

Through the Smoke of Atocha: A Reflection on Spanish Politics

Nunca respondas al necio según su insensatez, para que no seas tú también como él.

Responde al necio según su insensatez, para que no se estime sabio en su propia opinión.

—— Proverbios 26:4-5

The language of hyperbole and cliché generally counts for too much in a lot of political analysis, but in the case of the Spanish state it would be fair to say that the recent election of a PSOE (Socialist Party) government has sent shock waves throughout the international political world. That the Socialists, led by their fresh young leader José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero – and that one can be fresh and young at the age of 43 must stand as something of an indictment of mainstream politics – won the election against all prediction was surprise enough. That the defeated incumbent, José María Aznar, leader of the neoliberal, neoclerical Partido Popular, had been a key international figure, along with Tony Blair, in the preparation and carrying out of Bush's war in Iraq added to the novelty an international dimension. And that, within days of assuming office, Zapatero, completing the first fulfilment of his election promises, ordered the immediate withdrawal of the Spanish state contingent of the occupying forces in Iraq prompted many commentators to speak of a global realignment of the political stage.

Of course, to say that the election had been held in extraordinary circumstances would be to put it mildly. Just three days before, the campaign had been brought to a crashing halt as a series of holdall bombs – timed to explode simultaneously in the giant terminus of Atocha – ripped through early-morning commuter trains in Madrid, leaving around two hundred dead and five times as many maimed and injured.

Up to that point it had been clear that there was no possibility whatsoever of the PP losing the election – the only doubt in people's minds was whether it would be able to maintain its absolute majority or not. But that there was any serious possibility of the Socialists winning was regarded, outside of the party's headquarters in the Calle Ferraz in Madrid – and even by some within this sanctum, already sharpening their knives in anticipation of the power struggles ahead – as absurd.

So before we look at the specific circumstances of the election itself, the prospects for the new government, and the ramifications of its election both within and without the Spanish state, it would be worth first reflecting on why its victory had been regarded as so improbable in the first place. And in order to do that, it will be necessary

to take a step back from the immediate conjuncture, and take a rather longer term view of the political make-up of the Spanish scene as it has unfolded since the death of the dictator Franco in 1975.¹

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The process by which the present constitutional and political structure in the Spanish state came into being is universally known as *la transición*. The word is singularly appropriate. In no meaningful sense can it be said that the Francoist dictatorship was overthrown, as, for example, the Salazar-Caetano dictatorship had been a year previously in Spain's junior Iberian cousin, Portugal. And of course, the very experience of Portugal would stand as a warning to the Francoist state bureaucracy of what could happen if an external or internal shock to the political system caught them unawares and was handled badly.

Why had there been a dictatorship in Spain in the first place? Simply put, given the concrete historical features of the Spanish state social formation in the 1930s, once the radicalisation of the Spanish working class and poorer rural population had occurred, the 'modernisation' of the social and economic structure along capitalist lines could not have been managed *without* dictatorship. It was not so much that the then existing bourgeois-democratic regime had proved itself to be an inadequate vehicle for such a modernisation, but that the struggle for that regime, which was threatening to spill over into a struggle for something far more radical, was tending to put into jeopardy the very existence of bourgeois rule in the first place. Dictatorship arose because it was *necessary* for the continued operation, and development, of capitalist relations in Spain.

For in the Spain of the Second Republic a revolutionary crisis had been incubating long before the fascist rising of 1936. Already, the anarchists of the CNT-FAI had attempted two seizures of power in Barcelona: one in January 1932 and one in December 1933. By 1934, disillusioned with the Republic, the bulk of the Socialist party was calling for a socialism to be won by revolutionary means. Arms were laid store to; and when Gil Robles' clerical fascist CEDA entered the new government the signal was given to rise. In the end, throughout most of Spain the risings went off half-cock: only in Asturias was the rising carried out successfully. But, isolated, after two weeks of being run by a revolutionary committee composed of anarchists, Communists and Socialists, the Asturian Commune fell. Three hundred thousand armed workers had participated in the revolt; and the subsequent repression, at the hands of Franco's Morocco garrison, was brutal: over three thousand people were killed when the Commune was put down, with several tens of thousands more imprisoned and, more often than not, tortured to boot.²

The point here is that, *pace* the accepted – social-democratic – interpretation of events, which attempts to cloak the Republican side in the ensuing civil war with a bourgeois legality, and which is consequently incapable of explaining why the fascists rose in the first place, the revolutionary radicalisation of 1936 did not come after Franco's attempted coup: it *preceded* it. Franco did not rise against the Republic: he rose to pre-empt the possibility of the Republic itself being overthrown by an insurgent working class movement with its eye on something better. What prompted Franco's rising was precisely the fear that the attempt to overthrow the Republic from the left witnessed in Asturias would become generalised on an all-Spanish scale.³

¹ And in order to do this, it will be necessary for me to restate some arguments originally made in Ed George, 'Frankenstein and the Monster: The Spanish State Left After the May Elections', *What Next* 26 (2003), 1-11 (available online here: <<http://mysite.freemove.com/whatnext/Pages.htm/Back.htm/Wnext26/Spain.html>>).

² See the account in Pierre Broué, *La revolución española* (Barcelona, 1977), 75-6.

³ The false social-democratic interpretation of the Second Republic and the civil war, now accepted as orthodoxy within Spain, is dangerous not only because it is wrong, but also because in being so *transparently* wrong it has opened up the field

It is important at this point to grasp why it is that bourgeois democracy stands as such a common system of government in the developed capitalist world, and under which circumstances it may flourish, or be dispensed with. The fact is that bourgeois democracy, as a system of bourgeois rule, is the *preferred* system of rule in bourgeois societies – ‘preferred’ in the sense not of a conspiracy but, within certain very important concrete conditions, as the natural centre of gravity around which bourgeois society tends to gravitate. The reasons for this are obvious. The mechanisms of bourgeois democracy – the separation of legislature from executive, removing the latter from the mechanisms of popular control and supervision; the rigid practical as well as ideological division between the spheres of the ‘political’ and the ‘economic’, in other words the separation of a political world out of and apart from the rest of real social life, and the consequent development of a professional caste of ‘politicians’; the complex institutional mechanisms of ‘checks and balances’ – arrange themselves precisely in this way so as to safeguard capitalist social relations through their structural institutionalisation.

But at the same time, the democratic freedoms that the system permits and entails provide a plethora of safety valves at key pressure points within the political structure. Opposition is incorporated into the system within carefully defined limits and at safe remove from the real loci of power. It is thus normally not necessary to *crush* resistance to this or that aspect of the operation of the system with all the dangerous possibilities for the stability of the system that this opens up; resistance is incorporated into the system within its own carefully delimited space where it can exercise itself to the point of exhaustion without threatening the essential contours of the overall social order. Bourgeois democracy is thus not a sop granted to the workers by a begrudging bourgeoisie but the safest and most secure political *modus operandi* which the capitalist system finds to guarantee its own unmolested development. By the same token, dictatorship, although it rests on the display and use of naked force, is not the sign of a strong bourgeois system, but precisely the sign of a weak or threatened one.

Of course, for bourgeois democracy to function in this way requires certain necessary preconditions. It requires a working class movement willing to play within the rules: it requires a mass reformism, be it a socialist reformism (as in western Europe) or a liberal one (as in the United States). Bourgeois democracy is also, in part as a consequence of this, a relatively *expensive* system of rule. A bourgeois-democratic system that cannot guarantee a certain minimum standard of life for at least a significant part of its constituents will fail. Bourgeois democracy is thus in good part also normally necessarily *imperial* democracy; the reformist working class movement it breeds and upon which it must rest is in good part the partisan of an imperial reformism.

to a new school of neo-Francoist revisionist historiography which has little difficulty in making mincemeat of it. A case in point here is Pío Moa, who seems to be turning himself into a one-person publishing industry on the subject. Moa, a one time member of the leftist GRAPO (*Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre*) – a fact that should itself set the alarm bells a-ringing, since GRAPO, if not a organisation of *provocateurs* pure and simple, had a certain relationship with the security forces in the late 1970s that has yet to be satisfactorily explained – has written a series of books, some of them close to being best-sellers, demolishing the standard interpretation, and in so doing effecting something of a rehabilitation of Franco and Francoism (*Los orígenes de la Guerra Civil española* (Madrid, 1999), *Los personajes de la República vistos por ellos mismos* (Madrid, 2000), *El derrumbe de la Segunda República y la Guerra Civil* (Madrid, 2001), *Los mitos de la Guerra Civil* (Madrid, 2003)). Chief among Moa’s targets are the idea that left under the Republic was consistently ‘constitutionalist’, the argument that the civil war itself arose as a result of a reactionary anti-constitutionalist conspiracy, rather than being provoked by a developing socialist revolutionary situation, and that Franco himself was simply a ‘blindly lucky incompetent’. On each of these points it is unarguable that Moa is right over the upholders of orthodoxy; that he can number respected (if unbearably reactionary) historians such as the University of Wisconsin’s Stanley Payne among his defenders indicative of the strength of his case. The arguments of his detractors, meanwhile, are not only paper thin but base themselves on pure political contingency: the Spanish state establishment’s favourite in-house historian, Javier Tusell, commented in *El País* (22 February, 2003) that the problem with Moa’s interpretation is that it ‘offends the spirit of transition and reconciliation’; while Paul Preston, one of the better English-language commentators on modern Spanish history, could only remark that he found ‘it distasteful that a man who was responsible for terrorist acts that aimed at doing damage to Spanish democracy should pontificate on liberal values’ (see the comments posted at Stanford University’s World Association of International Studies (*vis*) website (<http://wais.stanford.edu/Spain/spain_1thecivilwarandhistorians7803.html>)).

Should one or both of these preconditions – a working class movement prepared to play within the rules, and the resources and stability necessary to guarantee the standard and manner of life of a core section of the population – disappear, or even if it is believed that there is a reasonable possibility of one or both of them disappearing, then the system tends to break down. Classically, either the system as a whole is overthrown by an insurgent working class movement, or the fear of this happening prompts the bourgeoisie to launch a pre-emptive assault in the form of dictatorship.

It is important to grasp that in this sense we cannot talk about a natural democratic prerogative on the part of the bourgeoisie – either the bourgeoisie as whole or one or another fraction of it. Resort to fascism is not the expression of one backward, precapitalist fraction of the bourgeoisie acting against other modern, democratic ones, but the movement of the whole bourgeois class, through its servants and functionaries, to defend itself from what it sees as either potential or actual mortal danger. Neither is it the case that a resort to dictatorship represents any necessary moral crisis of conscience on the part of the bourgeoisie: bourgeois democracy represents the most secure system of maintenance of the untrammelled operation of capitalist social relations but the necessary turn to the methods of dictatorship, although it reflects the situation of danger that the bourgeoisie believes itself to be in results in no existential panic on its part. In fact, it seems to be the case that a natural moral inclination towards bourgeois-democratic systems is to be found not among the ranks of the bourgeoisie but within the reformist workers' movement itself. When Ralph Milliband famously commented that of all the political parties claiming socialism as their aim the British Labour Party was the most dogmatic – not about socialism but about its adherence to the parliamentary system,⁴ he was only wrong in his implied thesis that there was something peculiarly *British* about this. As we shall see in the case of Spain, placing dogmatic faith in bourgeois democracy above and beyond every other claim to loyalty appears to be not only a rather more generalised phenomenon within social democracy (in both its second and third international incarnations), but also its greatest failure.

Understood in this way, we can summarise the historical 'function' of Francoist dictatorship in relation to the two outstanding tasks facing 1930s Spanish capitalism: to discipline the working class and radical movement, and to bring the Spanish economy, kicking and screaming, into the Europe of the twentieth century. Once the socialist revolutionary genie had been let out of the Republican bottle, the harsh truth is that the second of these tasks was dependent upon the successful completion of the first. And we can even periodise the dictatorship according to these functions. First comes the period of autarky, a period of desperate suffering and hardship for the Spanish people, a period of hunger, repression, summary execution and torture, from the fascist victory – or better rout – of 1939, to 1957. Next comes and the subsequent period of 'technocracy', of modernisation proper, from 1957 to the mid 1970s.

The timely death of the dictator, *Generalísimo* Francisco Franco Bahamonde, *Caudillo de España por la gracia de Dios*, brought the regime to something of a natural close. There were already several conjunctural factors pressuring for a re-establishment of 'normal' bourgeois-democratic government. There were signs of a working-class movement recuperating the stomach for a fight after the horrendous experiences of the 1940s and 50s. There was the fact that a dictatorship that would still resort to the *garrote vil* as its means of execution of choice would find it hard work to gain access to the modern clubs of nations – the European Common Market and NATO, for example. But above and beyond all this, the fundamental factor which explains the nature of the Spanish *transición* is simply that, at this historical point, dictatorship was simply no longer *necessary* for Spanish capitalism. By the mid 1970s, Spanish society had outgrown Francoism, and the Francoist state bureaucracy was able to manage a process of self-reform which was to result in the re-establishment of normal bourgeois government, bourgeois democracy. With the necessity for it went too the dictatorship itself.

On Franco's death, the Bourbon Juan Carlos, personally chosen by Franco as his heir (over the claims of the new king's own father, Juan de Borbón – much to the latter's chagrin – who was seen as too politically

⁴ In his classic *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour* (New York, 1964), 13.

unreliable) assumed the position of head of state.⁵ Even if it had initially seemed that he did so with the clear and expected mandate of continuing the dictatorship and its ideals, this was really never going to happen. Within the Francoist state apparatus, and among the great Francoist families of state, there certainly were those who would have favoured such a course, but they now found themselves in a small minority. The task of the day was now to bring Spain, with respect to its political institutions, into line with the rest of western Europe, and on this there quickly emerged a fairly generalised consensus: where differences did exist within the Francoist apparatus they were over the pace and depth of the necessary reforms, not over the necessity of reform itself. Of course, having noted this, it is clear that the operation was not without risk. Despite the fact that one of the ideological tasks of Francoism had been to eradicate as totally as possible the experience of the Republic from the collective memory, one of its lessons could not be forgotten. Bourgeois democracy, even a Republic, had proved insufficient to assuage the Spanish masses in the 1930s. What guarantee was there that a bourgeois-democratic constitutional monarchy would now prove adequate for a people who had suffered so long and so much? Surely there would be those who would point the finger, and demand a calling to account for those responsible for the torments heaped on the heads of the Spanish people over nearly half a century of repression. And, were this to happen, what would be the reaction of the foot soldiers of Francoism, the officer caste of the army and the hated Guardia Civil? The risks of an uncontrollable social polarisation, and the attendant dangers of that, stood clear for all who cared to look across the border at neighbouring Portugal, in throes of something that looked suspiciously like a socialist revolution. The order of the day was thus not whether or not to proceed with a projected orderly transition to bourgeois democracy, for on that there was near consensus, but what to do about the masses while it was underway.

There was not, in the end, any need to have worried. The received wisdom, and the official history (again, of liberal social-democratic vintage), of the *transición* puts its success down to the fortuitous appearance of a small number of capable and skilful leaders, prominent among them Juan Carlos himself, and Adolfo Suárez, former leader of the Movimiento, Franco's, and the only legal, political party under the dictatorship, who took control in 1976 of the task of assembling a transitional government. Without the wisdom, skilled diplomacy and patience of these two men all would have been lost, and, as a consequence, these two names have passed into Spanish history as two saviours of democracy.

In fact, the real story of the *transición* is rather different. If Juan Carlos and Suárez were not wanting in delivering to the wider world of Spanish society the message of a stable and orderly transition to bourgeois democracy, it is also the case that the audience to which this message was delivered, at least at the level of organisation and leadership, did not need to be force-fed the idea. The critical factor in the success of the *transición*, contrary to popular myth, lies not in the self-restraint of the Francoist apparatus, nor the brilliance of its leaders, but in the approach to it adopted by the leadership of the anti-Francoist resistance, which means, in almost total part, the Spanish Communist Party. Very simply, had the Communist Party not bought into the idea of the *transición* so completely and totally the latter would have failed.

But we need to take note here of the fact that since the mid 1950s the line of the Communist Party had been not for socialist revolution, nor even for the straightforward overthrow of the state apparatus, but for what it called 'national reconciliation'. Since this line appears at first sight rather curious, it is worthy of a little explanation.

The Communist Party's understanding of the configuration of bourgeois rule in Spain was the polar opposite of the one I have just outlined above. For the Party, under the General Secretaryship of Santiago Carrillo,⁶ fascism

⁵ And, very curiously, also the claim to the now non-existent Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Christian-feudal polity established through the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 by Godfrey of Bouillon during the First Crusade. Although the Kingdom effectively disappeared in 1291, the title to it eventually passed through the House of Naples, to which Juan Carlos de Borbón is technically the rightful successor.

⁶ There is an excellent two-part political biography of Carrillo by John Sullivan to be found in the British journal *What Next?*, 'Santiago Carrillo: A Life in Six Acts', issues 22 and 23, archived at the journal's site at <<http://mysite.freemove.com/whatnext>>; also archived at this site are a number of other articles by Sullivan, which

was *precisely* the natural prerogative of one fraction of the bourgeoisie: a fraction antediluvian, backward, and irrevocably tied to ‘precapitalist’ social and political institutions. Fascist dictatorship was thus seen not as consequent on a conjunctural imperative of the bourgeoisie *en bloc* in moments of – real or perceived – mortal crisis, but the perennial predilection of but one – anachronistic – part of it. The struggle against dictatorship was perceived therefore not as a struggle against bourgeois rule *per se*, but a struggle for political ‘modernisation’ to be necessarily made with that struggle’s ‘natural’ allies, the progressive, modern, democratic, non-fascistically-inclined bourgeoisie. Indeed, failure to make this necessary alliance between the working class and the progressive bourgeoisie would be quite literally sectarian, for it would leave the working class and rural poor isolated at the same time as undermining the key political struggle – against dictatorship – of the moment.

Two fundamental conclusions flowed from this analysis. The first was this. Since the mid 1950s the Party had held that the fall of the Franco regime, which it saw as imminent, would mark, since the regime was the natural representative of the interests of the big banks and the landowners, the beginning of ‘an antifeudal and antimonopolist democratic revolution’ which would subsequently incorporate more radical measures, such as the nationalisation of the banks and of large-scale industry, land reform, an anti-US foreign policy, and so on, and would in their turn suggest the beginning of the transition to socialism. The struggle for socialism in Spain would therefore have to pass through these two distinct stages: first, the democratic anti-fascist struggle, of necessity to be made with the ‘democratic bourgeoisie’; second, and subsequently, the struggle for more radical, socialistic measures. But the two stages were discrete: without the disciplined abstention on the part of the working class from the struggle for its own interests in the anti-monopolist democratic revolution lay the inherent danger of alienating its natural and essential ally in this first, preconditional, stage of the struggle for socialism. Hence the Party’s decidedly non-socialistic line of ‘national reconciliation’.

The second conclusion was that a perspective of self-reform on the part of the fascist state apparatus in the appropriate conditions was ruled out as impossible. The instinct for dictatorship on the part of the ‘pre-capitalist’ bourgeoisie was not the product of a tactical decision made in emergency conditions but a congenital impulse. Dictatorship could not be reformed into bourgeois democracy; it would have to be overthrown.

It was this second conclusion that came under fire within the Party at a meeting in exile (in Prague) of the Party’s Executive Committee in 1964. Fernando Claudín, a close collaborator of Carrillo since the 1930s, and effectively the Party’s number two, had developed, along with Jorge Semprún, a thesis far more in accordance with the real social configuration of Franco’s Spain. In an article written two years subsequently – ‘Two Conceptions of the Spanish Road to Socialism’ – Claudín summarised: ‘It was a case of clarifying whether or not capitalism had arrived at a stage in which it was incapable of radical transformation short of socialism, or if there was still the possibility of an intermediate “democratic revolution” which, without going beyond the limits of capitalism, would be able to resolve concrete antifeudal and antimonopolist tasks.’⁷ What appears here as a nuance was in fact a difference of fundamentals. For Carrillo and the majority of the Party not only was the overthrow of the dictatorship effectively the beginning, if the first stage of more than one, of the socialist transformation, it was the *only* road to the socialist transformation. For Claudín, the ‘democratic revolution’ was precisely just that: a political readjustment that could be accomplished within the confines of bourgeois rule, and which would not necessarily have anything to do with the struggle for socialism. For what Claudín was effectively saying was that since Francoism was a political regime representative of the general interests of the

combined give an essential background to the English-speaking reader to the processes covered by this essay. Also of note is Sullivan’s own website, which can be found at <<http://marxnat.tripod.com/>>, which too contains a wealth of material on the Spanish state, and also on the politics of nationalism. Sullivan was also the author of quite the best history of the Basque nationalist group ETA in English: *ETA and Basque Nationalism: The Fight for Euskadi 1890-1986* (London, 1988). Sadly, Sullivan died last year (a short obituary can be read here: <<http://archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/marxism/2003w40/msg00198.htm>>); given the paucity of reliable material on Spanish state politics in English, his death can be regarded as a tragedy for reasons beyond the customary ones in such circumstances.

⁷ Cited in Joan Estruch, *Historia Oculta del PCE* (Madrid, 2000), 209.

dominant classes, a majority part of these classes could support a democratic solution without putting into any doubt the capitalist character of the socio-economic structure. Thus the fall of Francoism could give birth to a democratic regime similar to that found in the other western countries, and, as a consequence, a change of the political regime must not be confused with the social revolution.

The prescience of Claudín's analysis is astonishing, but in the Communist Party of the 1960s such a challenge to the established line of the Party, which meant, in practice, a challenge to the personal authority of Carrillo, could not be tolerated, and Claudín⁸ – given his previous reputation as one of the Party's 'hard men', somewhat hoist by his own petard – found himself outside of the ranks of the Party, along with Semprún⁹ and the Catalan leader Francesc Vicens, in pretty short order.

Unperturbed by this blip of opposition, the Party continued on its merry way. In fact, that the analysis of Claudín and Semprún should have had so little impact within the Party should not come as too much of a surprise, for the Party's 'national-reconciliation' policy in the 1960s and 70s was little more than a continuation of its line for the civil war itself, a line which was informed by classical third international popular-frontism: a position based on the necessary subordination of the socialist revolution to facilitate an alliance with the progressive bourgeoisie in the struggle to eliminate impediments to bourgeois democracy – concretely, in this case, fascism. The Party's line from the 1950s up to and during the *transición* was simply a re-application of classical popular-frontism in a different political conjuncture.¹⁰

⁸ Claudín, who died aged 75 in 1990, had been a full-time worker for the Party from 1933 until his expulsion, and was subsequently to write one of the more important accounts of this dispute within Spanish state Communism - *Santiago Carrillo: Crónica de un secretario general* (Barcelona, 1983) – and one of the most important histories of Communism in general that we have available: *La crisis del movimiento comunista: De la Komintern al Kominform* (Paris, 1970) (in English translation *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform* (London, 1975)). This latter is a truly brilliant work, in which Claudín shows convincingly that both the Spanish civil war, and the subsequent Second World War resistance movements, contrary to the views of Communist Party orthodoxy, were classical socialist revolutionary movements seeking to establish popular revolutionary dictatorships (see *Communist Movement*, 210-42, 307-454). Claudín's conceptions were however seriously flawed in one key respect: he took the curious view that the period 1917-23 was *not* a revolutionary one, a view which led him to argue that Lenin's original Comintern project was flawed from its very inception, notably because it sought mechanically to apply Russian methods inappropriate in a western climate. The origins of this idea seem to lie in his attack on the idea of a centralised international, a view developed logically out of his oppositional positions of 1964. Nevertheless, this caveat aside, Claudín's contribution to our understanding of the history of the Communist movement, both in the Spanish state as well as elsewhere, remains a towering one.

⁹ Jorge Semprún too was to document his experiences in the debates of the 1960s, in his semi-fictionalised *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez* (Barcelona, 1977) – 'Federico Sánchez' being Semprún's Party *nom de guerre*. Semprún, who is still with us, was subsequently to resurface in as Minister of Culture in the Socialist Governments of Felipe González in the 1980s.

