Hitler and Mussolini when he maintained Spanish neutrality during World War II and forced the Spanish fascist party, the *Falange*, into a position of little real power. The relationship between Franco's Spain and the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini during the years 1936-1943 was one of convenience, not of political identity, since Franco and the fascist dictators shared common enemies but not common goals. Franco's government was conservative by nature not only in the years after World War II when, as is often argued, Franco may have been motivated by pressures from the victorious West to tone down the fascist nature of his dictatorship, but also in the period between 1936 and 1942, when fascism in Europe was at its height and it would have been in Franco's best interest to let loose any radical plans he may have held.

Not only was Franco not a fascist in the international arena, but the alliance between Franco and fascism within Spain was merely a superficial political maneuver by the Generalissimo intended to legitimize his own power through cynical use of radical dogma. Franco was able to take advantage of fascist support to emerge victorious in the Civil War, and establish a dictatorship despite monarchist pressure for a restoration, but he later crushed fascist hopes of building a radical, totalitarian regime in Spain. He was able to manipulate the Spanish fascist party into becoming a tool in the creation of a rigid, apolitical regime dominated by the army and the Church.

To understand fascism and its influence in Spain, understanding the ideological context from which it emerged is first necessary. The political and ideological realities of Europe during the rise of fascism can be traced back to the French Revolution of 1789. This great upheaval divided European thought and politics into three camps: those who were fiercely opposed to the Revolution and called for the conservation of aristocratic privilege and a state-supported Church within an authoritarian system (the con-

servatives), those who accepted the initial, liberalizing aspects of the Revolution and favored individual rights and parliamentary government (the liberals), and those who embraced the Revolution's most radical phase and called for the nationalization of all wealth-creating property to ensure economic equality (the socialists).<sup>3</sup>

Fascism emerged as an ideology that fundamentally rejected this entire system of thought. Benito Mussolini, the founder of fascism, named the movement after the Ancient Roman *fasces*, a bundle of rods from which protruded an axe used for decapitation. To Mussolini and his followers, the *fasces* was a symbol of the authority and glory of the Roman Empire, which they desired to recreate.<sup>4</sup> Fascism's goal was to combine elements of conservatism and socialism to forge a totalitarian state capable of mobilizing the people to a national rebirth and finally to a war of conquest.<sup>5</sup> For Mussolini, imperialism was the essence of fascism, and in his treatise *The Doctrine of Fascism* he declared:

For Fascism the tendency to Empire, that is to say, to the expansion of nations, is a manifestation of vitality; its opposite, staying at home, is a sign of decadence: peoples who rise or re-rise are imperialist, peoples who die are renunciatory.<sup>6</sup>

Fascists shared with conservatives not only their opposition to liberal democracy and working-class socialism, but also such traditional values as nationalism, militarism, authoritarianism, obedience, discipline and the idea of birthright.<sup>7</sup> However, the fascist movement cannot be called conservative, for this would be to ignore its revolutionary aspects. Fascists aspired to create an entirely new society with a new kind of man, totally subjugated to the state,<sup>8</sup> and strived to undermine the international status quo. According to Panunzio, an Italian syndicalist revolutionary leader, "fascism is a revolution that conserves and reinforces the idea of the State, defined as revolutionary because it desires to create a new State, and conservative because it defends the idea of a State."<sup>9</sup>

Fascist economic policy likewise eludes easy categorization within the nineteenth-century ideological framework. "Economic liberalism," favored by both conservatives and liberals, "was de-

nounced [under fascism] for promoting individual self-interest, as was socialism for creating conflicts between workers and capitalists.”<sup>10</sup> Fascism, as a social and economic revolution, was an attempt to find an entirely new way to restructure society, based on neither class warfare nor *laissez-faire* liberalism.<sup>11</sup>

In practice, fascism in Italy and Germany drew even further away from traditional conservatism.

What made fascism different from earlier dictatorships was the presence of a mass party that monopolized power through its security services and the army and that eliminated all other parties, using considerable violence in the process. This new style of party was headed by a leader who had virtually unlimited power, was adulated by his followers, and was the focus of a quasi-religious cult. The party’s doctrine became an obligatory article of faith for not only its members but all other citizens and was constantly projected by means of a powerful propaganda machinery.<sup>12</sup>

Following the full implementation of fascism, “class differences have been denied and so-called misfits have been eliminated. Politically speaking, the individual has ceased to exist. The party has become the state...”<sup>13</sup> This type of system is radically different from the traditional conservative authoritarianism, even in its most radical forms, such as the dictatorship of Franco. Conservative rule is dependent on traditional pillars of support such as the army and bureaucracy. In a conservative system such as Franco’s, any institutions or individuals who do not directly challenge or threaten the regime are left to their own devices. Fascism, meanwhile, asserts absolute control over all aspects of society, no matter how petty, because in a totalitarian system any type of non-conformity is seen as a threat to the regime.<sup>14</sup>

Fascism was politically successful only in nations where the mainstream right was weak and susceptible to manipulation,<sup>15</sup> and inhibited in states already dominated by traditional, authoritarian nationalism.<sup>16</sup> The explanation for the failure of a totalitarian state of fascist character to emerge in Spain therefore lies in the relative disposition of power between traditional right-wing elements and the Spanish fascist movement.

