

A Dangerous Illusion: "Liberalization" Of the Franco Dictatorship

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THE SENSATIONAL ASSASSINATION OF ADMIRAL CARRERO BLANCO, head of the government of General Franco, did not occur in a "peaceful" country "without problems" as has been maintained by certain Francoist leaders and by some ill-informed international observers. It occurred during a period of strong political tensions, grave economic preoccupations and intense social agitation.

In a book published two weeks before the assassination, "*Cartas al Rey*" (Letters to the King, Tr.) Emilio Romero, political writer of the regime and head of *Pueblo*, organ of the Falangist "unions," wrote: "We are in a period of succession. These historic moments are characterized by a weakening of authority, by widening expectations toward the unknown future, by an accentuation of family rancor among the political forces of the system in a 'cold war' for power."

In general, this analysis is a fair one. Franco is 81 and can no longer play the same role he played in the past as arbiter of the different political and social forces which are the supports of the totalitarian dictatorship. In 1969, after much tension and struggle, a formula of succession was established proclaiming Prince Juan Carlos "Successor to the Title of King." The grandson of Alfonso XIII, the king dethroned by the Republic of 1931, swore allegiance to Franco and to the Fundamental Laws of the dictatorship before the "Cortes," thus supplanting his father, the Pretender Don Juan, who lives in golden semi-exile in Estoril near Lisbon.

"Operation Juan Carlos" designed to prolong the Franco dictatorship past the death of Franco was the brainchild of Carrero Blanco and López Rodó, the leading political figure of the Opus Dei, that mystical mercantile sect which has played an important role in Spain since 1959. The idea was accepted by most of the Falangists, Catholic leaders and leaders of the regime's other forces. This compromise was guaranteed by the army (the military caste) but it provoked reservations among certain sectors in the Falange, among partisans of a regency and among monarchists loyal to the traditional monarchy represented by the exile in Estoril.

At the time, Franco declared and on various occasions persistently

repeated, that "everything is tied down, well tied down." However, the Carrero Blanco assassination and subsequent events culminating in the formation of the Arias Navarro government and the elimination of the Opus Dei from the cabinet show that the "ties" are extraordinarily fragile. The pretender Don Juan, who in 1969 had reluctantly yielded to the designation of his son to succeed Franco, recently told a group of Paris correspondents of the Franco press, "I think Carrero's death changes the whole basis of Spanish politics. The Prince (his son, with whom he had spoken in Lisbon a few days earlier) had nothing to do with this government crisis." He was referring, naturally, to the formation of the Arias Navarro government.

The unexpected removal of Carrero Blanco, keystone to the system of succession, has created a completely new situation. Today we all know that the assassination of Admiral Carrero provoked a real movement of panic among the ruling classes and castes. The *Washington Post* described in great detail how on December 20, 1973, while the assassination and its consequences were being concealed for long hours, Franco's military cabinet and the high command of the army practically took control of the country with the two aims of avoiding a military-Falangist putsch and of containing any subsequent public reaction. General Cano Iniesta, head of the Civil Guard, one of the leading figures of the extreme right, had to cancel a special message to his troops requesting them to mount guard and reinforce the repression. Workers, students and the people received the news of the assassination with joy, but fearing reprisals hesitated to demonstrate. The brave miners of Asturias, on strike for several weeks, returned to work after winning some of their major demands. There was a pause in the strike movement which had started in October in several areas but the pause was brief and strikes were renewed and intensified during the last week of December continuing into January and February.

BETWEEN THE 20TH AND 30TH OF DECEMBER the "cold war" over power referred to by Emilio Romero in "Cartas al Rey," intensified and took on a strange character. Romero himself in his daily *Pueblo* lamented not being a Spanish correspondent for the *Washington Post* so he could describe it. The result was the surprise establishment of the Arias Navarro government. We say surprise because nobody expected the ex-mayor of Madrid, a well-known specialist in repression (he was the Malaga prosecutor during the worst period of Fascist terror and then director general of security and minister of the interior) to be chosen to replace Admiral Carrero as chairman of the government, a particularly delicate position given Franco's age. Arias Navarro formed a government in which neither the most representative figures of the Falangist bureaucracy nor the outstanding technocrats of the Opus

Dei were included. His ministers are Francoist known for their opportunism, hardly compromised in the internal struggles, but quite sensitive to the pressures of the most reactionary elements in the military caste and in the regime.