¹⁰ This said, however, it is necessary to go on and say something else. For the left that likes to define itself in terms of its opposition to what it calls 'Stalinism' the line of the Communist Party in the civil war was a simple question of it subordinating its politics to the whims of the Kremlin. Were it so simple. It is undoubtedly the case that the Kremlin did not favour a socialist revolution in 1930s Spain, and it backed, and opposed, political forces accordingly; it is not possible in my mind, however, to extrapolate from this that Moscow *really* favoured the *defeat* of the struggle against Franco. But aside from this question of Moscow's intentions, the real problem is this. If it is held that the line of the Comintern and the Communist Party was solely or principally determined by the material interests of the Soviet bureaucracy, this does little to explain how the Party was able to build itself as a mass party over the course of the civil war out of what was even by the middle of the 1930s nothing more than an ineffective rump. The following figures give some idea of the scale of the Party's growth: just before the elections of February 1936 the Party had 30,000 militants, in January 1937 200,000 and in March 1937 250,000 in the 22 provinces controlled by the Republicans. In Catalunya in this period the PSUC passed from 5,000 to 45,000 members; and in the Basque Country the Party went from 3,000 to 22,000 (*Historia Oculta del PCE*, 132). Moscow gold and Moscow guns simply does not account for why the Party's ideas were so attractive: once again the 'conspiracy theory' interpretation of history proves itself to be either, dependent on the degree of rigour with which it is applied, truistic, or false. (The inadequate understanding that the 'non-Stalinist' left has of what it calls 'Stalinism' is clearly beyond the scope of this essay; I go into the theme with more rigour here:

During the 1960s, the overthrow of the Franco regime – understand in the framework outlined above – was considered the prerogative of what the Party called the *Huelga Nacional Pacífica* – The Peaceful General Strike; whatever else might be said about the Party's line in this period, they at least maintained a view of the centrality of mass mobilisation. However, after Franco's death, and once Suárez began to assemble the pieces necessary for the orderly dismantling of the repressive apparatus, even this saving grace was abandoned. For Carrillo, whose stewardship of the party was now completely unchallenged, the order of the day was an 'historic compromise' *al estilo español* between the workers' movement, and for which read Carrillo himself as its legitimate representative, and the 'democratic', 'modernising' wing of the bourgeoisie, represented, naturally enough, by Suárez, now operating as the head of a new party, the Unión del Centro Democrático (UCD) – a loose coalition of regime reformers and Christian and social democrats. Everything else that the Communist Party was to do in this period was to be subordinated to maintaining this alliance.¹¹ The party formally abandoned its commitment to 'Leninism', and unceremoniously ditched its republicanism (to the extent that militants who turned up to the Party's mass meetings in the late 1970s with the Republican flag, rather than the flag of the Spanish monarchy, found themselves on the receiving end of some decidedly 'undemocratic' treatment at the hands of the Party's stewards).

As John Sullivan has pointed out,¹² Carrillo enjoys the dubious – and unique – distinction of having destroyed not one but two mass parties of the Spanish working class. As a central organiser of the merger between the social-democratic *Juventudes Socialistas* and the Communist Party in 1936 he was effectively one of the key people responsible for the disabling of PSOE as a serious potentially revolutionary force at the *dénouement* of the Second Republic. His stewardship of the Communist Party during the *transición* effectively banished it too to obsolescence. For if there was now hardly a cigarette paper's difference between the Communists and the bourgeois UCD, there was now a new force on the horizon on the Party's left flank, as the Socialist Party, re-emerging phoenix-like on the political scene, cast itself as a political formation far more suited as a vehicle for mass aspirations for social and political change.

Up to the death of Franco, the Communists had been the principal oppositional force within the Spanish state, since Spanish social democracy had been unable to maintain itself as an organisation in the interior on being driven into exile with the fall of the Republic in 1939. However, in 1974, at Suresnes, on the outskirts of Paris, a Congress of the Party – effectively the Party's first and founding one in its modern form – saw the leadership pass from the hands of the ageing exiles based in Toulouse around its then general Secretary Rodolfo Llopis into those of a new, young leadership based in the interior, prominent among whom were a group of lawyers from Sevilla, who numbered amongst their ranks two men who were to make the Party into the modern social-democratic party of government that it is today: Felipe González and Alfonso Guerra.

The newly renovated Socialist Party quickly attracted the support – both moral and intellectual, as well as, very importantly, since the party was at this stage completely lacking in infrastructure, financial – from its sister parties in the Second International, especially from the German SPD (the SPD's Willy Brandt – who had been a journalist and supporter of the POUM in Spain during the civil war – and Michael Foot from the British Labour

<<http://archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/marxism/2002w52/msg00148.htm>> and
<<http://archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/marxism/2002w52/msg00149.htm>>.)

¹¹ Carrillo was the key figure in Spanish Communism from his *de facto* rise to the position of General Secretary in 1956 (in name from 1960) until his split from the Party in 1985. As a consequence of the line of the Spanish Party, he also became rather the doyen of the right tendency within official Communism known as Eurocommunism which developed over the course of the later 1970s and 1980s: his book *'Eurocomunismo' y Estado* (Barcelona, 1977) (in English translation *Eurocommunism and the State* (London, 1977)) became something of a Bible for the Red Guards of this movement. It is thus a pity that when discussion takes place on the question of Eurocommunism this latter is taken almost wholly as an *ideological* phenomenon, whereas it should now be becoming clear that the ideas it promoted were rooted – here, in the Spanish case – in real and actual political processes and struggles.

¹² 'Santiago Carrillo: A Life in Six Acts'.

Party were to attend the new Party's first legal congress in the interior, in Madrid in 1976).¹³ Although PSOE – like the Communists – threw its lot in with the *transición* as it unfolded (even if, considerably less encumbered by ideological baggage, it did so more for reasons of *realpolitik* and political opportunism), it did so on a far more critical basis than the Communist Party. In particular, the Socialists directed their by now rapidly growing fire at Suárez and the UCD for the slow pace of reform: PSOE was, at this point, very much seen as the radical wing of the *transición*, far more so than was the Communist Party. And although the latter was an activist party, boasting nearly a quarter of million members in 1978 and a daily paper, *Mundo Obrero*, to boot, PSOE found itself far more suited to the arena of bourgeois electoral politics, as a cursory comparison between the parties' respective leaders indicates – the young Felipe González, charismatic, photogenic, sexy even, and an electrifying public performer, and the ageing Carrillo, a figure seemingly from a lost generation, who, in addition, was to turn out to be a miserable parliamentary performer, being far more used to the silent respect with which his interminable political reports would be greeted in inner-party meetings than to the rough-and-tumble of bourgeois politics.¹⁴

For these two reasons – the evidently greater radicalism of the Socialists (up until 1979 they were even still, at least on paper, a 'Marxist' party, until, on González's insistence, the characterisation was dropped from the Party's statutes; and they certainly had more of the look of a radical progressive party about them than did the Communists), and that they were so more comfortable in the electoral arena – it was the Socialists, rather than the Communists, who found themselves as the natural repository of popular desire for change. The elections of 1982 confirmed this trend, and marked a new stage of the *transición*. The two parties instrumental in negotiating the political transformation thus far charted saw themselves discarded, their job effectively complete. The UCD, now led by the anonymous Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo, finding itself in a state of collapse, and haemorrhaging forces to its right and left, saw its vote collapse to a paltry 7 per cent. While the Communist Party, with 3.9 percent of the vote and just four deputies, effectively disappeared from the political map. The Socialists, on the other hand, won 48 per cent of the popular vote and enough parliamentary deputies to form a government with an outright absolute majority.

It is difficult now to have a real feel of the impact of 1982 on the popular consciousness of the progressive-minded people that time. For the first time in its history, and only seven years after the end of the dictatorship, Spain had a Socialist government. But aspiration and reality found themselves cruelly mismatched; for however left the Socialists had talked, once in power they were to follow a social agenda that could fairly be summed up as 'Thatcherite'. Of course, the economic prospects facing the new government were far from promising: the *transición* had coincided with the explosive quadrupling of world oil prices, and since Spain imported 70 per cent of its energy, mostly in the form of Middle Eastern oil, this hit it hard. By the end of 1982, inflation was running at an annual rate of 16 per cent, the external current account was US\$4 billion in arrears, public spending was ballooning and the foreign exchange reserves had become dangerously depleted.

To deal with this PSOE adopted a social programme that differed from that of the preceding government of the UCD only in its thoroughness: monetary devaluation, privatisation, restructuring and lay-offs, hiking the prices of public goods, slashing pensions and sickness payments.¹⁵ Had the head of the new government been called

¹³ It is perhaps significant – and it is certainly ironic – that at exactly the same time as PSOE was consolidating itself in the interior with the help of Second International money, the Communist Party was being publicly denounced by Moscow (in June 1977 in the journal *New Times*) for being at the heart of the organisation of an 'anti-Communist alliance'.

¹⁴ For good or ill, age is hardly an irrelevance in the beauty contest that is the bourgeois electoral arena: at the time of the first post-Franco elections (in June 1977), the most nationally prominent Communist Party figures, Carrillo himself, Dolores Ibárruri (*La Pasionara*) and the poet Rafael Alberti, were, respectively, 62, 81 and 74 years old, with Felipe González a mere strip of 35.

¹⁵ There was one particular measure taken by the government that was to have particular and insidiously deleterious consequences over the long term. The 1984 *Reforma del Estatuto de los Trabajadores* sought (ostensibly at least) to facilitate the creation of new employment by liberalising what was considered an especially rigid labour market (inherited from the

Helmut Kohl, Ronald Reagan or Margaret Thatcher perhaps its policy could be comprehended; that it was carried out by the until recently 'Marxist' PSOE could only add to the disorientation provoked.¹⁶

Nevertheless, unfavourable conjuncture or not, we should not see the PSOE government simply as a rather extreme case of crisis-management. The Party's historical contribution has in fact been rather more profound than this. For the *transición* from dictatorship to bourgeois democracy was not simply a political transformation but also, and in equal part, a *social* transformation, which had as its agenda the management of the shift from the corporatist top-down economic management of the dictatorship to a free-market economy organised on neoliberal lines. It was this social *transición*, begun under the UCD with the October 1977 Pacts of Moncloa,¹⁷ that formed the *leitmotif* of the PSOE years.

The role of the PSOE government – the party was re-elected in 1986, 1989 and 1993, albeit with increasingly reduced majorities, and in 1993 needing the support of the moderate Basque and Catalan nationalist parties to govern – was just as fundamental in the legitimisation and carrying out of the *transición* as was that of the Communists, even if its functional role was rather different. For if the Communist Party was necessary to apportion a camouflage of radicalism to the dismantling of the Francoist state apparatus and its replacement by a workaday bourgeois constitutionalist monarchist structure, PSOE's role was effectively to bed this system in, to consolidate its normal operation and – most fundamentally – to oversee the key structural *social* reforms necessary for a normal bourgeois democratic western European country at the close of the twentieth century.

It is important to grasp here quite how fortuitous was the timing of Franco's death for Spanish capital. In terms of the specific conjuncture, it appeared as if Franco had chosen an unfortunate time to die, presenting as he did the transitional regime with a economic crisis of marked severity to be solved alongside the tricky political process of state transformation to be charted; but when looked at in broader historical terms the situation looks very different. Let us imagine for a moment that Franco had died ten years earlier, in 1965. The lack of pressure to modify the dictatorship would in all probability have led to its continuation; when the crisis of the late 1970s hit, the impact on working-class consciousness of its effects on its standard of life would have been explosive. Any *transición* carried out now and under these conditions would not have had the pieces assembled to contain popular resistance; the possibilities for an explosive destruction of the dictatorship would have been greatly exacerbated, quite likely to the point of sparking a second twentieth-century Spanish civil war. On the other hand, had medical technology been able to keep the ailing dictator alive for another ten years, until 1985, say, the *transición* in its actual form would have been impossible. If a return to bourgeois-democratic functioning was to have been effected, Franco, and his hangers-on, would have had to have been forcibly removed from within the bourgeois state structure. An inter-state conflict of this nature, in conditions of grave economic crisis, would also presage an explosive end to the old regime.

dictatorship). Temporary working, as we shall see, has subsequently become a structural feature of Spanish employment (I say 'structural', since it bears little relation to typical patterns of seasonal work or gender distribution of employment, towards which the reforms of 1984 were ostensibly aimed). The fundamental point to register here is that the reforms opening up the Spanish state labour market to 'flexibility' were introduced by a *Socialist* government, not by the right.

¹⁶ There is a useful summary account of the first period of PSOE crash-and-burn (although the author is something of a fan) to be found in Charles Powell, *España en democracia, 1975-2000: Las claves de la profunda transformación de España* (Barcelona, 2001), 333-424.

¹⁷ Named after the prime minister's official residence, the Pact was signed by, amongst others, the Socialist and Communist Parties, and established a well below inflation wage freeze along with a series of measures aimed at restricting credit and reducing public spending. In the words of Paul Preston, one of the more sober commentators on this period: 'The Pact [of Moncloa] was [...] virtually the only way, *short of revolutionary measures*, of confronting the inextricably linked problems of the burden of Francoist economic imbalance and the unfavourable international situation.' (*The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*, (London and New York, 1990), 137, my emphasis.) Pretty much could be said for the programme of measures introduced by PSOE following its 1982 landslide.

But, as we know, Franco died in 1975, just as the economic crisis had begun to hit, and just at the point when Spain was, to coin a phrase, not only ‘ripe, but rotten ripe’ for structural social reorganisation, and the economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s within the framework of the political *transición* presented the perfect opportunity and excuse to tackle it. And the necessary and sweeping austerity assault unleashed on an unsuspecting working class was unleashed not by a regime of the unreconstructed right, but by a Socialist government recently elected by popular acclaim from a delirious electorate. Again, the presence of a party of the left willing to play ball with the bourgeoisie was to prove decisive in the *transición*’s success.

* * *

‘Atado, y bien atado’, the ageing Franco had once boasted about the state of affairs he would leave as his legacy: ‘tied down, and well tied down.’ That his boast turned out not to be an idle one is due in almost total part to the two parties of the Spanish working class, in their different ways, the one after the other. By the Communist Party, in engineering the political *transición*; and by PSOE, in implementing the social one. But there was a faustian price to be paid for all this. For not only was the Communist Party to find itself rudely discarded by history once its particular mission – the legitimisation of the *political* transformation – had been completed, but so too PSOE, which, by the early 1990s, its overseeing of the *social* transformation drawing to a close, saw its governmental project entering into terminal crisis. In addition to the inevitable political disillusionment engendered by its austere social restructuring of the Spanish economy, the Party, once envisaged as a vehicle for progressive social change, increasingly saw itself transformed into a mechanism for personal social enrichment. The collapse of the UCD at the turn of the previous decades assisted this process, as this latter party’s more liberal wing gravitated towards social democracy, peopling it at all levels with capable performers – sometimes very capable performers indeed – but performers nonetheless with little real ideological commitment to socialism.¹⁸ By the 1990s, what had, at the beginning of its governmental tenancy, given the party something of the look of a party of technocrats, was beginning to make it look more like a kleptocracy, as the party, at local and national level, found itself engulfed by a series of corruption scandals.¹⁹ Effectively, in the mid-1990s, the government, rather than being overthrown by anyone or anything, collapsed in on itself, unable, now that its historical mission was complete, to bear the weight of its own contradictions (indeed, that it lasted so long was in part to the goodwill allowed it by the boom in the Spanish economy over 1986-91, a boom fuelled in part by a generalised international economic upswing, and in part by the ‘*efecto 1992*’, as international firms, including European ones, unable to resist a gift horse, mouth open or not, jockeyed for a position within the exceptionally cheap and flexible Spanish labour market in anticipation of the Single European Market²⁰).

In 1996, in an election campaign notable for an unusual degree of unpleasantness, even by Spanish standards, a new party, the Partido Popular (PP), managed to scramble enough votes and seats to assemble a minority government (again with moderate Basque and Catalan support). The PP had been born of the Alianza Popular

¹⁸ For example, José Barrionuevo, a former officer of the Falange student union, who rose rather higher than most – ending up as Interior Minister (Home Secretary) – and subsequently fell rather harder than most: he was gaoled for ten years in the summer of 1998 (although he was released on licence three years later) for his mastermind role in the undercover ‘dirty war’ of the 1980s directed against the radical Basque nationalist group ETA (of which more below).

¹⁹ And right to the top as well: in 1990 a corruption scandal centring on his brother forced the resignation of the then number two in the government, Alfonso Guerra, a turn of affairs immensely damaging for the government and party since, while González was the photogenic public face of later Spanish social democracy, it had been Guerra, the man famously (and probably apocryphally) accredited with the warning directed at the government’s ministers ‘*el que se mueve no sale en la photo*’ (‘don’t move or you won’t be in the photograph’), who was the real brains behind the party’s project. If there has ever been a Spanish Peter Mandelson, the irascible Guerra was it.

²⁰ Over 1985 to 1990 direct inward foreign investment increased in Spain five-fold; see *España en democracia*, 426.

(AP), created as a vehicle of the more hard-line regime wing of the *transición* by one Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Franco's one-time Minister of Tourism and Information.²¹ As the UCD fell apart, the AP also offered itself as a natural home for that party's less liberal-minded followers (and only a cursory glance at the results of Spanish state elections is necessary to see that the rise of the AP/PP and the decline of the UCD are essentially two aspects of the same process). However, at the close of the 1980s, it was dawning on Fraga that, since his links with the Franco regime were becoming something of an electoral liability for the party, a replacement as public figurehead was necessary. The clear choice at the time for the job was between a young (36 years old) former Falange activist named José María Aznar López, a dull but clever and efficient bureaucrat, who had impressed Fraga with his business-like running of the regional government of Castilla-y-León, and Isabel Tocino, a member of the secretive fundamentalist Catholic sect Opus Dei,²² who, because of her rather more volatile populist style, was rapidly gaining a reputation as the Spanish Margaret Thatcher. Fraga, who is as astute a political operator as he is repugnant as a human being, opted for Aznar over Tocino – a move at first sight rather perplexing, but which in fact, as we shall see in a moment, turned out to be a political move of some brilliance. Aznar duly headed his party's campaign in 1989 as its prime ministerial²³ candidate and assumed the Presidency of the party, now called the Partido Popular, the following year.

²¹ Fraga – who apparently likes to be called 'Don Manuel' – is still active in Spanish politics, being, since 1990, the President of the Xunta, the regional government of Galicia. Why Galicia – historically an undeveloped and poor farming region, which today also boasts the radical nationalist Bloque Nacional Gallego, a formation with pretensions to radical socialism which has shown itself capable of winning in excess of 20 per cent of the popular vote in the region – should have been such a cradle for the Spanish right (after all, Franco came from El Ferrol) is an interesting question. In part, this phenomenon arises as a consequence of the historical pattern of landownership peculiar to the region. Unlike, for example Andalucía, where the huge landed estates (*latifundios*) encouraged the development of a genuine rural proletariat out of a desperately impoverished landless peasantry, in Galicia the typical land settlement was the small family-owned farm. That such a differentiation could arise in patterns of land tenure in a single polity is due in large part to the agonisingly slow and piecemeal construction of what was to become the territory of the present-day Spanish state over the seven centuries' drive to expel Arab culture from the Iberian peninsular (the process disingenuously if ubiquitously known in Spain as the *Reconquista*). The consequences of this are well-known: the Andalusian rural poor turned to the most radical forms of anarchism, which here became a mass movement at the beginning of the twentieth-century (such that we can say that the Andalusian peasantry at this time was the most radical in Europe outside of the Russian Empire), while in Galicia, small rural tenancies developed a far more conservative and traditionalist *Weltanschauung*. This means that the PP is still, even though its base is principally rural (although these days augmented by a layer of the super-rich, whose wealth has only been enhanced by the fact that Galicia's rocky and secluded beaches make it one of the natural European ports of entry for the international smuggling industry), comfortably able to win 50 per cent of the popular vote here. Radicalism in Galicia, where it exists, is thus predominantly urban. In the case of Andalucía perhaps we should also note that (in another fascinating twist of combined and uneven development) it was the importation of its revolutionary anarchism into the already established Catalan workers' movement (Catalunya had been – and still is – a preferred destination for Andalusian emigrants impelled by poverty and destitution) that made the latter in the 1930s the bastion of revolutionary ideas that it was.

²² Opus Dei, established by the Spanish priest Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer in 1928 (beatified in 1992, and canonised on October 6, 2002), acted as the spearhead of the 'technocratic' mobilisation of the Spanish economy during the 1960s, as Franco appointed a key team Opus Dei members, prominent among them Alberto Ullastres, Mariano Navarro, Gregorio López Bravo and López Rodó, to supervise economic reconstruction. Under the recent Aznar administrations, the group enjoyed a heavy influence in governmental circles. Aznar's Defence Minister, Federico Trillo, is an Opus Dei 'supernumerary', a member of the organisation's elite who tithe it a share of their earnings. Other prominent Opus supporters included Spain's Attorney General Jesús Cardenal, the police chief Juan Cotino, and three former ministers, Isabel Tocino herself, José Manuel Romay and Loyola de Palacio, the last of these now a European commissioner. Aznar's most recent Foreign Minister, Ana Palacio, attended the canonisation Escrivá in Rome. Aznar himself sent two of his children to Opus Dei schools and his wife, Ana Botella, a political figure in her own right, is at least openly sympathetic, if not an actual member.

²³ The top job in Spanish politics (after the King, of course) is actually rather grandly titled 'The President of the Spanish Government', although the job is really that of Prime Minister.

By 1996, the PSOE government, mired in scandal and crushed by the weight of dashed expectations, and no longer buoyed up by favourable international economic conditions, had little concrete material left to it which could act as the substance of an election campaign. In fact, its key campaigning point in the elections of this year was to warn of the danger of the unreconstructed Francoist right (i.e. the PP) undoing all the good work of the *transición* itself. To this end, it produced an election video featuring Aznar's head superimposed on the body of a rottweiler, and González began to conclude his speeches with the old civil war battle-cry of '*¡No Pasarán!*' – 'They Shall Not Pass!' It was here, in teeth of the most bitter of election campaigns, that the wisdom of Fraga's choice of successor revealed itself. Had the right's candidate indeed been Tocino, a little grist would have been fed to this particular mill of the left. As it was, Aznar, his dour plain-man image only enhanced by the mild congenital facial paralysis he in part hides with his trademark moustache, was about as far removed from the demented stormtrooper of social democratic imagination as anyone could wish for.

But anybody who had expected a dramatic change of course as the reins of government were passed on to a party which, as a brief glance at the surnames of its leading figures would reveal, seemed in good part to be composed of the children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews of the great Francoist families, was going to be disappointed. The jockey certainly looked different, but the horse was reassuringly familiar; rather than a rupture in the direction of Spanish politics, the Aznar years marked something of a continuation, if a deepening, of the processes opened up by the *transición*.

Towards the mid point of his eight-year tenure, Aznar was wont to declare that '*España va bien*' – 'Spain is going well'. Was he right? How *bien* was Spain really going? As ever, the answer to this question depends on perspective.

Right from the beginning, the Aznar government's first priority was to prepare Spain for entry into the third phase of European economic and monetary union, scheduled for the beginning of 1999. At first sight, the prospects looked rather inauspicious. Inflation, in 1995 – although it was falling – stood at 4.7 per cent: the second highest rate (after Greece) among the EU15 countries; while total government debt stood at 65.7 per cent of GDP, and was forecast to rise.²⁴ Unemployment, meanwhile, a chronic Spanish problem this, stood at a dispiriting 22.1 per cent, the highest of the EU15 by some margin, and more than double the European average. Yet in the end Spain sailed into the Eurozone with few problems. According to Eurostat,²⁵ between 1997 and 2000 real growth of GDP stood at over 4 per cent a year; although growth has subsequently slowed somewhat, it still stands well above the Eurozone average: over 1996 to 2004 the Spanish economy grew by an annual average of 3.2 per cent, compared to the Eurozone's 1.9. Unemployment, although still chronic, declined more rapidly than elsewhere in the Eurozone: nearly 1.4 million jobs were created between 1996 and 1999, accounting for nearly a quarter of aggregate EU employment growth. The only cloud on the immediate horizon at the beginning of the twenty-first century was Spain's above European average rate of inflation, but as any A-level economics student will tell you, a little inflation can be the indicator of a certain economic buoyancy. In the deep-pile corridors of the EU, phrases like 'economic miracle' could even be heard being bandied around.²⁶

But let's look at all this from a different angle. Aznar's growth miracle was founded on a level of short-term contracts triple that of the EU average, a phenomenon that is naturally more pronounced among women, among young people, and in the private sector. As a consequence, nearly 40 per cent of women working in the private sector work with temporary contracts; with respect to young people, in 2001 the temporary employment rate stood at 63 per cent among the population aged 20-24, and 44 per cent among those aged 25-29. Of all new

²⁴ All economic statistics, unless otherwise indicated either in the text or in these notes, come from the on-line European Industrial Relations Observatory, which can be found at <<http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie/>>.