Spain was the last of the major western European nations to develop an indigenous fascist party.<sup>17</sup> The *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista*, or JONS, a national-sindicalist group that embraced fascist ideology, was founded in 1931. On April 14 two of its leaders, Ledesma Ramos and Giménez Caballero, published *La Conquista del Estado (The Conquest of the State)*, in which the influence of fascist ideas was obvious. “The new state will be constructive and creative,” it declared. “It will supplant individuals and groups... let there be nothing above the State!”<sup>18</sup>

In 1933, José Antonio Primo de Rivera,<sup>19</sup> a radical intellectual, founded the Spanish fascist party. The party championed social and economic revolution in an ultranationalist, authoritarian context and rejected the political programs of both left and right, much as its Italian or German counterparts had done.<sup>20</sup> José Antonio writes in *El Fascio* on March 16, 1933: “The fascist ideal is not an ideal for the right (for the right seeks to preserve everything, even what is bad) nor of the left (for the left seeks to destroy everything, even what is good), but an ideal valid for the whole nation.”<sup>21</sup> The party ominously chose the name *Falange Española*.<sup>22</sup> Although a marginal political entity, the *Falange* received considerable financial backing from Mussolini.<sup>23</sup>

Neither the Falange nor the JONS was able, before the outbreak of Civil War, to attract a mass following comparable to the fascist parties of Germany and Italy.<sup>24</sup> The program of the Spanish fascists was vague and contradictory.<sup>25</sup> The middle class, which in other nations had been the most receptive towards fascist ideas because of its resentment of traditional elitism and fear of lower-class socialism, in Spain was largely ultraconservative and hostile toward the Falange’s calls for revolution. “There was little articulate nationalist feeling in Spain similar to the organized middle-class nationalism which swept many other continental countries in the nineteenth century.”<sup>26</sup> Spanish patriotic sentiment was largely of a conservative and traditional variety. The Spanish masses were unresponsive to the type of expansionist, ideological nationalism that was dominant in Germany and Italy.<sup>27</sup> Spain in the years preceding the Civil War was a society unresponsive to the ideas of fascism.

In the elections of 1936, when the Spanish left-wing and liberal parties united to form the *Frente Popular* (*Popular Front*), the various right-wing parties reacted and formed a rival *Frente Nacional* (*National Front*). The National Front was reluctant to include the Falange, because the fledgling fascist party could boast little popular support and its revolutionary elements would frighten conservative voters.<sup>28</sup> When the *Frente Popular* won the elections by a landslide and a new left-wing government was created, José Antonio and other prominent fascist leaders were arrested and the Falange declared outlawed.<sup>29</sup> Driven underground, its leaders in prison, and with no broad support, Spanish fascism suddenly faced political oblivion.

During this time, several prominent right-wing generals began forming a conspiracy to launch a coup against the Popular Front government. Having been declared illegal, the Falange, originally opposed to the conspiracy, grew in its desperation more supportive of a coup.<sup>30</sup> “Now that powerful forces had begun to conspire against the Republic, there was some chance that at least the negative part of the party’s program would be implemented.”<sup>31</sup> The Falange, however, was in no position to take control of such a rebellion. “A successful revolt by the Army...would certainly produce an authoritarian system of some sort, but this would by no means be a national syndicalist revolution. The Falange militia was poorly armed and at best equipped for sporadic street fighting. It was in no position to dispute supremacy with the Army, if the Army really planned to rebel.”<sup>32</sup> The distribution of power in Spain on the eve of the Civil War was such that any radical, fascist elements in an emerging right-wing regime would be firmly subordinated to the army and its conservative leaders.

Indeed, when the military uprising broke out on July 17, 1936, beginning in the *Tercio Extranjero* (the Spanish Foreign Legion) in Morocco it was an uprising of a conservative and military, not fascist, character. The uprising sparked a counter-revolution from the left, driven by the radicalized Spanish working class. Priests and landowners were killed, churches burned, and land collectivized. Engulfed by the uprisings from both sides of the

political spectrum, Spain became a battleground between rebel soldiers and civil guardsmen and the workers' militia, loyal troops, and other forces that supported the Republic.

Although not originally a fascist movement, the Nationalist uprising quickly began to adopt a strong fascist element. The Falange, whose ideology became more attractive in the atmosphere of national struggle and as a result of middle and upper-class fear of the rampant Reds, emerged for the first time as a mass party. Membership surged so quickly that it overwhelmed the party's organization, which was not yet tailored to incorporate such a mass following.<sup>33</sup> The ranks of the Falange grew to such a degree that it organized its own military formations.<sup>34</sup> Falange troops helped the military defeat the workers' militia in Valladolid and Zaragoza, but its leaders remained in Republican prisons.

