Spain during the Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy

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Paloma Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia. The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2002), 330 pp., $27.95 (pb), ISBN 1-571-814965.

Pilar Ortuño Anaya, *European Socialists and Spain: The Transition to Democracy* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 273pp., $69.95 (hb), ISBN 0-333-94927-7.

Julio Crespo MacLennan, *Spain and the Process of European Integration, 1957–85. Political Change and Europeanism* (London: Palgrave, 2000), 240 pp., £52.50 (hb), ISBN 0-333-928865.

S. P. Mangen, *Spanish Society after Franco: Regime Transition and the Welfare State* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 254 pp., $65.00 (hb), ISBN 0-333-65462-5.

Luis Moreno, *The Federalization of Spain* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 192 pp., £17.50 (hb), ISBN 0-714-681644.

Twenty-five years ago, the Spanish people adopted a democratic constitution after a dictatorship lasting for forty years. Since then, the transition to democracy in Spain has been much studied by political scientists, sociologists, economists, historians and journalists, and also by those involved, many of whom have written memoirs of this period. Many people consider the way in which Spain achieved the transition from dictatorship to democracy to have been a great historical success, so much so that it has been taken as a model for other transitions, thus evoking even more interest. The bibliography on the transition is now as extensive as that on the Spanish Civil War. Specific aspects have been studied and it has been considered comparatively, as part of the broader democratisation process of southern Europe which also affected Greece and Portugal and was described by Samuel Huntington as 'the third wave of democratisation'.[1]

One of the characteristics of the Spanish transition was the tacit agreement between the winners and the losers of the Civil War of 1936–9 to put the past behind them and 'forget'[2] the traumatic history of the division of the Spanish people and the resulting resentments between 'the two Spains'. The unanimous concern of political circles

[1] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

[2] See Santos Juliá, 'Echar al olvido. Memoria y amnistía en la transición', *Claves de Razón Práctica*, 129 (Jan-Feb. 2003), 14–24, and Javier Tusell, 'La reconciliación española', *Claves de Razón Práctica*, 132 (May 2003), 32–9.

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and society in general was that they should not repeat the mistakes that had put an end to Spain's only experience of democracy (the Second Republic, 1931–6), and that the transition should not turn into yet another frustrated attempt at achieving peace between the Spanish people. This was one of the main factors behind the policy of consensus between the different political and social sectors involved in the process of transition. The policy of negotiation and pact based on national reconciliation, which was considered essential during that difficult period of establishing democracy in Spain, still has its advocates. Most Spaniards believe that a mutual amnesty was necessary, first, in a metaphorical sense, that is, by not taking reprisals for what happened during the Civil War and the dictatorship, and in the real sense, because there were several amnesties by decree.[3] But it also has its detractors who consider that the process, rather than being one of 'amnesty', was one of 'amnesia' imposed by the winners over the losers of the Civil War, and they believe that the time has come to apply a 'policy of memory' in order to restore the dignity of the latter. In the current situation of consolidated democratic coexistence in Spain, to fear the reappearance of the ghosts of the past and to insist on avoiding feelings of revenge at all costs might seem exaggerated. But it must not be forgotten that the transition took place under a real threat from the pro-coup and reactionary tendencies of the extreme right wing and part of the army. The fact is that the willingness to reach agreements or compromise that was shown throughout the Spanish transition is widely considered to be a source of pride.[4]

This question of amnesty or pardon after a dictatorship, as opposed to demands that responsibility be taken, is fundamental to the analysis of such processes of transition. In the case of Spain, one of the authors who has studied it most is Paloma Aguilar Fernández.[5] Her book, *Memory and Amnesia. The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*, which was published in Spanish in 1996,[6] is based on a doctoral thesis she presented in 1995 to the Department for Political Science of the UNED (*Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia* – the Spanish Open University), where she teaches. It deals with the importance of the collective memory and stresses how the past can affect the present life of societies. She studies the role played by memories of the Civil War in the way in which the transition towards democracy took place after Franco's death. Her study begins with an analysis of the Manichean

[3] The government headed by Adolfo Suárez was the first to decree an amnesty in July 1976, but the final, unlimited amnesty for all crimes of a political nature was passed in October 1977 by the first parliament of the new democracy.

