

Conclusion: After Franco . . .

In spite of the common origins and ideology of its component sectors, *Falange* entered the post-Franco era in total disunity. On the one hand, the officially designated FFE de las JONS, under the leadership of veteran Falangist Raimundo Fernández Cuesta, grouped together those whose identification with the Franco regime was unshamed and even exultant, as they showed at the gathering organised in Madrid to commemorate the first anniversary of Franco's death, on 20 November 1976.¹ On the other hand, the various 'opposition' Falangist groups attempted to provide a minimal organisational structure for those who did not wish 'to be against (the National Movement), but within it, yet maintaining their own leaders'.²

In the Autumn of 1976, yet another call to unity had been made by the sector led by Fernández Cuesta, on the occasion of the first congress of the recently legalised FFE de las JONS, on 29 October 1976. Even before the meeting began, it was clear that ideas of unity were merely wishful thinking. On 28 October 1976, groups of *Hedilista* Falangists toured the streets of Madrid to dissuade comrades of the Fernández Cuesta faction from sticking up posters announcing the congress, and anti-Fernández Cuesta placards appeared on the top of the Puerta de Alcalá, where they had been placed by supporters of *Falange Española auténtica*.³ The congress was attended by many familiar figures from the *Movimiento Nacional*, such as Pilar Primo de Rivera and her nephew, Miguel, Blas Piñar López, Dionisio Sanz, José Utrera Molina and Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora. Also present were groups of militants representing former members of the SEU, the *Círculos Doctrinales 'José Antonio'*, the 'Ruiz de Alda' Circles, and the FES. It ended up in uproar. The FES leader, Sigfredo Hillers de Luque, suggested in the course of his speech that the Franco regime should now be 'profoundly criticised'. The regime Falangists leapt instantly to the defence of the *Caudillo's* memory and of their own personal and political history. After an exchange of blows and insults between the various factions, most of the 'comrades' left the hall, leaving the Chairman, Fernández Cuesta, entirely incapable of controlling *mêlée*, to address a much-diminished audience.⁴

This congress marked a change in the regime *Falange's* tactics. From attempting to erase or deny collaboration with Francoism, as they had

done since November 1975, fidelity to 'the values of 18 July 1936' now became the basis of the appeal of the Fernández Cuesta faction. Even after the *Generalísimo's* death, Franco and Francoism were, for them, the principle element in the political survival of *Falange*. Thus, on the occasion of the first anniversary of Franco's death, Fernández Cuesta wrote at length of the identity between Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera:

Franco and José Antonio, two exceptional figures in our history, are united not only in their thought and work and their desire to serve. They are also united in the content of their testament, two examples of Catholic faith and dedication to Spain, and in the day and hour of their death, and even in the place where their bodies rest for ever from the battle for Spain and for the Spanish people. I am sure – because I knew them both and I knew their far-sightedness and patriotism – of the complete understanding between José Antonio and Franco, in order that their exceptional qualities should render the best service to the cause of Spain.⁵

In the same way, *Falange* and regime were identified with one another:

Without the war and the Victory, the *Falange* would not have achieved so rapidly the implantation and diffusion it did achieve. Without the *Falange* and its sacrifices, the war would have been a grand and heroic military operation leading to the prevention of the triumph of Communism, to the re-establishment of material order, and to making possible co-existence between Spaniards. But it would have lacked the popular and ideological content which the *Falange* gave it, and the State would have been merely authoritarian, without the ambition of incorporating the totality of Spanish life which has guided its activity.⁶

The wheel had come full circle, however, and the situation which, in 1976, made possible the formal re-creation of *Falange Española de las JONS* merely returned it to the political ineffectiveness from which 'the war and the Victory' had rescued it forty years earlier. The performance of Fernández Cuesta's party in the general elections held in June 1977 demonstrated that, after forty years of Francoism, the majority of the Spanish people did not wish to be represented by a party which based its appeal primarily on its identification with the

previous régime. The extreme Right as a whole polled less than 1% of all the votes cast, and FE de las JONS in particular a mere 0.21%.⁷ The Falangist 'opposition' fared little better. The Doctrinal Circles presented candidates in 11 provinces, FE *auténtica* in 22, and FE *independiente* in 1. Between them, they polled 40359 votes,⁸ which indicated that the efforts of the preceding 40 years to dissociate the *Falange* from the Franco régime had failed to carry conviction for all but a tiny minority of Spaniards. Not a single candidate from either of the Falangist currents was elected to the *Cortes* on 15 June 1977.