²⁵ <<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/>>.

²⁶ And as something of a reward for this success story, Rodrigo Rato, Aznar's Finance Minister, has just been appointed to the vacant top job to replace Horst Köhler at the IMF.

contracts registered with the Spanish state employment ministry, an astonishing 90 per cent plus are time-limited in some way.

In addition to this, Spain is a deep well of unemployment. Even going by the heavily massaged official figures,²⁷ the rate of unemployment stands at over double the average of the OECD area, and is rising. On top of this, Spain is also a low wage economy: the last government increase in the national minimum wage, the *Salario Mínimo Interprofesional*, put its level to €526 per month. This level is not only the second lowest in the EU (after Portugal), measured both in absolute terms and as a percentage of average salaries, but is a good deal less than half the EU average. While it is true that most workers are covered by compulsory employer-union agreements (the *convenios*) which normally set wage levels relatively higher, it is still estimated that around a 800 thousand Spanish workers (a little under 10 per cent of the salaried workforce) receive the minimum wage.²⁸

There is more. Spain is currently, and has been for some time, in the grip of a fierce speculation-fuelled housing crisis: house prices have risen by nearly two thirds in the last four years. In 2001, the growth in the average price of housing property was 15.4 per cent while inflation stood at 2.7 per cent. That these rises are fuelled by speculation and not by a 'normal' supply and demand imbalance – i.e. that they indicate that something is going awry in the economy as a whole – is illustrated by a growing homeless crisis, as a huge number of dwellings stand unoccupied: second and unoccupied homes at present stand at a total of 7 million dwellings, 34 per cent of the total housing stock.

As a consequence of the housing crisis, unemployment rates and job insecurity, over two thirds of all Spanish 25 to 30 year olds still live – through economic necessity – with their parents. And this startling figure is rising.

So behind the good news of Spain's 'economic miracle' there lies a deep well of what sociologists these days call 'social exclusion': everyday life in Spain, if you happen to be young, poor, female, an immigrant, can be a joyless struggle to make ends meet. But this, surely, would be fertile ground for a socialist challenge to the neoliberalism of the Partido Popular. Not a bit of it. The harsh truth is that the role of the Aznar government has to be understood as a *consolidation* of the neoliberal framework established by PSOE, as well as, and it is fundamental to grasp this, the *amelioration some of its worst excesses*. Temporary contracts, for example, while they still stand at a staggering 30 per cent of the total workforce are falling overall. Between 1994 and 2000 the level dropped from 34.5 per cent to 31.6 per cent of the total workforce, and from 40.1 per cent to 34.6 per cent in the private

²⁷ As of January 2002, the quarterly Encuesta de Población Activa has changed its definition of unemployment to comply with criteria laid down by the European Union's Eurostat: under the latter's definition, unemployed people are only those persons who are registered as such at the unemployment office (in Spain, the Instituto Nacional de Empleo, INEM) and who have contacted the office in order to seek work actively in the four weeks previous to the survey. People who are registered and wait for the employment office to contact them are now no longer counted. It is estimated that around half a million people (two or three percentage points) have now been excluded from the unemployment figures as a direct consequence of this change. The second reason to see the current unemployment rate as a deflated figure arises from the curious fact that the number of contributors to the social security system continues to grow at a higher rate than employment, which, under present conditions, can only be explained by a large-scale legalisation of immigrant workers, i.e. by a legalisation of existing jobs rather than the creation of new ones.

²⁸ In addition, the SMI stands as a reference for establishing other wage related incomes: on top of its direct recipients those affected by the level of the SMI are those receiving, for example, unemployment benefit and other incomes, such as the benefit paid to workers of bankrupt companies by the Wages Guarantee Fund (*Fondo de Garantía Salarial*), in total amounting to another million and a half workers. Since the SMI stands at just 40 per cent of the average wage, Spain thus even falls outside the guidelines set by the Council of Europe's committee of independent experts for the implementation of the European Social Charter, who stipulate that a minimum equitable wage stand at 68 per cent of the average national wage. And if this were not enough, annual increases of the SMI tend to be set at below inflation levels. As a consequence, it is estimated that between 1995 and 2003 the SMI has lost 11 per cent of its value when compared to average wage levels.

sector.²⁹ With respect to government policy, however bad the record of the PP from the point of view of social exclusion, there is nothing that it has done that PSOE did not do before, and, in many respects, the Socialist record on these questions is often worse than the PP's.

Thus PSOE can make no real no real electoral challenge to the PP on this front. Affiliation to the European Growth and Stability Pact means that the days of Keynesian pump-priming are long gone, and within this framework the Socialists cannot argue with any credibility that they would deal with the problems facing the Spanish economy in a fundamentally different way from the PP. In fact, the PSOE programme for the recent elections makes a positive virtue of its commitment to 'budgetary stability' and 'non-interventionism'; it is, in short – to use a favourite word of British Finance Minister Gordon Brown – 'prudent', over anything else.³⁰ These days, for the average Spanish voter the choice between PSOE or PP is not a choice between progressive social change and neoliberalism, but between who is going to be the most reliable and trustworthy neoliberal. And on this score the PP wins hands down every time.

Now the attentive reader will probably be asking herself at this point: but what about the Communist Party? How did it react after its electoral *debacle* of 1982? Did it really sink without trace?

It was clear that Carrillo's position had reached the point of being untenable, and he resigned, springing his departure in such a way as to engineer in the process that the post be taken up by the young Asturian Gerardo Iglesias, who, as Carrillo planned it, would act as mannequin to Carrillo's puppetmaster. Unfortunately for Carrillo, Iglesias turned out to be made of sterner stuff, and he duly made his peace with the anti-Carrillo faction, leaving the former with no other alternative than to split from the Party. Carrillo subsequently disappeared from the political scene.³¹ Needless to say, none of these manoeuvrings won the Party much credibility, either in terms of votes or in membership: in 1986 it could only poll some 4.5 per cent in the elections, while its membership now stood at a mere 35,000, compared to the near 200,000 of late 1977.

In March 1986 the Socialist government implemented a 1982 election promise to hold a referendum over Spain's continuing membership of NATO, which Spain had entered in 1982, under the government of the UCD, and against the strong opposition of both PSOE and the Communists. González's 1982 commitment was that the Socialists would both hold a referendum *and* campaign for a no vote;³² by 1986, however, fearing that discontinuing Spain's membership would jeopardise the then on-going negotiations for Spanish entry into the EEC, he was having second thoughts.³³ In the end, the government campaigned in favour of maintaining Spanish membership, and won the vote.

²⁹ From these figures it can be adduced that although work conditions in the public sector are significantly better than in the private one (trade union affiliation is also significantly higher here too, which goes some way to explaining the conservatism and craftist elitism of the Spanish state trade union movement) at the same time in the former the level of temporary working is rising. This is in fact indicative of the PP's strategy in this field. By putting pressure on conditions in the public sector what the PP is achieving has an element of levelling down to it. The same thing can be seen in the overall workforce: the lowering of the level of temporary working has been achieved through a cheapening of dismissal costs for time unlimited contracts – again, a levelling down.

³⁰ The Party's electoral programme (naturally in Spanish), all 200 pages of it, can be read online in pdf format here: <<http://www.psoe.es/media/000000011000/000000011336.pdf>>.

³¹ Except for surprisingly frequent appearances on Spanish television, where Carrillo, now aged 89, is fond of regaling audiences with increasingly fanciful tales of his wisdom and courage during the *transición*.

³² Interestingly enough, the Party's 1982 opposition to NATO was spelled out in a pamphlet, *Fifty Reasons To Say No to NATO*, written by none other than Javier Solana, who, as we now know, went on to serve as NATO General Secretary from 1995-99, and who currently serves as the European Union's Representative of Common Foreign and Security Policy.

³³ It is also undoubtedly the case that the government would have come under very heavy behind the scenes pressure from, at least, the United States, since Spain has a considerable geo-strategic importance, resulting from its possession of the Islas Canarias, of the Moroccan enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and of the Mediterranean Islas Baleares. Spain is also a

Out of the anti-NATO campaign, in which the Communist Party played a significant role (interestingly enough, Fraga's AP abstained on the issue), emerged the proposal to establish a new broad organisation of those who had campaigned against NATO to fight the forthcoming general elections against the Socialists. The new organisation, which finally called itself Izquierda Unida (United Left), initially pulled together a wide range of left and republican groups and individuals, even if it was still the Communist Party that was the dominant force within it. But from the very fact that the organisation was born of popular mobilisation with the specific remit of mounting an electoral challenge to the PSOE government arose the two central contradictions that have dogged IU its whole life: how could it maintain itself as a 'party of the street' and an electoral machine at the same time; and what would its electoral position be *vis-à-vis* the Socialists? Would it support, or block, the formation of a future PSOE government? For Julio Anguita, dubbed '*el califa rojo*',³⁴ in 1988 Iglesias' successor as General Secretary of the Communist Party, and from 1989 Co-ordinator General of IU, the answer to this problem was a simple one. For Anguita, in politics, there were *dos orillas* – two banks of the river. IU, the Communist Party in the van, stood on one bank; everybody else – social democrats, the right, nationalists of all shades and stripes – stood on the other. This position had unfortunate consequences. In a number of local authority bodies, the unwillingness of IU to pact with any other left party opened the way for PP administrations (up to the point at which it was suggested in social-democratic circles, not entirely facetiously, that there must have been a secret deal of some kind existing between IU and the PP).

But worse was to come. After the 1996 elections, the PP managed, as we have seen, to form a minority government with the support of the moderate Catalan nationalists of *Convergència i Unió* (CiU). But a glance at the election results shows us that although the PP emerged as the party with greatest parliamentary representation, the combined votes of PSOE and IU would have made it, if they had been prepared to work in concert, the largest parliamentary bloc. Whether this hypothetical left bloc would have also been able to cut a deal with CiU is a question for speculation, but there is no reason why not (the substance of the CiU-PP deal was a renegotiation of the system of regional government financing; the then leader of CiU, Jordi Pujol, was – as he still is – an artful opportunist with little qualms about selling his support to the highest bidder). But with González at the helm of PSOE and Anguita at that of IU here were two men each of whom had no intention whatsoever of working with the other.

González's position in the party after the elections of 1996 was now quite untenable. Like Carrillo had in the Communist Party before him, he announced his resignation without warning (at the Party's 34th Congress in 1997) and took advantage of the confusion thus created to put a reliable henchman – his Employment Minister Joaquín Almunia – in his place. However, to rectify what appeared as a lack of legitimacy, Almunia instituted a process of 'primary' elections within the Party to win backing as prime ministerial candidate from the rank-and-file. Unfortunately for Almunia – a grey and rather colourless character – he lost to the far more charismatic Catalan Josep Borrell (a former Minister of Transport under González) hands down. However, within the next year Borrell was forced to resign as – now a chronic Socialist Party problem this – a corruption scandal broke concerning senior civil servants he had appointed while serving as a government minister. With no other

strategic site for US air-force operations: the US base at Morón de la Frontera was, since the signing of the Pact of Madrid between Eisenhower and Franco in 1953, the headquarters of the Sixteenth Air Force of United States Air Forces. This pact, the first effective diplomatic relation entered into by the Franco regime after the end of the Second World War, brought with it, as a reward for Spain's military co-operation, US\$500 million in grants from 1954 to 1961, and a further US\$1.238 billion of loans and grants from 1962 to 1982. In 1988 there were around 12,000 US military personnel based in Spain. (Information collated from the online Country Studies Series compiled by the Federal Research Division of the US Library of Congress (here: <<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>>), a project in turn sponsored by the U.S. Department of Army itself.

³⁴ 'The Red Caliph', so called because he hails from the traditional Communist Party stronghold of Córdoba (where he was mayor from 1979 to 1988); Córdoba was, of course, the capital of the Caliphate of al-Andalus, and, in the tenth century, at the height of Arab culture in the Iberian peninsula, was the culturally most sophisticated polity in Europe. The giant Mesquita – the third largest mosque ever known, and a building of breathtaking beauty even by Arab standards – still stands.

alternative in place, Almunia resumed his position as Socialist Party candidate for the prime ministership, thus foisting the party with a leader who not only suffered from an almost total charisma bypass but who had been overwhelmingly rejected by the membership to boot.³⁵

It couldn't get worse for the Socialists; but it did. On the eve of the 2000 elections, Anguita, who had had a history of heart problems, was forced to pull out of the campaign owing to the need for urgent and major cardiac surgery. Taking his place as a stop-gap was Francisco Frutos, who had superseded Anguita as General Secretary of the Communist Party. Frutos was from a different ideological wing of the party – the self-styled 'Leninists' – than Anguita, a wing that adopted a much less sectarian view of PSOE than Anguita's neo-Third Periodism. Thus the principal barriers to co-operation between the two left parties – the sectarianism of the Anguita current and the hostility towards the Communists of Felipe González – had been removed. And sure enough, an electoral deal was struck between IU and PSOE. In return for a commitment on IU's part to not stand or not campaign in constituencies where, without an IU candidacy, PSOE stood a better chance of winning representation, IU agreed to support a stripped down version of the Socialists' electoral programme, while IU candidates would enter into PSOE party lists for the upper parliamentary chamber, the Senate.³⁶

And it was here that the problem of what IU's relationship should be to a possible PSOE government made itself felt most keenly. While IU operated as a left opposition to a hostile social-democratic opposition, as it had up to 1996, the project of putting pressure from the left on a PSOE administration, a project fuelled by Anguita's *dos orillas* sectarianism, IU's political role appeared relatively uncomplicated. Once the question was the possibility of unseating the PP, however, all manner of questions rose to the surface. In this context, a good argument could be made for IU standing on its own programme with a commitment to support the investiture of a Socialist government should a hung parliament emerge. It could even be argued that IU should not stand at all in favour of a call for a Socialist vote in the name of unseating Aznar. But for IU to effect a partial standown while endorsing as its electoral programme the distinctly more rightist programme of PSOE (which meant for IU abandoning its positions for Spain's withdrawal from NATO and the renationalisation of privatised industries, as well as specific demands for rises in pensions and the minimum wage) seemed to many IU voters the worst of both worlds. Not prepared to vote PSOE, and seeing a vote for IU as effectively the same thing, they voted with their feet. Within PSOE too the deal reawakened the deep latent hostility towards the Communists: why, there could even be Communist ministers in the new Socialist government! But perhaps the principal difficulty with the agreement – which, incidentally, received the wholehearted endorsement of the now politically adrift Carrillo – was the way in which it was carried out. It stank of the smoke-filled rooms, of a behind closed doors stitch up, fashioned on expedient lines for opportunist reasons. And of course, had Anguita not been taken ill at that precise moment, a matter of weeks before the election, it would not have happened at all. The lack of any political preparation or consultation rankled as much with the IUers as it did with the Socialists; and with predictable results. In the elections, held in March, the Socialists lost a million and a half votes compared with their 1996 showing, and the IU vote fell by more than half, giving the PP a comfortable working parliamentary majority.

For both parties of the left 2000 was nothing other than a disaster, and it was an experience which would colour the next congresses of both the Socialists and IU, in both cases scheduled for later that year.

³⁵ Borrell, after serving the necessary period of rehabilitation, headed the Socialist Party's list in the recent European elections, while Almunia has found himself banished to that graveyard for failed party leaders, the European Commission, where he has responsibility for Economic and Monetary affairs.

³⁶ The Senate, which principally has consultation and delaying powers, was conceived in the constitutional settlement of the late 1970s as a kind of Spanish 'committee of the regions': it is elected therefore, on a proportional basis, out of closed party lists from large constituencies, with an additional top-up representation from already elected regional governing bodies. While this system guarantees representation for the large nationalist parties in Catalunya and the Basque Country, it makes it virtually impossible for a Spanish state third party, like IU, to win representation.

Since Almunia, at least displaying a little more grace than had his predecessor, had resigned on election night once the scale of the Party's defeat had become known, the principal task facing PSOE at its 35th Congress in July of that year was picking a new leader. Four contenders threw their hats in the ring. José Bono, President of the regional government of Castilla-La Mancha, and one of the Party's '*barones*',³⁷ could be seen as the candidate of the PSOE apparatus. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was a young and unknown – if both ambitious and industrious – parliamentary deputy from León. Matilde Fernández, a trade unionist and long time associate of Alfonso Guerra, and clearly the candidate most to the left, and Rosa Díez, a Eurodeputy (and head of the PSOE European Parliamentary group) and member of the Basque parliament, and a vitriolic and passionate opponent of Basque nationalism, were the two women candidates, and, not coincidentally, the two outsiders in the election. But interestingly, it was the women, Fernández and Díez, who were the candidates who put forward the most clear *political* platforms. Fernández projected a reorientation of the Party along the lines of a more classical left European social-democratic tradition, rather than the then intensely in vogue mantra of the 'Third Way': 'We want to do in Spain what Lionel Jospin is doing in France, and not what Mr Blair is doing in Britain,' she argued.³⁸ Díez, on the other hand, planted a complete and total break with the PSOE past. The first, now famous, sentence of her manifesto read '*Yo no estuve en Suresnes*' ('I wasn't at Suresnes'), in other words, I am not of the Felipe generation.

In part because of their political platforms, but also in part because of their sex in the intensely macho world of Spanish social democracy, both women did very badly, winning 11 per cent and six per cent of the vote respectively. If the Party was not ready to have a woman as its candidate for the Moncloa, then neither was it tempted by Jospinism, nor a rupture with the past.

And this last feature indicates the central modern dilemma for the Party. For *felipismo*, rotten and corrupt though it was, represents, as myth overpowers reality, the Party's glory days, and in a sense its soul, much as the 1945 Labour government does for British social democracy. To break with this past, to break with *felipismo* and Suresnes, would mean a break with the Party's very own *raison d'être*. But at the same time it was equally clear that the Party could not continue in the old way: the buzz word at the Congress was *renovación* – renewal. What the Party was looking for was a Janus, a figure who could simultaneously embody the past and the future, *felipismo* and a break from *felipismo* at one and the same time. And in Zapatero, the young unknown, whose supporters, in a conscious emulation of 'New Labour' and the 'third way', dubbed themselves '*Nueva Vía*', but who had made a special point of declaring his admiration for Felipe González practically every time he opened his mouth in the leadership campaign, they found their man. Zapatero's success, in short, can be put down to the fact that he was able to embody the spirits of both Tony Blair and Felipe González in the same single human form. And when the outstanding votes were counted up, the chimera from León had beaten the apparatus candidate by a whisker.

Zapatero's subsequent tenancy at the helm of the Party – despite the ridiculous hyperbole that has been heaped upon him since 14 March – has in fact been a textbook example of haplessness and clumsiness. Yet this is not really Zapatero's fault: his impression of being a weak leader arises not from personal failing but precisely from the fact that he has to, in order to fulfil the Party's expectations, embody two irreconcilable projects at one and the same time.³⁹

³⁷ The *barones* are the heavyweight leaders of the regional Party federations: Bono, Juan Carlos Rodríguez Ibarra of Extremadura, Manuel Chaves of Andalucía, Marcelino Iglesias of Aragón, Francesc Antich of Balears. With fitting irony, the Spanish word *barón*, which does indeed mean 'baron', and the word *varón*, which means 'male', have exactly the same pronunciation in the Spanish phonetic system. Needless to say, despite Zapatero's present-day efforts to present the Party as more 'woman-friendly', the Party's *barones* are at the same time still *varones*.

³⁸ *El Mundo*, 21 July, 2000.

³⁹ In much the same way, for example, as the British Conservative leader John Major – a greatly under-estimated political performer – could not help coming across as a characterless fool as the compromise candidate chosen to heal the unbridgeable chasm between the warring pro and anti European factions in the fallout from the Thatcher era.

Leadership matters were naturally also on the minds of those attending the Sixth Assembly of IU held in October of that year. Francisco Frutos – the Communists’ General Secretary, remember, and the Communists were increasingly not just the brain but the backbone of IU as the first Aznar legislature had seen a haemorrhaging away of independents, most notably Cristina Almeida y Diego López Garrido’s *Nueva Izquierda* current, to PSOE – put himself forward on the platform of a defence of the policy of the electoral pact with PSOE. From the left, *La Plataforma de Izquierdas*, headed by, amongst others, Ángeles Maestro, who was its candidate for the top job, set its stall against the deal, demanding that IU maintain its sovereignty as an organisation of the left, and clarify its own priorities and politics before it started to look for alliances with other formations. More importantly than this, however (for reasons I shall develop below), it was clear that *La Plataforma* represented a current within IU that was beginning to take on board a more critical view of the whole process of the *transición*, most concretely in relation to the national question, with regards to which they argued that it would find its solution through the right to self-determination and the struggle for a Spanish Republic (against the majority feeling within IU which would have held that the big problem with nationalism in Spain was reducible to the terrorism of the armed Basque nationalist group ETA, and that the terrorism of ETA was a question for the state, i.e. for the police and the courts). The import of these points will be developed below.⁴⁰

Between these two currents stood another led by the chief of the Asturian Communist Party, and former henchman of Frutos, Gaspar Llamazares. Llamazares’ current effectively amounted to a conjunction of the Communist Party and IU malcontents: amongst others an opposition current in the Andaluz Communist Party, the remnants of the old Usec section in the Spanish state, and also counted with the support of Anguita himself. So although Llamazares had supported the pact with PSOE when it was carried out, at the Assembly he managed to put enough distance between himself and Frutos to pick enough of the ‘unofficial’ vote to carry the Assembly by a whisker over Frutos’ current (the *Plataforma*, which won some 18 per cent, was never going to emerge as the majority current, not least because of its position on the national question, which flew in the face of a greater Spanish chauvinism which makes itself felt as much in IU as it does within mainstream Spanish social democracy).

The vote for Llamazares represented a clear rejection of the IU-PSOE electoral deal, but little else. Out of the crisis faced by IU in its post-election Assembly all it really managed to do then was to put a leadership together united on the fact that it was not at all happy with the way things were going, but with very little idea of what to do about it. The subsequent dismal performance of Llamazares on the national political stage, both electoral and otherwise, is indicative of this state of affairs. In addition, the organisation is now saddled with something of a state of feud at its leadership level, since the differences between Frutos – who continues in the General Secretaryship of the Communist Party, and who is a man who could be described as irascible even on a good day – and Llamazares, who continues as General Co-ordinator of IU, have degenerated into an intense personal bitterness, even a mutual hatred.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the PP’s absolute parliamentary majority notwithstanding, and despite the practical anonymity of the opposition, the second Aznar premiership began to look more like an exercise in crisis management than the confident, self-assured government it had every right to be.

In June 2002, the government’s proposal for a tightening of the eligibility requirements for unemployment benefit provoked the normally docile Spanish trade union movement into calling a reasonably well supported

⁴⁰ *La Plataforma* was subsequently to develop into Corriente Roja, and is, in the opinion of the author of this essay, one of the few rays of hope for the future on the Spanish left (its website can be visited here: <<http://www.nodo50.org/corrienteroja/index.htm>>). Since the completion of the first draft this essay, Corriente Roja has planted the possibility of pulling out of IU altogether (*El País*, 28 June, 2004): a definitive decision on this matter will be taken at a congress in July.

⁴¹ Indicative of this distasteful state of affairs was the public (in a press conference!) advice given by Frutos to Llamazares following IU’s disappointing shown in the last elections, that he should ‘just pack his bags and go home and play politics in his village’. *El Mundo*, 1 April, 1984.

