

June 29, 1977

## ***THE SPANISH ELECTIONS AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY***

### **THE ISSUE:**

On June 15, 1977, for the first time since 1936, the Spanish people went to the polls to elect political representatives. At issue in the elections were 350 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 207 seats in the Senate. There were also 41 other seats in the Senate to be filled by appointment by the King. The Spanish elections were closely watched by Europeans because on them depends the future of Spain: whether it will develop into a stable democratic society and, if so, whether of the right or of the left; whether its economy will recuperate from its current problems or will affect the European economy; and whether Spain will continue as an anti-Communist force or will succumb to Communist rule.

The elections were also of interest to Americans. On January 24, 1976, the United States government signed a five-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Spain which allowed the U.S. to continue operating three air bases and one naval base on Spanish territory, in return for \$1.2 billion in military credits, loans from the Export-Import Bank, and funds for military training. The U.S. Senate later ratified the Treaty. On the political future of Spain, then, and hence on the elections of June 15, depends the future of American military and economic ties with this nation of 35.5 million that overlooks the Straits of

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Gibraltar, the Western Mediterranean, and much of the North Atlantic littoral.

## RECENT HISTORY:

On November 20, 1975, General Francisco Franco died in Madrid. The passing of El Caudillo marked the end of an important era in 20th century history, but it raised ominous and also promising prospects for the country he had ruled since 1939. In 1969, Franco designated Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón as his heir and decreed the restoration of the Spanish monarch to follow his death. Juan Carlos is the grandson of King Alfonso XIII, who was deposed with the establishment of the Republic in 1931. Two days after Franco's death, the Prince was installed as King Juan Carlos I. He quickly embarked on a process of liberalization that, though sometimes checked, has not yet ended.

The freeing of over 1,600 political prisoners, the granting of the right of assembly, the legalization of labor unions and strikes, the loosening of controls over the press and political expression, and the legalization of opposition parties (including the Communist Party of Spain, or PCE, on April 9, 1977) are aspects of the "progressive" reforms that have occurred in Spain since Franco's death. The King retained Carlos Arias Navarro, appointed by Franco, as Premier. But, in July, 1976, Arias resigned on the request of the King, and Juan Carlos appointed Adolfo Suárez Gonzalez, a moderate centrist conservative, who at present retains office. On December 15, 1976, in a referendum approved by the unicameral Francoist Cortes (Parliament), 76 percent of the eligible Spanish electorate voted to approve by 94 percent a largely democratic constitution which establishes a bicameral Parliament responsible to the King. It is under this constitution, expected to be revised shortly, that the June 15 elections have been authorized and held.

Not everyone in Spain was pleased by this process of liberalization. A stable political democracy has never existed in Spanish history, and the country is often stereotyped as one of violent political extremes. Both the Francoists of the right and the Communists of the left criticised the new constitutional and political developments. Other groups have jeopardized the new reforms by continued policies of terrorism: beatings, kidnappings, bombings, and murder. (These groups include regional separatists in Catalonia, the Basque Provinces, and the Canary Islands; anarchists and Maoist groups; and fascists or right-wing Catholic organizations.)

Since Franco's death, there have been over sixty deaths from terrorist acts in Spain. In addition, economic problems, regional demands and conflicts, an untried electorate in a new political system, the rapid diffusion of culturally disparate ideas in a traditionalist and provincial country, and the reality of external intervention have all raised doubts as to whether Spain can achieve a stable democratic order. An appreciation of the political groupings within Spain and of the problems and issues of the election will lead to a better understanding of the Spanish future.

## POLITICAL GROUPINGS:

There were about 6,000 candidates of about 160 legally recognized parties contending for the 557 elective seats in the Parliamentary campaign, which began on May 24. There are several groupings - probably not parties in the Western sense - that command more support than most. So far, issues seem to play a minor role in Spanish politics. Campaigning revolves more around personalities and symbols from the Spanish past - relationships to Franco, to the Civil War, and to ideological posturing - than around a serious public discussion of national problems. The leading groups may be classified as Left, Right, and Center, with Extremists bordering each wing.

