SPAIN
IN SEARCH OF ITSELF

The transformation of Spain since the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975 has been remarkable. One American journalist recently described the country as a "thoroughly modern land, increasingly sexy and shockproof and rich." Only a few years ago, optimists in Madrid were promoting their country as the "California of Europe." But today, reports John Hooper, recession and mounting political uncertainties have punctured some of the optimism. They have also raised doubts about where the new Spain is heading.

BY JOHN HOOPER

Just about the first thing anyone arriving in Madrid is likely to see these days is a pair of immense office towers standing on either side of the northern entrance to the city. They dominate the skyline from countless angles and can be glimpsed from miles away across Spain's arid central tableland, the *meseta*. What makes them remarkable is not so much that they reach 27 stories into the sky but that they tilt precariously toward each other—at angles nearly three times as precipitous as the one at which the Tower of Pisa famously leans.

Unlike London, Paris, or Rome, Madrid never had an instantly recognizable monument. The *Puerta de Europa* (Gate to Europe), as the two-tower complex is called, has given it one. In time, the towers should be as readily identified with their city as Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower, or the Coliseum are with theirs. For the time being, though, these remarkable—and disconcerting—structures are likely to remain

The Living Room *(1970) by Equipo Crónica updates Velásquez's famous* Las Meninas *(see p. 27).*

more symbolic than celebrated. As is embarrassingly apparent from the steel-and-glass cladding that reaches only halfway up their sides, they are unfinished, unoccupied, and likely to remain so for some considerable time.

Residents of Madrid—*madrileños*—refer to these buildings not as the "Gate to Europe" but as the "KIO towers," in allusion to the Kuwait Investment Office, one of whose subsidiaries arranged for them to be built. Last year the KIO pulled out of Spain, complaining that it had lost huge sums of money and alleging that its misfortune was partly due to malpractice by its Spanish agents. Nobody is in a hurry to take over the Gate to Europe project because Madrid today finds itself with a huge

surplus of office space.

In several ways, the KIO towers epitomize the Spain that Felipe González and his Socialist Party have created since coming to power in 1982: the soaringly ambitious, daringly imaginative idea; the obligatory link with Europe; the dependence on foreign investments, and the whiff of irregularity that often floats around such investments. If, moreover, you had to hang a sign on Spain at the moment, it would be the same as the one that ought to be hanging on the KIO towers: "Work Temporarily Suspended."

The economic prodigy of late-1980s Europe is now in trouble. Even before "Spain's year"—1992—had ended, the country was plunging into recession. Domestic productivity, which increased 2.3 percent in 1991, is projected to decline about 1.0 percent in 1993; the same period has seen falling wages and growing unemployment. Such a downturn is scarcely surprising in today's financially depressed Europe. In Spain, though, economic setbacks have a wider relevance that is exceptional, if not unique.

When González paid his first official visit to Washington shortly after taking office, the Reagan administration concluded that the young prime minister and his team were best seen not as Socialists but as "young nationalists." It was a remarkably perceptive conclusion, for González and his intimates belong to, and spring from, a specifically Spanish tradition that dates back to the end of the last century, and beyond.

Spain, it should not be forgotten, was once the most powerful nation on earth, though delusions of grandeur long outlived the reality of imperial greatness. In 1898, when the United States seized the last remnants of Spain's first empire, even the more self-deluding Spaniards were forced to recognize the extent of their country's decline. From that point on, the causes of, and remedies for, Spain's *atraso*—its perceived backwardness relative to the rest of Europe—became the abiding obsession of its thinkers and leaders. An entire school of Spanish poetry, the "generation of '98," took its name from that fateful year.

By the 1930s, the Spanish had shown signs that they could in fact catch up. In 1936, when they held their first truly democratic general election, there were more telephones in Spain than there were in France. But the outcome of the 1936 ballot plunged the country into civil war. And when the fighting ended in 1939, it was a quasi-fascist coalition, led by General Francisco Franco and backed by the Axis, that had emerged victorious. All hope of expunging the *atraso* vanished. Instead of removing the General after the defeat of the Axis in World War II, the Allies opted to punish the Spanish people as a whole for having let their country be taken over by an undesirable. Spain was excluded from the Marshall Plan, and a trade embargo was placed on it by the newly created United Nations.

It was not until 1951 that Spain's per capita national income recovered its pre-civil war level. By then, parts of the country had come near to suffering outright famine. This is not a chapter of their history which the Spanish are particularly keen to recall or which, for different reasons, the rest of the world is particularly eager to disinter. The number of books written about Spain in the 1940s is minimal. Perhaps the best contemporary foreign account is Gerald Brenan's *The Face of Spain*, first published in 1950.

In it, Brenan records a walk through the hills in southern Spain, a walk that "led us past the mouth of a little cave or rock shelter, whose entrance had been blocked with a few household chattels. Behind these we discovered a woman lying on some sacks, who, when she

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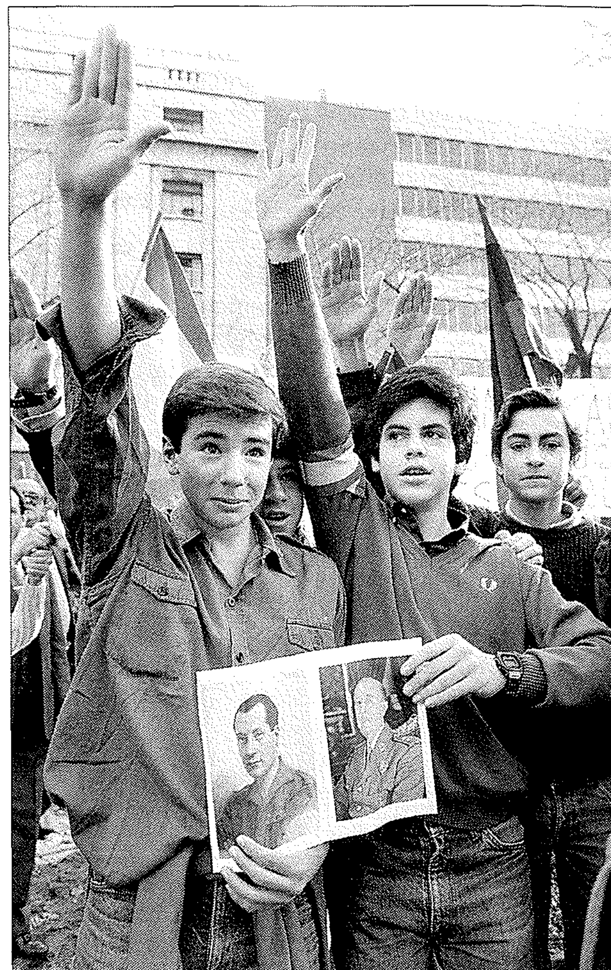
saw us, got up and came out. She was a woman of under 30, dressed in a very old and ragged black dress which showed her naked body through its rents. . . . She was obviously starving, but she did not complain, or ask for money, and when I gave her some, appeared surprised."