Seville, Cadiz, Cordoba, and Granada were also taken by the Nationalists, but the government in Madrid was not toppled and thus the coup failed in its primary objective. Once the initial chaos subsided, most of the territory on the Spanish mainland remained in Republican hands.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the Spanish navy had remained loyal to the Republic, thus making it impossible for the bulk of the Nationalist forces in Morocco, under the command of Francisco Franco, an ambitious general who had become notorious for his brutal suppression of a workers' uprising in Asturias in 1934, to cross into the mainland. General Mola's Northern Army, supported by monarchist and Falangist forces, launched an early offensive on Madrid that failed due to lack of troops and supplies. Unable to unite their forces and topple the government, Franco and the other generals were thus faced with a complete collapse of the rebel effort.<sup>36</sup> At this point, had it not been for foreign intervention, the forces loyal to the government in Madrid might very possibly have isolated the uprising in Morocco and gained control of the situation within a few weeks.<sup>37</sup> In the political milieu of the Nationalist Zone, which included fascist, monarchist, and various ultraconservative and even Republican elements, Francisco Franco had not yet made a commitment to any of the rival political parties. Stranded with his army in Mo-

rocco, Franco was in an ideal situation to enter Spain with decisive military forces and use his personal influence to shift the balance of power between the various Nationalist factions, he merely lacked the transportation.

Faced with a hopeless military situation, General Franco sent emissaries with requests for aid to Germany and Italy, whose fascist governments he believed would be sympathetic to the Nationalist cause. Initially, these requests were turned down, but eventually Mussolini and later Hitler both agreed to send military aid. The bonds between Mussolini, Fascist Duce of Italy, and Spanish conservative and military circles were long standing. In 1932, Italy had supplied arms to an unsuccessful coup in Spain launched by General Sanjurjo, who was also the leader of the 1936 uprising until his death in a plane crash.<sup>38</sup> When the military uprising broke out in Spain in 1936, Mussolini pledged his support, especially eager to bring into power the newly invigorated Falange. Hitler and Mussolini saw in Spain not only a prospective future ally, but an excellent rehearsal ground for World War II.<sup>39</sup> Eventually, 77,000 Italians were to fight in Spain, as well as the infamous Condor Legion from the German Luftwaffe, responsible for the atrocious bombing of the Basque town of Guernica in 1937.<sup>40</sup> The Italian Air Force made it possible for General Franco to ferry his Moroccan troops into Spain and begin an offensive that was to take him to the gates of Madrid. The decisive intervention of Germany and Italy turned the military uprising in Spain into a Civil War. Franco's alliance with the foreign fascists did not mark a commitment to the fascist revolution, however. Franco's character was such that he would not allow for the creation of a fascist state in Spain.

...whereas Mussolini and Hitler were 'outsiders' who had broken with society in order to identify themselves with, and assume leadership of, a particular group and ideology, Franco on the contrary was the finished product of a class, a caste and a life-history of 'classic' type. This difference between the...Caudillo and the Duce or the Fuhrer, between the youngest general in the Spanish army and those ex-N.C.O.'s, ambitious upstarts climbing to power amidst tumult after irregular careers, unstable visionaries—this distance between the

traditional career-man and those other adventurers measures the distance between Spain and Germany or Italy: Spain, where the archaic, traditional element still prevailed even in this reaction against twentieth-century innovation; Italy or Germany, where the opposition to communism took a radically new form. It was already obvious that the doctrines and methods of Franco were to evolve differently from those of fascism or nazism, owing to that specific Spanish backwardness which is reflected in the life of the Spanish dictator.<sup>41</sup>

Franco's reliance on aid from the German and Italian fascists, both ideologically tied to the Falange, meant that he had to give the Falange a prominent position in the Nationalist zone, but he was also motivated in his support of the party by personal political considerations. "In the nationalist camp the Monarchists were powerful...well-organized and strongly rooted in Navarre, Aragon and Castile."<sup>42</sup> Franco's ambitions for a personal dictatorship had to compete with monarchist desires for a restoration. Nothing was a more immediate threat to Franco's power within the Nationalist camp. The Generalissimo devised a cunning political strategy to deal with this obstacle: he used the Falange and its vaguely revolutionary program against traditionalists who threatened his personal rule, while preserving the monarchists in a position powerful enough to use them in turn, if need be, as a counterbalance against the Falange.

Franco was clearly in a position to assume authority over the Nationalist front by July 1936. "His past career marked him out for it and circumstances favoured him...He took only two months to become Generalissimo and Head of State...He was favoured by his past, his authority over the army, the fact that chance liquidated his rivals, for Sanjurjo's death [in a plane crash] was followed by those of José Antonio Primo de Rivera and the other Falangist leader, Onesimo Redondo, who were shot by the Republicans in November 1936."<sup>43</sup>

Franco thus used the Spanish fascist party in the early years of the Civil War to undermine the political aspirations of the monarchists. In this way he also ingratiated himself with his foreign allies, who preferred a semi-fascist dictatorship in Spain to

an outright restoration of the monarchy. Mussolini, in a later letter to Franco, writes that he would personally prefer "...a united and pacified Spain under the guidance of the *Caudillo*, head of the country and of the Party" to a restoration of the monarchy.<sup>44</sup> Franco became head of the Falange as well as head of state in the Nationalist zone, and took the title *Caudillo*, or *leader*, to suggest similar titles (*Fuhrer* and *Duce*) adopted by Hitler and Mussolini. By assuming a dictatorship and propounding a fascist ideology, Franco was able to garner the support of those Spaniards who wanted to follow the pattern of Germany and Italy.<sup>45</sup> The Falange was a useful political tool for Franco because, although popular and powerful, it was deprived of its leaders and unable to assert an independent political course.<sup>46</sup> The Generalissimo was thus able to turn fascist prominence into a political advantage, and manipulate fascist dogma in such a way as to legitimize his own power. Once all the power was concentrated in his own hands, Franco was able to reverse his policy and betray the hopes of his fascist allies.

