

Fear and Progress  
*Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain,*  
1939–1975

Antonio Cazorla Sánchez

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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## Fear and Progress

## Ordinary Lives

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## NOTE ON SOURCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Most of the original documents quoted in this book come from research conducted at the Archivo General de la Administración (AGA), located in Alcalá de Henares, in Madrid province. The different sections of this archive coincide with the names of the ministries of the Spanish government. Those most often used in this book come from the following ministries/sections: Interior (previously called Gobernación) (AGA-I or AGA-G); Presidencia (AGA-P); Cultura (AGA-C); and Sindicatos (AGA-S). There are other sources quoted from different archives, but most of them come from either the British Foreign Office (FO), located in Kew, London, or from the Spanish Socialist Party Archive at the Fundación Pablo Iglesias (AFPI), located in Madrid.

# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Acción Católica** Catholic Action, an organization that became the focus of political dissent and protest during the dictatorship. It often helped other banned groups carry out their activities.

**autarky** Economic policy adopted by the regime that included massive state intervention in the economy and was intended to enable the country to attain full economic independence from world markets. Abandoned in 1959, it caused havoc in Spain's economy.

**cacique** Local notables that from the mid-nineteenth century controlled politics in Spain. The word also implies corruption and abuse of power.

**Caudillo** Title given to Franco by his supporters, roughly equivalent to Duce or Führer.

**CNS** Confederación Nacional de Sindicatos (National Confederation of Unions). The official name of the Francoist-imposed unions.

**Comisiones Obreras** Workers' Commissions. An organization born out of autonomous groups of workers that rejected the official unions. Banned by the dictatorship, it eventually became Spain's largest union.

**ETA** Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Motherland and Freedom). A terrorist group founded in 1958, it seeks independence for the Basque territories located in northern Spain and southern France. Active during the last years of the regime, its activities became more intense after the restoration of democracy in 1977.

## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Falange** Spanish fascist party founded in 1933, and then fused by Franco with other right-wing groups during the war. It was Spain's only political party for the whole period of the dictatorship. Falange's official name (from April 1937) was Falange Española Tradicionalista de las Juntas de Ofensivas Nacional-Sindicalistas.

**hermandades** Brotherhoods, the term used for agrarian unions in the rural areas of Spain.

**HOAC** Hermandades Obreras de Acción Católica, the workers' section of Catholic Action.

**JOC** Juventud Obrera Cristiana (Christian Workers' Youth), the youth branch of Acción Católica (Catholic Action), which shared HOAC's pro-worker ideas.

**Movimiento** The Movement – the name that the Francoists gave to the regime, the July 17, 1936, military rising, and to the post-war Falange party.

**Opus Dei** Ultra-conservative Catholic organization closely associated with the dictatorship that provided the technocratic cadres for the economic modernization of the 1960s.

**PCE** Partido Comunista de España – the Spanish Communist Party.

**PSOE** Partido Socialista Obrero Español – the Spanish Social Democratic Party.

**Stabilization Plan** The 1959 plan that ended autarky and allowed the Spanish economy to embrace orthodox, and fairly successful, policies.

**STV** Solidaridad de Trabajadores Vascos (Basque Workers' Solidarity) – the name of the main Basque nationalist union.



Modern regions and provinces of Spain

# INTRODUCTION

## ORDINARY SPANIARDS IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

When a person's name appears in a history book, and it is a name we do not recognize, it is often assumed that this individual lived an ordinary, not particularly noteworthy, life. This is especially true if the reader of the text is an authority on the period of history being discussed. This expression of prejudice implies that most people's lives are ordinary and do not play a key role in history. Yet these same "ordinary" people are the main players in everyday life, and are the ones who enjoy, suffer, or simply endure history's consequences. This book is about the experiences of ordinary Spaniards who lived between 1939 and 1975 when their country was ruled with an iron fist by Francisco Franco Bahamonde, known by his supporters as *El Caudillo*.<sup>1</sup> It will also consider some aspects of the Civil War years (July 1936 to April 1939), so a period of almost 40 years will be surveyed.