24-hour general strike; the government was subsequently to back down on much of the substance of its proposed reforms.

In November of that year the *Prestige*, as the Greek-skippered, Bahamas-registered and Liberian-owned oil tanker, sank off the northern Galician coast, taking 60,000 tonnes of Russian-owned fuel oil with it. The disaster exposed the government as it dithered over whether to bring the ship into port or send it further out into the Atlantic proved, a procrastination which proved fatal to the vessel as it broke up in heavy seas; and further when it became clear that, despite a history of such disasters in those waters – the site of a breathtakingly beautiful coastline and home to some of the richest beds of shell-fish in Europe – there was no emergency contingency plan in place, insufficient clean-up material (volunteers who rushed to the scene from all over Spain were at times forced to scoop up the highly toxic and carcinogenic heavy fuel oil, which has the consistency of sticky chewing gum, with their bare hands) and no clear idea of how it would compensate the Galician fishermen, who were seeing the possibility of the source of their livelihoods being destroyed forever.

To compound the problem, as Aznar manoeuvred himself to centre world stage, alongside George Bush and Tony Blair in the run-up to the western invasion of Iraq (Aznar it was who authored the first draft of the '*Carta de los Ocho*', later redrafted by Tony Blair and subsequently co-signed by the governments of Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Poland, Denmark and the Czech Republic, in which, in frankly racist terms, the pro-war European faction nailed its colours to the mast of US militarism⁴²) it became abundantly clear that all this was going to sit ill with the Spanish people. One opinion poll⁴³ that spring put opposition to the coming war in the Spanish state at an astonishing 91 per cent.⁴⁴ And on 15 February, a day of internationally co-ordinated protest against the war, the mobilisations in the Spanish state were among the biggest seen anywhere: over a million people marched in Madrid, and a similar number in Barcelona, on a day on which around one person in 10 in the Spanish state took to the streets in opposition to the coming war and the role of their own government in its preparation.

It was at this point – the confluence of the peak of the anti-war movement and the height of the acrimonious blowback from the *Prestige* disaster – that, for the first time (and, as it was to turn out, until 14 March this year for the last time too) since the mid-1990s, some opinion polls appeared giving PSOE a marginal lead over the PP.

In May of that year Spanish-state wide regional and local government elections were held.⁴⁵ Clearly, these elections were to serve as a dress rehearsal for the general elections planned for a year hence. Given the

⁴² The full text of this letter (in English) can be read at <<http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110002994>>.

⁴³ Organised by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, carried out at the end of February 2003, and released a month later. See the results on the CIS website (<<http://www.cis.es/>>), at <<http://www.cis.es/File/ViewFile.aspx?FileId=1396>> (*Barómetro de Febrero (Estudio 2481)*, pregunta 19, página 9).

⁴⁴ To the question '*¿Está Vd. muy de acuerdo, bastante, poco o nada de acuerdo con que se produzca una intervención militar contra Iraq?*' ('Are you very much in agreement, strongly, not very or not at all in agreement with there being military intervention in Iraq?'), the replies were: very much in agreement: 1.2 per cent; strongly in agreement 4.1 per cent; not very in agreement: 20.8 per cent; not at all in agreement: 70.0 per cent; with 3.8 per cent either not sure or not answering.

⁴⁵ There were in fact a number of simultaneous elections on that day. On a Spanish-state basis municipal elections, for what are called *ayuntamientos*, roughly equivalent to the British local council, which include the enormous councils of Madrid (population around 3 million) and Barcelona (population roughly 1.5 million), down to tiny villages where the population may be only measured in tens of people; and for the governing bodies of 13 of the 17 *comunidades autónomas*: a region of government between the *ayuntamiento* and the national state dating from the late 1970s and early 1980s when a regional structure of devolved government was established with the aim of assuaging rebellious national minorities – in Galicia, Catalunya and, especially, the Basque Country – by creating an all-Spanish state structure in which powers could be devolved to these nationalities without acknowledging them any special 'national' status. The structure of *comunidades autónomas* sometimes follows accepted national or regional logic, such as in the cases mentioned above, but also includes such geographical and administrative absurdities as Castilla-La-Mancha and Castilla y León, in which previously unrelated

circumstances of their occasion, and the web of crisis in which the government now found itself enmeshed, therefore, anything short of an authoritative victory on the part of the left would auger ill for the real contest of power to come.

As it turned out, PSOE ‘won’ the elections – in the sense that it won more votes across the Spanish state than the PP – but by only the slenderest of margins. Given the tendency of Spanish voters to vote more ‘conservatively’ in general elections than in local ones such a fractional lead would have been regarded as a hollow victory even in normal circumstances; given the developments of the previous nine months anything less than a complete humiliation of the PP had to be regarded as failure.⁴⁶ In fact, the Socialists failed to achieve practically every one of their internally-set electoral targets: to maintain control of the *Comunidad Autónoma* of Baleares (they lost it), to consolidate its hold on Barcelona (they lost ground if not power), to win the *Comunidad Valenciana* (they didn’t) and to win control of the *ayuntamiento* of Madrid (ditto). Only in the *Comunidad Autónoma* of Madrid was there any sign of saving grace, for here, even though they were outpolled by the PP, the Socialists were able to agree a power-sharing pact with IU which was to give the two parties of the left an absolute majority of one deputy in the Madrid Assembly.

Or at least that’s what they thought. But, as Zapatero’s reign took a turn from the hapless to the hopeless, even this solitary jewel – in reality a stone dull and roughly-cut in an otherwise bereft crown – slipped through his fingers.

On the morning of 10 June, the inaugural day of the new Assembly, to much consternation it became clear that two PSOE deputies, Eduardo Tamayo and Teresa Sáez, although they had been seen in the Assembly building earlier that morning, had failed to take their seats. As a consequence, since the new administration could not be invested, the Assembly session broke up in confusion. In a long live television interview that afternoon, Tamayo explained that what lay behind their actions was their political objection to PSOE being ‘taken hostage’ by IU. However, it subsequently emerged that when Tamayo and Sáez had absented themselves from the Assembly, they had been taken to a hotel – where they were to remain in hiding for the rest of the week – booked for them by two property developers, Francisco Vázquez (a member of the PP) and Francisco Bravo. What seems most likely – although an official enquiry set up by the Assembly has been unable to untangle a web of patronage of almost unbelievable complexity – is that property developers, Vázquez and Bravo among them, feared that the new PSOE-IU administration would keep a closer watch on the implementation of town planning regulations than its PP predecessors; and in Spain town planning lies exclusively under the jurisdiction of local government, which, given the enormously over-inflated state of the Spanish state property market, gives those in control the opportunity to develop lucrative contacts with the world of property development and construction. That PP members were involved behind the scenes in the affair is beyond doubt; indeed, the PP had to expel one of its leading Madrid members, Fernando Bastarreche, for having denied publicly his relations with the two developers at the heart of the scandal.

Whatever the truth of what really lay behind the affair, finally, since Tamayo and Sáez refused to endorse the investiture of the proposed PSOE-IU administration, and also voted against the investiture of a PP one, the Assembly found itself stalled, and the elections had to be rerun. In the new elections, held on 26 October, as by now might be predicted, the PP won enough seats to give them an absolute majority in the Assembly, even though, on a reduced turnout, both the PP and PSOE lost votes compared with May.

regions have been roped together in a transparent attempt to try and do something constructive with the bits left over. There were also elections for the Spanish held enclaves in Morocco, Ceuta and Melilla, which hold a position in the Spanish state constitutional structure similar to the *comunidades autónomas*. *Elecciones Autonómicas* were not held in Catalunya (scheduled for later that year), Andalucía (this year, as they are normally held to coincide with general elections), and the Basque Country and Galicia (both scheduled for next year).

⁴⁶ IU fared little better, winning 6.1 per cent of the vote, compared to 5.5 per cent in the general elections of 2000, and 5.9 per cent in the previous local elections of 1999. But IU had publicly set itself the task of turning the winter and spring mobilisations into votes in the ballot box; but the winter and spring marchers clearly preferred voting with their feet.

The whole affair was a huge embarrassment for the PSOE leadership. Not only did it all smack of incompetence – if the party was not able to get all its representatives to the Madrid Assembly in the same room at the same time, how was it ever going to manage with running the country? – but it also raised the stink of that perennial PSOE problem: corruption. In addition, it turned out that Tamayo and Sáez were members of a faction within the Madrid party led by José Luis Balbás called ‘*Renovadores de Base*’ (Rank-and-File Renewers),⁴⁷ and Balbás’ faction had been instrumental in putting together the ad hoc *Nueva Vía* grouping set up in the Party in 2000 to impel Zapatero’s own campaign for party leader.

As if all this were not enough, in Catalunya bad was just at the point of turning into worse. On 16 November elections for the Generalitat, the Catalan regional parliament, were held. Since 1980 Catalunya had been run as something of fiefdom of Jordi Pujol, the leader of the moderate nationalist, Christian-Democrat orientated *Convergència i Unió* (CiU). In the absence of Pujol, not standing for the first time since the *transición*, CiU lost significant electoral ground, while the left nationalists of *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) doubled their vote, emerging as effective power-brokers in the new parliament; the Catalan version of IU, *Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verdas/Esquerra Unida i Alternativa* (ICV/EuiA),⁴⁸ also significantly increased its vote.⁴⁹ Out of this realignment, the PSC (PSOE’s Catalan nominally independent sister party) brokered a coalition deal with the other left parties, ERC and ICV/EuiA, and formed a tripartite government, with the PSC’s Pascual Maragall its President and ERC leader Josep Lluís Carod-Rovira his deputy, not only significantly more left than its CiU predecessor, but, worryingly so for the rest of PSOE, with a distinct Catalan nationalist tinge.

Predictably, that PSOE (or at least its Catalan affiliate) could form a government with a non-Spanish nationalist party provoked outrage at PP headquarters in Madrid. How could the unity of Spain be trusted – the guilt-by-association driven argument went – to a party willing to pact with others who, in their hearts, wanted to destroy it? It was clear now that the issue of the ‘integrity’ of the Spanish state was going to be a key issue in the forthcoming general elections. Thus, the news that was broken by the far-right daily *ABC* on 27 January of this year fell like very manna itself on the PP. At the beginning of that month, while Maragall had been on holiday, effectively leaving Carod-Rovira minding the shop, the latter had held a secret meeting with two central leaders of the armed Basque nationalist group ETA in the south of France. The meeting had been monitored by the state secret intelligence organisation, the Centro Nacional de Inteligencia, and a report passed on to Aznar’s office. How the news reached *ABC* is not known,⁵⁰ but its impact was dramatic. Guilt by association now went

⁴⁷ Although we should note that the existence of factions within PSOE does not necessarily imply the existence of political debate. In fact, the different groupings within the Party – ‘*Renovadores*’, ‘*Renovadores de Base*’, ‘*Guerristas*’ (i.e. followers of Alfonso Guerra), and so forth are rather clientage and patronage networks more reminiscent of the operation of a polity of late Medieval Europe than the internal life of a modern social-democratic party.

⁴⁸ In 1999, after a split within IU, *Iniciativa per Catalunya* and *Esquerra Unida i Alternativa* stood independently, the former winning three seats with 2.5 per cent of the vote, the latter – the ‘official’ IU group, no seats with 1.5 per cent.

⁴⁹ The PP typically polls low in Catalunya – under 15 per cent of the vote – since the natural representatives of those who would be PP voters elsewhere in the Spanish state are CiU supporters. Put another way, CiU voters are those who would be naturally inclined to support the PP were they not Catalan.

⁵⁰ Although the circumstantial evidence of a deliberately manufactured leak is such that the idea is difficult to resist. Javier Zarzalejos, one of Aznar’s personal assistants, is the brother of the editor of *ABC*. And the timing of the leak – if that is what it was – was fortuitous, not only in the light of the upcoming election, but also in that it exactly coincided with the closure of a Congress held in Madrid by the *Fundación de las Víctimas del Terrorismo* (an anti-Basque nationalist organisation, whose President is a certain Adolfo Suárez, which has links to, among other groups, the US Anti-Defamation League). The conference, which was closed by a speech by Aznar himself, had seen an intervention by the President of Columbia, in which he had made wild claims about ETA’s international links, including supposedly with the Colombian FARC. The Congress was widely reported on Spanish television, in reports in which various ‘victims’ – Colombian military officers, Israelis, Northern Ireland protestants, the head of the New York Fire Brigade – publicly paraded the physical scars and disfigurements inflicted on them by the evil wrong-doers of this world. That the television reports of this event were segued directly into the breaking news from Catalunya should go without saying.

into overdrive: how could Spain be trusted, the PP could now cry, to a Party which not only pacted with people who wanted to destroy it but were also – more or less – cohorting with terrorists to boot?

Zapatero, of course, demanded of Maragall that Carod-Rovira resign, which, recognising his position in the government as now untenable, he duly did. Nevertheless, the damage had already been done. That ETA was to subsequently call a formal cease-fire in Catalunya (but only in Catalunya) only gave the knife an extra twist.

And that is how the matter stood. PSOE, unable to draw a critical veil over its previous role in government, and finding itself as a consequence unable to offer any real alternative programme, rocked first by the shambles of the Madrid Assembly and now by the fallout of the Carod-Rovira affair, found itself incapable of making any headway in the opinion polls as the general elections drew ever closer. Now no-one talked about the result of the election: that was taken as a foregone conclusion. Now the only question debated by the pundits was how big the PP's majority was going to be.

And that is how the matter stood until, at a quarter to eight on a grey Madrid morning, a chain of events was unleashed which would – seemingly – turn Spanish state politics on its head.

* * *

But in order to be able to grasp fully the events that were now to occur, it is necessary to take a step aside from our narrative so that we can look at the configuration of Spanish state politics from a slightly different angle.

It is generally held by mainstream Spanish historiography that the birth of the modern Spanish nation effectively coincides with the marriage of the cousins Fernando of Aragón and Isabel of Castilla, subsequently *los reyes católicos* – the Catholic monarchs – in 1469. With Isabel's accession to the Castilian throne in 1474, and Fernando's to that of Aragón in 1479, followed by the subsequent conquest of Granada (1492)⁵¹ and incorporation of Navarra (1512) into the dynastic polity, Fernando and Isabel reigned jointly over a territory which almost exactly coincides with that of the Spanish state today.

Yet the commonly accepted interpretation that the agglomeration of these dynastic polities marks some kind of political and territorial fulfilment of a previously existing Spanish nation waiting to be born is exactly an example of the kind of false retroprojection of modern national identity into the past necessary for the historical justification of modern nations. For the internal political unity of the territory over which reigned Their Catholic Majesties was in fact never even near concomitant with its geographical reach. The economic and demographic powerhouse of the union, Castilla – the land of castles, so called because of its formation out of the broad and slowly southward-moving frontier zone between the northern Christian dynasties of Visigoth vintage and the rich Arab culture of the Iberian south – was itself the product of an agglomeration of rival dynasties.⁵² In addition, the typical resettlement of the frontier region by a semi-noble warrior class, proud of its independent status and its fiscal immunity and privileges, itself mitigated against a thoroughgoing vertical integration of

⁵¹ The great poet Federico García Lorca, just two months before his murder (as much for his homosexuality as for his suspected radical political leanings) at the hands of fascist paramilitaries, had this to say on the fall of Granada: 'It was a terrible moment, though they say just the opposite in the schools. An admirable civilisation was lost, with poetry, astronomy, architecture and delicacy that were unequalled anywhere in the world, in order to make way for a poor, cowardly, narrow-minded city, inhabited at present by the worst bourgeois in all Spain.' 'Conversación con Bagaría', *El Sol* (Madrid), 10 June, 1936.

⁵² Traditional conquest and dynastic marriage brought about the unification of León and Castilla in 1230, and the incorporation of the provinces of Guipúzcoa (in 1200), Álava (1332) and Vizcaya (1379).

political power and sovereignty. Although Castilla was, by the standards of the day, socially relatively urban, significantly it still lacked a capital. The Realm of Aragón presented an even more disparate and uneven picture. It was composed of three distinct territories: medieval Aragón proper, where true serfdom still dominated, the historic mercantile region of Catalunya, and Valencia, where merchants and nobles operated in tandem. In addition, a highly complex and well-established system of Estates, with independent *Cortes* in each province, operated throughout the realm. And Navarra's incorporation into Castilla in 1512 was accomplished on condition of the recognition of its distinct political and juridical structure. All of this added up to a extraordinarily complex system of medieval privileges highly unpropitious to a project of a centralist and centralising Absolutism

The entire subsequent history – at least up to the latter half of the nineteenth century – of the Spanish monarchy, in both its Austrian Habsburg and Bourbon incarnations, was to be coloured by this extreme social and political differentiation which existed immediately below it. This is not to say, of course, as has become historiographically fashionable, that the Spanish crown 'failed' in the construction of a nationally unified polity, for this would be to endow it with a teleological intent it never possessed; but it is cardinal to take note of the fact that the Spanish Crown was to consolidate itself not *against* the impossibly complex system of feudal privilege with which it was confronted but rather *on the back of it*.⁵³ Spanish Absolutism, in the true sense of the word, would never be more than putative.⁵⁴ The near absence of armed conflict between the Crown and the regions after the defeat of Catalunya in the 1640-53 war was not an indication of the strength of the monarchy, but precisely of its supine state before privilege and particularism.

In place of a true unifying political ideology within this mesh of feudal polities stood the suffocating unity of religion: concretely, the religion of Roman Catholicism, Single, Holy and Apostolic, anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim and anti-Protestant in equal measure. If Namier's celebrated observation that 'religion is a sixteenth-century word for nationalism' is to have any validity, it finds it precisely in Habsburg Spain, although the national element of religious unity would have to be retroprojected back into the latter by the Catholic would-be nation-builders of the later nineteenth (latter-day Carlism) and twentieth centuries (Franco and Francoism).

'National' construction – of the political as much as of the ideological variety – was rather to be the preserve and prerogative of Spanish liberalism. But 'liberalism', understood here less as the ideology of a true rising capitalist bourgeoisie than that of urban petit-bourgeois and professional social layers, faced apparently insurmountable obstacles, as urban Spain, even at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, stood as dwarfed within a mesh of unremitting social and political – 'feudal' – backwardness as its spokesmen were suppressed under the dead hand of orthodox Catholic fundamentalism.⁵⁵

⁵³ 'The authority of the Absolutist State stopped at municipal level over vast areas of the country. Down to the invasion of Napoleon, more than half the towns in Spain were not under monarchical, but under seigniorial or clerical jurisdiction. The regime of the *señoríos*, a medieval relic dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was of more directly economic than political importance to the nobles who controlled these jurisdictions: yet it assured them not only of profits, but also of local judicial and administrative power. These "combinations of sovereignty and property" were a telling survival of the principles of territorial lordship into, the epoch of Absolutism. The *ancien régime* preserved its feudal roots in Spain to its dying day.' (Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974), 84.)

⁵⁴ A fact of which Marx was typically aware: '[...] how are we to account for the singular phenomenon that, after almost three centuries of a Habsburg dynasty, followed by a Bourbon dynasty – either of them quite sufficient to crush a people – the municipal liberties of Spain more or less survive? That in the very country where of all the feudal states absolute monarchy first arose in its most unmitigated form, centralisation has never succeeded in taking root?' 'Revolutionary Spain' (1854), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Revolutionary Spain* (London, 1939), 24-5.

⁵⁵ This is, in addition, the explanation behind the otherwise perplexing riddle of the extent of Spain's fall from *siglo de oro* to the wretched backwardness of the early twentieth century, in which, in rural Andalucía, it appeared as if little had taken place from the technological point of view since Roman times. Spain's gargantuan empire, while it produced a fabric unmistakably imperial in *form*, was never, in strict Marxist (which is to say Leninist) terms, imperialistic in *essence*. The booty

What ultimately broke the seemingly immovable weight of Spanish Traditionalist monarchy was the Napoleonic invasion of 1808, and subsequent war of 1808-1813. Faced by the effective vacuum of power that arose from the *coup d'état* that succeeded in the abdication of Carlos IV in 1808, Napoleon occupied Spain and installed his own brother, Joseph, on the Spanish throne.⁵⁶ It was this breakdown of the Spanish monarchy that thrust the Spanish enlightened liberals to political centre stage in the provisional power formed by the *Cortes* of Cádiz – intended as a representative body of elected representatives from all over Spain, but in large part (owing to the French occupation) a self-selected body, a fact which was at the same time to give it an overwhelmingly liberal constitution and make it completely unrepresentative of the then surrounding political and ideological fabric. Nevertheless, the *Cortes* duly drew up a Constitution (1812), the first effective Constitution in Spanish history, in which was put forward the principle of national sovereignty in place of royal authority, as well as the abolition of noble legal privileges, seigniorial jurisdiction, entail, and the Inquisition (even if, significantly, it bluntly stated in its Twelfth Article that ‘The Roman Apostolic Catholic Religion, the only true one, is, and will forever be, the religion of the Spanish Nation’⁵⁷).

But by forcing Spanish liberalism to show its hand so early the War had effectively pushed it out on a limb. If this was the Spanish ‘bourgeois revolution’ it had happened one generation too early, for the restoration of the Spanish Bourbon line 1814 was to reveal quite how out of touch with the prevailing ideological and social conjuncture liberalism was. For in the immediate aftermath of the war, painfully conscious of the possible passage from an anti-Napoleonic uprising to an anti-Absolutist one, Fernando VII, the new king, constructed his regime on a positively *anti-patriotic* basis, and to popular acclaim to boot. Public monuments and ceremonies celebrating the rise of the ‘*Pueblo*’ against the French were only striking during the reign of Fernando by their absence.

In reality of course, that the 1808-13 War has gone down – as much in popular imagination as in respectable historiography – as the ‘War of Spanish Independence’ is another good example of the kind of grand myth-making that nation-building demands; of ‘getting one’s history wrong’, as Renan put it. For, independently of the wishes of the revolutionary deputies of Cádiz, for as much as ‘Spain’ may have been a rallying cry for the insurgents of 1808, by this would have been popularly understood, if it was understood at all, an admixture of tradition, religion and counter-revolutionary ideology. Insofar as popular xenophobia was a motivating factor, it was as much a xenophobia directed at the heathen and atheist than at the ‘foreigner’. The ideological nationalisation of the War was a task for a later generation, which began its work only after the defeats suffered by Spain in its crumbling empire in the Americas, as, one by one, its colonies liberated themselves.⁵⁸

of empire, at least that of it which could not be squandered on conspicuous consumption, simply slipped through Spanish fingers. The result, in Jordi Nadal’s words, was that ‘the case of Spain is less that of a latecomer than that of an attempt, largely thwarted, to join the ranks of the first-comers.’ (‘Spain 1830-1914’, in Carlo M. Cipolla (ed.) *The Fontana Economic History of Europe Volume Four: The Emergence of Industrial Societies (Part Two)* (Hassocks, 1976), 617.)

⁵⁶ The rising against Carlos – known as the Mutiny of Aranzuez – was far from being the popular insurrection directed at a corrupt Court as it has come to be known. It was, in fact, in large part the work of the Court faction assembled around the heir, and son of Carlos, Fernando. What enraged Fernando’s faction was the influence played by Carlos’ first minister, and effective substitute (since Carlos was far more concerned with the serious matter of hunting than the trivia of state), Manuel de Godoy, and Godoy’s greatest sin in their eyes was precisely his liberal sensibilities and supposed sympathies for revolutionary France.

⁵⁷ The full text of the 1812 Constitution can be read online (in Spanish) here:
http://www.constitucion.es/otras_constituciones/espana/1812.html.

⁵⁸ In the words of one of the more popular balladeers of the War, Bernardo López García, ‘*pues no puede esclavo ser / pueblo que sabe morir*’ (‘La Oda del Dos de Mayo’ – ‘never for slavery could be / this people, which knows how to die’). The outstanding point about López García’s poem, of course, is not its mawkish patriotism but the fact it was not written until a full sixty years after the events it describes.

The real nature of the war revealed itself at its close: far from being thrust into the leadership of the 'nation', liberals not only found themselves isolated, but persecuted, imprisoned and harried into exile, as their constitution, which had proudly declared that 'the Spanish nation is free and independent, and does not belong nor could ever belong to any one family or person', was publicly repudiated by the new regime.