The 'opposition' *Falange* which survived the electoral débacle subsequently underwent a certain process of realignment. Whilst FEa and FEi broke irreparably with their correigionaries, the *Círculos Doctrinales* 'José Antonio' allied themselves with the régime *Falange* and the extreme Right of the political spectrum. Only those who chose the latter course thereby resolved the grand contradiction of the Falangist 'opposition', between trying to attract a new clientèle whilst maintaining all the old watch-words, symbols, discourse and values. In joining forces with the *Falange* of Fernández Cuesta and Blas Piñar, the *Círculos* showed that they had understood that it was not possible to dissociate Falangism from Francoism, since both were part of the response given by the Spanish upper and middle classes to the circumstances of the Second Spanish Republic, both grew out of those circumstances, and each needed the other to continue thereafter. The remaining opposition Falangists who failed, or refused, to recognise the essential as well as the historical unity between Falangism and Francoism, made little progress in their attempt to find supporters for the former who, at the same time, rejected the latter. Their efforts were necessarily rendered futile by the illogicality of wishing to promote, in abstraction, one essential component of a coherent system, whilst rejecting the system as a whole. Thus, whilst the National Union (*Unión Nacional*, formed by FE de las JONS, *Fuerza Nueva* and *Círculos Doctrinales* 'José Antonio') managed to elect one candidate to the *Cortes* in the general elections of March 1979, the 'opposition' *Falange* (FEa and FEi) marginally increased their share of the total vote, but still failed to achieve Parliamentary representation.⁹

By then, a minimal party structure was virtually all that remained of *Falange*. After the death of its patron, the sprawling State administrative apparatus which had been its domain was dismantled with remarkable ease and rapidity. In spite of the efforts of both Franco and the *Falange* to leave the future of post-Franco Spain 'tied up, and well tied up', the two had undergone a simultaneous process of decay and

had been overtaken by the pace of economic development and the pressure from increasingly open, voluble and numerous democratic opposition movements.¹⁰

Without Franco, *Falange* survived little more than four years; without an independent Party apparatus to sustain them, the formal structures of the Franco régime were done away with in barely eighteen months. Between March 1976 and June 1977, in a two-fold transitional operation, the institutions embodying the Franco régime were removed, and those designed to give substance to the democratic monarchy of Juan Carlos I were moved into place. Thus, the Law of Political Associations, announced in March 1976 and approved by the *Cortes* in June of that year, at once opened the way to the legislation of all political currents and implied the end of the political monopoly officially exercised thereto by FET y de las JONS. The legislation of free trade unions in May 1977 was accompanied by the dismantling of the Syndical Organisation, from December 1976 onwards, and the distribution of its staff throughout the rest of the State bureaucracy. Similarly, the Law of Political Reform, approved by popular referendum in December 1976, and the subsequent legalisation of political parties in February 1977, meant the abolition of the existing *Cortes*; the establishment of parliamentary democracy based on the election of representatives by universal suffrage; and the dissolution of the General Secretariat of the Movement, with its National Council and its Delegations and Departments at national, provincial and local levels.¹¹

This process was carried out between March and May 1977. Little protest against these measures came from any of the Falangist sectors. On the contrary, they had taken stock of the post-Franco situation and had realised that the days of the yoke and arrows were over. Consequently, they were all more concerned with modifying their legal status, in a hasty attempt at least to salvage the name of *Falange*, than with attempting to oppose what was already a *fait accompli*.

José Antonio Primo de Rivera had stated in 1933 that his ideology, as well as being a school of thought, was also a way of being.¹² The parlous state to which *Falange* had returned by 1979 belied the fact that, for almost forty years, that apparently innocuous notion had been imposed as a reality on contemporary Spain, to the virtual exclusion of all other possible ways of thinking and being. *Falange* was able to achieve this, moreover, without having exclusive access to either political or economic power, which it shared with other forces present in the régime and which lay, ultimately, in the hands of General