Ordinary people not only make history, they also see it differently from those in power at the time and from those who have the advantage of judging events after they have passed. When we look at their lives and times, we know where they were going, while they did not. More difficult for us is to know what they were thinking and expecting from the future. The prospects and aspirations of ordinary Spaniards during and after the Civil War were a world apart from those of other west Europeans during the "Golden Age" after World War II, and from those of today.<sup>2</sup>

Today Europe is a free continent where people are culturally very close. Europeans see each other on television, they connect instantly through the internet, they meet in various forums, they consume each other's cultural products, they do and expect the same things every day. Half a century ago, in the middle of the "Golden Age," it was not like that. In 1957, for example, countries such as the United Kingdom and Spain, that now are separated by a two-hour flight on a discount airline, and that you can visit for a weekend of leisure, were very far apart, even remote. That year there were elections

in the United Kingdom, and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan could claim that most Britons had “never had it so good.” He was right. Britons were enjoying freedom and prosperity, and that prosperity was being distributed more fairly than ever before. This feel-good sensation was a product of the post-war “social pact”: the cooperation between capital, labor, and government which implied not only moderating labor demands but also sharing the benefits of the economic boom. Politicians could claim the same in many other countries across the Channel, such as Germany, the Netherlands, and even politically troubled France. There was, however, no contemporary “social pact” in Spain. Ruled by Franco since he won the Civil War in 1939, with the help of Hitler and Mussolini (and the indifference of Western democracies), things were very different. There was no freedom, no “Golden Age,” and certainly life, at least for the majority of Spaniards, was not so good.

This was the case for a family of nine who, with their eldest daughter’s fiancé, on an unremarkable day in the winter of 1957 in the poor Mediterranean city of Almeria, were finishing supper. As usual, the mother distributed dessert; it consisted of just two oranges for 10 people. Males had preference over females, older people over younger ones. Three segments were served to the father, two to the son-in-law, and one was divided between the rest of the family (the mother, three boys, and four girls). They were poor. Both the parents and the son-in-law were illiterate. The children all had some schooling, but only the youngest boy would complete his training as a mechanic. The rest were destined to have unskilled jobs. The father, a former farm worker, was a doorman at a government office; his wife helped him and did the cleaning after the office closed. The son-in-law was a fisherman. His young fiancée would be a servant most of her life, but would also work in a factory, and as a cook, a cleaning lady, and a janitor. Her brother, the next eldest, became a chauffeur, then a taxi driver, and he once attempted to become a bullfighter. The second eldest sister would sew and the other girls would be servants most of their adult lives, while another brother would always work as a waiter.

Since her marriage in the early 1930s, the mother had been pregnant almost continuously. Some of the children were born before the Civil War, others during the war, and most of them in the daunting post-war years. Other siblings had died in infancy and there had been multiple miscarriages. For her daughters and future daughters-in-law, however, this was not to be the case. Of the siblings seated at the table only the eldest daughter would have more than two children: she had four. The fourth child, a boy,



was born after the loss of the family's second child, a girl, who had died of a brain hemorrhage while still a baby, and had left them in deep mourning. That fourth child today teaches history at a Canadian university and is the author of this book.<sup>3</sup>

Like the lives of millions of other ordinary Spaniards, the harshness of life for the people seated at this table was the product not just of their poverty but of politics as well. However, these people did not protest, at least in public, and certainly they did not talk politics. In fact they chose to forget things that were "inconvenient" and painful to remember. It was not only that the father and the son-in-law's father had been republican soldiers. Almeria was republican for the duration of the war. Notwithstanding the fact that they had voted regularly for the left and even joined the socialist union, they had been forcibly recruited into the republican forces. They were simple men and they had done nothing noteworthy or exceptionally brave as soldiers, and had survived the war sometimes by *avoiding* their duties, not unlike Jaroslav Hašek's *Good Soldier Švejk*. They did not talk about my maternal grandfather's brief participation in post-war clandestine socialist meetings – my grandmother waiting in the house, full of terror, for his return – or about the son-in-law's uncle who lived exiled in Oran, then French Algeria, after having helped republican guerrillas escape Spain in a boat a few years before. Their biggest secret, a secret they were all careful never to talk about, was a different one.

On the wall of the room where they were finishing supper there was the photograph of a handsome young man in a strange uniform. Aunts and uncles from their extended family had the same picture on the walls of their houses as well. He was cousin Rafael, a republican medical officer who had been shot in prison after the war. The family also knew that Maria, my mother, the young fiancée at the table, a child of 8 at the time (1940), was the first who had learned, after a rude remark by a prison officer, that cousin Rafael had been executed. Nobody talked about where his body had been laid, although they had learned its exact location, in an unmarked mass grave in the city's cemetery. The family had come to accept their secret, and silence helped them to reconcile their experiences with their present reality. They did not dream of revenge. More surprising perhaps for today's readers, neither did they dream of freedom. They even thought that Franco was a good man who knew nothing of the crimes, injustices, and miseries committed against people like themselves. When Franco came to Almeria they went to cheer him. They had no money to buy flags so they hung a shawl from their window. "Our eyes were closed back then" they would say

when remembering those years; because once democracy was restored in Spain they “discovered” or “remembered” what they had earlier chosen not to see.