I. THE LEFT: The leading and most prestigious left-wing group in Spain is the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) led by Felipe González, 34, a lawyer from Seville. The PSOE is the mainstream socialist party, founded in 1879 and affiliated with the Socialist International. González is a young and, to many, attractive personality; he never wears a tie in public and has boasted that no one is to the left of him. He originally voiced a favorable attitude to the Communists, but has since backed off, due to pressure from other European socialist parties, such as the West German SDP. The SDP has financially supported the PSOE with \$20 million, as has Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez with about \$6 million last year. González has also called for the termination of U.S. bases in Spain.

Another left-wing alliance is the Federation of Socialist Parties (PSP), which began as a university group and still retains an academic tinge. The economist, Tierno Galván, lead this party. Its popularity in the early 1970's has dimmed somewhat due to its tendency to characterize Spain as a Third World country and to its connection with exiled Saharans and with pro-Arab forces. It has been associated with anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic ideas.

To the right of these groups is an anti-Communist social-democratic alliance composed of three organizations: the Federation of Social Democratic Parties, the Democratic Socialist Party, and the Social Reform Party. These also tend to have academic leadership; prominent within it are Professors Lasuén and Arrarte (economists) and Antonio García López, a strong anti-Communist. García is a lawyer from Madrid and is said to have great support from high military officers, but little at the grass roots level.

The Spanish left seems to be divided by various ideological persuasions of socialism and by an ambivalent attitude toward Communism. On the one hand, the democratic Left is drawn toward ideals of political liberty and, hence, favors Communist participation in politics as a test of freedom. But, at the same time, because it is moderate, it has a latent fear and distrust of the Communists. Thus, it is largely hesitant to exclude the PCE from politics but also hesitant to allow them a role. Felipe González was recently quoted on this issue:

"The Communists have never yet respected the rules of democracy when in power. But it is unrealistic to try to exclude them from politics."<sup>1</sup>.

If the Left becomes part of a coalition with Suárez, their ambivalence may disarm them in the event of a serious confrontation with the Communists.

II. THE RIGHT: The major right-wing organization is the Alianza Popular (AP), a coalition of former supporters of Franco who now support the democratic constitution. The leader of the AP is Manuel Fraga Iribarne, 54, former Minister of Interior and Information, who advocated liberalization under Franco. Other prominent leaders of the AP are Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, Minister of Public Works and builder of the modern Spanish highways, as well as a prominent political theorist; Laureano López Rodó, Minister of Finance in the 1960's when Spain made significant economic progress; and Carlos Arias Navarro, former Premier under Franco and Juan Carlos. The AP has received support from Franz Josef Strauss's Bavarian party and has sought support from other European conservative parties.

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THE ECONOMIST, April 2, 1977, Survey, p. 21.

In addition to the AP, there are at least three other right-wing groups of minor importance: the Fuerza Nueva of Blas Pinar, the National Alliance of Antonio Giron, and the Hermandad de Alfereces Provisionales. These are fascist or Falangist in orientation and appear to lack any widespread support.

III. THE CENTER: The main group is the Democratic Center Union (UCD), a coalition of about fifteen centrist organizations. This is the group of Premier Suárez, and has combined with the Popular Party of José María de Areilza. Areilza is a former ambassador to the U.S. and served as Juan Carlos' first foreign minister. Another leading centrist group is the Christian Democratic Alliance. It consists of Joaquin Ruiz Jiménez, of the Democratic Left, and the conservative Popular Democratic Federation and other groups. Jiménez, refusing to join the UCD because of the latter's alleged Francoist leanings, has allied himself with the PSOE.