[4] A survey carried out at the end of 2000 showed that 86 per cent of Spaniards were proud of the transition. See Juan Avilés, 'Veinticinco años después: la memoria de la transición', *Historia del presente*, 1 (2002) 88–97. 'Los españoles han interiorizado como un logro histórico el momento fundacional de nuestra democracia, lo que se traduce en una elevadísima valoración de su principal protagonista, Adolfo Suárez'. (Spaniards consider the founding of our democracy to be a historic achievement and this can be seen in their very high opinion of its main protagonist, Adolfo Suárez).

[5] See Paloma Aguilar, *Justicia, política y memoria. Los legados del franquismo en la transición española* (Madrid: Instituto Juan March 2001); Alejandra Barahona, Paloma Aguilar and Carmen González, eds., *Las políticas hacia el pasado. Juicios, depuraciones y olvido en las nuevas democracias* (Madrid: Istmo, 2002); pub. in English. *The Politics of Memory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[6] *Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española* (Madrid: Alianza, 1996).

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view of the Civil War offered by the Franco regime. This actually fostered division among Spaniards, as she found from research into official documents, No-do[7] tapes, textbooks, legislation, monuments, and so on. Finally, she analyses the way in which traumatic memories of the Civil War determined the process of transition towards democracy. According to Aguilar, in 1975, when Franco died, the main priorities expleassed by Spanish public opinion were peace, order and stability. The people wanted democracy, but only if it could guarantee social peace. The trauma of the Civil War helped to ensure that the process of political change was a gradual one, based on consensus, in line with the wishes of the society that had lived through the war. Memories of those tragic years meant that every effort was made to find political formulae based on consensus, even if this involved maintaining silence on certain matters that, if aired in public, might disrupt the process. There was a pact of silence based not only on forgetting but also on obsessively remembering the bloody, fratricidal conflict among Spaniards in order to promote moderation and understanding among the various political forces. The idea presented in the excellent study by Aguilar is that, over the years, the Civil War ended up playing a positive role because memories of it ensured that any possibility of a repeat was quickly defused.

In addition to the matter of 'memory', which has recently received a lot of attention on the part of sociologists, political scientists and historians,[8] another aspect of the Spanish transition that has been widely studied in recent years is outside influence on the process of democratisation. The idea expressed by the first analysts of the Spanish transition, such as Juan J. Linz, was that the international factor – foreign intervention – was not decisive in the process of political change in Spain.[9] Although this view is not entirely erroneous, the role of foreign agents – governments, multinational institutions, transnational party organisations, political foundations, and so on – merits close attention. Although the main agents in the process of democratisation were national ones, some writers insist that international factors and pressure from outside should not be ignored.

Along these lines, in *European Socialists and Spain: The Transition to Democracy*, which resulted from a doctoral thesis supervised by the Hispanist Frances Lannon and presented at Oxford University, Pilar Ortuño Anaya analyses the influence of foreign socialist parties and organisations on Spanish democratic opposition and, specifically, on socialist opposition. She studies, in particular, the support received from the late 1950s onwards by the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) and the socialist trade union UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores) from the Socialist International and from European socialists and trade unionists – especially the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party, the German Social Democratic Party, and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. These offered physical and

[7] The No-do was a cinematographic service created in 1942 offering newsreels and documentaries as propaganda for the Franco regime. Screening was obligatory in all Spanish cinemas until 1977.

[8] See, e.g., Joan Ramon Resina, ed. *Disremembering the Dictatorship. The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy* (Amsterdam: Rodopi Bv Editions, 2000).

[9] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 113.

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moral support which Ortuño considers to have been crucial in suppressing the Franco regime and generating a strong socialist party in Spain – that of Felipe González – which was recognised internationally and was eventually able to contribute to the process of democratisation after the death of Franco.