Conditions improved gradually during the 1950s, but it was not until 1959—long after Spain's diplomatic and commercial isolation had been eased—that the country's inherent economic potential was tapped. The so-called Stabilization Plan of that year was the prelude to a period of wholesale liberalization. The results were extraordinary. Between 1961 and 1973, Spain's economy grew at an average rate of seven percent a year, faster than that of any other country in the noncommunist world except Japan. By 1964, Spain had ceased to be a "developing nation" as defined by the United Nations. Its economy changed from an agriculturally based one into one based increasingly on industry and services, notably tourism. The exodus from the towns and villages into the cities, which had begun in the 1950s, gathered momentum during the 1960s. By the time the boom was over, one in seven Spaniards had fled the countryside in search of a better life.



The spirit of Franco lingers. In Madrid, members of the Fascist Youth Corps observe the 10th anniversary of the general's death.

That, eventually, is what most of them secured. The early years—often spent camped in illegally constructed shacks or lodged with friends in cramped, noisy, shabby apartments—were usually appallingly harsh. But, with time, the migrants attained progressively better accommodations and some of the more modest luxuries and conveniences: a refrigerator, a television, even a car.

In the mid-1970s, though, their progress and that of their country came to a shuddering halt, as a general slowdown hit the developed world. During this period the West discovered that a cyclical economic downturn, when set against a history of widespread deficit budgeting and in the context of quadrupled oil prices, could produce inflation at the same time as stagnation.

Spain's experience with stagflation was particularly bitter, because the worldwide economic crisis of 1973–74 commenced just as General Franco was reaching the end of his life. Decisive responses to the crisis conditions were frequently postponed or avoided as the country's leaders grappled with the problems of transforming Spain from a dictatorship into a democracy. Between 1975, when Franco died, and 1983, average real income

dropped—if only by 0.07 percent. Spain had again fallen behind in the race to catch up, and though the word *atraso* was no longer used, events were about to show that the concept it implied—the idea that Spaniards had a mission to put their country back in contention with the likes of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy—was still very much alive.

Among the first statements made by a Socialist leader after his party took office was that of Alfonso Guerra, the party's deputy general secretary and then deputy prime minister. The Socialists, he said, were going to change Spain "so that even its own mother wouldn't recognize it."

Guerra was, and still is, the outstanding proponent of the idea that Spain has it within its grasp to become the "California of Europe." This notion, which became particularly prevalent in the mid-1980s, took as its point of departure the revolution in information technology of the previous 10 years or so. Since industries no longer had to be located close to the source of their raw materials, it was argued, the people who ran them could now choose where to work. And, given a choice between a cold north and a warm south, they would opt for the latter. Once the European Community had a single internal market, it would see a transfer of resources of the kind that was already taking place in the United States. Large tracts of Northern Europe were doomed to become the Community's "rust belt," while a swath of the Continent from Portugal to Greece stood fair to become its "sunbelt."

Despite these plans there is scant indica-

Prime minister of Spain since 1982, Felipe González here rallies his Socialist supporters at the beginning of last summer's general election. His victory on June 6 surprised many pollsters.

tion of overseas firms setting up business in Spain in order to sell vanguard technology products to the rest of Europe. And it is not too difficult to see why.

The cultural differences that might deter an entrepreneur from switching from, say, Dusseldorf to Seville, are infinitely greater than those standing in the way of a move from New York to Santa Monica. California has always had a lot more to offer than sun—an exceptionally well-educated work force, impressively well-developed communications, and a culture geared to enterprise. Without belittling the progress made by Spain, and especially Andalusia, one must note that both are still a long way behind most of the rest of the EC on all three counts.

While the Socialists may not have turned Spain into the California of Europe, they can justifiably boast of bringing about a substantial improvement in the material well-being of the country, both in absolute terms and relative to the rest of the EC, which Spain joined at the start of 1986. An initial period of cutbacks and industrial downsizing gave way in the late 1980s to a spectacular boom. In the four years to the end of 1989, gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an annual average of 4.7 percent. In 1985, per capita income had been less than 72 percent of the EC average. By 1989, it was almost 76 percent.

Strengthened and encouraged by their increased prosperity, Spaniards started to make their presence felt in areas and ways that had previously been unthinkable. Spanish models began to be seen sauntering the catwalks of Paris and gazing out from the covers of glossy international fashion magazines. Spanish scientists cropped up on some of the world's most advanced research projects, including Europe's Nuclear Fusion Project. Spain's film industry, once seemingly incapable of turning out anything but grim, gory allegories, all of a sudden produced the comic genius of Pedro Almodóvar and a host of other directors—including Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón and Juan José Bigas Lana—who are less known abroad but no less innovative than the celebrated creator of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown.*

Spanish tennis players such as Arantxa Sánchez-Vicario, Concha Martínez, and Sergei Bruguera hover close to the top of the international rankings. This year, Miguel Induráin won cycling's premier event, the Tour de France, for the third year running. And at the 1992 Olympics, the Spanish astonished the world by carrying off 22 medals, including 13 golds—a better performance than was turned in by France, Italy, Australia, or Great Britain.

Spain's accomplishments in the world of journalism have been equally impressive. One of the English-speaking world's fastest-growing magazines is the Spanish-owned and inspired *Hello!* One of Britain's leading daily newspapers, *The Independent*, is now partly owned by a Spanish one, *El País*. There was a time when it was rare to find more than a handful of Spanish correspondents at even the biggest international events. But during Operation Desert Shield, the Spanish media contingent was easily as large as that fielded by Italy, France, or Germany. And it was a Spaniard—Alfonso Rojo of *El Mundo*—who became the only non-Arab press reporter to stay in Baghdad alongside Peter Arnett of CNN throughout the Persian Gulf War.

Indeed, Spain is a fully responsible member of the international community. Madrid successfully hosted the opening round of the 1991 Middle East peace conference. It was a Spanish initiative that helped bridge the gap between the two opposing camps in the EC over economic and monetary union, and a Spanish proposal that added a new dimension to political union by introducing the concept of community citizenship. It was not until 1989 that the first Spaniards joined a United Nations peace-keeping force. Yet today there are more Spanish officers wearing the sky-blue beret than there are officers of any other nationality. And in perhaps the sharpest irony of all, General Franco's notorious Spanish Legion

now tries to enforce the peace in the former Yugoslavia.

In the 1989 election campaign, González had boasted that under his administration Spain had acquired greater international prestige than at any other time since the reign of the Emperor Charles V in the 16th century. A similar message was subliminally projected by the staging of the extraordinary round of festivities held during 1992, when Barcelona hosted the Olympic Games, Seville staged Expo '92, and even Madrid was given a part to play as the EC's 1992 "Capital of Culture."

Last year was also, of course, the 500th anniversary of several of the more decisive events in Spain's history, even though—as was rarely pointed out—Spain itself had yet to come into existence in 1492. During that year, Columbus arrived in the New World, the combined forces of the Crowns of Aragón and Castile defeated the last Muslim kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula, and the monarchs of the two realms, Ferdinand and Isabella, agreed to the expulsion of their Jewish subjects.

None of these events is viewed with universal approval elsewhere. Spain's reaction to criticism of its 1992 jamboree, which generally began as astonishment and turned into indifference, betrayed a remarkable degree of continuing cultural and intellectual isolation. But it also suggested that González is not alone among today's Spaniards in looking back with pride to the days when Spain was conquering, then ruling, that empire "upon which the sun never set."