Suárez was widely expected to win the election, at least to the extent of being able to form a coalition government with the runners-up. One reason for this is his popularity, but also that the government-run election gives him an advantage. Only Suárez could use Spanish television to announce his candidacy, and the rural bias of the electoral system gives him (and the Conservatives) an edge. Suárez is probably further to the left than he has so far appeared, but still belongs in the center. He seems to value political realism and "pragmatism" above ideology. Of the Center and Right in general, it can be said that their candidates present an impressive range of talent and experience. However, many do not appear to be able to cope well with the techniques and rhetoric of a free election, and it is questionable whether they have much future unless they learn to do so quickly.

IV. THE EXTREMISTS: In addition to the fascist, Falangist, and Francoist groups, terrorist organizations such as the Warriors of Christ the King, the Falangist Kamikaze Commandos, the Carlists, the ETA (Basque Homeland and Liberty), and other separatist organizations have held public attention, if not power in Spain until recently. They were not expected to gain much support in the election, though at least half a dozen bombings disrupted the voting.

V. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SPAIN (PCE): The PCE was illegal in Spain from the beginning of the Franco regime until April 9, 1977. Its current leader is Santiago Carillo, 61, who was governor of Madrid in the Civil War when 12,000 Nationalist POW's were killed by Republican troops. Its senior figure is Dolores Ibarruri, who has long been a Stalinist and a resident of the Soviet Union until her recent return to Spain. Ibarruri, nicknamed "La Pasionaria", is suspected of involvement in the murder of conservative leader Calvo Sotelo in the days prior to the Civil War. Despite this association with atrocities and extremism, the PCE now claims to be a democratic movement, part of the allegedly reformist "Eurocommunist" movement in France and Italy. However, Carillo's recent book, Eurocommunism and the State, advocates a highly centralized and ideologized regime that would use political forces to transform Spanish society. Carillo's heir apparent is a well-known economist, Ramón Tamames, 43.

The PCE has reportedly received considerable aid from the KGB, which has infiltrated other leftist organizations and much of the media. However, Moscow has not overtly supported the PCE, perhaps because it distrusts the Party's independence, and has tried to create another Communist structure in Spain. According to Spanish intelligence, the KGB provided 1.5 billion pesetas (about \$22.5 million) last year for the PCE. Also, several top level officers of the KGB have been identified in Spain: Viktor Lessiovsky, Yuri Ponomarev, Viktor Filipov, Alekei Osipov, Anatoly Krasikov, Vladimir Pertsov. The KGB has made overtures to the PSOE and given covert aid to MPAIAC, a Canary Island guerrilla group, as well as to the mainland separatist movements. Rumania also gives covert training to PCE members in terrorist and guerrilla techniques.

The object of the Soviet Communists is revealed in the "Oran Plan", which came to light in 1974. The goals of this plan were to overthrow the governments of Spain, Morocco, and Portugal, and to achieve Soviet control of the Western Mediterranean and West African coast. KGB activities in Spain, aside from aid and training for its allies, have consisted of penetration of the Spanish media, the use of sports events and religious gatherings as political actions, and the manipulation of other social activities to subvert and propagandize Spanish society. This covert Soviet intervention is probably the greatest internal problem that a new government has to face.

In the face of this type of aid from the Kremlin, the PCE cannot credibly claim that it has turned its back on the Soviet "style" of Communism. Nor can the Communists be regarded as loyal to the non-Communist government of Spain. Unlike the much larger CP's of France and Italy, the PCE is a small party with a claimed membership of 150,000. This is small enough to be adequately disciplined by a determined leadership, and the PCE is prepared to take advantage of Spanish internal problems for its own advantage. In a forthcoming article (to be published in the first issue of Policy Review), Mr. Robert Moss, editor of the "Foreign Report" of the London Economist, says of the PCE:

It can count on mobilising union discontent in a deepening economic recession in Spain, and of continuing to try to build a broad 'popular front' combining the Communist, Socialist and left-wing Christian Democrat forces.

## THE ELECTION:

On June 15, about 80 percent of Spain's 23.5 million eligible voters went to the polls. The result was a fairly strong victory for the center and moderate left and a rebuff for the Communists and the right. The following table shows the results for the major winners.