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What happened to my family’s memories and old loyalties was not unusual. Millions of other families in Spain, formerly left-wing, had been forced during the first two decades of the dictatorship to accommodate their ideas, their vocabulary, and their expectations to the harsh reality. Unlike most west Europeans, who lived and prospered in democracy, for ordinary Spaniards post-war meant being forced to abandon any hope of freedom in exchange for some peace in their private lives and, just as importantly, in the streets. Franco claimed that his was a normal European regime with a specific Spanish nature. In fact, in the rest of western Europe (Portugal and Greece were the exceptions), people could vote their politicians in and out of office. In Spain, to confront the dictatorship meant automatic state violence, and people feared that responding to that violence would risk restarting the Civil War with all its horrors. Unlike most west Europeans, Spaniards sacrificed personal and collective freedom in exchange for peace, even if that peace was that of an oppressive and criminal regime.

The exchange of freedom for some form of peace would be harrowing enough if it had not also carried the second anomaly of economic stagnation. While freedom and democracy brought prosperous peace to the continent, the Francoist dictatorship and its peculiar peace brought unspeakable material suffering to ordinary Spaniards. Moreover, while in most of Europe the state and other public institutions worked effectively for the common good, in Franco’s Spain they were inefficient and often both hostile and repressive. This affected Spaniards’ values, making them pessimistic in social and collective matters. They became individualistic, because the only institution that they could always count on was a very private one: family. This collective pessimism helped poor Spaniards cope with the ruthless post-war years and, at the same time, it all but completely eroded the values that support civil society. Government repression did the rest, and this resulted in a society that grudgingly but passively accepted the unbearable social conditions that persisted into the early 1960s, while the rest of free Europe experienced the post-war economic boom. The Francoist dictate of peace over freedom carried the never officially recognized burden of peace over prosperity.

For all the above reasons, in 1957, if my family or millions of others like it had read or heard the news, they still would have known next to nothing of the dilemmas facing the regime. Official censorship prevented ordinary people from knowing of the government’s disturbing internal reports in

the late 1950s regarding the need for drastic changes in the nation's economic policies as inflation spiraled out of control and currency reserves quickly disappeared.<sup>4</sup> Common people knew nothing of the fact that Franco, the "good man," resisted changing economic policies. Neither were they told that the sycophants of the Falange – the leaders of Franco's corrupt, pseudo-fascist party – were still dreaming of the re-fascistization of the dictatorship as if the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945 had not taken place.<sup>5</sup> Nor that, on the other hand, Opus Dei, the "modernizing" wing of Franco's government, wanted to open up the Spanish economy to Western capitalism.<sup>6</sup>

Opus Dei was (and still is) an ultra-conservative social and religious Catholic organization created shortly before the Civil War. It became increasingly powerful in the post-war years thanks to both its contacts with Francoist politicians and its focus on recruiting and training young technocrats. In spite of its reactionary political agenda it was remarkably open to modern technical ideas, which made it popular among some sectors of the Francoist elites. Its proposals for economic reform were finally (and grudgingly) accepted by Franco in 1957. The old Falangist guard lost out. That year a cabinet reshuffle tilted power to Opus Dei technocrats and to their program for economic liberalization which was to make Spain wealthier, but, at the same time, leave it politically and socially repressive.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after, in 1958, this major policy shift led Spain to join the International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. After two decades of economic mismanagement, Francoism embraced modern capitalism. It was a political and economic watershed for the regime that changed the lives of most Spaniards. It also guaranteed the dictatorship's survival for two more decades.

Dictatorships, by their very nature, are based on repression and lies. Yet the ideas and actions of the people who have lived under dictatorial rule cannot be interpreted solely through their experience of repression. This is particularly valid for Francoism because of the regime's longevity. Between 1939 and 1975, during and long after the strong repression of the early 1940s, many complex social changes occurred which decisively affected people's lives. To explain Spaniards' lives during the dictatorship while only taking into account which side they stood on regarding this violence would be a simplistic representation of reality. Conversely, to explain Francoism, from the first to the last day of its existence, without taking into account the repression and fear it unleashed would be a distortion of the past, and a mockery of people's suffering.

The long duration of authoritarian rule in Spain, and its place in the context of events elsewhere on the continent at this time, have presented historians and other academics with the problem of establishing periods or stages of the dictatorship.<sup>8</sup> There is an overall consensus that, in *political* terms, we can talk of two periods. The first is the semi-fascist period up to 1945. The defeat of his friends the Axis powers in World War II forced Franco to inaugurate a second phase. The Spanish dictator discarded the most strident external aspects of his regime and embraced a Christian, anti-communist outlook. By then, the worst of the repression against the defeated republicans was over. This period was to last, in general terms, until the regime's end. It included active support of the Vatican and a formal alliance with the United States, established in 1953, which saw the US give financial help to the dictatorship in exchange for the establishment of American military bases in Spain.