It is not that the Spanish aspire to, much less expect, some form of domination, but many do feel that they have an opportunity—and a responsibility—to put their country back where they believe it belongs. It is this, perhaps, which explains a sense of national purpose, a sort of instinctive patriotism, which one would be hard put to find elsewhere in Western Europe and which is more reminiscent of the spirit that animated many of the newly independent Third World states of the 1960s. Spanish journalists, in print, on radio, and on television, often refer to their country as "*our* country." Any sign of anyone, anywhere paying attention to Spain is picked up and relayed back, to be pored over with fascination. When a Spanish ballet company put on a performance abroad recently, it earned a front-page photograph in that otherwise sophisticated newspaper, *El País*, together with a caption explaining how the event showed that Spanish culture was capable of transcending "our frontiers."

Yet suddenly, in their race to catch up, the Spanish are stumbling. It seems that the gap separating Spanish incomes from the EC average is now growing bigger rather than smaller. At the same time, an odd series of events has cast a searching light on the quality of much that has been achieved.

Spain's present economic situation is remarkable for the speed with which it has tipped from boom to bust. Employment is perhaps the best example. Joblessness had been edging upward since mid-1991, at a rate of 50,000–100,000 every three months. During the final quarter of last year and the opening quarter of this one, though, the number leapt by more than half a million. Put another way, one in every 25 Spaniards with a job in October 1992 had lost that job by the end of the following March.

Such a steep drop in employment would occasion a change of government in most democracies, especially if—as in Spain's case—the eventual election were held against a backdrop of no less than three currency devaluations in eight months. Yet, in the general election on June 6, Felipe González and the Socialists not only captured the largest single share of the vote but achieved a bigger-than-expected margin that has since enabled them to form a minority government. González managed to do what John Major did in Britain—retain power in a recession—and he succeeded in doing what Paul Keating did in Australia—defy a worldwide trend away from anything remotely linked to Karl Marx.

But then he managed much more than either. The very reason the election had been called was to distract attention from a split in the ranks of the ruling Spanish Socialists Workers' Party (PSOE). And the reason for the split was that González had tried—and failed—to get someone to take the rap for a corruption scandal. The reason the scandal had been an issue in the first place was that a team of his own administration's accountants had told the Supreme Court that the ruling party had, as alleged, been funded by systematic graft.

One might examine these peculiar events and conclude that the Spanish, faced with a temporary economic setback, responded prudently by choosing not to change political horses in midstream. It can be argued that the speed with which the Spanish economy went into reverse was in part due to last year's megafiesta. The boom had really ended in 1989, when the government put the brakes on an overheated economy by means of a credit freeze. It was then faced with the challenge of preparing Spain for its big year. In order to do so, it reversed its policy and sanctioned expansionary budgets for both 1991 and 1992. A building spree helped generate economic activity in general and keep people off the dole queues in particular. But the collapse, when it came, was correspondingly more abrupt.

The case for not changing horses in midstream was made repeatedly by the Socialists during the election. One of the main planks in the PSOE's platform, in fact, was that it was the only party that had succeeded in pulling Spain out of a recession in the mid-1980s. Then again, it was also the only party standing that had managed to cast Spain *into* a recession.

La Bolsa, *Madrid's stock exchange, is one of Spain's four exchanges and accounts for 82 percent of the nation's trading.*

The underlying question remains whether recent developments do not say something less sanguine about the underlying condition of the Spanish economy and the workings of Spanish democracy.

Anyone with a knowledge of Spain's modern economic history who has witnessed the developments of the past few months is bound to be troubled by an ominous sense of déjà vu. Ever since 1959, when it was opened to the outside world, the Spanish economy has reflected international developments—to an exaggerated degree. The highs have been higher, the lows lower. If history is indeed repeating itself, Spain is heading—as it was in 1974—for a deeper and longer recession than can be expected elsewhere.

There are at least two reasons why this pattern has developed. The first is an enduring lack of substance in the Spanish economy. Most of Spain missed out on industrialization, and those parts that did not are currently being stripped of the "sunset" businesses that once provided them with wealth without noticeably acquiring the "sunrise" industries they need for prosperity. In recent times, Spain has been forced to absorb the excess labor it was once able to unload on the rest of the world by means of emigration, first to Latin America and latterly to northwestern Europe. Nor has it ever achieved international competitiveness. Spain's trade balance has been consistently negative. The current account has been put into the black, when it has been in the black, by tourist earnings and emigrant remittances, not by sales of Spanish goods and services overseas.

It is noteworthy that Spain—unlike Italy, for example—has failed to produce any high-prestige, high-quality brand names. Indeed, Spain today is at least at the same stage of development that Italy was during the 1960s. Yet there is no sign that anything produced in Spain can win the worldwide recognition given to Lamborghini cars, Ferragamo shoes, or even Vespa scooters.

The second reason for Spain's roller-coaster economic progress is its acute dependence on the outside world. Though an immense amount of hard work has been done by Spaniards to make their country as prosperous as it is today, it is also a fact that the country's two modern booms were both crucially dependent on external catalysts.

If the mainspring of Spain's rapid growth in the 1960s was tourism, then what sparked the latest spurt of growth was Spanish accession to the EC in 1986: Membership in the Community offers a virtual guarantee to foreign investors. The EC principle of "solidarity" ensures that the Community's poorer members will be helped to grow until such time as they are more or less on a par with the rest. Sensing that putting money into Spain was almost a sure bet, foreign investors poured cash into the economy, stimulating the growth that was foreseen and closing what was in effect a "benevolent circle" of self-fulfilling expectations.

In order to preserve the inflated value of Spain's national currency and to make it attractive for investors to keep their money in pesetas, the González administration pursued a policy that sustained high interest rates. But the effect was to generate an essentially speculative rather than productive boom. Spanish industrialists—despairing of the cost of money and the rates of exchange—opted in droves to sell their businesses to foreigners and reinvest the proceeds in stocks, bonds, and other financial assets, thereby heightening the external dependence that has been at the root of the policy. By the end of 1992, according to the *Economist* Intelligence Unit, half of all Spanish industry was foreign-owned.

Because so much of Spain's growth has been externally stimulated, its economic advancement has not been accompanied by the degree of social change usually needed to bring such advancement about. For all the business that has been going on in Spain, the Spanish business culture remains remarkably tradition-bound. Take the not-so-small

matter of the afternoon siesta.

Spanish hours are, if anything, even wackier than they were before the recent booms. The traditional *jornada partida* ("split day") was a response to the intense heat of the Spanish summer. It was intended to allow for a siesta in the afternoon. Nowadays, with the spread of air conditioning, its original purpose has largely disappeared. In any case, even before the arrival of air conditioning, most workers had ceased to be able to take a siesta because, in big modern cities, their workplaces were too far from their homes.

Shop hours throughout Spain nevertheless continue to be from about 9–10 A.M. to 2 P.M. and from 4:30–5:30 P.M. until 8–8:30 P.M. Factories, on the other hand, mostly work a *jornada intensiva* which, in theory if not always in practice, lasts from 8 A.M. to 3 P.M. This is also true of offices, though a growing number now use the *jornada partida* in winter (when there is no need for the siesta it is meant to facilitate) and the *jornada intensiva* in summer (when some younger employees choose to sleep after work until almost midnight and then spend all night out and go to work straight from the disco). There is no accepted rule for when companies should change from one timetable to another and, just to make matters even more difficult, other firms—to keep step with their foreign parent companies—work nine to five or 10 to six. Virtually no one works on Friday afternoons.