- Provisionales, Fuerza Nueva, Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey, Confederación Nacional de Ex-Combatientes, Guardia de Franco, and Fundación Francisco Franco*. Leading figures present included Franco's daughter and son-in-law (the 'Duke and Duchess of Franco'), their son, Francisco Franco junior, José Antonio Girón, Blas Piñar, Raimundo Fernández Cuesta, and former Party Secretary, José Utrera Molina.
2. FE *independiente* militant, Joaquín Barqueró, in a letter to the newspaper *SP* (29 May 1969).
 3. *Informaciones* (29 Oct. 1976).
 4. Personal observation and *Informaciones* (29 Oct. 1976); *El País* (30, 31 Oct., 5 Nov. 1976); *ABC* (31 Oct., 7 Nov. 1976); *Cambio 16* (8 Nov. 1976).
 5. *El Alcázar* (20 Nov. 1976).
 6. *Ibid.*
 7. Linz, J. J. in *Rivista italiana di scienza politica*, no. 3, 1978. The vote polled by *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD), however, whose leader was a former Secretary General of the Movement, Adolfo Suárez, showed that a considerable portion of the populace was willing to be represented by the derivatives of that regime. UCD obtained almost 35% of the votes cast, giving its candidates 167 seats out of a total of 350.
 8. *El País* (10 May 1977); Linz, J. J., loc. cit.; *Informaciones* (18 June 1977).
 9. Whereas the minority groups including FEA had obtained 0.43% of the total vote in June 1977, their share increased to 1.28% in March 1979. The extreme Right also increased its share from 0.6% to 2.2%. *Unión Nacional* alone accounted for 2.1% of the latter figure; Rodríguez Aramberrí, J., in Claudín, F. (ed.), *¿Crisis de los partidos políticos?*, Décalo (Madrid, 1980) p. 130. See also, *Informaciones, El País* (Madrid, 3 Mar. 1979).
 10. For the role of the democratic opposition in the transition to democracy, see, e.g.: Preston, P., 'La oposición anti-franquista' in Preston, P. (ed.), *España en crisis*, pp. 254–63; Claudín, F. 'Le nouveau mouvement ouvrier' in *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 357 (Paris, 1976); Equipo de Estudio, *Al filo de la crisis* (Madrid: Punto Crítico, 1975). *Prueba de fuerza entre el reformismo y la ruptura* (Madrid: Elías Querejeta, 1976) and *Lucha por el poder* (Madrid: Elías Querejeta, 1976); Carr, R. & Fusi, J. P., op. cit., pp. 269–309; Debray, R. & Gallo, M., *Mañana España; conversaciones con Santiago Carrillo* (Madrid: Akal, 1971); Oneto, J., *Arias entre dos crisis* (Madrid: Editorial Cambio 16, 1975); and the interviews with Enrique Múgica (PSOE), Joaquín Almunia (PSOE), Julián Ariza (CC.OO.), Jerónimo Saavedra (UGT), and Jordi Solé Tura (PSUC) in Ellwood, S. M., *Spain in Franco's Shadow*, an unpublished collection of interviews with contemporary political figures, compiled in Spain between Jan. 1980 and Jan. 1981.
 11. Paradoxically, the General Secretariat of the Movement was the Ministry entrusted with organising the referendum of the Law which decreed that same Ministry's disappearance.
 12. Primo de Rivera, J. A., foundational speech, 29 Oct. 1933. Cf. Fernández Cuesta, R. speech made on 29 Oct. 1953: 'Falangism, more than a concrete programme . . . is an attitude and a way of understanding life.'
 13. *Blanco y Negro*, no. 3384 (Madrid, 9–15 Mar. 1977).

14. Gallego, S., 'El Movimiento que viene y va' in *Cuadernos para el diálogo* (12 Feb. 1977).
15. *Tiempo*, no. 23 (Madrid, 18–25 Oct. 1982).
16. The total vote polled in the Oct. 1982 elections by the coalition of which *Fuerza Nueva* was part ('*Unión Nacional*') was 100 899, in comparison to the 362 413 votes obtained in Mar. 1979 (*El País*, Madrid, 21 Nov. 1982).
17. For an analyses of the transitional process, see Preston, P., *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain* (London: Methuen, 1968) *passim* esp. pp. 160–227.
18. Under the leadership of former *Círculos Doctrinales* president, Diego Márquez Horrillo, FE de las JONS presented a handful of candidates in the June 1986 General Elections. None was elected.
19. *Fuerza Nueva* reappeared as a political party on 26 Oct. 1986 with the title *Frente Nacional* (National Front). Presented by its leader, Blas Piñar, as 'an alternative to the present system', its immediate objective was announced, not as participation in Spanish elections, but as the achievement of representation in the European Parliament.