Despite their alliance with the *Caudillo*, the Spanish fascists were forced during the Civil War to subordinate their interests to those of the army, at the head of which were conservatives.<sup>47</sup> In 1937, Franco merged the F.E. de las JONS with the various monarchist parties, thus creating a single state party such as that of Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy. Unlike in Germany and Italy, however, where the totalitarian system gave the one remaining party absolute power, the merger in Spain was meant to cripple the Falange by incorporating into its ranks reactionary elements that were hostile to its fascist program.<sup>48</sup> The *Caudillo* made sure to exclude from the organization of the new party all those sincere revolutionaries who dreamed of making the Falange the foundation of a totalitarian state. Those ambitious fascists, such as Aznar and Gonzalez Vèlez, who tried to expand the party's influence in the new government, were arrested and exiled. Any action taken by the Falange, which began to realize it was being betrayed, against the Generalissimo was doomed because Franco was too deeply entrenched. "[Franco] was easily able to crush an attempted plot hatched against him by a few *Camisas viejas*<sup>49</sup> of the Falange...who had remained loyal to the original spirit of the

Falange. To defeat these he did not even need a ‘night of the long knives,’<sup>50</sup> a tribunal served the purpose.”<sup>51</sup>

In 1938, a new government was formed in Nationalist Spain with its seat in Salamanca. Franco remained as head of state, and five generals were included in his cabinet, while the chief Falangist leaders were excluded. The army, not the Falange, was the mainstay and political core of the emerging Nationalist state.

Not only was Franco able to take advantage of fascism within Spain without elevating it to a dominant position, he also managed to remain independent of the German and Italian allies upon whose aid he relied on for victory. “Very soon both Italy and Germany came to realize...that they had to reckon with the Caudillo who, as early as 1936, sought not so much to satisfy the ambitions or the political and ideological projects of Fascists and Nazis as to ensure his personal power.”<sup>52</sup>

In January of 1939 Barcelona, second largest city of Spain and stronghold of anarchism and Catalan separatism, fell to the forces of General Yague. Tens of thousands of refugees attempted to flee to France to escape the vengeance of the victorious Nationalists, who had become notorious for their brutal reprisals against the “Reds.” In February, Franco’s government joined the Anti-Comintern Pact<sup>53</sup> and was officially recognized by Great Britain and France. Madrid fell to the Nationalists in March, and shortly afterward a Friendship Treaty was signed between Spain and Germany. The Third Reich was given substantial mineral rights in Spain in exchange for its contribution to Franco’s victory.<sup>54</sup> The Republic collapsed as much from the German and Italian support of Franco’s armies as from lack of unity.<sup>55</sup> On the eve of the Nationalist victory, over 250,000 Republican political prisoners languished in Franco’s prisons. According to the *Law on Political Responsibilities*, passed on February 9, 1939, “all those who had been members of any party, trade union or masonic lodge during the period prior to the Civil War, [or] who at any time from October 1, 1934 were ‘held to have helped to undermine public order, or after July 18, 1936 to have impeded the national Movimiento...by definite acts or by being passive...’ were to be

judged by a 'National Tribunal on Political Responsibilities.'"<sup>56</sup> Over 100,000 prisoners were eventually executed after summary trials, and many thousands more died of deprivation and disease. In cruelty, Franco's regime in its hour of triumph rivaled Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.<sup>57</sup>

The difference between the Spanish terror and its fascist counterparts was not one of method, but of purpose. In Spain, the mass executions were meant to reinforce the conservative rule of the army, not to build the foundations of a totalitarian state. In fact, victory was self-defeating for the Falange, for once the radical left had been liquidated by Franco's execution squads, the party had no enemy left to rally its supporters against.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, the Caudillo, no longer reliant on foreign aid, increasingly let the true nature of his regime overshadow its early, radical elements. While Hitler and Mussolini had masked revolutionary pretenses under conservative rhetoric during their rise to power, Franco had masked his Catholic conservatism under revolutionary dogma. While the fascist dictators, initially supported by conservatives,<sup>59</sup> moved far beyond the desires of their reactionary supporters to realize their own, fascist visions of totalitarianism and conquest, Franco, initially supported by radicals, came far short of realizing their hopes for a New Spain in favor of his own, conservative vision. A Labor Charter implemented in March, 1939, to appease the Falange and its desires for a national-syndicalist state did nothing tangible to disturb the old economic order and the privileges of the elite. Hitler's ambassador in Spain, "analyzing for Berlin's benefit (19 February 1939) the characteristics of the Nationalist regime then gradually taking shape, notes ironically: 'A German who has been active in Spain for decades recently answered the question: 'how do you find the new Spain?' by saying: 'When I find it, I shall tell you about it.'"<sup>60</sup>

Spain under Franco was dominated by the upper class entrenched in an alliance with the victorious army and the Catholic Church. The position of both of these groups was strengthened immensely in Franco's Spain. Unlike the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini, there was no tension between Franco's regime and the

Vatican. Laws passed by the Spanish government made Catholicism the official state religion and gave the clergy control over primary education. The cult of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, organized by Franco, was only a superficial concession made to undermine Falangist resistance provoked by the triumph of the Church.<sup>61</sup> The end of the Civil War marked the rise of a Christian intellectual organization, founded in 1928, known as the *Opus Dei* and dedicated to self-sacrifice in a religious context. The *Opus* was given a strategic position in the New Spain to control intellectual life through the *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas*, established in November 1939. The social position of the army was also strengthened along with that of the Church. Unlike Germany and Italy, where social transformation had been achieved by the Fascist Party and the army, traditionally conservative, had been swept up by the tide of revolution, in Spain it had been the army, not the party, that had successfully effected social change.<sup>62</sup> The military acquired a special role in Spain, offering prospects of social mobility and education. "The army, in effect, was almost a union and employment service unto itself..."<sup>63</sup> This strengthening of conservative institutions in Spain ran contrary to fascist dogma.