The social and economic history of Francoism is more complex because it includes the transformation of Spain from an essentially agrarian country in 1939 to a modern, urban one when the dictator died in 1975.<sup>9</sup> However, most scholars agree that in *socio-economic* terms there are three main periods. The first period, which lasted until 1952, was dominated by a policy of autarky or economic self-reliance, and was characterized by serious food shortages which caused widespread famine among the poor.<sup>10</sup> Under autarky, the regime, copying fascist Italian and Nazi policies, tried to make the country independent of the world's economy. In the first years of World War II, when both the USA and the UK offered economic help, the pro-Axis dictatorship dismissively rejected it.<sup>11</sup> The Francoist state massively intervened in the economy, regulating both trade and the supply system. It also manipulated markets, imposed import substitution, and forced industrialization. The result was an unmitigated economic and human disaster. The second period, which lasted from 1952 until 1959, has been called a transitional or semi-normal period. Responding hesitantly to the catastrophe, in 1952 the government semi-liberalized the economy and dropped some of its most dysfunctional and irrational policies. Finally, the third period started in 1959 as the government adopted a stabilization plan – the brainchild of the Opus Dei's technocrats – that restored order after the economic chaos of the previous two decades and opened the door to the Spanish economic “boom” or “miracle” of the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>12</sup>

The story of “ordinary people” and the changes in their lives through those 40 years would be complicated enough if Spain was a culturally, economically, and demographically homogenous country, but it wasn't in 1939

and it isn't today. Spain is a "little continent," a diverse country with deep economic, social, and cultural differences between and within its various regions and nationalities. In 1939 the majority of the population was rural, but the large cosmopolitan cities of Madrid and Barcelona, along with secondary centers such as Seville, Valencia, Bilbao, and Saragossa, were already well established. Some regions were fairly industrialized. Coalmining and iron mills dominated the landscape of extensive areas in Asturias and the Basque country, while in Catalonia, especially around Barcelona, there was a concentration of textile production. Madrid provided services, both through private interests such as banking and through a highly centralized state. Other parts of the country had less concentrated and weaker industries connected with food-processing and a variety of exports. In all regions, including the richest ones, backward and poverty-stricken villages could be found no more than a few kilometers from cities and industrial centers. Major agricultural production was divided between the traditional wheat regions in Castile and parts of Andalusia. Other parts of Andalusia were covered with olive groves, while there were important fruit- and wine-exporting areas on the Mediterranean coast. North of Madrid in the eastern part of the peninsula small farms were the norm, whereas further south and west, large landed estates dominated and provided temporary, ill-paid work for hundreds of thousands of landless peasants.<sup>13</sup>

Culturally and politically there were significant regional and local differences in 1939. Across Spain most people spoke Castilian, but the use of native languages was extensive in Catalonia, Galicia, and, to a lesser extent, the Basque country, particularly in rural areas. Until their banning by the dictatorship there existed strong nationalist political parties in both Catalonia and the Basque country. In these regions, as in the rest of Spain, farmers and people living in rural areas generally voted for the right, whereas landless peasants and people living in urban and industrial centers were either left-wing or at least republican.

During the war, Basque, Galician, and Castilian peasants formed the bulk of the soldiers in Franco's armies, often as volunteers, while many landless peasants were forcibly conscripted from western Andalusia, a traditionally anarchist stronghold that fell to the Francoist rebels. The republican troops came from both urban centers and the east of Spain. These ideological divisions mirrored religious attitudes in Spain, such that in regions where a rural, property-owning peasant population dominated, particularly in the north, attendance at mass and religious observance were high. In contrast, workers, both rural and urban, predominantly practiced religious

indifference when not exercising outright anti-clericalism.<sup>14</sup> These old divisions and diversity will be crucial to understanding political and social movements in the last years of the dictatorship, because in the regions and cities with an old, well-established working class the level of protest against the regime was far more intense than in agrarian and conservative Catholic areas.

These material and cultural differences within Spain only made the Civil War more complex. It would be both simplistic and misleading to summarize the conflict as having been between the rich Francoists and the poor republicans. There were many poor people who volunteered for Franco's side and many middle-class citizens among his opponents.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the cultural, regional, and identity differences all over the country were too numerous and complex to allow such categorization. It would, however, be fair to describe the outcome of the war as a crushing defeat for the poor, both immediately, in the case of workers and landless peasants, and later in the life of the dictatorship, in the case of small, landowning farmers. In the end, both groups suffered from the imposition of policies that ran against their interests. In the 1940s and 1950s Franco's policies caused unspeakable hardship for the landless peasants. The demise of the small landowners among the peasantry largely took place in the 1960s.<sup>16</sup>