It is still normal for bosses to keep their secretaries in the dark about their whereabouts when they leave the office. At the same time, Spanish bosses are notoriously reluctant to delegate authority. As a result, all decision-making is paralyzed in their absence. If someone you are trying to contact is out (and most Spanish office workers spend up to an hour midmorning eating breakfast in a nearby "cafeteria"), then it is you—not he or she—who is expected to return the call.

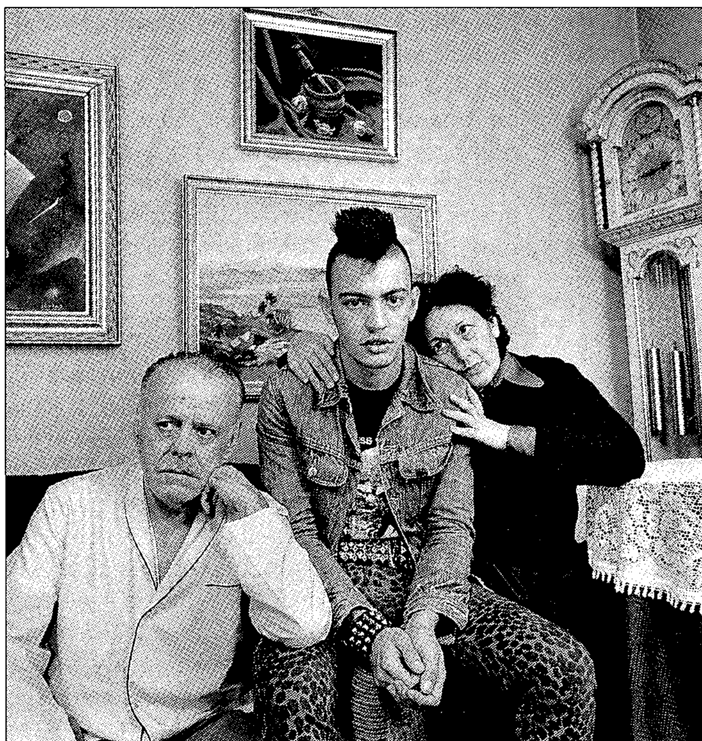
Personal links remain of paramount importance in any sort of business. Anyone who tries to make contact by sending a fax or letter out of the blue is likely to be ignored. If, however, you can elicit a relationship, no matter how tenuous or specious, with the person you need to contact, you will usually succeed on the first try. Possibly the single most useful phrase for anyone working in Spain is *de parte de*, though it is rarely mentioned in language courses and woefully mistranslated in most English-Spanish, Spanish-English dictionaries as "on behalf of."

When a caller says, "Llamo de parte de Señor X," what he or she is actually saying is "I got your number from X and am ringing with his blessing." It could well be that X is the husband of the second cousin of the person the caller wants to speak to, and the caller may know him only because he has a colleague whose sister-in-law went out with X five years earlier. Nonetheless, a bond of obligation has been established, and unless the person being sought is ready to risk insulting X, then that person is going to have to come to the phone and give the caller whatever help he or she requires.

The survival of such arcane practices is just one illustration of the way in which the immense changes of the last quarter century have left Spain's patina of modernity distinctly patchy. But there are other examples as well.

On the Paseo de la Castellana—the eight-lane highway that runs north-south through Madrid—you could be in, say, Atlanta. Shiny new limousines and roadsters race down a canyon formed by clean-lined office blocks in which the lights burn long after dark. But an hour's drive or less across the *meseta* and you can be in a world of attitudes and rituals that would have been completely familiar to Europeans of centuries ago.

There is growing concern in the rest of Europe, for instance, over the degree of cruelty to animals at village fiestas in Spain. A terrified goat is hurled each year from a church belfry at Manganeses de la Polvorosa. A hapless donkey is harried and jostled and leapt on in the streets of Villanueva de la Vera. In some villages, chickens are buried up to their necks



Rock musician Alberto Rojas of "Third World War," posing here with his parents, typifies Spanish youth today: rebellious but devoted to family.

years, the two frantic bursts of economic growth, and the political transformation that occurred in between have all combined to insulate the country from a number of the intellectual movements and social phenomena that have contributed most toward shaping contemporary attitudes elsewhere.

Just to take two examples, Spain is waking up in a postindustrial, postfeminist world having scarcely experienced either industrialization or feminism. The absence of large-scale industrialization outside the Basque country, Catalonia, and Asturias goes a long way toward explaining the persistence—other than in those areas—of that anarchic streak that 19th-century visitors found so striking in the Spanish. Industrialization encourages regimentation, and through the growth of trade unions and collective bargaining, it promotes solidarity. Both characteristics are noticeably lacking in Spain.

and dispatched with either stones or clubs. In others, they are brained or decapitated while hanging from a cord. At Tordesillas in Old Castile, it is the young women of the town who, blindfolded, lay about the hapless, captive birds with swords. Bulls are tortured in any number of ways, with lances, darts, and flaming balls of tar stuck to their horns. For sheer weirdness, though, it would be difficult to beat what happens at Robledo de Chavela in the province of Madrid. There, the Easter Sunday parade stops beside a large tree stump. From it dangle earthenware pitchers which—the night before—are filled with small animals. To the strains of the Spanish national anthem, the pitchers are stoned by the parishioners until the animals fall out dead or dying. The ritual has been vigorously defended by the parish priest, who has linked it with the "struggle against sin."

There is a topsy-turvy, out-of-kilter feel to modern Spain that is, by turns, refreshing and disturbing. The isolation of the early Franco

The level of trade-union membership is the lowest in Western Europe, and there is nothing even resembling a working-class identity. Pressure groups of all kinds are less common than elsewhere in the developed world. Those that do exist tend to have smaller memberships by comparison. A high proportion of Spain's environmental protest groups are short-term, single-issue movements based firmly on the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) principle.

The Spaniards' leap from a preindustrial, agriculturally based society to a postindustrial, service-oriented one also perhaps explains why they have brought with them attitudes more typical of the 18th century than

of the 20th century. If they are to make sense of the social relationships around them, visitors to Spain would be well advised to imagine themselves inside a novel by Fielding or Smollett.

Bosses will deliver orders with a bluntness, and employees receive them with a servility, that can shock outsiders. Yet, underlying their relationship, there is often an assumption of personal equality, a recognition of personal dignity, that is lacking in most other advanced contemporary societies. The same chauffeur who greets the Chairman as "Don Pedro" can be seen arguing vigorously with him over the news of the day on the way to the office.

Relations between the sexes are equally deceptive. On the surface, Spanish women seem to have caught up with their sisters in the rest of Europe. There are three women in the cabinet. The head of one of the biggest state-owned corporations—the RENFE railway network—is a woman. And the government funds an institute for the promotion of women's rights.

But public opinion in Spain was never given the ear-bashing it received in the United States at the height of the feminist movement in the 1970s. At that time Spaniards of both sexes were far more concerned about whether or not their country was going to slip back into dictatorship. Every so often a rape or harassment case reveals stunningly reactionary attitudes among members of the judiciary. A judge recently threw out a sexual-abuse prosecution on the grounds that the alleged victim was too old and plain to have excited the defendant. Advertisements that would never get off the drawing board on Madison Avenue easily find their way onto the billboards of Spain. A recent ad for quince jelly, which the Spanish eat with sheep cheese, showed a woman naked from the waist up cupping a pair of quinces in front of her breasts, with the slogan, "What the quince jelly girl is offering you tonight."