The famous contest between the Falangist bureaucracy and the Opus Dei, which seemed to conclude in 1969 with the triumph of the Holy Mafia, inspiring the claim that a homogeneous government had been formed committed to the integration of the Spanish economy into the Common Market and the international capitalist economy and to effecting a "true political opening" in the country, turned out to be a kind of false stalemate. Arias Navarro arrived on the scene to "strengthen the political structure" of the somewhat battered dictatorship and to stabilize that heterogeneous faction ridden conglomeration called the "National Movement." His task is essentially to prepare for the succession under better conditions for the dominant classes, which does not exclude Arias' possible role as the bridge to a broad coalition government (Falangists, Opus Dei, diverse monarchist and Catholic tendencies) under the control of the military caste, to whom the Law of Succession gives the transfer from Francoism to the . . . Francoist monarchy.

Contrary to what has generally been supposed, Arias Navarro has made it clear that there will be no "going into reverse." In other words, in the Europe and world of 1974, it is very difficult to wave banners and proclaim the openly fascist objectives of the '40's and '50's, or to renounce the demagogy of "liberalization." Camouflage is necessary, and there is no alternative to continuing the game of "openingism" as did Carrero Blanco himself. However, "openingism" up to now has been translated as the following: selective repression against the trade union militants (monstrous sentences in the 10001 trial, councils of war against the Barcelona and El Ferrol strikers), attempts to destroy revolutionary groups of workers and students, the expulsion of protesting teachers and students from universities, severe sanctions against the rebel priests, implacable struggle against the ETA and death by garroting for the leftist student, Salvador Puig, in Barcelona.

In the political field Arias has promised a "liberalization" of the press, radio, television and theater, the modification of the structure of the Cortes (a caricature of a parliament in which state and "trade union" functionaries are predominant), reform of the "trade unions" hated more every day by the workers and the "study of a statute of association" which it seems will permit the organization of "associations within the framework of the National Movement." As will be seen none of these measures (and it is doubtful whether they will be carried out) would fundamentally change the totalitarian structure of the

dictatorship. As for the rest, most of them have already been promised by preceding governments. A few years ago even a project of associations was approved (always in the framework of the National Movement) which Franco refused to permit and which was quickly buried. The government may yet under the ever more vigorous pressure of the working class, the university and intellectual youth, and of certain strata of the petty bourgeoisie which demonstrate strong democratic aspirations attempt a certain "liberalization" of the press and the other media, but it will be a fraudulent controlled "liberalization" like the one outlined in 1966, and perhaps also as brief as was the preceding one. In any case the effective reestablishment of democratic liberties must be excluded as a possibility.

THE ARIAS NAVARRO GOVERNMENT includes for the first time three vice-presidencies to be occupied respectively by the ministers of the interior, the treasury and labor. This is profoundly significant, tending to confirm that the real problems the new government will have to confront—aside from the "succession" and the "strengthening of the political structure"—are the repressive "maintenance of order," the consequences in Spain of the double world crisis (inflation and energy) and the tensions and conflicts in business and industry.

"Maintenance of order" is particularly difficult in a society in full evolution and under a regime in full ideological and political decadence. The less obtuse elements of the system recognize that the dictatorship has lost the little influence it had among the workers and students, especially among the new generation. On the other hand the economic problems are quite grave. The capitalist development of 1960–1973, realized under the direct impulse of international high finance, was based on an intense exploitation of the working class, on the prodigious phenomenon of tourism (the leading "industry" of the country), on the exportation to Europe of more than a million workers (10% of the active population) and on the most liberal policy in the world with respect to foreign capital (unequalled facilities for investment and for the export of profits). Tourism has been for Spain a sort of new discovery of America. Its profits equal what the Marshall Plan provided for all the countries of western Europe. If indeed the national income has now risen to more than a thousand dollars per capita, i.e. doubled in the last fifteen years (its distribution is worthy of the most backward countries) the regime has not succeeded in creating a flourishing agriculture nor an industry able to compete in the European and world market. The trade balance has a deficit on the order of 50%, and the balance of payments has been favorable the last few years thanks to the profits of tourism, the remittances of the emigrants in France, Germany, Switzerland, etc. (an average of \$500,000,000 per

year), and the investment of foreign capital, in some cases frankly speculative. This is the "Spanish miracle" so praised by the dictatorship and its allies, in particular the European and American investors. The lack of a really competitive industry and the weaknesses of agriculture are the reasons the ruling classes have yet to ask for entrance into the Common Market, and why they are content to claim a treaty of association with the Common Market, like the one obtained by Greece.

Inflation, chronic under Francoism, has annulled a good part of the benefits of economic growth. Even though all the Francoist statistics are false or contradictory—to the desperation of the experts of the OCDE, the regime has recognized in recent years a "normal" rate of inflation of 6%. But this rate increased considerably in 1973 as a result of the worldwide inflationary process (14.2% according to the Francoists, 20% according to the *Financial Times*, and 25% according to studies by private groups in Spain).