Ortuño's study is not the only recent one to be based on the premise that the international dimension was not as marginal, limited or indirect in the democratisation processes as had been thought previously. Charles T. Powell, the author of an excellent brief history of Spain over the last 25 years,[10] was convinced of this and while at Oxford supervised a doctoral thesis by Julio Crespo MacLennan which was published, like that by Pilar Ortuño, by St. Antony's College, Oxford. Since the era of Raymond Carr, this college has been known for its large, prolific group of Hispanists, some of the most well known being Martin Blinkhorn, Frances Lannon, Shlomo Ben-Ami, Paul Preston and Charles Powell himself. During the 1980s and 1990s, these were joined by others such as Sheelagh Ellwood, Sebastian Balfour, Paul Heywood and Helen Graham.

Crespo, an Anglo-Spaniard educated like Powell at Oxford, analyses in *Spain and the Process of European Integration, 1957–85* Spanish relations with the European Community and what he considers to be the very powerful influence of the latter on the process of change towards democracy in Spain. The period he studied is not that usually considered to be the transition – from the death of Franco in 1975 to approval of the Constitution in 1978. Like the authors of the other studies discussed here, Crespo argues that in order to understand the process of transition it is necessary to investigate not only its progress, achievements and limitations but also its origin, its deep root, which some writers trace back to the immediate postwar period in Spain. All these studies of the transition therefore cover a long period that includes at least some of the Franco years, analysing trends in the Franco regime and in society at that time.

Crespo's study begins in the middle years of Franco's regime – in 1957 – a key year not only because it marked the signing of the Treaties of Rome which led to the birth of the European Economic Community (EEC) but especially because it saw a new government in Spain that marked a decisive change in Spanish foreign policy, based on becoming closer to Europe. In spite of international isolation of his regime, Franco was following closely the process of European integration, and in 1962 Spain officially presented its application for membership. The authoritarian nature of the regime, as well as the difficulties involved in the process of European integration, were the reasons why Spain was not accepted at that time into the European Community, even though the Spanish economy was becoming increasingly interlinked with that of the European countries. Crespo expresses his indebtedness to the good historiographic studies on relations between Spain and the Community during the Franco period – especially those by Fernando Guirao, Teresa La Porte and Antonio Moreno Juste[11] – but his own study is extended to 1985, when democratic Spain finally joined the

[10] *España en democracia, 1975–2000* (Barcelona: Plaza Janés, 2001).

[11] F. Guirao, *Spain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945–57*. St. Antony's Series (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998). M. T. La Porte, *La política europea del régimen de Franco, 1957–1962* (Pamplona:

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Community. The attention he pays to Spain's negotiations for membership is perhaps the most novel part of his work. When Franco died in 1975, Europe was seen both by the regime and by the opposition as synonymous with democracy and modernisation. A close association existed between Europeanisation and democratisation, and there was a unanimous perception that, unless it was a democracy, Spain would be unable to join Europe. There was an extensive pro-Europe consensus, and the wish to join the Community as soon as possible forced Spanish political circles to carry out a set of reforms that would contribute to democratisation. However, democratisation and Europeanisation were not so much simultaneous processes as a series of processes. In fact, Spain had to work hard for many years to achieve membership, to a large extent because of reluctance on part of the member states to bear the cost of expanding the Community. When membership eventually went ahead, a radical transformation of the Spanish economy took place. Spain made great efforts to adapt to Europe and was rewarded with the financial support of the Community. This aid was decisive in helping an economy which was backward in comparison with others in Europe to converge with the most developed of them. Spain's membership eventually afforded Spain a role on the European and international scenes, and Crespo's book offers a good analysis of Spain's transformation.

Luis Moreno, another Spanish researcher who is now publishing in English an updated version of the book he published a few years ago in Spain,[12] analyses in *The Federalization of Spain* one of the most difficult aspects of the transition towards democracy in Spain and one which has still not been fully resolved, namely, the transformation of a centralist state into one which underwent over the last quarter of the twentieth century the 'federalisation' of its territorial political organisation. In a very short time, from 1975 to the end of the twentieth century, Spain changed from being one of Europe's most centralised countries into one of the least centralised. As from the death of Franco, the change from an authoritarian political system to a democratic one offered not only the possibility of restoring individual rights and freedoms, as in any democratic society, but also the recognition of the different collective identities that had been negated and repressed under the Franco regime. The 1978 Constitution laid the foundations for the 'Estado de las Autonomías' (State of Autonomous Communities), leaving plenty of room for specific regulation. Twenty-five years after it was approved, the debate is still going on. What was eventually decided on was a system involving the creation of seventeen Autonomous Communities, each with their own government and parliament.

