

Post Franco

The Spaniards – A Portrait of the New Spain. By John Hooper

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This remarkably informative work should be read by anyone wanting to know what post-Franco Spain is like. The subject-matter is well organized. The style remains always simple and unaffected, the labour expended in gathering and ordering the material never becoming obtrusive. The first two chapters aside, which give the required political and economic background, the work deals largely with matters that most immediately affect daily life: housing, welfare, education, employment, the power of the state, the role of the army and the police, law and order, television and the press, sex, the arts, the church. There is a third section devoted to regionalism: the Basques, the Catalans, the Galicians, and the granting of limited autonomy. The final chapter gives a sketch of what John Hooper believes to be the changed nature of the Spanish character, as it sheds the effects of the Civil War and the long years of the Franco regime, and begins its accommodation to the new Spain that is arising.

In one important respect the work bears out Robert Graham's observation in *Spain: Change of a Nation* (Michael Joseph). Spain is unique and experiences unique difficulties in that the change from tyranny to democracy has not come about at one stroke following an uprising that smashed the existing institutions and threw out those staffing them, but is taking place piecemeal. Spain remains a patchwork, in which institutions inherited

from Franco still exist and in some instances inhibit the progress towards conditions more in keeping with democratic aspirations and intentions. Some of these are gradually being done away with. Others seem destined to stay, because any alteration would offend the susceptibilities of the army which remains *the* stronghold of ultra-right beliefs and mores; and, if provoked, might attempt another coup d'état, notwithstanding Tejero's failure. Even Gonzalez's socialist government does its share of pussy-footing, one eye on the army.

John Hooper also agrees with Graham in believing that the changes that have occurred, especially those making for greater tolerance, and those causing the younger generation to dismiss the Civil War and its totalitarian aftermath as something that happened in "other times", are such as to rule out the successful outcome of any renewed attempt to re-establish tyranny.

Yet the future of Spain remains uncertain. How much of the new Spain and its more democratic institutions will be able to withstand the combined effects of recession and membership of the Common Market? This said, what Spain has presently achieved to improve the life of the majority is impressive and substantial. One is grateful to John Hooper for making it so effortlessly possible to become aware of what has taken place.

Pierre Watter