To the inflation, the highest in Europe, there must be added the energy crisis. "Friendship with the Arab countries," the opportunist constant of the dictatorship, has not prevented the diminution of fuel deliveries by 30% and the working of refineries at 80% of capacity. On the other hand the skyrocketing prices of oil and its derivatives have delivered a severe blow to the automobile industry, one of the principal engines of Spanish capitalist development. It has come to the point that those enterprises which last year were proposing large investments in Spain in order to take advantage of the low salaries and of government aid (Ford, Renault, Fiat, General Motors, British Leyland) are now reconsidering their plans. As for the rest, the restrictions and the economic "stabilization" measures adopted by the Carrero government and maintained by the Arias government have caused great disappointment. In effect, in a country like Spain where the regime was trying to replace the fascist mythology with the mystique of uninterrupted economic growth and where the standard of living of the working class and the popular masses continues to be quite low (about half that of France), it is now difficult and risky to speak of "Zero growth" and "austerity," as the official propaganda has begun to do. Be that as it may, the economists of the regime already foresee a significant reduction in the rate of growth, a much greater deficit in the trade balance, and a return to a deficit in the balance of payments. This sober perspective is based on the crisis in tourism, the inevitable reduction in the remittances of the emigrants (Germany and other countries have limited immigration), and the probable reduction of the investments of foreign capital.

THE NEW ECONOMIC SITUATION alarms not only the leaders of the regime, it is much more alarming for the mass of people who do not seem ready to pay the consequences of inflation, speculation, the energy crisis, the diminution of tourism, the limitation of emigration abroad, and the prevalent corruption. The last of these eats into the economic and social system, as the monarchist-Francoist daily "ABC" pointed out recently in an impressive article. And this is why the labor movement has reacted with a rare vigor.

For some years, despite the Francoist dictatorship and repression by employers and police, the working class, much stronger and concentrated than in the '30s by virtue of capitalist development, has been fighting with an energy and constancy which have won the admiration of the proletariat of all Europe. In a country where there is no right to organize, where the "unions" have been justly described as corporative or as the trade union police of the dictatorship, there are more strikes than in any other country of Europe. Since October, for example, we have seen a broad strike movement provoked by the renewal of collective bargaining agreements. The regime tried to accomplish these renewals under the control of the Falangist "union" bureaucracy without the workers' participation. This movement, comprising nearly a million workers, was hardly interrupted by the Carrero Blanco assassination and the legitimate fear of repression it inspired. The strikes broke out (in many cases with occupation of enterprises and confrontation with the forces of repression) not only in the traditional areas of industrial combat (Asturias, Catalonia, the Basque provinces) but also in cities such as Pamplona, Valladolid, Vitoria, Santander, Cadiz, El Ferrol, which are beginning to stand out in the labor and industrial geography of the country.

The strike movement now underway is distinguished by two important facts. The workers' demands are very radical: 4,000 pesetas wage increase when millions of wage earners make from 6,000 to 15,000 pesetas, a forty hour week, a month of paid vacation, 100% coverage for accident or sickness, retirement at age 60 with 100% of salary, freedom to hold meetings on company property, review of working conditions, prohibition against dismissal of workers imprisoned on political grounds or on account of their strike activity, freedom to organize. The workers are operating outside the "trade union" apparatus of the dictatorship, meeting in assemblies where they freely determine their objectives and demands, and where they elect commissions, committees, or simple delegations to represent them before the employers. These organs are very frequently imposed on the authorities and the "trade union" bureaucracy. This system of direct democracy tends to become generalized, representing a constant chal-

lenge to the Falangist bureaucracy and a factor of considerable significance for the future of the Spanish labor movement.

Many of the strikes have been victorious. The Asturian miners won a considerable wage increase and the forty hour week; the navy yard workers at Astano (El Ferrol) won a substantial increase and an improvement in working conditions; the workers in some of the mechanical and metallurgical enterprises in Catalonia and the Basque Provinces obtained wage increases from 14 to 20 percent and shorter hours. By these struggles, which the dictatorship cannot suppress, a new proletariat, formed in great part of workers from the countryside without any proletarian or trade union tradition, is being forged and tempered. It is a young fighting vanguard inspired by the glorious revolutionary traditions of the Spanish labor movement of 1900-1936 and endowed with the trade union and political capacity to reconstruct the labor movement and play a major political role in the approaching crisis.

But the workers don't fight alone. In many cases, as recently at Standard Electric (an ITT company) of Madrid, technicians and engineers were allied with the workers, which shows that certain sectors of the middle class oppose the brutal policy of exploitation and oppression by a dictatorship inspired by a banking-industrial oligarchy which has used Francoism to impose miserable working conditions and make fabulous profits. The student movement, although somewhat less active in recent months, continues in its aggressiveness and radicalism, to be one of the moving forces in the struggle for liberty and socialism. The national freedom movements of Catalonia, the Basque provinces and Galicia, nationalities now more oppressed than ever, engage in the most diverse forms of struggle, from demands for cultural aspirations to open struggle as in the Basque country, displaying their personality and strength. Over thirty years of dictatorship and false Hispanicizing uniformity have been unable to destroy them. On the contrary, they are rising anew with unforeseen vigor. In the schools of law, medicine, architecture and economics, democratic aspirations, renewed in the most diverse circumstances, are often mixed with frankly socialist demands in the fields of medicine, public health, social security, social services, education. These demands reveal that the chaotic and unequal development of capitalism, based exclusively on obtaining quick and easy profits, has utterly neglected the living conditions of the masses.

