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FRANCO'S CHURCH

Franco's dictatorship was the result of a civil war and in this long, bloody dictatorship resides the distinguishing feature of the history of 20th-century Spain when compared to other capitalist countries in Europe. It is true that Spain, unlike other countries, never had the chance to benefit from an international democratic intervention to block the authoritarian outcome of the war, which is a key factor for understanding the long duration of the dictatorship. It is worth emphasizing, above any other consideration, the winning side's commitment to vengeance and its denial of pardon and reconciliation, as well as it's hanging on to the power provided for them by arms for as long as possible. The military, the Catholic Church and Franco made peaceful coexistence fairly difficult for several decades.

It is difficult to understand the long duration of this dictatorship unless one takes into account the repression, the army's rallying around Franco and the international context of the cold war that played into the regime's hands. The Catholic Church's contribution to this end was also considerable. The 20th century has seen no other authoritarian regime, fascist or otherwise and there have been some of varying colours and intensity, in which the Church has taken on such blatant political responsibility for, and policing of, the social control of the citizens as in Spain. The Protestant Church in Nazi Germany or the Catholic Church in fascist Italy certainly did not take such responsibility. In Finland and Greece also, after their civil wars, the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches signed alliances with the right-wing winning sides, defending patriotism, traditional moral values and patriarchal authority in the family. Yet

in neither of these case were there any calls for vengeance and bloodshed as strong or as tenacious as was the case with the Catholic Church in Spain. It is true that no other Church had been persecuted so cruelly and violently as the Spanish Church. But, once the war was over, the memory of so many martyrs gave strength to resentment instead of pardon and encouraged vengeance among the clergy.

Three basic ideas sum up my thoughts on this issue. Firstly, the Catholic Church became involved and steeped in the "legal" system of repression organized by Franco's dictatorship after the civil war. Secondly, the Catholic Church endorsed and glorified this violence, not only because the blood of its thousands of martyrs cried out for vengeance, but also, and above all, because this authoritarian outcome cancelled out, at a stroke, the major ground won by laicity prior to the military coup in July, 1936 and gave it the powerful authority and monopoly beyond its dreams. Finally, the symbiosis between Religion, Nation and the Caudillo was decisive for the survival and maintaining of the dictatorship following the defeat of the fascist powers in the Second World War.

The fall of the Monarchy was a genuine disaster for the Church. It hated the Republic, its system of parliamentary representation, anti-clerical legislation, people power, in which Catholic values no longer held sway. It mobilized the population, giving shelter, under the ideological umbrella of Catholicism, to a mass movement of dominant classes, the most conservative sectors, who were concerned about their own order as well as that of the Church, although in the history of Spain, during the republican period as well as afterwards, order and the Church had always gone together, and would continue to do so.

From the outset, the Church and most Catholics placed all their resources, and there were a good many of them, at the disposal

of the insurgent military. The military did not have to ask the Church for its support, which it offered gladly, nor did the Church have to take its time in deciding. Both parties were aware of the benefit of the role played by the religious element; the military because they wanted order, the Church because it was defending the faith.

The Church was delighted with this "providential" uprising, as it was termed by Cardinal Primate Isidro Gomá in the report he sent to the Secretary of State of the Vatican, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, on August 13, 1936. It was all the more delighted that it was arms that ensured "material order", eliminated the unfaithful and restored "freedom".

The clergy's complicity with this military and fascist terror was absolute and did not need anti-clericalism to make it known. From Gomá to the priest who lived in Zaragoza, Salamanca or Granada, all were aware of the massacres, heard the shots, saw how people were dying, with the relatives of prisoners or the missing coming to them in desperation, seeking help or charity. The clergy's usual response to all this was silence, either voluntary or imposed by superiors, or else accusation or denunciation.

And this is how Franco's Church emerged, which identified with him, admired him as the Caudillo, as an envoy sent from God to re-establish the consubstantiality of traditional Spanish culture with the Catholic faith.

Franco's victory in the war meant the absolute triumph of Catholic Spain. Catholicism once more became the official State religion. All the republican measures that were cursed by the Church and the right wing were repealed. From that moment, the Church was to enjoy a long period of total well-being, with a dictatorship that protected it, showered it with privileges, defended its doctrines and crushed its enemies.

For some time, fascism and Catholicism were compatible, in statements and daily practice, in the projects promoted by the rebels and in the form of government and way of life imposed by the winning side. Fascism was "a virile protest against an absurd democracy and rotten liberalism", wrote Eloy Montero in 1939, in his book *Los estados modernos y la nueva España*. The Jesuit, Constantino Bayle, wrote in a similar vein when the war was at its height, delighted by the fact that fascism was the name given to the overthrow of the parliamentary system and universal suffrage, the elimination of political parties and trade unions, the "abomination" of democracy, the "eradication" of the "poison seed of Judaeo-Masonry". If this was fascism, then "the National Uprising, the Government of Franco, and the whole of Christian Spain" were fascist.