But it would be an unwarranted simplification to see Fernando's reign simply as the monolithic Absolutism that it appeared to be, for this would be to fail to see the deeper contradictions that his regime tried to suppress on the surface. Rather, it is better to understand the regime as a kind of 'Absolutist bonapartism', built as an arch above competing, and ultimately incompatible, political and ideological projects. For Fernando found himself caught between two camps: between the arch-traditionalist land-holding (and therefore clerical) lobby, who demanded the *permanent* liquidation of liberalism, and a relatively enlightened officer caste, who had risen through the military hierarchy during the War itself, but who now found themselves cast out of the military command structure by the attempted return to an neo-Absolutist *status quo ante*. In this way, even though the attempt at exporting 'liberalism at the point of a bayonet' through the Napoleonic invasion had been ultimately repulsed, the dynamic it set in train was in the end to prove the undoing of any Spanish Absolutist project.⁵⁹ On his death bed, the King, suffering from what was up to then his most serious, and, as it was to turn out, his last, attack of gout, rescinded the (ill-named) Salic Law⁶⁰ introduced by Felipe V which barred inheritance to the throne passing through the female line, thus opening up the succession to his only child, a daughter. A bloody succession crisis duly erupted, which in turn was to act as a prism in focusing the competing claims of arch-traditionalist monarchists on the one hand and moderate liberals on the other. In the unfolding crisis, the Catholic traditionalists could find a champion in the Fernando's brother, Carlos; in the regency of Fernando's widow María Cristina (Fernando's daughter Isabel, who would come to reign as Isabel II, was then only three years old) moderate liberals could find theirs. So although what seemed to be played out in this, the first Carlist War, and in the two that succeeded in the later nineteenth century, was a simple inter-court faction fight over succession, in fact what was at stake was the contest between moderate liberal modernisation and Catholic Traditionalism, the 'two Spains' of legend. And, at least until the mid-point of the nineteenth century, it was clear which of the two factions was fighting for 'Spain'; for, while the Carlist armies proclaimed themselves 'Catholics', it was the Liberal army that called itself the 'Nationals'. In fact, it was only after Prime Minister O'Donnell's mid-nineteenth-century land-grab in Morocco (rather grandly dubbed '*la guerra de África*' in Spanish historiography), in other words, after Spain's retarded entry into the world imperialist system proper, that the Carlists too begin to refer to their supporters as 'Spaniards'.

Thus by the end of the nineteenth century there existed two distinct national projections of 'Spain', based on two distinct models of Spanish history, based in turn on two distinct political programmes. In the liberal version, the Spanish nation was portrayed as having arisen out of the struggle of the 'Spanish spirit' to survive successive waves of invaders in successive cycles of loss and recovery of national sovereignty. In this historical model, Numantia,⁶¹ Saguntum,⁶² the Reconquista⁶³ and the War of 1808-13 were depicted as repeated re-enactments of

⁵⁹ 'When Napoleon sought in 1808 to put his brother on the Spanish throne, he dragged a forgotten part of Europe back into history. Much as he was hated, his armies kept open for a few years a chink through which light from the outer world could percolate. [...] The nation closed its eyes in vain; Napoleon had murdered sleep, and Spain was to sleep no more.' (V. G. Kiernan, *The Revolution of 1854 in Spanish History* (Oxford, 1966), 1-2.)

⁶⁰ 'Ill-named' because it was believed that the provision came from the Frankish *Lex Salica*; this latter, however, while it did indeed prohibit female succession to property, did not with respect to titles.

⁶¹ Numantia, a settlement to the north of modern Soria, withstood repeated Roman attacks from the time of Cato the Elder's campaign (195 BC) until Scipio Aemilianus finally took the city in 133 BC after an eight-month blockade.

⁶² Saguntum, a small town in the Valencia region, was laid siege to by the Carthaginian emperor Hannibal for eight months in 219 BC in the dispute between Rome and Carthage that was to start the Second Punic War.

⁶³ In English the 'Reconquest', the *Reconquista* refers to the seven-century expulsion of the north African Arabs – originally Moslem Berbers – from Spain, a process generally held to have begun with the victory of the Asturian Visigoth king Pelayo over the Muslim forces of Munuza at Alcama in 718, and terminating with the fall of Granada in 1492. One of the

the essence of Spanishness, restless in its quest for freedom and liberty (and, as we shall see, in its twentieth-century incarnation, for ‘democracy’). In this historical model (the ideological basis for a political programme of anti-oligarchic – ‘bourgeois’ – modernisation) the future of the Spanish nation lay in its ability to salvage its millennial propensity for liberty from the more recent ravages of Absolutism, and frequently Absolutism begot of ‘foreign’ inspiration. This liberal view of Spain, while frequently anti-clerical, could not, as a consequence, countenance itself as anti-Christian; likewise, while it may have been anti-Absolutist, and certainly anti-despotic, it could not also, for the same reasons, be anti-monarchic.⁶⁴

The alternative view, that of Catholic Traditionalism, the vehicle for the political project of the defence of landowning, and hence clerical, priority, set out a vision of Spain in which the essence of Spanishness took on the form of monolithic Catholicism. In this version of history, the Muslim ‘invasion’ of the eighth century was seen as a divine punishment inflicted on the Visigothic rulers for their failure to defend the interests and institutions of the Church, and it was the righteous struggle to free Spain from the infidel that forged the great Spanish-Catholic nation. In this version, Liberalism was detested because it was anti-Spanish. ‘Good kings’ were good because of their Christianity; ‘bad kings’ were bad because they flirted with liberalism (hence the Catholic-Traditionalist distaste for Bourbons). Whereas for liberals Spain’s survival was predicated on a restoration of a mythical half-lost medieval ‘liberty’, the Catholic-traditionalist version had Spain’s future dependent upon the maintenance of religious and oligarchic hierarchies.⁶⁵

It is important to grasp the context in which these rival visions of the Spanish ‘nation’ were concocted. Indicative of Spain’s fall to the status of fourth-rate international power, over the course of the nineteenth century and a good part of the twentieth Spain largely failed to participate in that very special arena in which the ‘nationalisation of the masses’ is tempered: inter-imperialist international conflict. While around it, European nations were tearing into each other with gay abandon, Spaniards fought each other. The nineteenth century opened with Spain losing the greater part of its Latin American empire; it closed in 1898 with the shock of defeat in the Spanish-American war and the loss of the rest of it.

But the crisis engendered by 1898 had been accompanied by another salient fact: the emergence within Spanish territory of non-Spanish nationalisms – specifically, Catalan and Basque nationalism. Now it is not the case, as it

greatest myths in contemporary Spanish historiography, since what is being dealt with here is a *conquista* pure and simple, with no ‘re’ about it. By what token, for example, are the Iberian Berbers not deemed to be ‘Spanish’ when their Visigoth predecessors are? In fact, at its beginning the ‘*Reconquista*’ was nothing more than a series of skirmishes between neighbouring dynasties, each considering itself equally justly present in the peninsular, with religion taking little part in it. It was only from the later eleventh century that the idea of a specifically *Christian* Reconquest begins to be linked to the general idea of ‘Crusade’, and consequently given papal blessing, but, even then, there was no sense that this ‘Iberian Crusade’ had any specific element of Spanishness to it. This aspect was only subsequently retroprojected back into its interpretation after the *Reconquista* had been completed.

⁶⁴ In this version, the history of the Spanish crown was divided into competing lists of ‘good kings’ and ‘bad kings’: the former were those who promoted ‘national’ unity against the factional power of the nobility; the latter those who let religious intolerance and despotic power – either their own or that of their favourites – get the better of them. Particularly unfavoured in this model were those ‘bad kings’ who happened to be Habsburgs, since they suffered the misfortune of being ‘foreign’ to boot.

⁶⁵ An astonishing, and, in its reactionary way, wonderfully illuminating, English version of this view of Spanish history – written by the nineteenth-century clerical historian Ramón Ruíz Amado – can be found at the website of the Catholic Encyclopaedia: <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14169b.htm>>. Here, we are informed that ‘The struggle of eight centuries to recover the territory wrested from them by the Mussulmans, who were enemies at once of their land and of their faith, effected in the Spanish people that intimate fusion of patriotic and religious feeling which distinguished them during many centuries.’ Regarding the Jews, we are told that ‘Oppressed by vexatious laws, and abhorred by the people, whom they ruined with their usury, perverted, and scandalised with their sacrileges, they were finally expelled from Spain by the Catholic Sovereigns, who regarded them as dangerous to the religious unity and the security of the country on account of the relations which they maintained with the Moors.’ And so on *ad nauseum*.

is commonly supposed in mainstream Spanish historiography, that the emergence of these new nationalisms followed as a consequence of the problems of national identification engendered by the ‘crisis of Spain’ post-1898: this latter merely formed the context, the material and ideological backdrop, to their development. And although Catalunya could boast a history of independent existence as a polity, and certainly in the realm of the socio-economic could distance itself historically from the rest of the Iberian peninsular given its strategic location within the network of western Mediterranean trading relationships, and despite the fact that the Basque provinces of Guipúzcoa, Álava, Vizcaya and Navarra could maintain a fond memory of a semi-independent existence by virtue of their own then still relatively recent system of feudal privileges (the *‘fueros’*), what lay at the heart of the emergence of modern Catalan and Basque nationalism as concrete political projects in the latter half of the nineteenth century was the impact of the uneven social and economic development on them within the Spanish state itself. Far from representing repressed, under-developed and persecuted minority regions (as the wishful thinking of more modern-day Catalan and Basque nationalism would have it), Catalunya and the Basque Provinces – here specifically Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya – stood as beacons of modernity and development, even *over*-development – in a sea of rural misery controlled by the dead-hand of provincial backwardness that was Madrid.⁶⁶

It is also necessary to debunk the common myth that modern-day Catalan and Basque nationalism represent some kind of reincarnation of Carlist exceptionalism. Although some of the founders of the modern nationalist movements may have found succour from the use of Carlist vocabulary and symbology, it is important to grasp that Carlism was a pre-nationalist – and, in its anti-liberalism, at times an actively *anti*-nationalist – movement. The difficulty in separating Carlism from non-Spanish nationalism in mainstream Spanish historiography comes precisely from the fact that this latter is itself pristinely nationalist in outlook, and thus, being unable to look below the surface ideology of nationalism in general, takes the nationalist rhetoric of other nationalisms as good coin.⁶⁷

We should also be aware of the danger of equating Catalan and Basque nationalism. Modern Catalan nationalism, the appearance of which can be dated to the mid-nineteenth-century Catalan literary (and therefore linguistic) renaissance (the *Renaixença*) has tended towards a more pragmatic and ‘autonomist’ – rather than separatist – nationalism, more content to safeguard its cultural, linguistic and economic place within a unified Spanish state. In this sense Catalanism is a politically and socially relatively broad phenomenon: it is perfectly possible to be a Catalanist social-democrat, a Catalanist communist, a Catalanist christian democrat, and even, more recently, a Catalanist neoliberal. Debates around the status of Catalunya within the Spanish state tend to revolve less around independence or not than around relative degrees of ‘autonomy’, a debate which rarely intrudes into Spanish state politics as a whole.

⁶⁶ As indicated by a veritable late nineteenth and early twentieth-century population explosion: from 1857 to 1920 the population of Guipúzcoa rose by 65 per cent on its 1857 values, and that of Vizcaya by 155 per cent. Remember that this period includes the ‘Long Depression’ of 1873-1897: during this period (from 1877 to 1900) population rose 17 per cent in Guipúzcoa and 64 per cent in Vizcaya. Over both these periods, population growth was largely stagnant in neighbouring – and more rural – Álava and Navarra (Luis Castells Arceche, *Modernización y dinámica política en la sociedad guipuzcoana de la Restauración, 1876-1915* (Leioa, 1987), 160). Industrialisation in Vizcaya was built on iron ore extraction and steel; in Guipúzcoa, light industry and engineering. It is difficult here to resist a comparison with the national configuration of the British state, especially with respect to Wales, for here, also despite the best historical mythologising of modern-day Welsh nationalism, what accounts for national specificities in modern times is also precisely Wales’ position as an *over*-developed region and a consequent pattern of economic development (and population surge) equally out of synch with the greater part of western Europe (on this particular point, see Gwyn Alf Williams, *When Was Wales?* (Harmondsworth, 1985), 173-81).

⁶⁷ Even names can be deceptive. The full name of the Partido Nacionalista Vasco, the current largest Basque nationalist party, founded in 1895, is Eusko Alderdi Jeltzalea-Partido Nacionalista Vasco. *Eusko Alderdi Jeltzalea* roughly translates as ‘Patriotic Basque Followers of the doctrine of *JeL*’. This latter stands for *Jaungoikoa eta Lege-zaharra*, or ‘God and the old laws’, the old laws being, of course, the *fueros*.

In the Basque case, on the other hand, we find a nationalist and political configuration that is completely different. Modern Basque nationalism has always had a strong independentist coloration. In good part this tendency is rooted in the dramatically more rapid and violent pattern of industrialisation in the Basque Country, especially in Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa.⁶⁸ As modern industry tore out the heart of rural culture, and as immigrants from elsewhere in Spain flooded in to meet the soaring demand for labour, the idea that the Basque Country, or at least a part of it, was a *different* country, *oppressed* by Spain, was fuelled. The independentist tendency of Basque nationalism⁶⁹ is at the same time reinforced by – and reinforces – a political polarisation within Basque politics, reflecting a historical social polarisation within Basque society itself. Basque politics revolves around the confrontation between two rival nationalisms – Basque, separatist and irredentist; and Spanish. Basque social democracy – and the industrial setting of the Basque Country, especially that of Vizcaya, was a cradle of Spanish social democracy – is, as a consequence, congenitally and apparently irredeemably Spanish centralist and chauvinist.⁷⁰ In addition, this polarisation – for or against Basque nationalism – cuts right into mainstream Spanish state politics.

There are a number of threads that we need to pull together at this point. We need to take note of the weakness of Spanish national identity. This may at first sight appear paradoxical, since the twentieth century witnessed two outbreaks of dictatorship, those of Primo de Rivera and Franco, in which Spanish nationalism was unleashed in the most visceral form possible. The paradox is only apparent, however, for an over-demonstrative chauvinistic nationalism is usually the sign of a nationalism that feels itself threatened, of a weak nationalism.⁷¹ For in Spain, the national project, which was the form taken by the liberal struggle against oligarchy and feudal and religious hierarchy, was, historically speaking, unable to complete its mission without the outside help of Napoleon. That liberalism was unable to dominate the ideological and political terrain was evidenced by the fact that Catholic Traditionalism itself was able to set itself up in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the form of an alternative national project. And that Catholic Traditionalism and bourgeois liberalism could confront themselves like this, almost as mirror images, is cardinal in understanding how Spanish politics is held together. For what is fundamental in the political and ideological configuration of Spain is not what separates liberalism from Traditionalism, but what unites them, and what unites them is precisely their mutual vision of the nation,

⁶⁸ See note 66 above.

⁶⁹ Although independence for what exactly has not always been clear, a state of affairs reflective of the historical absence – again, against the conventional understanding of modern nationalist ideology – of a distinct Basque polity. Arana's original project was aimed at a specifically Vizcayan independence. For more modern-day Basque nationalism, the Basque country has been understood as at least composed of not only the three commonly accepted (even by opponents of Basque nationalism) Basque provinces of Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya and Álava, but Navarra as well. However, the present-day *Comunidad Autónoma Vasca* is composed of these first three only; Navarra has an independent status as a *Comunidad Autónoma* in its own right. But for more radical currents, the Basque Country would be composed of not only Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya, Álava, and Navarra but Iparralde too, this last being the collective name (which translates into English as 'The North') for the French Basque territories of Soule (Zuberoa, in Euskara, the Basque language), Labourd (Lapurdi) and Basse Navarre (Nafarroa Behera), which are included along with other non-Basque territories within the Lower Pyrenees Department of France. And even the terminology can be confusing: the three-province Basque *Comunidad Autónoma* is what is frequently – even by non-nationalists – referred to by a word coined by Arana, Euskadi (although the Spanish term País Vasco – Basque Country – is often used); but when nationalists talk about the more 'global' Basque territory. i.e. that including Navarra and Iparralde they tend to use the term 'Euskal Herria'.

⁷⁰ That the socialist left within a minority national region should in fact be *more* big-nation nationalist than that of the centre was a phenomenon noted by Lenin. 'I also fear that comrade Dzerzhinsky, who went to the Caucasus to investigate the "crime" of these "national-socialists", distinguishes himself there by his truly Russian frame of mind (it is common knowledge that people of other nationalities who have become Russified overdo this Russian frame of mind).' V. I. Lenin, 'The Question of Nationalities or "Autonomisation"' (1922), *Collected Works* vol. 36 (Moscow, 1966), 606.

⁷¹ As it was in the British case, in which traditional British jingoism and its paraphernalia appeared not at the height of the British empire, when it went unchallenged on a world scale, but only during the final third of the nineteenth century, when British imperial dominance was already at the beginning of its decline.

and – crucially – where its enemies may be. For both traditions the very existence of ‘Spain’ represents a triumph of millennial virtues, and those who challenge its existence or integrity must represent the millennial vices on whose anvil true Spanishness was forged. Given this common ground, that millennial virtue on the one hand is a tradition of ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, and on the other the defence of the true Church against the unbeliever and infidel, is in the end only a detail. The slogan of Francoism, ‘*España: Una, Grande, Libre*’, would not have sounded inappropriate in the mouth of a nineteenth-century liberal.

And of course the salient point is that Spanish nationalism was forged without a real external enemy: while the peoples of the principal powers of western Europe could vent their jingoistic frustrations on their neighbours, Spaniards had to make do what they could find at home: rather than an enemy without, all Spanish nationalism’s demons were to be found in the enemy within. From both national traditions any threat to the integrity of Spain was to be damned: for the liberal tradition, the natural inheritance of Spanish social democracy,⁷² Basque and Catalan separatism was anathema for being a Traditionalist, foralist, Carlist throwback to oligarchy and absolutism, and was, by its very nature, un- or anti-democratic; for the latter-day Catholic Traditionalists, separatism was to be likened to Communism, and Catalan and Basque nationalism intolerable because it was ‘red’. Independently of the whys and wherefores, then, here was real common ground between Spanish right and left.

Where substantial differences exist between left and right in relation to their approach to the non-Spanish nationalities they centre on details, not on fundamentals. Under no circumstances whatsoever can either tradition countenance the recognition of fundamental national ‘rights’ in any meaningful sense. Along these lines, the approach of the liberal tradition – in both its bourgeois and social-democratic incarnations – has been to try to accommodate non-Spanish nationalisms within a Spanish-state constitutional framework, with the recognition of political, linguistic, cultural and even economic privileges, but privileges devolved from Spain with Madrid veto. With respect to Catalan nationalism, by virtue of its autonomist, rather than independentist, nature, this has been historically relatively unproblematic. In a way reminiscent to the strategy of what Dieter Groh called ‘negative integration’ directed at the workers’ movement in the pre-First World War German Empire, Catalan nationalism has been accorded a political space within but at one remove from the fundamental set-up of Spain as an unified and centralised national state.⁷³ In short, as long as the Catalans don’t get too

⁷² The idea that the prevailing ideas of an antecedent radical bourgeois thought should have a formative influence on the ideological configuration of social democracy is hardly an original idea, yet the phenomenon still lacks the systematic treatment it deserves. Nicos Poulantzas once had this to say on the matter: ‘It is important to observe that the particular features of the transition [from feudalism to capitalism] in these [western European social] formations had important repercussions *for the workers’ movements of these countries*. The most important thing here is the *ideological* influence of the models of these revolutions on the workers’ movements: it is clear that the working class frequently cannot escape the fact of living, even when rebelling against the prevailing system, according to the model imposed by the predominant ideology. In our case, these models of bourgeois revolution and the ideological forms which accompany them are manifested, in their impact on the ideology of the working class, on the one hand as *dangers of specific deformations*, which stand as a threat to revolutionary theory, and on the other as *temptations*, so to speak, of *mimicry*, on the part of the working class of the revolutions of their national bourgeois class.’ (*Poder político y clases sociales en el estado capitalista* (Madrid, 1976), 232-3, my translation from Spanish into English, Althusserian-style italicisation in the original.) Poulantzas goes on to point to the concrete manifestations of an ‘English’ (*sic*) trade-unionist deformation, which ‘consists in attributing primacy to the class struggle at the economic level [...] and forgetting the political struggle for control of state power’, a French tendency towards ‘jacobinism’, the intrusion of radical democratic petty bourgeois ideology on the workers’ movement, resulting in a tendency to Blanquism, anarchism and utopian socialism (Poulantzas’ text was originally published in 1968), and German ‘insularity’, the tendency to see the state as the architect of the socialist revolution ‘from above’. A Spanish tendency to favour political centralisation in the face of irredentist nationalisms could perhaps be added to Poulantzas’ list.

⁷³ Dieter Groh, *Negative Integration und Revolutionärer Attentismus: Die Deutsche Sozialdemokratie am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt, 1973). In the words of Günther Roth, ‘negative integration’ is a means of allowing ‘a hostile mass movement to exist legally, but prevent[ing] it from gaining access to the centres of power.’ (*The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa, 1963), 315.)

pushy, the liberal tradition is happy to let them just get on with things. Thus Catalunya was accorded an autonomous (within the limits just outlined) government under the administration of the Mancomunitat from 1914 to 1925, and an autonomy statute and autonomous government in the form of the Generalitat under the Second Republic. True, for Catholic Traditionalism, in its two concrete twentieth-century manifestations in the form of the dictatorships of Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) and Franco, even such concessions to non-Spanishness were not to be countenanced. Under both regimes, all concessions to Catalan self-government were abandoned, and under the Franco dictatorship measures were taken to prohibit the use of the language, and other national paraphernalia, such as flags, national anthems, and so on.

But with regard to the Basque Country, however, the differences between the two Spanish nationalist traditions narrow considerably. Liberal social democracy has always found much more difficulty constructing an autonomy package within the framework of a sacrosanct, centralist Spain acceptable to Basque nationalists than it has with respect to Catalans. Under the Second Republic the autonomy statute offered by Madrid to the Basques was not to be implemented until after the outbreak of the civil war precisely because what was on offer from Madrid was not seen to go far enough in terms of devolved powers. The sticking point was the demand, formulated in an alternative proposal for a statute of autonomy by a congress of nationalist local government representatives held in Estella (Lizarra) in Navarra in June 1931, that the future autonomous Basque government would assume full control over religious affairs. This was a step too far for Madrid, for what this appeared to auger was the possibility of an autonomous Basque Country dominated by the Catholic-leaning PNV proving a bolt-hole of reaction within the Republic. But what the Spanish Republican and social-democratic left could not understand was this. Whatever the traditionalist and anti-liberal values that happened to be held in common by both Basque nationalism and the Spanish Catholic Traditionalists, the latter would never, because of its very visceral Spanishness, be able to countenance the autonomist or separatist demands of the former under any circumstances. As a consequence, it was clear that the most efficient way to break Basque nationalism from its traditionalist outlook was to foment an alliance with it precisely on the basis of recognition of rights of Basque self-government. The proof of this particular pudding was tasted under the Lerroux government, which, from its election at the end of 1933, overturned the then on offer proposal for a Basque statute of autonomy and threatened to do the same with the already in operation Catalan one too. For the Spanish Traditionalist right Basque conservatism counted for nothing; what was fundamental was the unity of Spain. José Calvo Sotelo, Finance Minister under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, summed up the outlook of the Spanish right with precision when in 1935 he famously declared: 'Between a red Spain and a broken Spain I would rather the former, which would be but a passing phase, while the latter would be broken forever.'⁷⁴ The experience of the Second Republic, and the civil war which followed, should have proved for once and for all, to both the Spanish state left and to Basque nationalists, even if against their gut wishes and best intentions, the logic and efficacy of their mutual natural alliance against Spanish Traditionalism and centralism. And as it turned out, and despite the fact that sections of the Basque nationalist PNV had originally equivocated with respect to their attitude on the occasion of Franco's uprising, once open civil war indeed had broken out, in July 1936, and once the Basque autonomy statute had indeed been approved by the Popular Front government the following October, the Basque government continued to participate in the Republican Government and loyally to support the Republican Army for the rest of the war.⁷⁵

Naturally, for the ensuing dictatorship of Franco the 'gentler' autonomist nationalism of the Catalan variety and the 'harder' separatist Basque one amounted to pretty much the same thing, and it clamped down on both with equal force and in equal measure. But it would be instructive to imagine how this would have appeared from within Catalunya and the Basque Country. For the Catalans, dictatorship did indeed represent a fundamental and deleterious shift in their relationship with the rest of Spain, a rupture with the previous constitutional *quid pro quo*

⁷⁴ What is often forgotten is that Calvo Sotelo's remarks were made with specific reference to *Basque* nationalism, in a speech delivered in the Frontón Urumea in San Sebastián in Guipúzcoa

⁷⁵ There is an excellent synthetic account of the early period of Basque nationalism – up to the beginning of the Franco Dictatorship – in John Sullivan, *El nacionalismo vasco radical 1959-1986* (Madrid, 1988), 11-32.

with liberal Spain. And the dream of a return of a return to a halcyon *status quo ante* would in turn colour the Catalans' reception of the future *transición*. But in the Basque case popular perception, at least within the Basque nationalist community, would have been quite different. The more intransigent and irredentist the nationalism held, the less it would have appeared that anything fundamental had changed at all. The autonomous Basque government of 1936 was a short-lived affair, and in good part, it could be argued, it was so as a consequence of Madrid's reluctance to recognise the justice of the Basques' claims to determine their own level of self-government. For a significant layer of Basque nationalism, then, the passage from Second Republic to Francoist dictatorship represented not a *qualitative* shift in the political configuration of the Spanish state and their position within it, but only a *quantitative* turn in the level of repression the Spanish state was prepared to mete out.