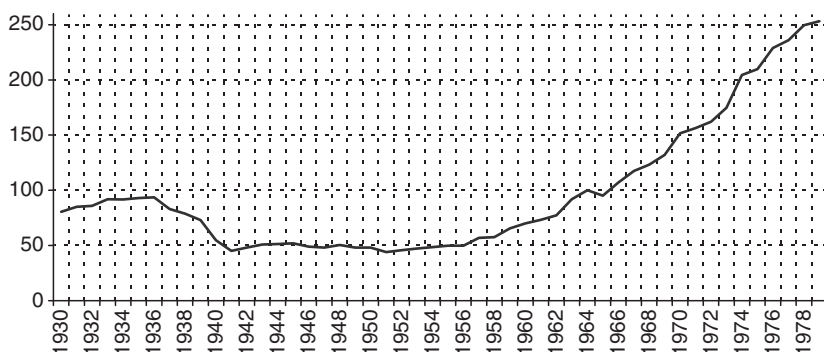
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At the end of the war all Spaniards, whatever their political ideas, witnessed (what they felt is a different matter) the suffering of millions of people during the terrible "Hunger Years," which lasted from 1939 to 1945.<sup>17</sup> Two sinister developments mark this period. First, Franco's extremely harsh and ruthless political repression was practiced against the vanquished republicans as hundreds of thousands of people were imprisoned. At one point in 1941 the jails had 280,000 political inmates. Some 50,000 of them were shot between 1939 and 1945, while hundreds of thousands suffered legal and extralegal persecution.<sup>18</sup> Francoist claims that it was a normal European government, just another Western Christian regime, were opportunistic lies. Two factors negate such spurious claims. First Franco's repression far surpassed the repression of political enemies (fascists, collaborators, etc.) that took place in France and Italy during and immediately after the liberation of those countries at the end of World War II. The total number of people killed in these two countries – which witnessed by far the most significant crimes of this nature in western Europe between 1943 and 1946 – was about 25,000, roughly half the number of those executed in Spain (50,000) after the end of the Civil War in 1939.<sup>19</sup> Spain had at that time a population that was three times smaller

than France and Italy combined. Moreover, most of those murdered in France and Italy were killed by anti-fascist gangs and guerrillas in the chaos during liberation. In Spain, most of those shot were sentenced by military courts.

The second extraordinary aspect of Francoist policies was starvation. Historians have frequently analyzed the mechanisms and the breadth of political repression in Spain, but the scale of the suffering caused by hunger, which has been largely neglected until relatively recent studies, cannot be exaggerated. Not since the last pre-modern famine in the south in the 1880s had so many died of hunger in Spain. Numbers can give only a cold indication of the harrowing reality. It has been estimated that between 1939 and 1945, that is *after* the Civil War had ended, 200,000 Spaniards starved to death.<sup>20</sup> This compares very badly not only with the efforts of post-1945 liberation governments all over western Europe to feed their people, but even with the effects of Nazi food policy in occupied France during the years 1940–4, which caused very serious shortages and a sharp increase in mortality rates but not mass starvation. It is difficult to find a similar outcome to Franco's Spain food policy elsewhere in western Europe. The situation is closer to that created by the then desperate Nazis in the Netherlands in the winter of 1944, when up to 30,000 people died of starvation-related causes. Since the Dutch population was a third of the Spanish, this notorious famine, although imposed by a ruthless foreign power, was less than half as lethal, given the relative sizes of the populations, than the famine unleashed by Franco on his own people.<sup>21</sup>

Post-war suffering was intense and affected the majority of the population. War and autarky caused real incomes to drop by 66 percent between 1935 and 1945 (figure 1). Furthermore, during the period of economic decline in the early 1940s, the agrarian workforce increased – it had been 45.5 percent of the total working population in 1930, but rose to 55.5 percent in 1940. This was a phenomenon without parallel in modern Europe, with the exception of Russia during the Soviet revolution and its subsequent civil war. This shift had deadly consequences, because it helped to depress wages even further. The reduction of wages was not just the product of “neutral” macro-economic adjustments: new, lower wages were imposed by the winners of the war, who had resented the Republic's pro-worker labor laws and policies. It was social revenge at its crudest, and the result was that even employed adults went hungry and their children starved.