The Spain that the war victors constructed was a territory particularly suited for this "harmonization" of the "modern authoritarian current" with "glorious tradition". The feeling of uncertainty and fear caused by the reform measures of the Republic, the anti-clericalism and expropriation and destruction following the military coup was used by the military, the Church and reactionary forces to mobilize and obtain social base willing to respond to what was interpreted as clear symptoms of de-Christianization and "national disintegration". The army, the Flange and the Church represented these victors, and from them came the upper echelons of government, the system of local power and the faithful servants of the administration. These three bureaucracies vied with each other to increase their spheres of influence, and recent research has noted these rivalries in a good many towns and villages in Spain. But, for a certain period, too long for thousands of citizens, they were united in what Santos Juliá called "the common exaltation of military, fascist and Catholic values: order, leadership and religion".

When this "harmonization" between Catholicism and fascism could no longer be defended abroad so easily, the dictatorship was forced to shed its fascist appearances and highlight the Catholic base, the essential identification between Catholicism and Spanish tradition. The regime that resulted from the war had nothing to do with fascism, said Franco in an interview with *United Press* in November, 1944, because fascism did not include Catholicism as a basic principle. In previous years, however, the military, traditionalists and the Church never tired of saying just the opposite: if fascism was nationalism and there was no difference between Spanish and Catholic nationalism, then there was no contradiction between fascism and Catholicism.

On July 18, 1945, nine years after the military uprising that sparked the civil war, Franco increased the presence of Catholics in his government. He kept Ibáñez Martín in Education and appointed Alberto Martín Artajo as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Martín Artajo, a former CEDA politician and deputy, was a forty-year-old lawyer, chairman of Acción Católica and a prominent member of the Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas. A protégé of Angel Herrera, the founder of the ACNP who became the priest and later the cardinal, Martín Artajo offered Franco the collaboration of the Catholics. Herrera, Martín Artajo and the bishop primate Enrique Pla y Deniel were convinced that it was now the time for the Catholics to take on political responsibilities in such difficult times for their Spain and their Regime. Martín Artajo had previously said this to Franco during a long conversation they had had on May 1, 1945. Martín Artajo also knew Luis Carrero Blanco, the Under-Secretary of the Cabinet, Chief of Operations of the Spanish Navy who, according to Paul Preston, "shared all Franco's political prejudices." Martín Artajo and Carrero Blanco had taken refuge at the Mexican Embassy in Madrid together during the "red" months of the second half of 1936.

In short, the former politicians of the CEDA and prominent members of the ACNP played a decisive role in the institutionalization of the victors' New State of Spain. The Church and the Caudillo worked hand in glove together for almost four decades. Spanish Catholicism came out on top from this exchange of favours with a murderous regime, constructed on the ashes of the Republic and vengeance on the defeated. The Church of the Crusade, Franco's Church, the Church of vengeance appealed to traditional religious values, primitive even, and tried to reconvert Spain, its Spain, with the most repressive and most violent measures in the history of contemporary Spain.

The Church hierarchy, Catholicism and the clergy were, of course, not immune to the socio-economic changes that began to challenge the Francoist dictatorship's political machine in the early 1960s. Catholicism was forced to adapt to this evolution with a series of internal and external transformations that have been studied by various authors.

This secularization coincided with general reform trends emerging from Vatican II. Catholic opinion and practice began to expand, with young priests who departed from the traditional ideology, workers of the JOC (Catholic Working Youth) and the HOAC (Workers' Brotherhood of Catholic Action) actively working against Francoism, and Christian sectors who toiled away with Marxists on the future society that would follow the overthrow of capitalism.

Priests and Catholics talking about democracy and socialism and criticizing the dictatorship and its highly repressive manifestations - all this was new, very new, for Spain and it naturally produced a reaction in wide Francoist circles, used as they were to a Church that was servile and supportive of the dictatorship. But it would be grossly overstating it to conclude that most of the clergy, and the Bishops' Conference, set up in 1966, abandoned Francoism in

those last few years and embraced the democratic cause. It would be more correct to say, as Frances Lannon mentioned some time ago, that the Spanish Church had discovered that its interests "could be better served under a pluralisti regime than by a dictatorship" that was now showing major symptoms of crisis. This idea was also recently expressed by William J. Callahan: it was a question of reforming what was necessary but at the same time preserving "everything that could be saved from the privileged relationship that the Church maintained with the regime".

When the "invincible Caudillo" died on November 20, 1975, the Spanish Catholic Church was no longer the monolithic block that had backed the Crusade and the bloody post-war vengeance. But the legacy that remained of this golden age of privileges was, however, decisive in education, propaganda resources and the media. What the Church did in the final years of Francoism was to prepare itself for political reform and the transition to democracy. Before Franco died, the ecclesiastical hierarchy had drawn up, in Callahan's words, "a strategy based on the end of an official State religion, the protection of Church finances and recognition of the Church's influence on issues of moral order". More than a quarter of a century later, at the end of the transition, it seems clear that this strategy has been highly successful, especially in the protection of its finances and in the power and influence it has held on to, and even increased, in the matter of primary and secondary education.

Of course, the Church underwent a great deal of change when compared to the other basic pillar of the dictatorship, the army, which was closely identified with Franco and the regime, and maintained it right up to the end. But in the broad perspective of the forty years of the dictatorial regime, the Church did much more to legitimize it, strengthen it and silence its numerous victims and breaches of human rights than oppose it. It provided Franco with

the cloak of religion to cover up his tyranny and cruelty. Without this cloak, and the image that the Church built up around him as Caudillo, saint and supreme benefactor, Franco would have found it much harder to maintain his all-embracing power.