All this notwithstanding, of course, at the dictatorship's close it was immediately apparent that the new transitional government would have to reach some kind of accommodation with the Spanish peripheral nationalisms. In the Catalan case this was accomplished with a minimum of fuss, as the ageing Josep Tarradellas, the Generalitat's President in exile, was brought back from Mexico, and – an astute move by Suárez, this – a Royal Decree of September 1977 annulled Franco's own previous annulment of the old Generalitat, allowing Tarradellas to act as a provisional President of a provisionally autonomous Catalunya. This proved to be a sufficiently effective holding operation which was able to contain the situation until the 1978 Constitution which set up the currently existing 'state of autonomies'.⁷⁶

No such simple solution was possible in the Basque case. The fundamental difference here was that, alongside the more moderate nationalists of the PNV, who were perfectly happy to accept an autonomy statute along the same lines as the Catalan one, as long as they could remain in control in its negotiation and able to control the projected parliamentary institutions to emerge from it, there existed a much more radical political current, smaller, but still significantly large, for whom nothing short of full state independence would be adequate.⁷⁷ In addition, in the Basque Country a significant part of the population were not Basque nationalist at all: not only not interested in self-government but actively hostile to the idea. And of course we find the radical nationalist ETA, an organisation basing itself (or at least trying to) on the twin projects of Basque national independence and revolutionary socialism, and who had been waging an 'armed struggle' against the Spanish state since the late 1960s.

In the end an autonomy statute was drafted by the PNV directly with the Suárez government, by-passing the other political forces in the Basque Country. In the meantime, however, the new Constitution had already been

⁷⁶ See note 45 above. In fact, the Constitution of 1978, which established framework of the system of *Comunidades Autónomas*, allows for two distinct categories of *Comunidad Autónoma* when, in its second article, it states, rather cryptically, 'The Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, common and indivisible homeland of all Spanish people, and recognises and guarantees the right of autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed and solidarity between all of them.' Aside from the obvious non-sequitur that this sentence contains, here we find the famous '*café para todos*' ('coffee for everybody') solution to the problem of Basque and Catalan (and, to an extent, Galician) national questions: the 'nationalities' (rather than 'regions') referred to were understood to be precisely Catalunya and the Basque Country, but by not naming them, and lumping nationalities with regions in a common structure, the intention was to allow for a level of Basque and Catalan self-government without specifically saying so. The Constitution also laid down two possible methods of setting up of *Comunidades Autónomas*, the second being the celebrated 'fast track' method set out in article 151, which opened up the possibility for putative *Comunidades Autónomas* to achieve greater and more rapid accumulation of devolved powers through the establishment of an autonomy statute approved by a popular referendum. In the end, the fast-track route was to be followed by Catalunya, the Basque Country, Galicia and Andalucía. The present Constitution can be read here: <<http://www.constitucion.es/constitucion/castellano/index.html>>; an English translation (though the translations used both here and elsewhere in the text are mine) here: <http://www.igsap.map.es/cia/dispo/ce_ingles_index.htm>.

⁷⁷ The more radical currents within Basque nationalism, collectively known by the Basque word *abertzales*, are hardly the crazed and isolated minority that Madrid frequently paints them to be. In Basque elections, the *abertzale* left consistently picks up around 15 to 20 per cent of the total vote, putting it as a comfortable third of all Basque nationalist opinion.

drawn up and subjected to popular referendum, and while, although it won wide acceptance throughout the rest of the Spanish State, the majority of the Basques symbolically rejected it: even though it was approved by a majority of three to one, the turnout in the referendum in the Basque Country (here understood as Vizcaya, Álava and Guipúzcoa) only amounted to around 45 per cent of the electorate.⁷⁸ Here, the PNV had effectively campaigned against the Constitution, calling for what dubbed an ‘active abstention’ in the referendum; however, when the autonomy statute it was largely responsible for drafting was put to the vote the following year, with the PNV campaigning for its support, it was passed, with 94.6 per cent of the electorate voting for, but 43.8 per cent abstaining.

However, it was now clear to anyone who cared to see that this was not the satisfactory solution to the Basque ‘problem’ that had originally been intended. Given that the autonomy statute could only make sense within the framework of the Constitution there now opened up a not only a breach between Basque nationalism and Spanish nationalism within the Basque Country, but also a permanent tension between the moderate PNV⁷⁹ and the more radical nationalist, or *abertzale*, currents. The tensions thus created were to colour Basque – and by extension Spanish – politics right up to the present day.

From the first elections to the new parliament in 1981, and up to 1998, the PNV was able to function as the governing party in the Basque Parliament, from 1986 with the support of the Basque section of PSOE. This political collaboration with Spanish state social democracy is not as peculiar as it first appears to be: for both formations, collaboration was the necessary means to ensure the defence of the of the existing constitutional settlement of the *transición*. PSOE needed the PNV on board in the Basque Country just as Suárez needed PSOE and the Communist Party on board in Madrid. For the PNV, on the other hand, maintaining governmental links with the more radical wing of the nationalist movement to the exclusion of collaboration with the Spanish state constitutionalists would have been too dangerous from the point of view of the survival of the Basque autonomy settlement, and, crucially, PNV’s own dominant position in it. But in addition to this, the party also remained tied to its nationalist credentials, and, via this, to the broader nationalist movement, including the *abertzale* component. A break by the PNV from the rest of the nationalist movement would deprive the former of its essential role in Basque politics, for the Party is only useful to Madrid insofar as it *is* nationalist. In addition, the PNV cannot formally completely break from the *abertzales*, for to have the *abertzale* left in general, and ETA in particular, running amok without the PNV’s more moderating influence would also have a seriously destabilising impact on the PNV’s place in the Basque constitutional framework.

⁷⁸ The vote for the constitution was 479,205 with 163,191 votes against out of a total electorate of 1,552,737, giving a turnout of 44.7 per cent. However, if account is taken of the 11,097 *nulo* (spoiled) ballots and the 39,817 *blanco* (blank) ballots, the turnout drops to 41.4 per cent. (Source: <http://www4.euskadi.net/emaitzak/datuak/indice_c.asp>, click on ‘Refer. Constitucional 1978 (R78)’ at the bottom left.)

⁷⁹ Today the PNV is a moderate bourgeois-nationalist party of Christian-Democratic stamp (it is, in fact, a member of the Christian Democratic International). It is not openly independentist: its statutes define it as ‘an instrument of the realisation of the nationalist political project’, which ‘seeks to win the greatest social, economic, political and cultural development of the citizens of Euskadi’. Fundamentally, PNV is an opportunist party with the single goal of maintaining control of the Basque government. This fact explains the otherwise incomprehensible series of apparently mutually contradictory political deals made by the PNV with other political parties in both the Basque Country and Spain. In 1996, for example, when the minority government of the Partido Popular was in need of parliamentary support in Madrid to enable it to form a stable administration, an agreement was signed between PP and PNV (along with agreements between PP and other non-Spanish nationalist formations) to widen – although not greatly – the powers of the Basque parliament: the PP agreed to compensate the PNV for property seized and destroyed by Franco, and to give the regional governments in the CAV some extra tax advantages, more authority over their ports, a little more money for training schemes and a vague commitment to ‘consider’ more moves toward devolution in the future. But, on the other hand, PNV’s tenure as the governing party in the Basque parliament was, from 1986 to 1998, achieved with the support of the Spanish Socialist Party, while after 1998 PNV has governed with the support of a broader nationalist bloc.

The wave of anti-Basque-nationalist outrage that swept Spain, including the Basque Country, following ETA's kidnapping and execution of the PP councillor Miguel Ángel Blanco in 1997 blew this complex set of political relationships clean out of the water. In the first place, the PNV realised that the danger of popular revulsion against ETA turning itself on them too was very real. To make matters worse, it was also clear to anyone who cared to look at the statistics that from 1993 the gap between the combined votes of the Spanish State parties (PP and PSOE) and the Basque nationalists had been narrowing, to the point that from 1996 the PP and PSOE combined had been winning a greater share of the vote in Spanish State elections (but not – yet? – in Basque elections) in the Basque Country. Over the summer of 1998 a series of more or less secret meetings took place between representatives of PNV and ETA, both sides motivated by a fear of being politically isolated, a process which resulted in the signing of the Pact of Lizarra (named after the town in Navarra in which it was signed⁸⁰) in September of that year by PNV, Eusko Alkartasuna,⁸¹ Herri Batasuna,⁸² the Basque section of Izquierda Unida,⁸³ and a host of other, smaller political parties, trade unions and community organisations. What was significant about the Lizarra Pact, which was ostensibly an attempt to establish a 'peace process' along the same lines as that then taking place in Ireland (or at least on a wildly over-optimistic assessment of the lines of the Irish process – again, an example of nationalists taking other nationalists' rhetoric for good coin) was its statement, tucked away towards the end, that '[...] a definitive resolution [of the 'Basque problem'] [...] would deepen democracy in the sense that *the people of Euskal Herria would be given the last word regarding the shaping of their future, with the states involved respecting that decision*' (my emphasis). While the text as a whole was hardly unambiguous, this section can be read as a statement for self-determination, and – since the term 'Euskal Herria' was used – self-determination for the Basque Country understood in the global sense, that is, as comprising the *Comunidad Autónoma*, Navarra, and the French Basque territories.⁸⁴

The significance of the Pact was indicated when four days later ETA announced an indefinite cease-fire. And in October of that year elections for the Basque parliament were held: with the combined votes of PNV, EA and HB (who, for the first time, took their seats in the Basque parliament – up to that point they had held that, as the parliament had been established under the auspices of a constitution that they did not accept they would not bestow on it the approval implied by their participation), a government composed of PNV and EA was invested (PSOE having withdrawn from its 12-year-old coalition with the PNV, accusing the PNV – hardly unfairly – of having made a secret pact with Herri Batasuna), with the PNV's Juan José Ibarretxe installed as *lehendakari*. This was not the first exclusively nationalist government of the CAV (PNV had been able to govern alone from 1980 to 1984, and had managed to limp along as a minority government from 1984 to 1986), but it was the first exclusively nationalist government effectively to incorporate the support of the *abertzale* left.

⁸⁰ Lizarra has a symbolic resonance for Basque nationalism: it was the site of the approval of a joint statute of autonomy for the Basque territories and Navarra drawn up by the locally elected nationalist politicians of these areas in 1931 (see above).

⁸¹ A 1986 split from PNV led by the former *lehendakari* (Basque first minister) Carlos Garaikoetxea. EA is nominally more radical than PNV – it openly calls for Basque self-determination, for example – but, in reality, PNV and EA are chips off the same opportunist block.

⁸² Roughly the Sinn Féin to ETA's IRA, although the Irish metaphor needs to be treated with caution.

⁸³ Unlike in the rest of the Spanish State the Basque section of IU is not dominated by the Communist Party. The political differences between the independent majority of the Basque IU and the Communist Party in the Basque Country centre on what the Communists call 'equidistance', a home grown version of the theory of the *dos orillas*. Concretely, the Basque Communists' criticisms of the majority (which are shared too in Madrid) is that it is far too soft on Basque nationalism. The differences were at one point so strong within the Basque IU that the Communist minority refused to let themselves be considered as candidates in the Basque elections of 2001.

⁸⁴ A Spanish version of the text of the pact can be read here: <<http://www.lizarra-garazi.org/01default.htm>>; an English translation – inadequate, in that it misses the nuances of the text referred to above – here: <http://www.euskadi.net/pakea/indicel_i.htm>.

But the Lizarra agreement, intended as a ‘route-map’ for a political solution to the Basque ‘problem’, in the end turned out to be something of a road to nowhere. At the end of November 1999, ETA called off their cease-fire, returning to armed actions with the assassination of Fernando Buesa, a leading Socialist Party politician, and former deputy *lehendakari* and Basque minister, in February 2000; and in January 2000 the parliamentary deputies of Herri Batasuna (now rebaptised as Euskal Herritarrok⁸⁵), declaring that Lizarra had failed, walked out of the Basque parliament, paralysing it – since the PNV government was unable to function without its votes, and the government could not be removed since the combined votes of the non-Basque nationalist parties were insufficient (which is why the next Basque elections were held in 2001, a year earlier than scheduled).⁸⁶

Nevertheless, Lizarra marked a watershed in Basque politics: effectively it signalled that the constitutional settlement of the *transición* had failed. Gone forever now was the possibility of PNV-PSOE collaboration. For the liberal nationalism of the Spanish Socialists, non-Spanish nationalism was tolerable only up to the degree that it accepted the rules of the constitutional integrity of the Spanish state. Going beyond this point was to cross the Rubicon, and the automatic reflex of Spanish social-democracy was now to defend the integrity of Spain against Basque nationalism, now not only against its *abertzale* component, but against it *tout court*. In the Basque elections of 2001, it was given to be understood that, should PSOE and the PP together win enough seats to make them collectively the largest group in the parliament then they would form a joint, anti-Basque nationalist, administration.⁸⁷ As it happened, they failed. The turnout in the elections was a record high, and PNV and EA, who this time stood on a joint ticket, emerged as the largest parliamentary group. Significantly, the vote for IU also increased (countering the trend with respect to IU elsewhere in the Spanish state), which could be seen as an endorsement of their pro-Lizarra position (much to the horror of IU headquarters in Madrid); and Euskal Herritarrok’s vote declined significantly, a fact which in turn could be interpreted as a punishment on the part of the electorate for ETA’s breaking of their cease-fire. In short, the election could only be understood as a for or against Lizarra plebiscite, and the Basque electorate turned out and voted resoundingly for it.

Nevertheless, the ante had been upped significantly, and the PP government, loyally supported by the Socialists, responded in kind, unleashing a series of measures which were to terminate in the banning of Euskal Herritarrok – now, confusingly, re-relaunched as Batasuna – in August 2002 (a decision confirmed by the Spanish Supreme Court in March 2003) and the seizure of its assets and offices.⁸⁸ In addition, as a consequence of the banning,

⁸⁵ The rapid series of name-changes undergone by Herri Batasuna over this period was not simply a question of political ‘relaunching’ but something that developed from a fear of being banned, and the belief that a ‘moving target’ in this sense would be more difficult for the authorities to home in on. As it turned out the fear was justified, but the diversionary tactic inadequate.

⁸⁶ Why ETA called off their cease-fire will have to be a matter for speculation, since the organisation itself has not been exactly forthcoming or clear on the nuances of its strategic thinking. However, for me, it seems clear that an important factor at this time in pushing ETA towards a ‘political’ strategy in the first place was the perceived fear of political isolation, arising both with regard to the wider population of the Basque Country’s attitude towards ETA, and as a consequence of the development of the relationship between PNV and PSOE. If this was what pushed ETA into the Lizarra process, then it is also clear that the pressure was off them somewhat by the end of 1998: Lizarra had opened up an almost impassable rift between Basque nationalism and Spanish socialism, while the elections to the Basque parliament at the end of 1998 had given the *abertzale* left its biggest ever vote in the CAV. I suggest that ETA abandoned the Lizarra route because by then there was simply no longer the necessary pressure on them to follow it.

⁸⁷ And, for good measure, in December 2000, PP and PSOE signed an ‘Agreement in favour of Freedom and Against Terrorism’ in Madrid, in which both parties called on the PNV to break definitively all links with the framework of Lizarra, a demand which was presented as a precondition to any future pact or agreement with Basque nationalism. The agreement declared: ‘PP and PSOE want to make explicit, before the Spanish people, our firm resolution to defeat the terrorists’ strategy, using all the measures that the *Estado de Derecho* [i.e. the legal framework of the Spanish State] puts at our disposition.’ (*El País*, 9 December, 2000)

⁸⁸ The banning took place under an amendment to the law governing the regulation of political parties, which made it incompatible for a party which ‘defended’, ‘justified’ or ‘supported’ ‘terrorist acts’, effectively making it a crime for a

the Spanish Supreme Court demanded the withdrawal of parliamentary facilities to Batasuna's parliamentary group, which had now returned to the parliament; and it is to the Basque government's credit that it has so far refused to implement this decision.

In the face of all this, in September 2002 the PNV's Juan José Ibarretxe, who had continued in the post of *lehendakari*, put forward the project of a new Basque autonomy statute. The resulting draft document, issued a year later under the title of '*Propuesta de Estatuto Político de la Comunidad de Euskadi*', but known more commonly as '*el plan Ibarretxe*', proposes, amongst other measures, that the existing *Comunidad Autónoma Vasca* would have what it calls 'associate sovereign status' with Spain, and that it would have the right to determine its own relations, not only with the rest of Spain as a whole, but with other Basque territories, including Navarra and the French Basque territories, and with other entities – other nations, the European Union, etc.⁸⁹ The document is currently passing through the Basque parliament in its drafting phase, and is scheduled to be presented to the parliament for approval at the end of this year. The proposal is that the text finally approved by the parliament will be subject of a popular referendum some time next spring.

To say that *el plan Ibarretxe* has been greeted with furore would be understate matters. The response of the PP government in Madrid was to denounce the proposal as an evasion from the 'fight against terrorism', and it was quick to remind Ibarretxe that his proposal for a referendum lay outside of the provisions of the Constitution, was thus illegal, and that he, Ibarretxe, would be facing criminal charges, with the probability of gaol and disqualification from office if he pursued the matter. Ibarretxe's response that if that was what was to come to pass then the matter would be sorted out 'on the streets' may just have been hotheadedness, but it indicates the scale to which political tensions have been sharpened over the issue. The general secretary of the PP, and its prime ministerial candidate, Mariano Rajoy, even went as far as to say that what Ibarretxe was about was tantamount to 'treason'.⁹⁰

Neither has Ibarretxe been making many new friends in PSOE. Although the Spanish Socialists cannot quite manage the Defcon-2 rhetoric of the PP, the incoming PSOE Minister of Justice, Juan Fernando López Aguilar could declare recently that the *plan Ibarretxe* was 'at heart unconstitutional and therefore politically non-negotiable'. A little more darkly, he warned: 'The *plan Ibarretxe* is simply not going to prosper.'⁹¹

Izquierda Unida and the Communist Party have not been far behind. Although Llamazares himself can say very little, given that the Basque section of IU has not only voted in favour of the *plan Ibarretxe* in the Basque parliament, but also forms a part of the Basque government itself, with its leader, Javier Madrazo, acting as Minister of Housing, at the next level down from him there is a great deal of opposition. Rosa Aguilar, a Communist Party stalwart and the IU Mayor of Córdoba, even took to an interview on national television to denounce the failure of IU in the Basque Country to distance itself from Ibarretxe (in which she also insisted that the Supreme Court's demand that the Batasuna parliamentary group in the Basque Country be dissolved be

political party *not* to condemn terrorism. Also deemed illegal were the acts of 'encouraging hatred and violence', encouraging 'social confrontation', 'challenging the legitimacy of democratic institutions' and 'promoting a culture of civil confrontation'. The new law, which does not only apply to the Basque Country, was fully supported in the Spanish parliament by PSOE. IU, on the other hand, decided to abstain, a move justified by IU leader Llamazares like this: 'We are abstaining because while we repudiate Batasuna's connivance with ETA, we don't think that the Parliament should involve itself in something that pertains to the judges', i.e. that illegalisation should now have been a legal and not a political matter. This is what is known in everyday speech as having one's cake and eating it. (See *El País*, 21 August 2002.)

⁸⁹ The full text (in Spanish) of the proposed statute can be read here:

<http://www.elmundo.es/documentos/2003/10/estatuto_vasco.pdf>. Unfortunately, I know of no available English translation of this fundamentally important text.

⁹⁰ *El Mundo*, 26 October, 2003.

⁹¹ *El Mundo* 22 April, 2004.

carried out in the name of ‘respect for the rule of law’).⁹² Francisco Frutos, the General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, declared the *plan Ibarretxe* a ‘lamentable political adventure’, which ‘breaks with the democratic process forged over the last 25 years’.⁹³ While the Basque section of the Spanish Communist Party, in the name of ‘solidarity of all the peoples of Spain’, regretted that the *plan Ibarretxe* would impose the ‘nationalist agenda’ on political debate in both Spain and the Basque Country.⁹⁴

Perhaps the attitude of the PP towards Ibarretxe’s proposal for a new Basque statute along the lines of something looking very similar to real self-determination (in the true meaning of the term, i.e. free of a Madrid veto) is understandable; maybe now it is also clear why the mainstream Spanish state *left* – both PSOE, and, a few shades of nuance behind, IU – confronts such proposals with such opprobrium too.

The fact is, and this is critical for an understanding of how present-day Spanish politics works, that the Spanish state left cannot, absolutely cannot, even countenance this kind of thing for precisely the same reason that drove the PP to declare what Ibarretxe was up to as criminal, and that is that the content of the *plan Ibarretxe* is *unconstitutional*, and the Constitution, and everything that goes with it, is the one thing that the left will simply not break from. We saw earlier how the *transición* itself was only won with the support of the Spanish state left, and winning the *transición* has now transformed itself into the Spanish state left’s *raison d’être*. Of course, that Spaniards are now able to operate within conditions of constitutional democracy after suffering three and a half decades of fascist dictatorship is clearly a positive state of affairs. Only the churlish – or the sectarian – would begrudge Spaniards the right of assembly, of free movement, of political association, to vote, and – if comparison is made with the years of autarky of the 1940s and 50s – the freedom from the threat of starvation, of summary arrest, torture and the middle of the night firing squad, in the name of the necessity of some future socialist nirvana; even if, of course, these rights, like all bourgeois democratic rights, exist within a constitutional framework designed both to protect the untrammelled operation of capitalist production and to keep it safely out of reach of the tinkering of ordinary people; and even if, as is inevitable in all bourgeois democratic systems, the system of bourgeois democratic rights will often march hand in hand with some ugly and most decidedly anti-democratic activities. But the real problem is this: the affinity for the left of what it calls ‘*la democracia*’ – the institutional monarchic bourgeois democratic system that issued from the *transición* – and the institutional framework in which it is inculcated, ‘*el estado de derecho*’ (the ‘state of law’, although the English language is too historically influenced by an Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence to convey accurately the import of the expression) is precisely *not* based on seeing it as a sum total of concrete rights and freedoms, but as a kind of emblematic expression of all that is good and virtuous about Spanish history and culture. In short, the trinity of *la transición*, *la democracia* and *el estado de derecho* is the modern resurrection of nineteenth-century bourgeois Spanish liberalism, and for bourgeois Spanish liberalism, the very integrity of Spain itself stood as the fundamental, and only, guarantee, of the survival of the virtues – democracy, freedom, constitutionality, rationalism – of Spaniards. Anything that jeopardised the constitutional integrity of the Spanish nation jeopardised too the millennial virtues of Spanishness; and what jeopardises it the most at the present, now that Napoleon is no longer with us, is precisely the threat posed by irredentist nationalism in general and Basque nationalism in particular. Catalanism, as we have seen, is tolerable for this viewpoint, for it is prepared to live within the Madrid veto. Basque nationalism, for its historical independentist tendencies is not. This is a matter that is even beyond rational debate, since, for Spanish social democracy, in both its Second and Third International forms, *la democracia* has been transferred from the stuff of politics to the status of a totem. The Constitution functions as the Received Word, talk of modification beyond the merest philological technicality simply beyond countenance. And the heretic is not to be reasoned with; he is to be destroyed. Not for nothing is it that the most common epithet used by the left in its denunciation of the *abertzales* is ‘nazi’.