**Figure 1** Inflation-adjusted salaries for male agrarian workers, 1930–1979 (1964 = 100)

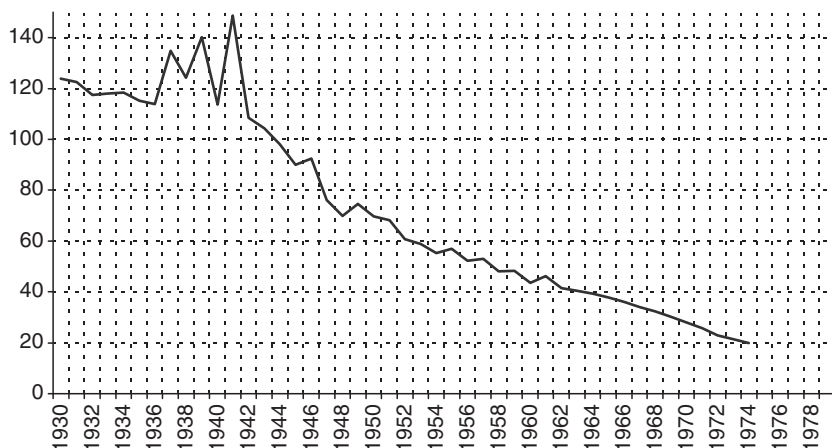
Source: Carreras and Tafunell, *Estadísticas históricas de España: siglos XIX y XX*.

The worst years for hunger, and for illness for those weakened by it, came between the end of the Civil War and 1942. During this period, numerous epidemics, particularly typhus, ravaged the country. The advance of the dreadful pellagra – an illness caused by a poor diet – became common. In 1940 and 1941 there were thousands of, until then, healthy young adults who lost their sight, developed painful cracks in their skin, and died from hunger or from eating poisonous plants while trying to fill their stomachs in despair.<sup>22</sup> Tuberculosis, another product of misery, returned and became a symbol of this desperate period. Young children (figure 2) and the elderly were the main victims of hunger and its related illness.

In spite of this horror, and usually indifferent to its resulting suffering, Franco and his generals remained enthusiastic about autarky. They thought that if it had made their admired Nazi Germany so strong, it would certainly work for Spain.<sup>23</sup> The Caudillo, so they reasoned, would soon be able to have 2 million men in arms, thousands of airplanes, and dozens of battle cruisers at his disposal.<sup>24</sup> In 1939 he spoke with characteristic dismissiveness of the “liberal economy” as being part of “foreign Jewish capitalism.”<sup>25</sup> These racist ideological views, class prejudices, and sheer ignorance are key to understanding why there was more hunger in Spain after, rather than during, the war.

The conflict itself did not greatly affect agriculture, but post-war misery came from the adoption of the twin policies of economic autarky – when the Spanish economy became isolated from the world, especially from its





**Figure 2** Child mortality, 1930–1979 (per thousand)

Source: Carreras and Tafunell, *Estadísticas históricas de España: siglos XIX y XX*.

traditional British and French commercial partners – and massive but inefficient state intervention in the marketplace. These policies demonstrated the callousness of the leaders of the dictatorship towards ordinary people's suffering.<sup>26</sup> For consumers, the combination of these two policies meant that not enough food was being distributed through the rationing system while there was plenty of it on the unaffordable, for the majority, black market. Food often failed to appear at distribution points because of corruption. In a country where hundreds of people were shot every day, only one single Francoist official was ever executed because of corruption. In this particular case his dissenting political activities, not the fact that he stole food and caused other people's deaths, was the real motive behind his killing.<sup>27</sup>

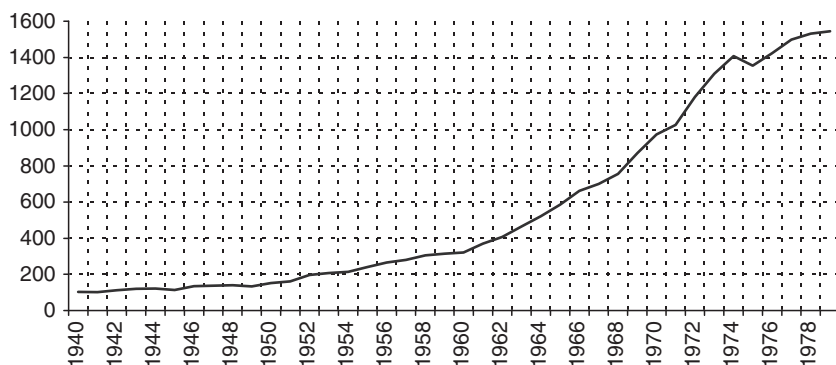
During the 1940s, and even into the 1950s, basic staples such as wheat and olive oil were sold on the black market at an average of two to three times the official prices, and often much more than that. Profits were exorbitant, particularly for big landowners and those with the political connections that allowed them to act with impunity. Participation in the black market was widespread, and millions of small producers reaped their share as well.<sup>28</sup> This period left a deep imprint on the collective memory of Spaniards, which is marked by an obsession and worry about food that survives today.