An organized feminist movement did exist in Spain, but by the time it waned in the 1980s its only palpable achievement was a limited abortion-rights law. Equal-opportunity legislation now exists, but it is widely ignored. Spanish bosses are habitually gender-specific in job advertisements and often pay men and women different rates for the same work.

In most of the rest of the developed world, progress toward sexual equality followed on—doubtless grew from—progress towards sexual freedom. The same process occurred in Spain, but acquired certain special characteristics.

The arrival, back in the 1960s, of millions of tourists in what was a still-traditional society allowed Spanish men to indulge in premarital relationships without involving Spanish women. The *sueca*—it means "Swedish woman" but was applied to all sexually available northern females—soon figured prominently in Spanish popular legend. The effect was twofold. Spanish women were left feeling that they had some catching up to do and that they needed to prove they were as desirable as any foreigner.

The results are still visible today. For the most part, Spanish women give the impression that they want to be seen as alluring first and equal second. As it happens, during the last few years a more balanced diet made possible by prosperity has produced a generation of taller, slimmer *españolas*—and done so at a time when fashion and prosperity have provided them with an opportunity to flaunt their charms. And flaunt is often the word. The fine distinction between elegance and sexiness which is drawn elsewhere counts for little in Spain. What is good for the disco is frequently good for the office, too.

It rarely raises a murmur, though. After 36 years of dictatorship under the late General Franco, today's Spaniards seem almost obsessively determined to avoid censure of anything other than perhaps racism, terrorism, and corruption. But explicit sex on the telly at 5 P.M. when the kids are home from school and playing with the zapper? So what? The papers say that such-and-such a politician has had a child by his mistress. Who cares? It is only now—10 years at least since the problem be-

came evident—that a handful of conservative local government authorities are taking steps to stop junkies from shooting up in public places.

Even the minor social vices are winked at. In five years since returning to Spain, I have not only never been given a breathalyzer test but have never seen anyone else being tested. It often seems, in fact, that drinking and driving is compulsory rather than just tolerated. Almost every highway gas station has a machine selling canned beer, and several offer spirits with mixers in easy-to-open, easy-to-hold, wide-necked bottles, presumably so that you can take a swig of gin and tonic or rum and Coke while you steer.

For more than a year it has been fashionable for the young of Madrid to dance all night from Saturday into Sunday, then dose up on an awesome cocktail of designer drugs and roar off by car to Valencia, 225 miles away. There they can continue dancing until about 6 P.M. before returning, exhausted, along the same busy road. The practice is sufficiently established for night clubs to have been set up along the route to cater to those revelers who choose to break their journey for a quick top-up of pounding music, pills, or both. The police must know what is going on—it has even been written up in the newspapers—but so far they have done absolutely nothing to stop it.

It often seems as if tolerance is being used to replace, rather than accompany, decisions about what is good or bad, right or wrong—a knock-on effect perhaps of the decline in the influence of Roman Catholicism. That decline is largely explained by the history of the church's close association with Franco. The hierarchy in particular came down squarely on the side of the General and his forces during the civil war, and although the priesthood leaned progressively further toward the opposition in the later stage of Franco's rule, it was not enough to clear away the stigma that Roman Catholicism had acquired in the eyes of many progressive Spaniards. The leadership of the PSOE, for example, is overwhelmingly agnostic.

Spanish society continues to respect those family values whose implantation is widely, if debatably, credited to the church. Though premarital sex is common in Spain, cohabitation and illegitimacy rates are among the lowest in Western Europe. Some 70 percent of young people live with their parents until they marry. Yet the comprehensive rejection of Roman Catholic teaching on contraception is made evident by the fact that, since 1980, the average number of children per family has been just 1.5.

For all intents and purposes, though, Roman Catholicism is Spain's only faith. Its Jews were expelled five centuries ago and its Muslims not long after. Protestantism was kept out by the Inquisition. Freemasonry was proscribed by Franco. So the decline of Roman Catholicism has effectively deprived the Spanish of what for centuries was their sole ethical lodestone. The idea of turning to another religion, or even to a sect or cult, rarely seems to occur to Spaniards. The Spanish philosopher José Luis Aranguren has described the resulting condition as "moral minimalism."

In politics, one finds both moral and ideological minimalism. Successive González administrations have drifted from socialist principles progressively closer to a kind of managerial pragmatism. A third of the members of his present cabinet are not even members of the PSOE.

"We no longer have a policy," a Socialist once told me without a trace of regret. "We use opinion polls instead. The moment we see that 51 percent of the electorate is in favor of something, we make it law." The polls, often lavish in scale, are prepared by a special, government-funded polling center, the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, some of whose studies are withheld from the general public. Such an approach makes it almost impossible for the opposition to find an issue on which to attack the party in power and attract votes.

Political debate, when it is not about personalities, therefore often centers on whatever scandal happens to be catching the attention of the media at the moment.

Ideological commitment is hard to come by except on what, in Spain, passes for the hard Left: an intensely fissiparous electoral alliance of Communists, disgruntled Socialists, Republicans, ecologists, pacifists, and feminists known by the misleading title of the United Left. Just as the Socialists have succeeded in stealing the clothes of the Right, so the Right, in the form of the People's Party (PP), is forever attempting to steal the clothes of the Left. In the last general election, for example, it shied away from admitting that privatization was its answer to tackling the budget deficit, preferring instead to stress its commitment to welfare.

The idea that ideological labels are for taking off and putting on at will is perhaps the inevitable result of Spain's recent political history. The stock phrase to describe what happened during the late 1970s is "Spain's peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy." Yet the process was not peaceful at all. In fact, politically inspired violence has claimed more than 1,000 victims since Franco's death. It was not until the boil of neo-Francoist resentment burst with an abortive military coup in 1981 that subversion of the new order by supporters of the old one ceased to be a serious problem. Before and since then, Spain's democratic rulers have had to contend with a variety of left-wing terrorist groups originally set up to undermine the dictatorship. The Basque guerrilla movement is well known; less so are its nowadays more or less defunct Galician and Catalan counterparts. Spain is also home to the First of October Antifascist Revolutionary Groups (GRAPO), an organization inspired by beliefs reminiscent of those of the Italian Red Brigades.

What gave Spain's transition its identity was not the absence of violence, then, but a decision intended to minimize the threat of even greater disruption. Franco, it should be remembered, died in his bed. Spain's quasi-fascist regime, unlike Portugal's, was never overthrown. Although it was widely accepted—even by many former supporters—that it had had its day, the institutions that were meant to guarantee its survival were still in place when its creator expired. Instead of making a clean break with the totalitarian past, as proposed by leaders of the clandestine opposition to the dictatorship, it was decided to win the consent of the Francoist institutions to their own abolition or reform.

This was the plan concocted by Prince Juan Carlos and his advisers. It was put into effect by Spain's first democratically elected post-Franco prime minister, Adolfo Suárez, who ran the country from 1977 until 1981. It was entirely characteristic of the process that Suárez himself had been the last secretary general of the only

Lt. Colonel Antonio Tejero de Molina, front man for the abortive military coup of 1981, holds forth from the podium in Spain's parliament.

party allowed to operate legally under Franco, the National Movement.