⁹² *El Mundo*, 12 December, 2003. The interview was aired on the independent television station Antena 3.

⁹³ *El Mundo*, 13 September, 2003.

⁹⁴ According to their website: see ‘El PCE-EPK considera que el Plan Ibarretxe es una propuesta nacionalista y electoralista’, <<http://www.pce.es/epkpce/page26.html>>.

It can now be seen that the ideological glue that holds the whole contraption of the *transición* together – and thus the best safeguard for the continued unmolested operation of capitalism in Spain – is Spanish nationalism; Spanish nationalism of nineteenth-century liberal vintage, which is neither a flag-waving jingoistic nationalism like the British-English one, nor a blunt instrument of Francoist variety, but which is none the less pernicious for that.

The *transición* tied the Spanish working class and its parties to a system of bourgeois constitutional monarchy, with everything else that went with it – from low wages and institutionalised labour flexibility to entrenched clericalism and the highest rate of domestic violence in western Europe – with the tightest of bonds; and it is only through attacking this system at its nerve centre, Spanish nationalism in the concrete form of reification of the constitutional settlement of the late 1970s,⁹⁵ will these bonds ever be loosed. The distance that the Spanish state left still has to go to realise this strategic challenge is indicated by its unmitigated chauvinism in relation to the Basque question. In one sentence: until the Spanish state left comes round to see that irredentist Basque nationalism is not its enemy, but its strategic friend, it will achieve nothing. What happened after 11 March once again indicated the truth of this; that, without this understanding, everything else ultimately comes, can only come, to nothing.

* * *

As, over the course of that Thursday morning, 11 March 2004, the scale of what had happened began to become clear, and the body count rose into double figures, and seemed likely to hit three, shocked people began to ask the obvious question. Who was behind this? Who had planted the bombs? The first assumption drawn by most people with an opinion to share that morning was that it had been the work of the Basque nationalist group ETA. Now, for the Spanish state equivalent of the man on the Clapham omnibus this is perhaps understandable, since realistically, at first sight, who else could it have been. But it is necessary to emphasise here that politicians from all sides immediately sprang to the same conclusion, and made public statements accordingly. It is especially important to emphasise this given the fabric of mythology that has subsequently been woven around the whole affair.

For the standard explanation of what happened, and what was just about to happen, is this. As soon as the bombs went off, the PP, realising that if it became public knowledge that the attack had been carried out by an al-Qaeda type organisation – just days before the elections, remember – and fearing that they would be held responsible for having embroiled Spain in the western invasion of Iraq, an operation that was and still is extraordinarily unpopular in Spain, and that they would pay an expensive electoral price for their foreign policy decisions, decided to insist, at least up until the elections, on someone else – anyone else – being responsible. And that someone else was ETA, who just happened to be the most convenient fall guys for this operation. The government thus lied from the off, and when their operation came unstuck, an appalled Spanish people, fired up by righteous anger, voted Socialist in the elections held on the Sunday.

This is the explanation held by the Socialists, the Communists and IU, and even the revolutionary left (what there is of it these days in Spain). But it is inadequate, for it is, rather like the curate's egg, true only in parts.

Here it is where it is false. It is not true that the PP was the only party publicly to attribute guilt to ETA; it is not even true that the PP were the *first* to do so. Before the PP made any such declaration, the leaders of PSOE, IU

⁹⁵ This is the Spanish version of what Tom Nairn once described as the 'spirit-country', the 'national spirit-essence, a land of the mind distinguishable from the mundane [...]. One can think of it [...] as a set of mental map-survey points implanted in our communal psyche.' (*The Enchanted Glass* (London, 1988), 91-2)

and the PNV had already made public declarations to that effect. Thus, that morning, Zapatero stated that the attack was ‘the most horrendous that ETA have committed’; and Llamazares denounced the attack as a ‘nazi barbarity committed by ETA,’ an ‘attempt to drown democracy in blood’, and called for ‘police and penal persecution’ to finish off the group. And most interesting of all, the Basque *lehendakari* Ibarretxe himself said, in a prepared declaration to the press at 9.30 that morning, that ‘ETA is writing the last pages of its history [...]. ETA has tried to dynamite democracy.’ Now it is almost certainly the case that these parties were acting, at least in part, on information supplied through official channels. But it is nevertheless important to note the curious fact that at this early point practically the only political force to *not* name ETA was the government. Just after midday, the PP’s prime ministerial candidate Mariano Rajoy had condemned the attacks, he did not attribute them to anyone; only at 1.30 that afternoon, with a statement by Ángel Acebes, the Interior Minister, was there any official naming of ETA as chief suspects.⁹⁶

Thus we can see that, *pace* the account now universally accepted by the left, the government did not on that Thursday insist on ETA’s responsibility in the face of evidence to the contrary. Rather it insisted on ETA’s responsibility in the face of *no* evidence at all (other than a particular political assessment of ETA and its tactics). And at this point the PP was in line with practically every other political force in Spain in attributing responsibility to ETA: where it differed – other than being the party with the most privileged source of information from the state security forces – was that it was somewhat slower off the mark than the other parties to name names.

But, of course, as time passed evidence that this was almost certainly not the work of ETA did begin to accumulate. Circumstantially, of course, with a little thought, it should really have appeared improbable that ETA had planted the bombs. The clear aim of the attack was to cause the maximum carnage. In addition, the areas targeted – el Pozo del Tío Raimundo, Santa Eugenia, Atocha – were far from the mainstream stockbroker belt: the victims were to be factory workers and students, not politicians and businesspeople, and certainly not the security forces. So if this had been the work of ETA, it would have marked a dramatic – and frankly inexplicable – change in tactics. It would also have marked a new, and highly unlikely, high in logistical sophistication. And, most uncharacteristic for ETA, there was no warning given.⁹⁷

On top of this, that morning, answering the inevitable question on local radio, Arnaldo Otegi, spokesperson for the now banned Batasuna, declared in the most clear terms, for the reasons just outlined, that he could not believe that ETA were responsible.

Alongside this circumstantial evidence against the possibility of ETA involvement, over the course of that Thursday evidence of a more concrete nature began to accumulate. First, on the Thursday morning, the police discovered a stolen van – a white Renault Kangoo – containing detonators and a tape with verses in Arabic at the place where the bombs were planted. Significantly, the detonators were of a type not used by ETA. An unexploded bomb was discovered at the scene later that afternoon that contained explosives identified the next morning as of the type known as Goma 2-ECO, a type of plastic explosive abandoned by ETA ten years ago for the more readily available dynamite derivative Titadine. Then, later that evening, a claim for the attack was made on behalf of the Abu Hafs al Masri brigades (although with what seriousness this should have been taken is not clear, since this group – or at least this name – had been used previously to claim false responsibility for previous attacks). But on Friday evening came the most convincing evidence of all: ETA themselves made a

⁹⁶ Quotations and chronologies assembled from both print and online editions of *El País*, *El Mundo* and *El Diario de León*, 12 March, 2004.

⁹⁷ It is customary in Spain, especially on the left, to regard ETA as simple murderers and criminals. Nevertheless, each and every ETA action has had a political motive, and, when it was a question of a bomb in a public space, has come accompanied by a warning, even if, at times, a not very effective one. Whatever one may think about ETA’s tactics and politics, however bungled previous operations may have been, whatever the rights and wrongs of civilian ‘collateral damage’ in the armed struggle, the vision of ETA as wreakers of carnage for carnage’s sake is a view with its origin in the type of Spanish nationalist mythology outlined above, not in facts.

statement, through the Basque press agency Gara, that they were not responsible for the attack – and ETA, throughout their history, have always, always, claimed responsibility for their actions. On Saturday the arrests began, of people linked, in one way or another, to supposed ‘al-Qaeda’ type organisations.

In the light of this, over the course of Friday the other principal parties began to raise doubts about the government’s it-was-ETA hypothesis. But two curious facts stand out. The first is this: it is certainly the case that in each and every public statement made by the government over this period it was insisted that it was believed that ETA was responsible for the attacks; but it was never the case that the government ever ruled out the possibility, however remote that it may have been for them, that someone else was responsible. Government statements being government statements the language in which they were couched was formal and carefully constructed to cover the backs of whoever wanted their back to be covered, but the claim that the government *definitively* ruled out authorship by a person or persons not connected with ETA at any point is false.

This is the second. Subsequently, the mainstream left was to claim that the it-was-ETA hypothesis, which they shared on Thursday morning in ‘good faith’, had been dropped by them by the Friday, once concrete and circumstantial evidence seemed to have pointed in a different direction. This is false too. It *is* true that the mainstream party leaders were vocal in their concerns over the Friday that the government just *might* not be playing a fair hand with the facts. But it is also the case that, if we can impute dastardly motives to the PP given the proximity of the elections to put their own particular spin on events for electoral advantage, this does not mean that we cannot do the same with regard to the left. To plant the suggestion, but only the suggestion, that the government might not being *entirely* honest in the context of the shock and outrage still being palpably expressed would reap its own reward. Goose and gander here could surely eat off the same plate. But the fundamental point is this. Once the scale of the carnage became known that Thursday, the government had called mass demonstrations throughout Spain for the Friday evening under the slogans of ‘With the Victims, With the Constitution, For the Defeat of Terrorism.’ This is enormously revealing of what was happening. Why ‘With the Constitution’? If the attacks had been carried out by an al-Qaeda type group, or by anyone else in the whole wide world *other* than ETA for that matter, what could the *constitutional* implications have been? No: ‘With the Constitution’ and ‘Against ETA’ can only function here as synonyms. But there was practically no opposition from the mainstream parties to this shoehorning of popular solidarity with the victims into the political framework of defence of the Constitution. From PSOE, on this question, there was only support for the government. From PNV, support, with the proviso that the Basque Country’s mobilisations be carried out without any political slogans at all. IU, at least, argued that ‘With the Constitution’ was ‘inappropriate’ for a demonstration of solidarity with the victims, on the grounds that this latter should not be dependent on support for the former. But this was to miss the point of the ideological structure then making itself felt. ‘With the Constitution’ was not a peripheral issue at this point, unnecessary ideological baggage that could be safely left out. ‘With the Constitution’ was in fact the central ideological feature of developments.

For what was happening now was this. Once the it-was-ETA line had become fixed, by around midday on Thursday, and it was fixed out of practically unanimous all-party consensus, a political momentum was built up that was simply impossible for anyone to stop, a momentum which carried all along with it. Fundamentally, what now drove the process was a recrudescence of simple Spanish nationalism, and the way that all shades of Spanish state politics had bought into the totems of Constitution, *democracia*, and *estado de derecho* as the concrete living manifestation of everything Spanish about Spain propelled a self-fulfilling logic which saw to it that once this holy trinity was deemed to have come under attack, and by definition it could only have come under attack from *within* the Spanish state, not from *outside*, a deluge of patriotic reaction was unleashed which practically, none, whether they wanted to or not, could have stopped.

The thirty years of *la democracia* had sown the wind; what was now being reaped was the hurricane. What had happened was that from the PP, through PSOE, to IU and the Communist Party, the reification of the Spanish nation as expressed as *la democracia* made it inevitable that they could not stand against the flow of mass nationalist sentiment – unleashed through the mutual effort of all with their denunciation of ETA ‘nazis’ and

‘barbarians’ intent on destroying ‘democracy’ (and for ‘democracy’ here we are compelled to read ‘Spain’). ‘With the Constitution’ was not an independent issue at all those days, separate from the bombings and the mass reaction to it, but a question, once the tidal wave of mass nationalism had been unleashed, that stood right at the heart of developments. The only response open to all political forces to such a shocking event turned out to be a nationalistic one: and Spanish nationalism, in its modern form, as we have seen, is forged above everything else on opposition to irredentist nationalism in general and Basque nationalism in particular. If for Doctor Johnson patriotism was the last refuge of the scoundrel, in Spanish politics, nationalism – liberal constitutional, democratic, post-Franco nationalism – is the last refuge of practically everybody in a crisis as deep as that unleashed that Thursday morning.⁹⁸ It was not that the conviction that ETA was responsible for the bombing made the explosion of Spanish nationalism inevitable, but the other way around: that the only fundamental common political discourse remaining within Spanish state politics is nationalism meant that by default ETA *had* to be blamed – be it directly, or indirectly – before the facts, and independently of them; not that ‘Against ETA’ necessarily meant ‘With the Constitution’, but that ‘With the Constitution’ meant ‘Against ETA’.⁹⁹

As it turned out, the demonstrations of that Friday night were truly enormous.¹⁰⁰ All over the Spanish state the flag of the Spanish monarchy was being displayed – in shops, in people’s windows, on lapels – and on the demonstrations of that Friday evening themselves, possibly the biggest popular mobilisations seen in Spain since the days of the Second Republic, the mood was aggressively nationalistic: ‘*España, unida, jamás será vencida*’ – ‘Spain, united, will never be defeated’ – was a common chant. Now, one could say that it is merely churlish to focus on this overt display of nationalism – for it was nothing worse than what is seen at the average football match – and miss what was essentially a display of popular solidarity with the ordinary working class victims of the bombings. But this would be to miss the point. For sure, solidarity with the victims was one of the sentiments that motivated people into going on the demonstrations, but it is cardinal to see that the dynamic unleashed here was not solidarity with innocent victims of mindless slaughter *per se* but *Spanish* victims of an attack on *Spanish* democracy, on *Spanishness* itself, a dynamic symbolised by the unity of political forces – Communists, Socialists, neoliberals, the Church, the Royal Family – heading the marches.¹⁰¹ The mood was on

⁹⁸ As expressed by both Aznar and the king in live television addresses to ‘the nation’ on the afternoon and evening of Thursday. Speaking first, Aznar claimed that the people who had died had died ‘because of the mere fact of being Spanish’, conveniently forgetting the large number of victims – due to the location of the bombs – who were immigrants, often without papers, forced as a consequence to work in sweatshop conditions without rights due to his government’s racist anti-immigration laws. Aznar’s subsequent declaration that non-Spanish victims and their immediate families will be granted Spanish citizenship – even if posthumously – was just an extra twist of the knife. Aznar finished his address by urging a massive turn out for the Friday demonstrations today in the name of ‘solidarity’ and ‘patriotism’. Later, the nation was addressed by its King, the Bourbon Juan Carlos (in his first address of this type to his subjects since his live (if half-hearted) televised declaration of opposition to the attempted coup of 1981). Amongst other things, he said, continuing the theme: ‘Discouragement was not made for Spaniards. We are a great country, which has demonstrated with interest its capacity to overcome difficulties. Let there be no doubt. Terrorism will never achieve its ends. It will never be able to weaken our faith in democracy, or our confidence in the future of Spain.’ (Both quotations from *El Mundo*, 12 March, 2004.)

⁹⁹ Let us note here an isolated incident, but a revealing one. On the Saturday, in Pamplona in Navarra, Ángel Berroeta, a baker, and a member of an organisation of families of Basque nationalist prisoners, refused a request from one of his neighbours that he display a poster with a black ribbon and the slogan ‘ETA No’, of the kind now going up in shop and house windows throughout Spain, in homage to the victims of the Madrid bombings. The neighbour, who is married to a policeman, returned to her flat and told her husband what had happened. Her husband went to the baker’s shop, and shot the baker dead. Needless to say, Berroeta’s name does not appear on the official lists of the victims of the events of 11 March. (*El Mundo*, 14 March, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ And in addition, Friday midday also saw what amounted to a virtual 15 minute general strike. The slogans for the stoppage from the two principle trade union federations were ‘No to ETA!’ (UGT), and ‘ETA Against All, All Against ETA’ (Comisiones Obreras).

the whole frankly ugly, and depressing, and not just because of the events of the previous day: a complete contrast to the enormous mobilisations against the war of the previous year.

But the decisive question that now faces us is this: *did* the government lie? Did the government, once the evidence started to mount up, *really* believe that the probability was that it had been ETA?

While it is always unwise to impute stupidity to one's adversary, it is also dangerous to overestimate their intelligence and capacity to understand. 'All science would be superfluous if the form of appearance of things directly coincided with their essence,' and it would be unwarranted to expect of the thorough-bred nationalists of the PP an understanding of the inner workings of Spanish nationalism itself. The point of this essay is not that really existing Spanish nationalism in the concrete form of *el estado de derecho* and *la democracia* is a simple smoke-and-mirrors device to pull the wool over the workers' eyes, but that it is a real phenomenon in which its participants really believe. There is no reason to think therefore that the so frequently emitted line that ETA are a band of crazed killers interested in the game of butchery for butchery's sake is not believed by its perpetrators – certainly at the 'middle-cadre' level of the state and security force bureaucracy, i.e. the very people who were passing on to the government the information with which it had to work. For the left to claim now that all was simply a campaign of dissimulation carried out at the whim of the PP central office in order to win the elections is, given the fact that the rest of the left went along with this story for a good part of that Thursday and subsequently too, somewhat disingenuous and naïve in itself; in addition, this interpretation, so at odds with the facts, in turn indicates just how much the left too was swept along by the momentum of a process it was equally incapable of understanding.

But the tide of nationalism did not sweep all along with it. Honourable mention must be made of Eusko Alkartasuna, who criticised the basis of the Friday in the strongest terms, to the point of threatening not to participate in them (a decision that they finally rescinded at the last minute). Too of Esquerra Republicana, and especially to its leader Josep Carod-Rovira, already something of a hate-figure outside of Catalunya, who argued on the Thursday morning, with no small degree of political courage, for the necessity of political dialogue with those responsible for the attacks, whoever they may have been. And especial mention needs to be made of IU's Corriente Roja, who did refuse to take part in the mobilisations, precisely on the grounds of the lie that 'the unity of democrats in the face of terror' represented.¹⁰²

In addition, on the demonstrations themselves, opposition voices were beginning to make themselves heard, even if they only formed a small minority part of the mobilisations. Alongside the slogans of solidarity with the victims, and slogans of an overt Spanish nationalist nature, there could also be heard slogans questioning the interpretation of the government (and the other parties) of what had happened. When Aznar arrived to head the Madrid demonstration, for example, he was jeered and jostled and greeted with cries of '*¿Quién ha sido? ¡Cuéntanos la verdad!*' – 'Who was it? Tell us the truth!' At the end of the Barcelona demonstration, Finance Minister Rodrigo Rato and Catalan PP chief (and former Foreign Minister) Josep Piqué too were jeered. Cracks were now beginning to appear in the consensus reaction to the events of Thursday, and the people who were going to get the blame – perhaps we can say now a little unfairly, since, as we have seen, they were hardly alone in leading the nationalistic dance – were the PP.

¹⁰¹ According to a report commissioned by the UN Human Rights Commission (available online in Spanish here: <<http://www.ugt.es/inmigracion/nunidas.pdf>>), over the last 12 years, around 2,000 immigrants (according to the most 'optimistic' figures), largely sub-Saharan Africans, have died crossing the Straits of Gibraltar attempting to enter Spain, a figure that should be at least double if account is taken of the bodies washed up on the Moroccan side of the Straits too. Between January and September 2003 were recorded 162 deaths on the Spanish side alone. Perhaps it is also churlish to ask where are the black ribbons and the mass demonstrations for these victims of a global terrorism of a rather different sort.

¹⁰² Corriente Roja's statement of the March in which they made this position clear can be read online (in Spanish) here: <<http://www.nodo50.org/corrienteroja/archivos/archi145.htm>>.

The following day, the Saturday – now the day before the election, in Spain a ‘day of reflection’ on which political campaigning is banned – something rather more dramatic happened. That afternoon, spontaneous, and quite large, demonstrations were held outside PP offices. Around 5,000 outside the PP’s central offices in the Calle Génova in Madrid – ‘*¡Antes de votar, queremos la verdad!*’ (‘Before we vote we want the truth!’), people cried; some 7,000 or more in Barcelona, under the slogan ‘*Las guerras son vuestras. Los muertos son nuestros*’ – ‘Your wars, our deaths’; and demonstrations in as well, amongst other places, Santiago de Compostela, Bilbao, Sevilla and Valencia.

Who had organised, and participated in, these demonstrations? No-one really knows, but we can be certain of a number of things. In something of a sign of the times, the principal organising tool for the demonstrations had been mobile phone text messages. In addition – and much to the fury of the PP – the leftward-leaning private radio station Cadena Ser interrupted its enormously popular weekend afternoon sports magazine *Carousel Deportivo* to cover the events of that Saturday afternoon as they unfolded. But, despite the accusations of the PP, we can be sure too that none of the big parties were involved: organising something like this on an official day of no campaigning would simply be too dangerous for parties so enamoured of the bourgeois electoral arena (although we should note that Llamazares was subsequently to admit, rather shamefacedly, to passing on a number of SMS messages he had received on his mobile advertising the demonstrations). No: it seems that the organisers and participants were (mostly young), progressively minded people, with some kind of history of political activism, most certainly in the massive anti-war and Prestige mobilisations of the previous year. Most significantly, it was precisely this layer’s reluctance to vote in an institutionalised political system which seemed to them unrepresentative and immovable that had been responsible for the PP’s consistent lead in the opinion polls, presaging their victory in the forthcoming elections. The consequences of what had happened between 11 and 14 March for this social layer in Spain for the character of the incoming government we shall see in a moment.

How had these people seen the events? Stunned – like everyone else in Spain had been – by the scale of the carnage of Atocha, they were now questioning why, now that so much evidence had accumulated pointing to the improbability of ETA involvement, the government was so insistent on this as a principal line of enquiry. Smelling an electoral rat, they began to ask themselves if it was not the case that the PP were now deliberately managing the situation for their own political advantage, a supposition fuelled by the most gentle of noises now emanating from PSOE, IU and PNV headquarters suggesting too that, at the least, the government should be widening its investigative dragnet just a little. This line of thinking – which really amounted to putting two and two together and making three and a half, since it failed to answer why the PP, along with everyone else, had so confidently gone for the it-was-ETA explanation on the Thursday, and failed to see that PSOE, IU and PNV doubts were themselves inevitably coloured by the same mental concentration being provoked by the imminence of the elections – is ultimately what explains what happened on the Sunday, as Spain went to vote.