The Falange did not merely languish passively while its dreams of radical social change were cast aside. Franco was so deeply entrenched with the support of the military and the clergy, however, that any efforts by the fascists to assert their independence were doomed from the start. Falangists disaffected with the new regime formed an anti-Franco political junta in Madrid in the end of 1939, which involved the influential fascist sympathizer General Yague, conqueror of Barcelona. The conspiracy, infiltrated by informers and its leaders politically dependent on the very regime they were conspiring against, was a total failure. General Yague was summoned by Franco to answer for his actions, where he burst into tears before the Caudillo, begged forgiveness, and was promoted.<sup>64</sup> "In this strongly authoritarian (but not fascist) regime, there was no room for political opposition. The fascists became junior partners in the government, and as such, they had to accept responsibility for the regime's policy without being able to shape it substantially."<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, Franco was still

taking advantage of fascist dogma to legitimize his dictatorship. Juan Perez, the regime's official theoretician, propounded in *El Partido* (1939) and *Genio y Figura del Movimiento* (1940) the idea that "a new concept, issuing directly from the [Nationalist] revolution, requires one man to become the leader and embodiment of a national community."<sup>66</sup>

Neither was there any solidarity between Franco and his fascist allies on the international arena. When the Germans signed a non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia in August of 1939, Franco was aghast. To the vehemently reactionary Spanish dictator, the godless, Communist U.S.S.R., which had sent forces into Spain to fight for the Republic, was the embodiment of all evil. Germany's attack on Poland in September and the subsequent dismemberment of eastern Poland by the Soviet Union found Franco deeply sympathetic to the Catholic, anti-Communist Poles.<sup>67</sup> Franco's ultraconservative, anti-Bolshevik view of the war allowed no justification for aggressive expansionism if it strengthened the position of Communism at the expense of a Catholic state. This put him at odds not only with the foreign fascist dictators but with the fascist movement within Spain as well. In January 1940, organized Falangist demonstrations shouted *Gibraltar para España*.<sup>68</sup> while Franco's regime was concluding commercial agreements with France and Great Britain.<sup>69</sup>

Franco maintained Spanish neutrality during the blitzkrieg against France, but was careful not to offend the Germans, lest they refuse to stop their conquest at the Pyrenees. On June 3, 1940, Franco sent a letter to Hitler in which, without abandoning his traditional flattery and courtesy towards the German dictator, he made it clear that Spain would not join the Axis:

Dear Fuhrer,

At the moment when the German armies, under your leadership, are bringing the greatest battle in history to a victorious close, I would like to express to you my admiration and enthusiasm and that of my people, who are watching with deep emotion the glorious course of a struggle which they regard as their own, and which is realizing the hopes that already burned in Spain when your soldiers shared with us in the war against the same, though concealed, enemies. The great

upheavals which Spain underwent in the three years of war...have put us in a difficult position...have forced us to make our official attitude a neutral one.<sup>70</sup>

Nonetheless, Franco was willing to take advantage of the military situation to make cheap territorial gains for Spain. On June 13, one day before the fall of Paris to the Germans, Franco had Spanish neutrality changed to “non-belligerency,” thus allowing Spanish troops to occupy Tangier in Africa.<sup>71</sup> This minor action was not nearly comparable to the radical assault on the European *status quo* made by the Hitler and Mussolini regimes.

Spain drifted closest to the Axis, and to intervention in the war, in the summer and autumn of 1940 when Hitler’s and Mussolini’s troops were on a high tide of conquest. On July 2, a law was passed in Spain organizing the Falange into a national militia, though all key posts within it went to men from the army.<sup>72</sup> Franco also enumerated territorial conditions for Spain’s entry into the war: Gibraltar, French Morocco, Oran in Algeria, as well as an enlargement of the Rio de Oro and Gulf of Guinea colonies.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, Franco’s secret police organization was designed with the help of SS Chief Heinrich Himmler.<sup>74</sup> In France and in the territories conquered by the Third Reich, the Gestapo tracked down anti-Francoists to hand them over to Spain or deport them to labor camps. More than 40,000 exiles suffered this fate.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, with characteristic duplicity Franco asked U.S. Ambassador Alexander Weddell for \$100 million in credit from America, and allowed *Campsa*, a Spanish oil company, to make a deal with Texaco for oil imports across the Atlantic.<sup>76</sup> The purpose of these agreements was not only economic but political, since Franco was not yet willing completely to sever his ties to the Anglo-Saxon powers.