The main goals of this system were to help resolve the historical conflict between peripheral nationalist movements and the centralist administration, while creating a more efficient method of governing Spain that would be closer to its citizens and therefore more decentralised. Achievement of the second of these goals has been more clearly positive than the first. Spain has seen the most radical process of

Universidad de Navarra, 1992). A. Moreno Juste, *Franquismo y construcción europea, 1951–1962* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1998).

[12] *La Federalización de España: poder político y territorio* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1997).

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decentralisation of political power in Europe since the Second World War. While at the start of the process the central government controlled 90 per cent of public expenditure, today it controls just over 50 per cent of a much larger budget. And it is important to note that, from the start, public opinion was largely in favour of this decentralisation and the creation of the Autonomous Community institutions.

However, integration of the 'historic communities' (those in which nationalist feelings were strongest) within the new constitutional state had much less positive results. As the degree of self-government has increased in these historic communities – especially the Basque Country and Catalonia – and as they have taken on powers that have been transferred to them from the central administration, the dissatisfaction and ambivalence of the nationalists with regard to the system of autonomous community government has increased, and today they are demanding not only further powers but also recognition of the national identity of their respective communities. In effect, there is a stark contrast between the development achieved by the system of Autonomous Communities and the level of satisfaction felt within the communities whose claims were the main reason behind their being created in the first place.

The studies referred to so far are based on historiographic approaches and methods, with exhaustive research into the primary sources that are available – archives, press, parliamentary debates, personal memoirs and writings by protagonists, interviews with politicians and diplomats, and so on. Moreno's book, however, adopts the approach of a social scientist and uses a dense methodological and conceptual system, devoting the whole of the first chapter, for example, to theoretical debate on a multitude of concepts relating to regionalism, nationalism and federalism. Moreno analyses the territorial structure of the Spanish state with its 'nationalities' and 'regions' and all the complex relations between them. Basically this organisational model aims to make compatible the principles of territorial unity and diversity. Moreno considers that the State of Autonomous Communities that was created after the approval of the Constitution in 1978 is based on a 'quasi federal' or 'imperfect federalism' model, sharing many of the essential features of contemporary European federal systems. But at the same time it has serious defects, such as the almost complete lack of channels for co-operation among the different Autonomous Communities and between them and the state. This is reflected in their insufficient participation in the general governance of the country. From this point of view, the Senate is clearly dysfunctional as a territorial chamber.[13] The Spanish model also suffers from an asymmetry in the powers held by the 'nationalities' and 'regions' and has therefore been described as 'asymmetrical federalism'. Moreno argues that a federal

[13] The 1978 Constitution established a bicameral parliament – the Cortes Generales – comprising the Congreso de Diputados (Chamber of Deputies) and the Senate. The latter is defined by the Constitution as the house for territorial representatives, but in fact its functions do not tie in with the real situation of the Autonomous Communities and it has become something of a second chamber with much less relevance than the Chamber of Deputies, which takes precedence. One of the most common criticisms of the Spanish political system is precisely the ineffectiveness of the upper chamber. Many people advocate a reform of the Constitution that would enable the Senate to carry out the essential role of co-ordinating and linking the governments of the Autonomous Communities with the central government.

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development of the system, once there has been greater federalisation, will facilitate greater identification of the historic communities with the idea of Spain as a pluri-national reality, or a 'nation of nations'. He closes his book expressing the hope that Spain will find the way to achieve unity and diversity simultaneously. One factor leading him to be optimistic and which he analyses in depth is that the majority of citizens see themselves as having a 'dual' identity. They feel that belong to two places – the nation/state (Spain), and the ethnic territory (the nationalities and regions that form the Autonomous Communities), that is, Spaniards feel that they have a 'dual nationality'.