Franco's relatives were never put in jail. What awaited them was the perhaps worse fate of being subjected to weekly coverage in Spain's gossip magazines. Franco's leading secret policemen were mostly assigned to the battle against terrorism. Several of the most renowned torturers among them have since retired to well-paid jobs in the private-security industry. Numerous major and minor public figures from the Franco era were quietly allowed to soften their image, shift their stance, and then re-emerge as if they had been lifelong committed democrats. There are showbiz personalities with their own programs on Spanish television today who were once only too happy to be photographed entertaining Spain's aging dictator. Newspaper editors who had Franco's full faith and trust can now be heard on Spanish radio confidently offering their strictures on the Socialists' approach to civil liberties.

At no time was a line drawn through the Right, as it was in Portugal, in order to distinguish between democratic and totalitarian conservatives. One consequence is that the People's Party, which is led by incontrovertibly moderate, democratic right-wingers, nevertheless attracts a pretty heterogeneous array of supporters, from neoliberals to more or less unreconstructed Francoists. This makes it comparatively easy for its opponents to claim that a vote for the People's Party is a vote for a return to dictatorship, which the Socialists did in the final stages of this year's general election campaign. At various times they compared the PP's leader, José María Aznar, to Hitler, Franco, and the leader of the failed 1981 coup, Antonio Tejero de Molina.

An indication of the success of these tactics could be discerned in the way the exit polls, which have a good record of accuracy in Europe, failed to get it right in Spain. Like the polls conducted during the campaign, they showed the PP and the Socialists neck and neck. Numerous Spaniards must have lied to—or withheld the truth from—pollsters even after they had voted. Many of these are thought to have been poorer, mostly rural voters who were playing it safe and misleading—or omitting to answer—the pollsters, just in case González's warnings did come true and their answers were somehow one day held against them.

This fear may be a bit disquieting, but it is not really surprising. Spaniards have never seen one fully combatant party hand power over to another after losing at the ballot box. Or rather, most of them have not. The oldest among them saw it happen in 1936, when the Popular Front beat the National Front. And that led to the civil war.

Spain's only previous ruling party since the death of General Franco, Adolfo Suárez's Union of the Democratic Center (UDC), fell apart in office. The Socialists, by far the biggest opposition party at the time, stepped in to fill the gap, but before they were able to do so maverick elements within the army staged their failed coup. Small wonder there is a fear of change.

It has been argued that a democracy cannot be properly consolidated until power has been voluntarily surrendered through the ballot box at least twice. On that reckoning, and even if you regard the 1982 election as constituting a voluntary surrender of power, Spain does not yet have a consolidated democracy.

Is there, in fact, any likelihood of a return to dictatorship—or, still worse perhaps, civil strife? Looking around Spain today it is very difficult to imagine. Almost a quarter century of impressive if irregular economic growth has healed the raw political divisions and vast social imbalances that made Spain so explosive in the 1930s. The civil war is rarely mentioned precisely because it is reckoned too terrible to recall. The ultra-Right nowadays collects a minute percentage of the vote at election time. Almost nothing has been heard by way of serious complaint or protest from

within the armed forces for years now. Nor is there a cause apparent that could provide reactionary officers with the minimum of public support they would need for another intervention. Looking around Europe, there would seem to be at least a dozen countries more at risk of instability than Spain.

But in today's Europe it would be unwise to take anything too much for granted, and it has to be admitted that a "nightmare scenario" can be made out. It depends for its credibility on the interaction between Spain's ethnic and cultural diversity on the one hand and the peculiar role assigned to its armed forces on the other.

Spain is an unusual example of a state whose ethnic composition has remained stable yet varied. It has scarcely altered since the 17th century, when the last Muslims were deported, yet it is characterized by considerable heterogeneity.

At the point where France meets Spain in the crook of the Bay of Biscay are to be found the Basques, a people whose non-Indo-European language—now spoken by only about 10 percent of the inhabitants of the Basque country—is thought to go back to the late Stone Age. At the other end of the Pyreneean mountain range that runs from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean is Catalonia, a territory that was partly repopulated after the Arab invasion of A.D. 711 by Franks and that even today has a distinctly French air. Catalan looks and sounds indeed like a cross between French and Spanish. Not only is it spoken by about two-thirds of the population of Catalonia itself, but variants of the language are used by some two-thirds of the Balearic Islanders and about half the inhabitants of the Valencian country, immediately to the south of Catalonia.

If Catalan resembles a cross between Spanish and French, then Galician—the language of the far northwest of Spain—seems like a hybrid of Spanish and Portuguese. It is in fact every bit as much a separate language as Catalan, and the parent tongue of Portuguese, rather than vice versa. The number of speakers is reckoned at over 80 percent of all inhabitants of Galicia, though that includes large numbers who speak a bastardized, semi-Hispanicized, version.

In all, almost a quarter of the population of Spain speaks a language other than that somewhat inappropriately named tongue, Spanish. (In Spain, as in Latin America, it is often referred to as *castellano*, that is, Castilian.) Linguistic differences constitute a significant centrifugal force pulling at the state, and not the only one.

Spain's size, its relatively low population density, its mountainous topography, the scarcity of navigable rivers, and, until comparatively recently, the shortage of other communications have all combined to isolate Spaniards from one another. This has not only made the regional differences among them greater but also—in many instances—more apparent than real.

Even so, Spain is like both Italy and Germany in having a population that has been divided among different states for much of its history. Before the unification of Spain—a process not finally settled until the middle of the 17th century—the people who lived in what is now Spain were scattered among the Muslim Kingdom of Granada, the Kingdom of Navarre, and the so-called Crowns of Aragón (a federation of the Aragonese, the Catalans, the Valencians, and the Balearic Islanders) and Castile (which took in not only Castile but also Asturias, Cantabria, León, the Basque country, Estremadura, and Andalusia). Because Italy and Germany were united only during the last century, one might conclude that the separatist impulse is potentially stronger in those nations than in Spain. This may yet prove to be the case, but it is equally important to bear in mind that because the centralizing process in Spain took place in an earlier age, it was carried out with less sensitivity and also with less efficiency. The Basques, in particular, were left to enjoy rights—known as *fueros*—which gave them a privileged and separate status within a nominally unitary state.

Two factors have helped contain Spain's centrifugal tendencies. One has been the flow of job-seeking migrants into the industrialized Basque country and Catalonia which began in the last century and continued right up to the early 1970s. Because there has been considerable "absorption," particularly in Catalonia, where the language is easier to learn, ethnically "pure" Basques and Catalans are now reckoned to be in a minority in their respective lands.

Improvements in communications, particularly within the past decade, have also played a unifying role, helping to show Spaniards that they are not perhaps quite as different from one another as they had once believed.

In between these two developments, and overlapping them, however, was an outburst of intense regional nationalist feeling which—for better or worse—has left its mark on the country. It was almost certainly linked to the upsurge in regional nationalist sentiment elsewhere in Europe during the mid-to-late 1970s, but it took strength mainly from popular reaction to Franco's remorseless centralism.