The years of hunger and repression – preceded by the years of civil war rife with horrific killings between republicans and Francoists, bombing of major cities, and displacement of a large portion of the population – fundamentally shaped the lives and values of the generations that experienced these events. To this day, many of Spain’s intrinsic sociological and political patterns can be traced to the traumatic war and oppressive realities of the post-conflict period. However, memories about that period can be very different because the dictatorship’s pursuit of autarky and political repression meant one thing for those closely associated with the regime and quite another for other Spaniards. A minority made fortunes out of everybody else’s pain. Those who owned a business or had a farm did not always suffer the period’s miseries. For most people, however, autarky meant imposed policies that they had neither chosen nor could protest against, and for which they paid heavily. For example, in 1930 Spanish disposable income per inhabitant was 13 percent below that in Italy; in 1950 it was 40 percent lower, and the Italian “economic miracle” was still to come. In that year, Spain was the only Western country that had yet to recover its 1929 production levels.<sup>29</sup>

In spite of the 1952 economic reforms, the economy stumbled from crisis to crisis during the rest of the 1950s as it was besieged by bottlenecks in the procurement and distribution of materials and products, inflation, trade deficits, currency emergencies, and, most worryingly for the government, a wave of strikes. Not even the arrival of American economic assistance (\$487.8 million between 1954 and 1957) erased the possibility of a complete economic collapse.<sup>30</sup> It was only after the implementation of the Opus Dei technocrats’ 1959 Stabilization Plan, and after a sharp contraction of the economy, that a spectacular period of economic growth occurred and industrialization gained a safe footing (figure 3).

Between 1960 and 1975 Spanish national income doubled, an increase that surpassed the figures for all other industrialized countries in the West with the exception of Japan. For this period, the average annual growth of GDP was an impressive 7 percent (figure 4). Foreign investment increased dramatically, from just \$40 million in 1960 to \$697 million in 1970. Sunny, friendly Spain now became a popular country for vacationing: numbers jumped from barely 6 million tourists in 1960, to more than 30 million visitors in 1975, and these visitors left behind more than \$3 billion that year. Tourists were not the only ones on the move.<sup>31</sup>

## ORDINARY SPANIARDS IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

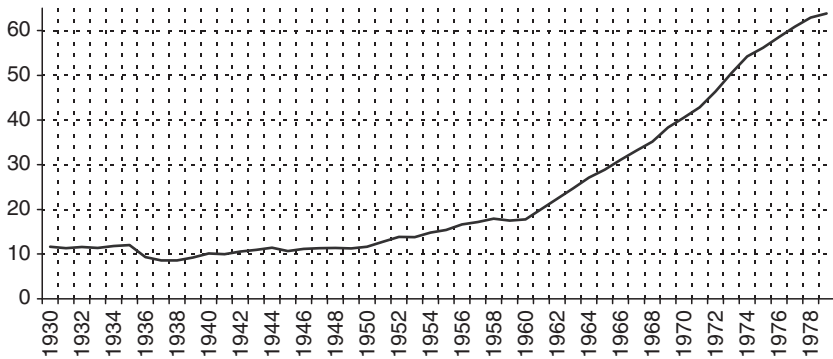


**Figure 3** Industrial production levels, 1940–1979 (1929 = 100)

Source: Carreras and Tafunell, *Estadísticas históricas de España: siglos XIX y XX*.

Between 1950 and 1975, about 6 million Spaniards, a full 20 percent of the population, relocated. Most of them were peasants who fled the countryside to cities. More than 2.3 million people migrated to Europe, temporarily or permanently. A modern economy in Spain demanded that people moved where capital was invested, a rational option, perhaps, from an economic point of view, but a harsh one in social or personal terms. This migration due to need can be considered as another form of human suffering for the Spanish during this period; it represented another toll that the poor had to pay. The massive migrations of the 1950–75 period meant the end of rural Spain as it had been for centuries and an accelerated process of social and cultural change in both rural and urban settings. It was progress, but one achieved through a suffering that cannot be separated from the reign of fear that Francoism imposed on Spaniards.

At the moment of Franco's death in 1975, Spain was a modern, industrial, and mostly urban country, yet not all sectors had moved at the same pace. The rewards of economic and social development were very unevenly distributed both geographically and between classes. Between 1964 and 1967 income disparities grew, and only after 1970 were those disparities between the rich and the poor to be slightly reduced. In 1974, half of the country's population received only 20.9 percent of the disposable national income, while the other half collected nearly 80 percent (of those, the richest 10 percent took home almost 40 percent of income).<sup>32</sup> In geographic terms, more than half of the national income was concentrated in an area of just 11 percent of Spain, while 53 percent of the territory shared only



**Figure 4** Spain's GDP, 1930–1979 (1995 = 100)

Source: Carreras and Tafunell, *Estadísticas históricas de España: siglos XIX y XX*.