The first thing that is striking about the election itself is the dramatically high turnout compared with the previous one. Compared to 2000, the number of votes cast was up 2,507,146, from 23,339,474 to 25,846,620.¹⁰³ All of the major parties, in a continuation of the ideological coloration of the preceding days, were to hail this fact as a ‘triumph of democracy’ against terrorism. But this increased turnout was far from evenly distributed across the political spectrum; and given that PSOE’s vote increased by 2,990,935 votes (from 7,918,752 to 10,909,687), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this increase in the Socialist vote almost on its own accounts for the rise in turnout. Put another way, what fundamentally happened in these elections was that a little under three million people, who did not vote last time round, and who, if the opinion polls are to be believed, did not have the intention of voting this time round either, voted – stung by the events of 11 to 14 March, and by their perception of them – for the Socialists. This interpretation is only reinforced if we take account of what happened to the votes of the other parties. The PP appears to have been on the receiving end of a severe

¹⁰³ For a comprehensive statistical account of the election (in Spanish), see
<<http://www.elmundo.es/especiales/2004/03/espana/14m/resultados/congreso/globales/>>.

punishment by the electorate if one relies solely on mainstream psephology's analytical tool of choice, percentage of votes cast, for its *share* of the vote fell from 44.5 per cent to 37.6 per cent. But when we look at *total* votes cast, the fall in PP support turns out to be statistically less dramatic: from 10,321,178 to 9,630,512.¹⁰⁴ This was no 'swing' from PP to PSOE. If there was a swing involved at all, it was from disillusioned, left-minded abstainers to PSOE. IU, in turn, also appeared to have suffered a fall in its vote, for its share was down from 6.0 per cent to 5.0 per cent, but again, if we look at total votes cast rather than share of the vote, we see that in fact IU just about maintained its support at parity (although, since IU is the party that had set itself the task of turning the street mobilisations into votes in the ballot boxes, this itself must be regarded as failure). That for IU the negative balance-sheet of its performance in the election has been focused not on the total number of votes it received, nor on its share of the vote, but the fact that this latter translated itself into a loss of four parliamentary deputies indicates quite how deep into the electoral mire it has sunk.¹⁰⁵

In short, therefore, what happened on 14 March has to be understood as a continuation of the reaction to events witnessed by the dissenting voices on the demonstrations of 12 March and by the anti-PP demonstrations of 13 March, as a significant minority of Spaniards, natural left-voters, but without, through reasons of disillusionment with the political system, intention of voting, decided that the PP's behaviour after 11 March (or at least their perception of it) merited a *voto útil* for PSOE this time, in order to unseat the government.¹⁰⁶ If this was a 'punishment vote', it was a punishment inflicted on the PP not by its own supporters, but by a social layer that no longer, in normal circumstances, votes at all.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ That mainstream psephology should choose the statistic of percentage of votes cast above all other comparative tools is a fact perhaps explained by the way that it treats elections as purely numerical events, detached from politics, either electoral politics or politics more generally understood. The practical shortcomings of this approach, and the value of developing analyses based on an examination of election by election shifts in party support based on total votes cast, i.e. vote share measured as percentage of the electorate, is a methodological question dealt with more thoroughly in Ceri Evans and Ed George, *Swings and Roundabouts* (Cardiff, 1999) (available online at <http://www.angelfire.com/alt/ceri_evans/writings/swings_and_roundabouts.htm>.)

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps at IU headquarters minds were also concentrated by the fact that under the Spanish system parties receive funding on the basis of the number of parliamentary representatives they have, and the party was clearly staring down the barrel of a significant drop in income.

¹⁰⁶ Apart from these all-Spanish state trends, there are two other features worth taking note of here. In the Basque Country we can indeed see something of a collapse of the PP vote (from 323,235 to 232,577 votes – 28.3 per cent to 18.8 per cent of votes cast); while both PSOE and PNV votes rose: from 266,583 to 336,958 votes (23.3 per cent to 27.2 per cent of votes cast) and from 347,417 to 417,154 votes (30.3 per cent to 33.7 per cent) respectively. What happened here, I suspect, is that there was a real swing from PP to PSOE (remember that in the Basque Country, given the centrality of the national question within mainstream politics, both perennially as well as, for the reasons outlined above, in this specific conjuncture, a switch from PP to PSOE – or vice versa – is not such a fundamental shift, given the parties' basic agreement on matters national, as it may seem); with the in other circumstances abstention vote being shared between PSOE and the PNV according on the basic national outlook of the voters concerned. In Catalunya, the general election results confirm the trends noted in the Catalan elections of last year. CiU has been unable to hold on to its base of support, haemorrhaging votes to both PSOE and to the more radical nationalists of Esquerra Republicana (ERC), who were the other success story of these elections – they more than tripled their vote and returned eight deputies to Madrid (compared with one in 2000). That ERC are direct competitors for the more nationalist-inclined portion of the Catalan PSOE's base may explain why PSOE leader, and Generalitat President, Pascual Maragall, has begun to talk of the necessity of a reform of Catalunya's autonomy statute (although without specifying concretely in relation to what). Interestingly enough, IU increased its vote significantly in both Catalunya and – especially – the Basque Country.

¹⁰⁷ That the elections of 14 March did indeed reflect something extraordinary helps explain the European elections of 13 May, which in turn displayed something of a return to normality. PSOE maintained its lead over the PP, although that lead was sharply reduced. In every *Comunidad Autónoma* in which PSOE led the PP in March, they maintained their lead, even if it was reduced; while in every *Comunidad Autónoma* in which the PP had outpolled PSOE their lead was increased. It was of course of vital importance for PSOE to win in May, so as to prove that March was not a fluke produced by exceptional circumstance; equally, it was crucial for the PP to, if not win, then at least to cut the Socialists' electoral lead significantly to

But it is also important to note that the elections cannot be seen as forming any kind of definitive closure on the events of 11 March. That people chose to punish the PP over all the other parties for its behaviour indicates that what really took place had not been fully understood. For to see what happened as PP dissimulation pure and simple is, as we have seen, in and of itself, inadequate; to fail to see that the nationalist reflexes that pushed the PP into an inexorable chain of events are shared almost in their entirety by the parties of the left too means that the unresolved contradictions of the Spanish state left, which arise from their relationship to Spanish state nationalism, *la transición*, *el estado de derecho*, and the Constitution, although they may now be hidden beneath the surface, for the moment invisible to the naked political eye, are still with us as much as they ever were. March 14, which appeared to harbour so much change, in reality changed surprisingly little.

* * *

‘¡No nos falles!’ the crowd chanted outside the Socialist Party headquarters in the Calle Ferraz in Madrid on the night of 14 March. ‘Don’t let us down!’. We are now in a position to offer some kind of preliminary perspectives for the new government’s prospects.

In the first place, it is necessary to note that this is a government that has had power thrust upon it in the most unexpected manner possible, for it is absolutely not the case that PSOE won these elections, but that the PP lost them. Thus when Zapatero declared on election night that his victory was a product of a ‘deep desire for change’ on the part of the Spanish people, we have to say that his remarks either display an enviable talent for wishful thinking, or amounted to an attempt to keep his and the other Party leaders’ spirits up, akin to whistling in the dark. Had the elections been held a week, or even three days, earlier, he most certainly would not have won.

In addition, the Socialist Party itself is a party as internally divided, chaotically organised and with the same tendencies to mismanagement and corruption as before; and Zapatero a leader as ineffective and lacking in authority as always. None of this has changed, although the warm glow of the post-election period has kept, and will keep for a little longer, these particular wolves from the door.

It is with this in mind that we need to take stock of the government’s record up till now.

It is certainly the case that Zapatero has so far acted with exemplary directness. He fulfilled the first of his substantial pre-election pledges, the withdrawal of the Spanish military contingent from Iraq, within days of the government assuming office, and he seems to be well on course to fulfil another, the legalisation of gay marriage. But... While only the churlish would begrudge these measures, we should also be aware that as far as fulfilling election promises goes this is likely to be it, since these two measures are about as far into the wish-list of good intentions that the Socialist Party presented as an electoral programme that he will be able to go. That Zapatero acted so quickly on the commitment to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq is indicative that he is keenly aware of who exactly are the three million extra voters, and what their political concerns are. But all he is able to do here is extend the honeymoon period, and, as any married couple, gay or not, will tell you, all honeymoons, however sun-kissed and romantic they may be, must eventually come to an end.

prove the opposite. All could therefore leave the European electoral arena happy (except perhaps IU, who, although they more or less maintained their percentage share of the vote, saw their actual vote cut by half, which only increases the sense of crisis in IU headquarters in Madrid). However, perhaps the really outstanding feature of these elections – which was repeated on a European scale – was the dramatically low turnout. In Spain, only 45.9 per cent of the electorate felt able to make the effort to vote, down significantly not only on 1999 (64.3 per cent), which was to be expected, since the 1999 European elections coincided with regional and municipal elections in Spain, but also, more meaningfully, on 1994 (59.1 per cent).

Laudable though the government's record may be up till now, then, it will need to keep in mind a certain William Jefferson Clinton's contribution to the science of political theory, that 'it's the economy, stupid'. For without being able to at least maintain, never mind improve, the living standards of at least a significant majority of Spaniards Zapatero and his team are going to find their newly-won popularity to be a fickle beast. And here the omens look really inauspicious.

The Aznar boom, whose benefits have now been passed on to the new government, was predicated on a combination of the explosive expansion of the construction industry and strong domestic (i.e. household) consumption, two elements which together, according to Julio Rodríguez López of the Banco Hipotecario,¹⁰⁸ have accounted for around 80 per cent of the growth in the Spanish GDP of recent years. On top of this, the Spanish economic good news story of the Aznar years was also based on the Eurofever surge in inward foreign investment, and the return on Spanish investments – largely in the banking and telecommunications sectors – in Latin America. And the harsh truth is that each of these elements – the construction boom, household consumption, inward investment, the Latin American capital market – have large, and increasingly large, question marks hanging over them.

In reality, the construction boom is no longer a boom but a bubble, as a lack of equivalently lucrative investment opportunities results in capital being sucked into a market for houses in which demand seems to be rising unstoppably (to the extent that Spain is the country with the highest dwelling-home ratio – i.e. the highest number of empty properties as compared the whole housing stock – in the OECD¹⁰⁹). The key word in the last sentence is of course 'seems', for what everyone knows about bubbles is that at some point they burst, the crunch question being not whether, but when. Already the signs are not good. The report of the IMF's 2003 Article IV Consultation with Spain, which otherwise warmly congratulated the government (the outgoing government of the PP, that is) for the good work already done, also warned that 'the boom in housing prices and rising household indebtedness [...] cannot continue unabated without increasing the potential for adverse fallout.'¹¹⁰ While the OECD's six monthly report on international economic prospects rather more pointedly warned of the growing possibility of a 'sudden and sharp' fall in property prices at some point in the medium term, and advised the Spanish powers that be to begin to plan accordingly.¹¹¹

But what can it do, to 'plan accordingly', exactly? The IMF report cited above argues that the problem of poor competitiveness could be addressed by a further drive towards labour flexibility. But this seems an unlikely option, and would have been so for a PP government too, given, one, the already astronomical level of flexible working in Spain, and, two, that the recent trend has been towards a relative amelioration of this state of affairs. It is especially improbable given that the new government has made something of a play of its determination to further encroach on temporary working (even if it is also the case that its electoral programme is singularly lacking in bright ideas to bring this about). In addition to this, we should also note that any further assault on basic living standards would have a calamitous knock-on effect, both social as well as economic, when it is born in mind that household debt in Spain is now reaching record levels, standing, in the first trimester of 2003, at around €460 billion, up 13.5 per cent on the previous year, and nearly 250 per cent on eight years previously.¹¹² And about 50 per cent of this debt is tied up in mortgages, with the rest responsible for the very same buoyant household demand that is such an essential motor behind recent growth. Aside from any other considerations,

¹⁰⁸ *El País*, 19 May, 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Of around 1.5:1, which roughly breaks down to 23 million dwellings to 15 million homes, i.e. of the 23 million dwellings which compose the total housing stock around 7 million stand empty.

¹¹⁰ 'IMF Concludes 2003 Article IV Consultation with Spain', <<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2004/pn0431.htm>>.

¹¹¹ *El País*, 13 May, 2004.

¹¹² *El Mundo*, 23 July and 16 June, 2003.

be they political or moral, laying further siege to basic living standards in Spain would only amount to robbing Pedro to pay Pablo.

Neither is the government, hidebound as it is by the framework of the European Stability Pact, and by its own home-grown semi-neoliberalism, able to develop an interventionist strategy to prepare the ground for a soft post-bubble landing by, for example, attempting to rectify, or at least ameliorate, the perennial economic defect of weak Spanish competitiveness, responsible for Spain's large balance of trade deficit, in order to open up alternative investment fields for surplus capital. But without government intervention, it is difficult to see how the disjuncture between the property bubble and the rest of the economy will right itself organically, without crash and crisis, however cathartic these latter may prove to be, since, in good part, insofar as it results from a lack of capital investment (Spanish spending on R+D, which barely stands at one per cent of GDP, is well below the EU15 average), is itself a direct consequence of the property boom.¹¹³ These two phenomena – a failure of capital investment and the property bubble – are not contingent phenomena, but expressions of the same underlying process. Thus 'planning accordingly' is precisely what the government is not capable of doing, for the only mechanisms it has at its disposal amount to relatively minor tinkering around the edges of the problem, not the kind of root and branch (revolutionary?) restructuring necessary.

Given this state of affairs, it is difficult to see how the government can do anything other than sit back and enjoy the ride, however bumpy it may turn out to be.

And it can only be bumpier still for the fact that from May of this year the advantages Spain has received from its position as one of the poorer EU member states look set to dry up. We saw earlier that the '*efecto 1992*' brought with it significant foreign direct investment, keen to take advantage of cheap and flexible Spanish labour in anticipation of the Single European Market. Now perhaps we are witnessing an '*efecto 2004*', as foreign firms decamp for the greener, and certainly cheaper, pastures of the east, where labour costs can stand at even a quarter of Spanish ones.¹¹⁴ Thus at the beginning of 2002, the US-based Lear Corporation announced the closure of its plant in Cervera, Catalunya, which produced cables for the automobile industry, to reset up

¹¹³ We should also note that, according to the IMF report cited above, poor competitiveness in part also results from an unusual and highly rapid incorporation of what it calls 'newer, lower-skilled entrants' into the labour market; which, in Spain, is just another way of saying 'immigrants'. But immigrant labour is no peripheral feature of the Spanish economy. Although immigration is on a European scale relatively low (according to the last Municipal Census there were a little under two million legal immigrants in Spain on 1 January 2002, around five per cent of the total population) it is rising more rapidly than in most other member states, and in fact forms a structural part of certain employment sectors, principally construction itself, hotels and catering, agriculture and 'domestic services' (i.e. household servants). The strategic significance of the immigrant workforce – and its willingness to do the nasty jobs Spaniards are not prepared to do, at least not for the money currently on offer – is shown by its geographical concentration: in Alicante legal immigrants form 8.6 per cent of the population, in Baleares 8.3 per cent, and in Almería 7.3 per cent. In these areas immigrant labour forms the backbone of the workforce in the hotels and catering and agricultural sectors. Quite simply, without an influx of cheap, young and fit (and this is the logic of the PP government's toughening, supported by PSOE, of immigration law: not to make immigration impossible, but simply more difficult, and the immigrant more threatened and desperate, the better to fill employment needs) these crucial strategic sectors of the Spanish economy would cease to function. This phenomenon is reflected by the disproportionate representation of non-EU immigrants in jobs with short-term contracts. According to the European Industrial Relation Observatory, the temporary employment rate of non-EU immigrant workers of the 16 to 45 age group stands at 65 per cent, while that of Spanish nationals of the same age stands at 36 per cent. (Interestingly enough, the rate of temporary employment of EU immigrants only stands at 30 per cent, lower than the indigenous population, a reflection of the fact that such workers tend to be concentrated in professional and management sectors.)

¹¹⁴ According to the European Industrial Relations Observatory, the average labour cost in the ten new member states stands at €4.2 per hour, while in Spain it stands at €14.4 per hour. However, the decision to relocate may involve more factors than simple cost. Indicative of a possible future European trend of splitting up operations within a single and variegated Europe was the decision taken by Philips to close its Spanish Novalux subsidiary, relocating the R+D department to technologically more advanced France, and production to cheaper Poland.

production in Poland. In September of the same year, Volkswagen announced the transfer of 10 per cent of the production of the SEAT Ibiza to Bratislava, following the earlier shift of Polo production to the same site. In February 2003, the French-based Valeo corporation decided to close down its plant in San Esteves de Sesrovira; although Valeo, which produces automobile lighting systems, will maintain production for the time being in Jaén, it has a number of new plants already up and running in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Rumania. Most recently, it has been announced that the Korean-based consumer electronics multinational Samsung is to close its operations in Spain and relocate them to Slovakia, which will be its headquarters in Europe.

It is not clear at this point whether all this harks of a flood of job losses to come, or not. But the signs, and the economic logic, are ominous.¹¹⁵

But the *efecto 2004* will not only be limited to the loss of foreign inward investment. Spain is currently the largest net beneficiary of EU funds in absolute terms, and the fourth largest (after Greece, Portugal and Ireland) in GDP terms: over 2000 to 2006 the recipient of €43 billion of Structural Funds plus €11 billion from the Cohesion Fund. Clearly, the 2007-13 budget negotiations will see the greater part of this money depart east as well.

Another of the economic success stories of the Aznar years was the boom in Spanish investment in strategic sectors in Latin America: over the last eight years, Spanish companies, prominent among them Telefónica, Repsol, Iberdrola, and the banking groups BBVA and Grupo Santander, have sunk around €100 billion in the region. Apart from the fact that, for example, Telefónica, now the largest communications group not only in Spain but also in Latin America as a whole, clearly sees the advantage in capital investment outside Spain rather than inside, to the cost of its under-invested and over-burdened domestic service (as anyone who has tried to make a telephone call from within Spain at peak periods will testify), the concentration of Spanish investments in what is hardly the most politically stable part of the world threatens to leave key sectors of the Spanish economy at the risk of painful exposure to future political and social turbulence in the continent, as they were in 2002. And aside from this, while the present Spanish government may label itself as 'socialist', its socialism is going to be one with sharply divided loyalties should a political upsurge like the one we saw in Argentina at the end of 2001 and beginning 2002 threaten the viability of Spain's new imperialist conquest of the southern Americas. My comment at the outset of this essay that bourgeois democracy is also in good part necessarily *imperial* democracy was not intended as a platitude.

Looked at in this way, it is hard to escape the impression of a government trapped in the grip of a set of contingent processes none of which it has either the capability or the will to deal with. The Aznar legacy, the new government's inheritance, already has something of the look of a poison chalice about it. Cast unprepared into office on the back of a political process completely beyond its comprehension and control; and, having cut its strategic international ties with the Bush-Blair axis in the name of a return to the Europe of old, but finding this latter now looking in the other direction, to the east, the government finds itself adrift in the storm of a global economy not inclined to show favours to even the best of intentions, with the rocks of economic catastrophe, although still in the middle distance, drawing closer all the time.

¹¹⁵ In addition, the economic pressure created by the EU's eastward expansion results in companies demanding increases in production by increasing working time, driving up flexibility and/or reducing wages. The Japanese-based Nissan corporation has announced that it wants to raise its Spanish production from 100,000 units in 2003 to 150,000 in 2007 through more working hours rather than more workers. The Fisipec textile firm is planning to reduce pay by 20 per cent, a cut to be followed by a two year freeze. And, most recently, in May of this year, the SEAT car group negotiated a ground-breaking five-year plan based on three classic flexibilisation techniques: 'group working' and 'management by objectives', a productivity-based pay scheme, and a working time account system to manage labour demand to variations in the production cycle. The two main trade union federations, UGT and Comisiones Obreras acquiesced to this plan, with only the minority syndicalist-led CGT opposing the deal.

But there remains one fundamental issue, which stands out over the other potential pitfalls and disasters outlined above, serious though these may prove to be, hanging over Zapatero and his team, an issue which has the capacity to not only blow the government off course but back to where it came from and beyond.

The last PSOE government, that of Felipe González, as we have seen, in the end collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions, its work of bedding in the *transición* completed, and unable to support the force of the combined pressures of popular disillusionment and despair, a crashing economy, and a welter of corruption scandals. But it is instructive to observe that the *coup de grâce* was administered to *felipismo* not through a scandal relating to personal enrichment but through that which was prompted by the government's 'dirty war' directed against ETA: '*el caso GAL*'. The GAL – *grupos antiterroristas de liberación* – was a paramilitary commando organised from the ranks of the French criminal underworld (including mercenaries with counter-insurgency experience in Algeria) with the remit of 'eliminating' key figures within ETA and the *abertzale* left more generally on the basis of a kill first and ask questions later strategy. In total, during its five-year campaign of kidnappings, bombings and torture, a total of 27 people were killed, a good number of them with no connection to Basque nationalism. At the fag end of *felipismo*, the investigation into the GAL, led by the High Court judge (and self-promoting careerist) Baltasar Garzón, threw up increasingly convincing evidence that the GAL chain of command stretched right up to the highest echelons of government. As we have seen, the highest public figure to fall was José Barrionuevo, González's former falangist Interior Minister, and although it has never been proved that González himself was involved, in television appearances at the time in which he denied all knowledge of the affair, González, sweating, had all the look of a trapped and wounded animal, desperately looking for an escape. There is hardly anyone in the Spanish state today who does not believe that González was ultimately behind the GAL.¹¹⁶

I noted above that the unconditional loyalty to bourgeois democratic institutions appears to be the prerogative and natural reflex of reformist workers' movements; and also that the specific Spanish manifestation of this phenomenon is Spanish Socialism's unconditional, almost irrational, affiliation to the Constitution: to *la transición*, *el estado de derecho* and *la democracia*, a nexus bound together by the cement of nineteenth-century liberal nationalism. Defence of this system may be Spanish socialism's *raison d'être* in the present day; it is also its greatest, and most deadly, weakness, for when this ideological affiliation is challenged, it finds itself automatically in a bloc with the Spanish right, to the latter's perennial advantage.¹¹⁷ Guided by this 'socialism of fools', how will the Zapatero government react to the Basque question this time around? What approach will it take with regard to *el plan Ibarretxe*? What will it do should ETA strike again? How will the Basque section of PSOE fight the Basque elections scheduled for next year? What approach will it take towards Batasuna, should they, as they will, demand the right to contest the elections? Will it rescind the PP's ban on *abertzale* politics, or will it continue

¹¹⁶ Questioned in 1988 during a press conference about secret funds used to organise GAL operations, González is reported to have replied that 'democracy defends itself not only in the courts and in the conference rooms, but also in the sewers.'

¹¹⁷ A phenomenon – the politically debilitating effect on the working class movement effected by its own chauvinism – that Marx understood well: 'I have become more and more convinced – and the thing now is to drum this conviction into the English [*sic*] working class – that they will never be able to do anything decisive here in England before they separate their attitude towards Ireland quite definitely from that of the ruling classes, and not only make a common cause with the Irish, but even take the initiative in dissolving the Union [...]. And this must be done not out of sympathy for Ireland, but as a demand based on the interests of the English proletariat.' ('Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann' (29 November, 1869), *Marx and Engels Collected Works* vol. 43 (1988), 390.) And: 'All industrial and commercial centres in England now have a working class *divided* into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who forces down the standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker, he feels himself to be a member of the *ruling nation* and, therefore, makes himself a tool of his aristocrats and capitalists *against Ireland*, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*. [...] The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of *English rule in Ireland*. [...] This antagonism is the secret of the English working class's impotence, despite its organisation. It is the secret of power by the capitalist class.' ('Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt' (9 April, 1870), *ibid.*, 474-75.)

the PP's policy that even to *think* that responsibility for ETA violence lies ultimately in Madrid is an idea so dangerous that it cannot be permitted in the electoral and constitutional arena? In short, will Spanish social democracy sacrifice itself once again on the altar of chauvinistic Spanish nationalism, or will it finally see that its unconditional affiliation to *la democracia* is precisely the mechanism by which any vestigial reflex on its or its supporters' part for social and political justice is neutralised?

The omens are not, frankly, good. Swept to power by a whirlwind beyond their comprehension, it now seems as if the Party really believes that it was placed into power by a people anxious for 'change'. Yet 'change' is precisely the one thing that it cannot bring about. And given the inauspicious social, economic and political climate in which it finds itself, it may well be that, one day, historians will judge that the elections of 2004 could well have been the ones it was better to lose. And should this government fail – and while we might really and genuinely hope that it doesn't, the omens seem to auger ill – what will come next? We need to remember that the failure of *felipismo* led directly to eight years – and they would have been more, were it not for what happened between 11 and 14 March – of neoliberal *aznarismo*. History is not kind to those who fail to learn its lessons, yet the entire political outlook of Spanish social democracy is founded on burying the past, not interrogating it. And the socialist left that is really necessary today in Spain, which we do not yet have, will have to be built, or it will not be built at all, on precisely those lessons of Spanish history over which 14 March, 2004 seems only to have laid yet another layer of mystification.

León

July 2004