In response to the pressure for a quasi-federalist solution, Suárez's administration set up a system in which each of the 17 regions of Spain, dubbed "autonomous communities," acquired its own president, government, flag, legislature, and judiciary. The outstanding peculiarity of the system was that various regions were given different degrees of self-government. The Basque country, Catalonia, and Galicia were granted, as a right, a generous measure of home rule. But a sort of democratic obstacle course was set up for the others to test how much autonomy each really wanted. Only the Andalusians of southern Spain succeeded in putting themselves on a par with the Basques, Catalans, and Galicians.

The eventual scheme of graded autonomy turned out to reflect quite accurately the intensity of separatist sentiment in the various parts of Spain. The snag was that it left open the door for incessant bargaining: Every time one of the "autonomous communities" gets additional powers, all the others clamor for compensatory increments of their own. To date, this has not been much of a problem. The 1978 Constitution sketched out the powers assigned to each sort of autonomous community and, in their negotiations, the central and regional governments have been operating well within the bounds outlined 15 years ago. The Constitution, however, is a vague—often deliberately vague—document, and it creates numerous gray areas where it is by no means clear whether power ought to be exercised by Madrid or by one or more of the regional administrations.

Most of the responsibilities indisputably assigned by the Constitution to the regions have since been transferred. Quite soon therefore the debate will focus on areas where it will be a matter of opinion as to whether the deal struck goes beyond the terms of the Constitution. Indeed, this is already starting to happen. The Catalan nationalists have demanded control over a share of the income tax collected in Catalonia—a question not covered, let alone settled, by the Constitution.

It is at this point that another part of the document becomes of paramount importance, for it stipulates that the armed forces "have as their mission to guarantee the sovereignty and independence of Spain, defend its constitutional arrangements and its territorial integrity." It was this last requirement that was used to justify the failed 1981 coup—an uprising launched specifically to abort the creation of the autonomous communities.

One reason why the 1981 coup failed was a logical inconsistency obvious to all but the most purblind officers—the very constitution that empowered the armed forces to intervene also sanctioned the system of regional government to which the conspirators objected. No such inconsistency arises, however, if the arrangements can be depicted as exceeding the limits of the Constitution.

The regional nationalists' ability to secure concessions from the central government is almost certain to increase. For the past 11 years, authority has been exercised in Madrid

by an administration with an outright parliamentary majority. Last June, however, the Socialists lost their ability to pass legislation without reference to the opposition and, at present, are attempting to negotiate deals with the Basque and Catalan nationalists. Both groups had earlier been invited to join a coalition government, and both have said they will reconsider the offer when they see the shape of the Socialists' budget for next year.

To a large extent, the future stability of Spain depends on two factors. The first is the effect of the nationalists' incorporation into government. If the military sees nothing but endless concessions by the central government, the situation could turn nasty. But if there is evidence that the nationalists are gradually being drawn into assuming responsibility for the fortunes of the Spanish state, then the results could eventually be positive.

A second factor is the fate of the project for European union. The reason Spaniards are so keen on membership in the EC is not, as one might think, that they are among the net beneficiaries. Polls show that a majority believe—against all the evidence—that their country has lost out from belonging to the Community. The benefits of EC membership are perceived as being less tangible. It proves to the Spanish that they truly are Europeans, and not—as they sometimes, only half-jokingly, claim—*medio moros* (semi-Arabs). But it also offers a solution to the interlocking problems created by the armed forces and the regional nationalists.

We tend to forget that the extension of EC membership to the poorer states of Southern Europe had more to do with Continental security than with anything else. It was not just a way of rewarding the Greeks, the Portuguese, and the Spanish for having got rid of their unpleasant and potentially destabilizing regimes; it was also a means of ensuring that they remain democratic by making it clear that democracy is a condition of membership. The successful results of that policy can be seen in Spain today: Barely a murmur has been heard from the army in the nearly eight years since the Rome Treaty was signed.

EC membership, in so far as it commits Spain to the process of European union, also holds out the prospect of a solution to the regionalist problem. How depends on your standpoint. The centralist view is that Basque and Catalan demands will gradually become irrelevant in a united Europe. The Basque and Catalan nationalists, by contrast, believe that once the existing state frontiers disappear, the way will be open for a more rational, ethnically based internal territorial division.

But what happens if the process of European union, on which Spain is staking so much, should come to a dead halt, as it has sometimes threatened to do in the past year or so? The most likely answer, on the generally impressive evidence of the recent past, is that the Spanish would find a peaceful and sensible way of resolving the dilemma. Nevertheless, the shadow of a doubt must remain.

SPAIN IN SEARCH OF ITSELF

The English poet W. H. Auden described it as "that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot Africa,/soldered so cruelly into inventive Europe." Auden's characterization of Spain is only a gentler version of a typical European condescension that survived right up until recent years. "Africa begins at the Pyrenees," announced the 19th-century French novelist Alexandre Dumas, snidely implying that Europe ended there. Indeed, the period labels by which we usually chart Western European history—Renaissance and Reformation, Enlightenment and Industrialization—seem largely inapplicable to Spain. Its tradition has been one of isolationism driven by some form of authoritarian rule and stiffened by a powerful Catholic Church. This has earned Spain a reputation for stagnation and backwardness, one that for much of its history it has deserved.

But Spain has not always lagged behind its neighbors to the northeast. It was, after all, the first nation to enjoy a "golden age," building an empire of a scale unseen since the days of Rome. In **Spain and Its World, 1500–1700** (Yale, 1989), John H. Elliott, a professor of early modern history at Oxford University, suggests that 16th-century Castilians saw themselves as successors to the Romans, "as a chosen, and therefore superior, people, entrusted with a divine [Catholic] mission which looked towards universal empire as its goal." But that self-perception included a fatalistic belief in inexorable decline. As Elliott notes, no thinking Spaniard could avoid asking the question: "If all great empires, including the greatest of them all, had risen only to fall, could Spain alone escape?"

Elliott points out that Spain's decline was not so much a national as a Castilian failure, resulting from the crown's inability to rid itself of "imperial delusions." Spaniards have long lived with the weight of an extensive bureaucracy, one of the legacies of the Austrian Hapsburgs who gained the Spanish throne when Charles I (later Holy Roman Emperor Charles V) succeeded his grandfather, Ferdinand, in 1516. The wealth of empire was reserved almost exclusively for the crown, but so was the burden of managing it. Sixteenth-century American possessions "made it possible for Castile to sustain itself as the dominant world power, but at an economic, administrative, and psychological cost which only slowly became apparent. . . . In fact, empire had become a psychological burden which made it almost impossible to think in realistic terms about the changing international situation." The result was one expensive war after another with contending European powers.

Historian Richard Herr's **The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain** (1958) stands as the best work about a thoroughly neglected century in Spanish history. Despite the challenge of new political ideas from abroad, notably liberalism, Spain remained united beneath, and loyal to, the crown and the church. As Herr shows, the mercantilist policies pursued by Madrid resurrected the economy and for once favored the peripheral maritime provinces, such as Galicia and Catalonia, making the state more self-sufficient and actively encouraging the exportation of surplus goods. The provinces responded with a new loyalty to throne and country. And "by keeping progressives from hearkening to anti-Christian extremists in France," Herr says, "their religious faith prevented the entry of the Enlightenment into Spain from destroying the spiritual unity of educated Spaniards. . . . The nationalism that imbued Spaniards from all over the peninsula at the end of the century had as its rallying cry 'Religion, King, and Country!' "

But throughout the tumultuous 19th century—what historian Adrian Shubert in **A Social History of Modern Spain** (Unwin Hyman, 1990) calls "an unbroken litany of short-lived governments, military coups, and civil wars"—Spain suffered a progressive deterioration of national identity. In **Spain, 1808–1975** (Oxford, 1982), Oxford historian Sir Raymond Carr resists blaming this decline on any one of Spain's paradoxes, "its traditionalism or its revolutionary individualism, its extremism or its static conformism." Instead, he points to Spain's slow economic and industrial develop-

ment. Out of insufficient wealth, he says, emerged persistent regionalism and finally separatism, as Catalonia and the Basque country started to go their own ways as independent states. If Spain had become a prosperous and progressive nation, Carr writes, "all would have 'utilized' the Spanish state and found their interests in the general prosperity of the union."