Other writers, however, are concerned and pessimistic about the question of the Spanish 'nations', and this is probably the greatest problem faced by Spain at the start of the twenty-first century. The model for the state in Spain is far from being resolved. The main nationalist parties in the historic communities seem also to be the main opponents to further promotion of the federal system desired by Moreno.

Included among the powers that have been transferred to the Autonomous Communities in democratic Spain are social assistance, social services and welfare policies in general. In his book, *Spanish Society after Franco: Regime Transition and the Welfare State*, S. P. Mangen analyses the progress made by post-Franco Spain in instituting the welfare state, that is, state intervention and expenditure with a view to improving quality of life mainly through pensions, health services, education, family assistance, and food and environmental hygiene. Mangen's book is a historical summary of what has been researched by other writers on many more specialised subjects. It covers trends in social policy in Spain since the 1820s, and the second part of the book focuses on the most salient features of Spain's current welfare state. If we remember that, when the dictator died, the Spanish welfare state was the most underdeveloped in Europe, then the tremendous progress that has been made in universalising social benefits and services is very obvious. However, social protection in Spain is still poor in comparison with average services in Europe, especially with regard to family assistance. Shortcomings are largely resolved because the family, and especially women, play an essential role in providing welfare for family members. But this excessive burden for women who have to care for the family's dependants, comes at a cost – a low rate of employment for women, and low fertility (the lowest in the world, together with that of Italy). The Scandinavian welfare state is widely used by analysts to measure the achievements and shortcomings of social protection systems in other advanced capitalist countries. Mangen, however, in line with recent theories establishing a different model for southern, or Mediterranean Europe – basically Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal – believes that Spain should be included in such a southern, or Mediterranean, European welfare model, with certain specific characteristics which he analyses in detail and with problems to be faced in the future.

As stated at the start of this review, much has been written on the Spanish transition, largely because it took place successfully without any great social trauma during a relatively short period of time and resulted in a stable democracy that is now irreversibly consolidated in society. However, much remains to be done by historians, and this is not because they have not wanted to deal very recent times. Quite the

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opposite: they have shown much interest in what is called the history of the present time, one of the most fruitful and innovative fields of historiography today. Historians have sufficient methodological experience to be able to carry out a rigorous study of our most immediate past. The archives on the history of the transition were closed for a long time because, by law, twenty-five years must pass before they are opened to researchers. This period is now over, so that finally essential documents are available. It is much more difficult, however, to obtain access to the private archives of political leaders, although one very recent study is actually based on some of them.[14] Some subjects – the study of the different political parties, the drafting of the Constitution and the constitutional consensus, and economic policy – have received much greater attention than others. New studies on many aspects of the complicated process of political engineering that was involved in the transition to democracy in Spain can be expected to appear in coming years, based on public and private documents.

There has been much debate on whether what happened was just a reform or a radical break with the past. The conclusion has been that it was a break with the past involving reformist procedures. One characteristic of the Spanish transition is that it took place from within the dictatorial regime, that is, the initiative and control of the process was first taken by reformist sectors of the Franco regime. This does not mean that the democratic opposition parties and society itself did not also play an important role. The transition was encouraged 'from above', but there is no doubt that there was constant pressure 'from below' in the form of great social mobilisation which forced the reformists to speed up and extend the process of change. The debate on who were the real protagonists of the transition, which was very much in the air a few years ago, now seems to have closed, with the conclusion that it was the result of a collective effort in which both the elites in power and the democratic opposition were essential players.

[14] See Javier Tusell and Genoveva G. Queipo de Llano, *Tiempo de Incertidumbre. Carlos Arias Navarro entre el franquismo y la transición, 1973–1976.* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003). This is a biography of Carlos Arias Navarro, Prime Minister from the assassination in 1973 of Carrero Blanco until the arrival of Adolfo Suárez in 1976. Like most of the books reviewed here, it also aims to cover the origin of the transition as it took place towards the close of the Franco regime, because, as its authors state, 'nothing can be understood [in the transition] if we only start at the death of Franco'.

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