On October 23, Hitler and Franco met at Hendaye to discuss Spain’s entry into the war. Specially-trained German troops, which had captured the Belgian fortress of Eben-Emael, were ready to move into Spain and attack British Gibraltar on January 10, 1941. However, Franco’s price for cooperation with the Axis in foodstuffs, aircraft, and guns was so high that Hitler declared “he would rather have four teeth pulled out than deal with such a man

again,” and no precise date for Spanish entry into the war was fixed.<sup>77</sup> Soon afterwards, Mussolini’s surprise invasion of Greece turned into a catastrophe, and when it seemed the tide of combat had temporarily turned against the Axis, Franco refused German troops headed for Gibraltar right of passage through Spain.<sup>78</sup> Thus Spain, after several months of indecision, remained neutral and stifled the hopes of Hitler and Mussolini, and this at a time when frustrating the hopes of the fascist leaders was a dangerous action to take. Franco’s regime was in more open opposition to Hitler’s designs than any other in continental Europe.

The prevention of Spain’s entry into the war required the silencing of the Falange, the most openly pro-war faction within Spain. Franco’s brother-in-law Serrano Suñer, “in whom the whole country saw the embodiment of pro-Axis policy...sought to use the Falange to create a totalitarian state in which he would be the leading personality.”<sup>79</sup> On May 5, 1940, Franco struck against the Cuñadisimo<sup>80</sup> by making General Galarza, an anti-Falangist, Minister of the Interior (a post traditionally allotted to Suñer) and by giving the Ministries of Labor and Agriculture to two pro-Franco Falangists and thus forcing the Falange to finally relinquish all independence by accepting these posts. Suñer lost all ability to rely on his party, and the May 1940 purge was the beginning of the end of his political career. Franco’s decree of November 28, 1941 suppressed the national services of the Falange, which had been set up in 1938 and given the party a structure similar to that of the administration. After this decree, all that remained of the Falange’s tangible sources of power were its syndicates.<sup>81</sup> José Luis Arrese, a staunch Catholic, whose motto was “we believe in God, our country, and Franco,”<sup>82</sup> was put in charge of the party, whose ties to the government were strengthened as its program was weakened.

Operation Barbarossa, Hitler’s invasion of Soviet Russia, temporarily revived the question of Spanish neutrality. Franco’s press reacted with fervent enthusiasm to the sweeping advance of Hitler’s armies. “...The war against the U.S.S.R. restored to the international situation, in the eyes of all supporters of the [Franco] regime, a coherence which the Soviet-German pact had destroyed.

Now the crusade against *los rojos*, the Reds, revived.”<sup>83</sup> Franco sent a legion of volunteers, the *Division Azul* (Blue Division), to fight on the eastern front at Novgorod and Leningrad. The *Division Azul* was the only force ever sent by Spain to support the Axis, though Franco later explained that he sent the volunteers not to support Germany but to fight Bolshevism.<sup>84</sup> Franco spoke on July 17, 1941 to the National Council of the Falange, declaring that “the destruction of Russian Communism, that nightmare of our generation, is now inevitable.”<sup>85</sup> Operation Barbarossa provided Franco with an irresistible opportunity to strike against Communism, but the *Division Azul* was not meant to turn the eventual tide of war in favor of the Axis.

When the German offensive was halted at both El Alamein and Stalingrad, Franco felt encouraged to move once more against Serrano Suñer and the Falange. On September 3, 1942, in a reshuffling of the cabinet similar to that of 1941, he replaced Suñer at the foreign ministry with General Jordana, a strong Anglophile, and gave the Ministries of War and the Interior to two “Falangists” actually loyal to himself.<sup>86</sup> By 1942, the Falange controlled only 40 of the 106 seats in the Spanish National Council.<sup>87</sup>

When the tide of war irrevocably turned against Germany and her allies, Franco finally cut off all ties to the Axis. The 1942 purges marked a final turning point in Spanish diplomacy, and in the autumn of the same year decrees on the censorship of foreign broadcasts and a prohibition on music in foreign languages virtually put an end to Italian fascist propaganda in Spain. American President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent personal reassurances to General Franco on November 8 that the Spanish regime had nothing to fear from Allied troops in Africa.<sup>88</sup> In 1944, the Falange’s fascist salute was outlawed and the party deprived of control over mass media. The Ministry of Education was given authority over schooling and fascist propaganda was removed from the nation’s conservative, Church-influenced textbooks.<sup>89</sup>

“Wherever fascism was found...it had territorial expansionism as one of its essential goals.”<sup>90</sup> Though Franco owed a great military debt to the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini, not only did

he maintain Spanish neutrality in World War II, but did so by striking against the Spanish fascist party, which openly favored intervention. In the years between the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 and Franco's final commitment to neutrality in 1942, Spain seemed to have the prospect of becoming an aggressive, expansionist fascist state, and was prevented from doing so because Franco frustrated the Falange's expansionist designs as well as the revolutionary aspects of its program.<sup>91</sup> He betrayed both the Spanish fascist movement that had helped bring him to power and the fascist allies who had helped him win the Civil War. During the period between 1936 and 1941, when fascism outside Spain was on the rise, Franco undermined the power of the Falange in order to ensure his own, conservative dictatorship, whose true nature crystallized in the years following World War II.