This instability led finally in 1936 to the Spanish civil war, fought between the Popular Front—a coalition of Left Republicans and Socialists—and the Nationalists, a fascist movement backed by the military and led by Generalíssimo Francisco Franco. George Orwell's **Homage to Catalonia** (1938; reprinted by Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1969) remains perhaps the best personal account of that bloody war. Orwell, who fought for a year on the Republican side, bore grim witness to both the political and human realities of the conflict: "Outside Spain few people grasped that there was a revolution; inside Spain nobody doubted it."

The nature of the revolution, the complicated ideological conflict of the war, and its outcome receive scholarly treatment in Hugh Thomas's epic work, **The Spanish Civil War** (1961; reprinted by Harper & Row, 1986). Thomas concludes that while Franco "ruled regally, according to no theory save his own style of compromise . . . between Falange, Church, army, monarchists, and industry," and while Spain remained "politically immobile" for more than 30 years, it still became one of the countries that "will be seen to have had its industrial revolution under the aegis of an authoritarian right-wing regime."

There is little doubt that Franco's death in 1975 was the event most crucial to the democratic transition of the late 1970s, but it was not the only necessary factor. In **The Return of Civil Society** (Harvard, 1993), Complutense University of Madrid sociologist Victor M. Pérez-Díaz relates that liberal tendencies among the educated elite began to emerge by the late 1950s. The real change was in the mentality of the Francoist establishment, "a realization of the failure of the corporate, authoritarian, counter-reformist, and autarkic aims incorporated in the idea of a 'well-ordered' society. . . . From that moment on, it became increasingly evident that such an ideal did not constitute a credible scenario for the future of Spain."

Despite the rising tide of liberal and leftist sentiment after 1975, including among Francoist defectors, the extreme Right was still a force to be reckoned with, particularly because its power was grounded in the military. University of London historian Paul Preston, in **The Triumph of Democracy in Spain** (Methuen, 1986), argues that to avoid a catastrophic clash between Left and Right, "it

Las Meninas *(1656) by Diego Velásquez*

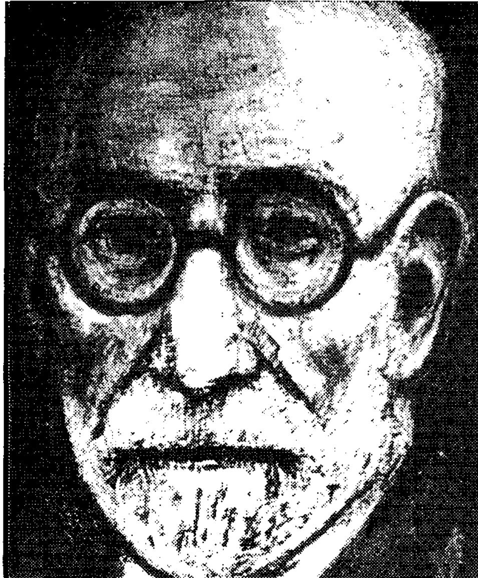
was essential that . . . the introduction of democracy . . . meet with the approval of the armed forces and the bulk of the old guard." The result was that the Francoist constitution remained in force until 1978 and that the transition took place within its framework. Meanwhile, the other partner in the regime, the Catholic Church, redefined its role completely. As Adrian Shubert points out, the church has always wanted a national Catholicism, a popular identification of Spain as a nation largely defined by its ties with the Catholic Church. So by the time of democratic transition, the church had not only forsaken its alliance with the Francoist "crusade," Pérez-Díaz says, "but it began to ask the people's forgiveness for having failed to avert the war."

The years before and during the democratic transition were uncertain, to say the least, but it was not a time of political upheaval or revolution (apart from an abortive military coup in 1981). The triumph of democracy in Spain was that nation's first instance of political success by way of moderation, compromise, and even toleration between Left and Right. What this meant for the liberal opposition, Preston argues, was a string of sacrifices: "Hopes of significant social change were shelved in order that the urgent immediate goal of political democracy might be secured." The post-Franco reformers, who were educated in the burgeoning liberalism of the 1960s, seemed to possess a nonradical, democratic "sense." Pérez-Díaz argues that the political elites "were successful not because they were able to lead the public but rather because they were able to learn from and follow the public mood." The fulcrum of Spanish political stability was no longer the rigid, counter-reformist ideology of monarchy or dictatorship, but instead the fluid, liberal ideas of a new generation.

The first of Spain's recent economic revivals actually preceded the political transition, and it might have had more significant consequences for Spanish society. Journalist John Hooper, in **The Spaniards** (Viking, 1986), cites a fairly typical case from the 1960s and '70s—a man who had started his working life as a shepherd but ended up an electrician on the *Talgo*, the Spanish-designed and -manufactured super train: "He had gone from poverty to prosperity, swapped the most rudimentary job imaginable for one that required a high level of technical sophistication, and moved from a cottage in the hills to a neat three-bedroom flat in a block with fitted kitchens, modern bathrooms and a swimming pool." By the time the first "miracle" ended in the winter of 1973–74, Spain was the world's ninth industrial power.

Still, it is hard to overstate the psychological costs of the civil war and Franco's reign. In **Out of the Past: Spanish Cinema After Franco** (British Film Institute, 1986), author John Hopewell explains the flowering of Spanish film in the last decade as part of a national struggle to forget the war and its legacies. The war itself and the Francoist "peace" of the 1940s and '50s "left many in a permanent state of evasion, of absence from reality. . . . Filmmakers [such as Luis Buñuel and Pedro Almodóvar] and critics broke with dominant film styles in an almost neurotic and thoroughly understandable attempt to start from scratch, to dissociate themselves from a damned and damning past." If anything, says Hopewell, the Spanish tend to think of the past as "a tragedy for which no one is responsible. . . . Spanish filmmakers tend to portray it as if, even at the time, it were already determined." In this, they seem not unlike their 17th-century ancestors: heirs to a fatal destiny.

In **Barcelona** (Knopf, 1992), critic Robert Hughes returns to Orwell's Catalonia, in part to determine the extent to which Spain has shed its Francoist character. Hughes quotes the grandson of Joan Maragall, a turn-of-the-century poet and Catalonian separatist, to illustrate Spain's current predicament: "After nearly 40 years of Franco's insisting that *his* ideology was the essence of Spain, that everything else was foreign and un-Spanish, Spain must (as it were) re-Hispanicize itself, draw a self-definition that includes openness." Indeed this is Spain's challenge: to transcend its closed, authoritarian history and create a new identity that will allow the "miracle" nation of the 1970s and '80s to become a major player on the European and global stage.



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