14 percent of the nation's wealth. In the early 1970s Spain was divided into five regions according to the pre-eminence of economic activity, their social profiles, and the concentration of wealth. The industrial areas of the Basque country, Barcelona (and other parts of Catalonia), and Asturias ranked first; Madrid was second, as its economy included a very active service sector in addition to industry; the third area, dominated by urban middle classes and small businesses, included regional capital cities such as Corunna, Santander, Saragossa, and Valencia; the agrarian areas of rural small farming of the interior and the north of Castile, Leon, and Galicia were fourth; and fifth stood the rural areas of the large agricultural estates and the impoverished urban centers of Andalusia, Extremadura, and La Mancha. In addition, the last group of regions suffered a demographic hemorrhage during the dictatorship, and the south in particular was left with many areas where abject poverty and illiteracy were rampant and social services scarce.

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The social and economic changes that took place in the latter years of the dictatorship have led many people, academics included, both inside and outside Spain, to believe that Francoism was the basis for the country's successful transition into a modern nation.<sup>33</sup> The central thesis of this book argues that exactly the opposite is true. If we were to ignore the brutally harsh 1940s and the miserable 1950s, one can say that Spain's development was indeed facilitated by the regime's economic liberalization in 1959. But Franco's apologists also forget that the "economic miracle" was made

possible only by the extraordinary exploitation and sacrifice of ordinary Spaniards, particularly landless peasants and workers, and their families. Throughout the Franco years, the poorest members of Spanish society bore the brunt of both economic mismanagement and change, and they were the last to profit from the economic “boom.”

The regime can be credited with two main achievements in the process of Spain’s development that some may call “merits,” but these were obtained at great cost and both were socially selective. The first merit was, after 20 years of failure, to change economic policies in 1959 from autarky to orthodox capitalism, which had proved successful in the rest of the continent since the late 1940s. The second “merit” was that Francoism created an affordable, disciplined workforce which was achieved by the killing of union leaders, by the destruction of genuine, representative organizations, and by instilling fear and pessimism in the general population. The combination of these factors made possible the optimum exploitation of employees by both the state and capital interests. The state guaranteed employers a “business-friendly environment” with a docile and cheap workforce.

Hence capital, both local and international, had “never had it so good” as it did in Spain. This can be seen not just in terms of the poor salaries ordinary Spaniards received or the expensive consumer products they were forced to buy in a protectionist market, but also, and probably most importantly, in terms of the deficient services that the indolent state offered Spanish workers. It is an irony that, not unlike the Chinese “economic miracle” of today under communism, this controlling and repressive state eventually adopted policies very close to a *laissez-faire* liberal economist’s wildest dreams. It offered an excellent package to capital investment, comprising low taxes, a disciplined and inexpensive workforce, and a captive consumer market.<sup>34</sup> Spain did not have a modern, progressive income tax system until 1977. This was a boon for the wealthy, but it also meant the state had very little money to spend. In 1965 income tax represented only 14.3 percent of the total amount the state collected from taxes (the OECD average was 26 percent), and public expenditure was only 15 percent of GDP (the OECD average was 31 percent). As late as 1970, public sector expenditure was barely 20.1 percent of the country’s GDP, while Germany’s was 36.8 percent, France’s 51 percent, Italy’s 43.3 percent, and the UK’s 53.2 percent.<sup>35</sup> The price of Spain’s “miracle” was mostly paid by those who went hungry, those who did not receive adequate social or educational services, those who had to migrate to survive, those who worked hard and consumed little, and those who were forced to buy whatever the protected economy put in front

of them. They were the poor, and they were the majority of Spain's population; they were, by definition, the "ordinary" Spaniards.

Behind these policies, numbers, and dates stand the lives of ordinary people. A history using either a traditional political or socio-economic framework would tell us relatively little about how they lived throughout the different stages of the Franco dictatorship. This book wants to tell their story according to their own memories, which throughout the text are frequently contrasted with the official version of events. It begins by illustrating how political violence and repression were experienced, creating an atmosphere of widespread, but often unspoken, fear, and how this fear was manipulated by the regime. Next, it describes the social cost that Spaniards had to pay for political decisions taken by the government on socio-economic matters, and how the interests of the majority often came last when the dividends of progress were distributed. Thirdly, the book examines the phenomenon of massive migration that ended the traditional, rural Spanish way of life, as people looked for better opportunities in distant places, and looks at how the process of migration changed them. The fourth chapter describes how social, demographic, and economic forces contributed to accelerating the process of changing values. Finally, the book explores the diversity of perspectives and socio-political opinions in the last years of the dictatorship, as the regime's mounting problems and Franco's physical decay opened up the possibility of political change. This last chapter is an interpretation of how Spaniards slowly liberated themselves from the fears of the past and thus planted the roots of their country's rapid and relatively peaceful transition to democracy between 1975 and 1977.