During the remainder of the Caudillo's rule, Spanish fascism lost what little remained of the force it had once held.<sup>92</sup> This decline in the fortunes of the Falange was not merely the result of "the maneuvers of the Franco regime to stay afloat in a world without allies."<sup>93</sup> Franco was more than willing to make superficial gestures to foreign powers that made his regime seem more moderate or more extremist depending on the international balance of power at the time, but did not allow foreigners to influence his policy in any profound and meaningful way. If history had turned out differently, and World War II had been won by the Axis, the fundamental distribution of power within Spain would probably not have been profoundly different.<sup>94</sup> The regime would still have supported the traditional institutions of Catholic Spain instead of a fascist social revolution.

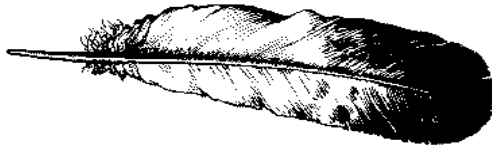
The diplomatic ostracism of Spain by the victorious allies of World War II hurt Spain economically, and she was excluded from the Marshall Plan for the economic reconstruction of western Europe,<sup>95</sup> but Franco did little to promote a rapprochement with the Allies. He did allow a Spanish bill of rights, the *Fuero de los Españoles*, to be drafted in 1947, and in the same year for Spain officially to be declared a monarchy, but the new bill of rights was written in such a way to do nothing to fundamentally ameliorate

the despotic nature of the regime, and the issue of monarchical restoration was postponed until Franco's death.<sup>96</sup> Franco was content to sit through the period of isolation without making diplomatic overtures, confident that eventually "the West would come to him."<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the period of ostracism came to an end in 1950 when, under pressure from America, which was striving to build a cold war front against the Communist bloc, the United Nations revoked the diplomatic sanctions it had imposed on Spain in 1946.<sup>98</sup>

Franco's Spain in the years after World War II was not totalitarian. Unlike Germany or Italy, Spain in the period 1950-1975 never pretended to be a fortress economy,<sup>99</sup> and aid from the United States made possible the development of industry in Spain.<sup>100</sup> Although on its surface a semi-fascist corporate state, Franco's regime was essentially a traditional, apolitical military dictatorship.<sup>101</sup> When Franco's successor, the young King Juan Carlos, made Spain a liberal democracy in the years after the dictator's death, the transition to a parliamentary government and a non-authoritarian society was smooth and permanent. The ease of the transition to democracy in Spain proves better than any abstract, theoretical argument that the difference between Franco's Spain and a truly totalitarian state was considerable.<sup>102</sup>

Spain under Franco was a rigidly inert authoritarian structure upheld by the army, the social elite, and the Church, for all of whom Franco's rule was a guarantee of stability and privilege. Spain's Caudillo was willing to adopt pro-fascist or pro-western pretenses as the situation best suited him, but "fascist" Spain in the early years of his dictatorship was as much of a ruse as the "organically democratic" Spain of his later years. Franco was able to integrate Spain both into the fascist Europe of the 1930s and into the cold-war world of the decades following World War Two. The only ideological stance he was not willing to compromise for the sake of power was his hatred of communism and revolution. Franco's Spain was a relic of the *ancien régime*, the product of lingering feudal institutions and sentiments from the days of the Inquisition in a nation that was on the brink of modernization. In

no way was Franco's rule profoundly influenced by anything new to emerge in the twentieth century, such as fascism. Every maneuver made by Franco to stay in power was a maneuver by the old guard of Spain to maintain an anachronistic hold on Spanish society. Superficially, these maneuvers liberalized Spain, such as when the regime created the *Fuero de los Españoles* or the 1975 law legalizing political associations,<sup>103</sup> or radicalized her, such as the foundation of the Cult of José Antonio Primo de Rivera or the inclusion of fascist dogma in elementary textbooks. In reality, however, they were designed only to strengthen the power of *El Caudillo* and the withering elements of Spanish society he represented. When Franco died in 1975, the process of purging Spain of fascism had already been completed, and the nation had only to cast aside her moribund, authoritarian structure to become a stable and liberal democracy.



<sup>1</sup> George P. Blum, The Rise of Fascism in Europe (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998) p. 89

<sup>2</sup> Walter Laqueur, Fascism (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 115

<sup>3</sup> Roderick Stackelberg, Hitler's Germany (London, England: Routledge, 1999) pp. 12-13

<sup>4</sup> James D. Forman, Fascism: The Meaning and Experience of Reactionary Revolution (New York, New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1974) pp. 19-20

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>6</sup> Benito Mussolini, The Doctrine of Fascism 1932 (no publisher)

<sup>7</sup> Stackelberg, p. 19

<sup>8</sup> Laqueur, p. 13

Fascist legal theory was defined by Mussolini as follows: "Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state." (Max Gallo, Mussolini's Italy [New York, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973] p. 197)

<sup>9</sup> Jorge Lombardero, *Hacia Una Teoria del Estado Nacional Sindicalista* 1997. The Spanish version: "...*el fascismo o es una revolucion que conserva y resfuerza la idea de Estado, definiendolo como revolucionario (porque desea crear un Nuevo Estado) y como conservador (porque defendia la idea de Estado)*"

<sup>10</sup> Blum, p. 7

<sup>11</sup> Roger Eatwell, Fascism: A History (New York, New York: The Penguin Press, 1996) p. 14