WE ARE WITNESSING A GREAT REBIRTH of everything that Francoism has tried to destroy during its long reign, and a wide-ranging attempt to close the terrible parenthesis in the history of the social struggles of Spain which the Franco regime has filled during a third of a century. The "succession," i.e. the transition from the Franco dictatorship to a

monarchy called forth to perpetuate the political and social forms of domination, is the riskiest and most complex maneuver the dominant classes and castes have had to come up with in over a century. If indeed the policy of co-existence with the regime, maintained as much by U.S. capitalism, which has made Spain one of its principal strategic platforms thanks to its military bases and an ideal spot for its investments, as by the great European capitalist powers which have made Spain a tourist paradise and a reserve of cheap labor, and as by the USSR, East Germany and China which maintain excellent diplomatic and commercial relations with the Madrid regime, seems to guarantee that the maneuver will succeed without great obstacles, nevertheless the enterprise confronts great difficulties.

The "succession" could open a political crisis which could be transformed into a revolutionary crisis. The idea of a peaceful evolution toward a democratic bourgeois regime is completely illusory. Big capital and the Spanish forces of reaction are not prepared to run the risk of a liberalization which could endanger the dominant social and political system. All the phony "openings," yesterday's and those that the Arias Navarro team is now attempting, are intended purely to disguise the real nature of the totalitarian regime and to neutralize the working class, revolutionary, and anti-Franco forces and their supporters throughout the world. Fortunately, the new working class and revolutionary generation is not deceived. For it, as for the workers and the masses, the problem is not one of "liberalization" but of liquidation of the Franco dictatorship. This is why the hour approaches in which Spain, finally emerging from its long and painful social and political lethargy, will once more be a force in the destiny of Europe and the world.

Translated from the Spanish by Richard Schoen

(This is the first of a two part article. The second will deal with the rebirth of the Spanish workers' movement.)

WILEBALDO SOLANO, General Secretary of the Iberian Communist Youth, youth organization of the POUM during the revolution and the civil war in Spain, was imprisoned by the Stalinists 1938-1939. Condemned to 20 years at hard labor in 1941 by a French military tribunal by order of the Nazis, he was liberated by the Maquis in Spring 1944 and organized a group of guerrillas in the South of France. At the end of the war, he was elected General Secretary of the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unity). He is the director of La Batalla, organ of the POUM and has lived in exile since 1939.

The Romantic Revolt of the Greek Students and Its Bestial Repression

Amalia Fleming

ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1973, about one thousand students decide to absent themselves from lectures until some of their essential demands are met; they have been struggling for these demands for almost a year. The following day, November 14, the new Minister of Education not only turns down their requests but also threatens the students with worse conditions if they continue to protest.

The students shut themselves in the Polytechnic University determined not to leave until their goal is reached. They assemble to deliberate while more and more young people from other faculties join in. After another day they come to the obvious conclusion that no problem of theirs can be solved satisfactorily as long as the Junta continues to rule, under whatever disguise it chooses to appear. They therefore decide to struggle for the overthrow of the hated dictator Papadopoulos and his regime.

As their only weapon the unarmed youngsters have a home-made transmitter through which they are able to shout their faith in freedom and in the future of Greece, and the truth about the terrible conditions prevailing in the country for all Athens to hear; the truth which for six and a half years the Greeks were not allowed even to whisper. This weapon proves to be a most powerful one; it brings results far beyond the students' wildest dreams. Their youthful voice rouses the people of Athens and of other university cities to open rebellion against the usurpers of power. The Junta is panic stricken. In its confusion it orders that this voice be stifled: tanks, guns, anything may be freely used; human life is not to be considered. And so it happens.

The number of unarmed people, mostly students and even some schoolchildren, killed on this night, or who have since succumbed as a result of fatal wounds, is well over three hundred; the exact figure may never be known. The number of wounded and arrested runs into thousands. The unbelievable bestiality used on the wounded and dying is a measure of the military's fear and shows where such fear may lead a dictator.

On November 25, one week after this "slaughter of the innocents," President Papadopoulos is overthrown by a group led by Brigadier Ioannides, chief of the military police, the man whose task was to protect Papadopoulos and his regime.

So the students' first aim was realized because, although the fall