Franco. The secret of *Falange's* success lay in the role assigned to it by the régime.

In the first place, *Falange* had provided the oligarchy which emerged from the Civil War with a body of doctrine suitable for laying the ideological foundations of the post-war New State. The quasi-revolutionary content of the Falangist credo combined the protection of the interests of those who had fomented and won the Civil War with elements of novelty and modernity which disguised the reactionary character of the regime. In the second place, *Falange* served as the controlling apparatus for the great mass of people whose interests had not benefitted from the war. Small time victors and losers of all descriptions had to be kept under political surveillance whilst, at the same time, they must be organised and exploited economically. In addition, they were persuaded that such control and exploitation was the best for everyone and even indispensable, given the 'naturally undisciplined character of *homo hispanicus*'.

Both the 'official' and 'opposition' *Falanges* fulfilled the role assigned to the Party in the post-war division of labour. The former, not only with the unconditional support it gave to whatever decisions the *Caudillo* might take, but also through the thousands of Party members who staffed the administrative structures of the regime. No other contemporary political group could boast as many people working in, and for, it. Even at the end of 1976, when the organisms which had composed FET y de las JONS were on the verge of disappearance, the staff of the General Secretariat throughout Spain was still estimated at over one million people, of whom some 11 000 were situated in Madrid.¹³ Moreover, no other group enjoyed *Falange's* economic privileges: when Franco died, in 1975, the annual income of FET y de las JONS from State sources was estimated at 9 000 million pesetas.¹⁴

The 'opposition' *Falange* made its contribution to the maintenance of the regime in those areas which, it was felt, were most open to the 'danger' of Left-wing influences: the working classes and the Universities. The 'opposition' *Falange* was not working consciously to hand these areas over to Francoism, but what its militants did not appear to understand was that any attempt to undermine the implantation of democratic opposition to Franco in those areas was automatically beneficial to the regime.

Finally, both 'left' and 'right' of the Falangist spectrum accepted and propagated the ideology and values which the Franco regime recognised and proclaimed as its own.

Whether the *Falange* would have been revived by those who organised the attempted military *coup* of 23 February 1981, or the *coup* evidently planned for 27 October 1982, clearly belongs to the realms of speculation. It is worthy of note, however, that the Decree which the October 1982 rebels planned to issue based the decision to depose the King on his alleged 'infidelity' to the 'Fundamental Principles of the Movement' and expressed the determination of the military *Junta* which would have replaced the Monarch to impose 'strict observance' of those Principles in the future.¹⁵

The Council of War held against those responsible for the 1981 *coup* did not reveal any implication on the part of *Falange*, except for the individual involvement of former Syndical Organisation official, Juan García Carrés. Nevertheless, the course of action followed by the Falangists in 1981 and 1982 suggests that they may have hoped that a military *deus ex machina* would again save them, as in 1936, from extinction. After the failure of the attempted risings, and after the electoral victory of the Spanish Socialist Party in October 1982, the only remaining Falangist forces of any consideration, FE de las JONS and *Fuerza Nueva*, virtually went into voluntary liquidation. The leader of *Fuerza Nueva*, Blas Piñar López, announced the dissolution of his party on 20 November 1983,¹⁶ whilst Raimundo Fernández Cuesta announced his resignation as head of FE de las JONS in February 1983.

In the transitional period which followed General Franco's death, it had become increasingly clear that the majority of Spaniards actively wanted to live in the kind of liberal democratic regime which was, and always had been, anathema to the Falangists. In spite of the obstacles encountered along the way, by 1983, democracy had, in effect, been reestablished and even partially consolidated in Spain.¹⁷ The Falangists, remnants of an outworn era, could not ignore that reality. Some resigned themselves to a residual existence on the fringes of national politics.¹⁸ Others withdrew to winter quarters, to await new opportunities. As even they admitted, however, Spain seemed unlikely to provide them in the near future.¹⁹

Notes

1. Personal observation, and *El Alcazar* (15, 20 Nov. 1976); *Diario 16* (6-11 Nov. 1976); *Ya* (21 Nov. 1976); *El País* (17, 20 Nov. 1976). Participant groups included: *FE de las JONS*, *Hernandada Nacional de Alférezes*