<sup>12</sup> Laqueur, p. 15

<sup>13</sup> Forman, p. 22

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23

<sup>15</sup> Eatwell, p. xxi

<sup>16</sup> Blum, p. 78

<sup>17</sup> Stanley G. Payne, Falange: A History of Spanish Fascism (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961) p. 1

<sup>18</sup> Ledesma Ramos and Gimenez Caballero, *La Conquista del Estado Nr. 1* March 14, 1931

The original Spanish version: "*El nuevo Estado ser-constructivo, creador. Suplantar a los individuos y a los grupos...Nada, pues, sobre el Estado!*"

<sup>19</sup> Son of the Spanish dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera

<sup>20</sup> Blum, p. 13

<sup>21</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, New York, New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1974, p. 35

<sup>22</sup> *Falange Española, or Spanish Phalanx*, in reference to the close-ranked military formation used by King Philip of Macedon to crush democracy in Ancient Greece.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47 Unable to win broad support, the Falange and the JONS competed for the same marginal constituency until their merger in 1934 into a unified fascist party, the FE de las JONS.

<sup>25</sup> Payne, p. 42

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121

<sup>34</sup> Blum, p. 14

<sup>35</sup> Payne, p. 116

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118

<sup>37</sup> Payne, p. 119

<sup>38</sup> Gallo, *Mussolini's Italy*, p. 265

<sup>39</sup> Jose Yglesias, *The Franco Years* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1977) p. 6

<sup>40</sup> Gabriele Ranzato, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York, New York: Interlink Books, 1999) p. 77

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45 The monarchists were themselves divided into two camps: the Alfonsists, who favored a restoration of the exiled King Alfonso III, and the Carlists, an authoritarian, ultraconservative group led by Fal Conde that operated through the *Comuniun Tradicionalista* (the *Traditional Fellowship*) and supported a rival dynasty. The Carlists had their own militia, the *Requetès*, which constituted the major part of General Mola's Northern Army.

<sup>43</sup> Gallo, *Spain Under Franco*, p. 41

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>47</sup> Laqueur, p. 84

<sup>48</sup> The new party was to be known as the *Falange Española Tradicionalista de las JONS*. The addition of the word *Tradicionalista* to the radical party's name was a sign of the direction in which Franco was pushing the Falange.

<sup>49</sup> *Camisas viejas*, or *old shirts*, from the blue shirts worn by the Falangists, was a term used to describe members of the party's old guard from its early days before the mass influx of membership at the outbreak of the Civil War.

<sup>50</sup> The "Night of the Long Knives" was a dramatic blood purge of the German SA in 1934, by which Adolph Hitler reinforced his control over the Nazi Party and curbed its revolutionary elements.

<sup>51</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 46

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49

<sup>53</sup> The Anti-Comintern Pact against Soviet Russia and a supplementary protocol were signed by Germany and Japan in 1936. Italy joined the pact in 1937.

<sup>54</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, pp. 52-55

<sup>55</sup> Pietro Nenni writes in the March 11, 1939 article of *Nuovo Avanti*, "Before the barricades put up in the autumn of 1936 were overthrown by enemy tanks, Madrid was conquered, crushed, humiliated by internal discord...the hour of defeat is always cruel, but it becomes unbearable when it is accompanied by treachery." (*Ibid.*, p. 61)

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55

<sup>57</sup> Forman, pp. 82-83

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83

In Germany, such an enemy was found in social scapegoats such as the Jews, but fascism in Spain had no anti-Semitic aspects.

<sup>59</sup> Laqueur, p. 15

<sup>60</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 57

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58

<sup>62</sup> Forman, p. 83

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84

<sup>64</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 88

<sup>65</sup> Laqueur, p. 84

<sup>66</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 89

<sup>67</sup> Brian Crozier, Franco (Toronto, Canada: Little, Brown and Co., 1967) pp. 369-370

<sup>68</sup> *Gibraltar para España!*, or *Gibraltar for Spain!*, was the rallying call for the Spanish pro-intervention faction during World War II. Gibraltar is a piece of territory on the southern tip of the Iberian peninsula that controls access to the Mediterranean, and has been in British hands since 1704.

<sup>69</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, pp. 91-92

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93

- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 94
- <sup>72</sup> Crozier, p. 417
- <sup>73</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 96
- <sup>74</sup> Forman, p. 82
- <sup>75</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 11
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 97
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-101
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 102
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 109
- <sup>80</sup> *Cuñadisimo*, a mock derivation of the word *cuñado*, or *brother-in-law*, was used by the Spanish people in reference to Suñer because he was the brother-in-law of Franco and occupied an influential position within the Generalissimo's government.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 109
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 109
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 111
- <sup>84</sup> Crozier, p. 370
- <sup>85</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 112
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 116-118
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 109
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 118
- <sup>89</sup> Forman, p. 84
- <sup>90</sup> Blum, p. 16
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 78
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 14
- <sup>93</sup> Yglesias, p. 11
- <sup>94</sup> Crozier, pp. 435-436
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 445
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 435
- <sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 405
- <sup>98</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 196
- <sup>99</sup> Forman, p. 87
- <sup>100</sup> Gallo, Spain Under Franco, p. 212
- <sup>101</sup> Laqueur, p. 115
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 115
- <sup>103</sup> Yglesias, p. 151

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27 February 2003

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Dear Mr. Fitzhugh,

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Chairman, Maritime History Department