PARTY	% OF POPULAR VOTE	SEATS IN CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES	SEATS IN SENATE
UCD	34.0%	165	105
PSOE	28.5%	119	60
PCE	9.0%	20	8
AP	8.2%	17	

At the close of the polling, King Juan Carlos named 41 moderate and centrist Senators to fill the appointive seats in the upper house. The political fortunes of the leading candidates are also revealing. Suárez, Carillo, Ibarruri, and González were all elected, but two leading rightists - Arias Navarro and Blas Piñar, were defeated.

If it is possible to infer trends in Spanish political culture from these results, one can say that the Spanish electorate feels very little nostalgia for the Franco years and has little desire to return to it; that it equally rejects the

Communist alternative, despite Carillo's efforts to refurbish his image; and that the electorate is attracted to the center-left policies of increasing liberalization, economic distribution, and modernization.

These results point to a coalition of the center and left under Suárez and González. The latter, however, whose party would profit from a more urban-oriented electoral system, has indicated that he looks on a coalition with the center unfavorably and has already called for a quick drafting of a new constitution and for new elections. Whether such a coalition would provide a stable government, given the political ambitions of its likely leaders, may well be doubted.

## THE FUTURE:

Governmental stability appears problematical also when one considers the problems the government must face. In addition to the infiltration of the KGB (and other foreign forces) discussed above, Spain has severe economic problems that only a very strong and stable government can deal with: 30 percent annual inflation, 8 percent unemployment, a balance of payments deficit of \$4.24 billion last year, a fall in its foreign reserves of \$900 million, a foreign debt of \$12 billion and a chronic flight of capital. Such problems call for austerity, but the recently legalized labor unions are unlikely to accept such measures passively. Their Communist and Socialist leaders will not ignore the political opportunities presented by the economy and a divided ministry.

The predominantly right-wing military forces of Spain, on the other hand, will probably be reluctant to accept much left-wing pressure. The military forces consist of 314,000 men (47,400 officers; 267,000 NCO's and privates). The army consists of 220,000 men and has played a major role in the preservation of internal order. This role has been supplemented by the three police forces: the General Police Corps, 10,000 men plus employees and informers; the Civil Guard, 63,000; and the riot police, 34,000. A military coup cannot be discounted, especially since the election returns do not point toward the possibility of a right-wing democratic victory. Since the armed forces also contain liberal and left-wing units, another civil war is a possibility. The government seriously feared a coup in the wake of its recent legalization of the PCE. For this reason, it announced the action without warning the day before Easter, when most Spaniards were dispersed on vacation.



If Suárez should attempt to reform or scale down the police and army, as he has announced he will, this threat to their long-established power could also alienate many officers and increase the likelihood of a coup.

Finally, all these problems could link to the general cultural transformation that is occurring in Spain as it becomes more industrialized and urbanized and enters more into the mainstream of 20th century Europe. Demands for regional autonomy, for economic integration into the EEC and military-political acceptance into NATO, for social liberalization (divorce, abortion, women's rights), and for economic innovations (wage increases, new housing, labor demands) could create a "revolution of rising expectations" that would overlap more insidious appetites for power. The Communist Party's Central Committee has issued a communique to its leading activists which, among other things, calls attention to the political uses of the highly popular and newly tolerated pornography in Spanish newsstands:

The tolerance toward sex that is practised by government oligarchy is much to our advantage. Many of our newly affiliated youngsters have confessed that they were first attracted by pornography.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, then, we may say that the future of democracy in Spain is still precarious. Despite the success of the election itself, it is not clear that most Spaniards fully understand the meanings and commitments of democracy - a pre-election poll showed that only 26 percent of the Spanish people knew what they would be voting for. The results of the elections promise to be unstable, and it is not clear that the new government will even be strong enough to endure, let alone seriously try to resolve Spanish problems.

The persistence of terrorism, KGB subversion, and the independent power centers of Spanish society in labor, the armed forces and police, as well as in the Church and economic formations, all remain serious threats to a stable democratic order.

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Quoted in National Review, June 10, 1977, p. 665.

