17.32

Jordi Solé Tura

SOME REMARKS ON POLITICAL PLURALISM

IN SPAIN

The discussion of the limits of pluralism in Spain is not possible without some previous comments on the main features of the historical process of the Spanish political system building. In fact the analysis of the Spanish case is an analysis of the crucial theoretical point of continuity and discontinuity in the process of political institutions.

The Spanish political system has a very strong tradition of centralism, rooted in one of the most ancient absolute monarchies and developped without no significant break through the constitutional institutions in XIX and XX centuries.

During this period Spain has had seven Constitutions, three non enacted Constitutions, four civil wars, two breakdowns of the established monarchy , two republics, two restorations of monarchy, two military dictatorhips and a large number of military coups d'état. Throughout this tortous path, the Spanish State developed with very specific features, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Highly centralized institutions, on a Jacobin model, but without any significant transformation of the Spanish social model and any process of real unification of the historical diversity of the Spanish civil society.

2. A ruling class very closed, that is to say, an oligarchy formed mainly by landlords, the high bureaucracy and the speculative bourgeoisie. The industrial middle class was not, throughout the XIX century, a significant part of the oligarchical ruling class or it had, in any case, a subordinated position in it.

3. Industrial and financial capitalism developed late in the last years af the XIX Century and in the XX Century, but only in some parts of Spain (Catalonia and the Basque Country, mainly). The rest of the country remained mainly an agrarian social and economic system, but with great diversities in the social structure: great latifundia in the South, very small land tenures in the North.

4. A very strong role of the Crown, which gave to the King

a decisive weight in the conduct of Spanish politics , destroying in fact the role of parliamentary institutions.

5. A very important role of the Army. In fact, the Spanish Army did not fight external wars during the the XIX and XX centuries (with the exception of the war against the U.S.A. and some minor colonial battles in Morocco). It was an Army of internal wars, that's to say, of civil wars. This role increased in the XX century and developed in a military dictatorship (,general Primo de Rivera, from 1923 to 1929), an uprising against the Republic and a civil war(1936-39) and the dictatorship of general Franco (1939-1977). That means that during the XX century Spain has been under military rule for nearly fifty years.

6. A prevailing of Catholic Church upon public morals and behavior, as well as upon education and cultural production.In fact, the capilar organization of the Church (and also of the Civil Guard, the rural police) were the main instruments of political centralization, as bureaucracy was largely ineffective.

7. As a result, the Spanish political system was largely impenetrable to liberal reforms.In fact, the reformistic periods throughout XIX and XX centuries were all short and they ended all with military interventions. That means that in the Spanish political history has been impossible to establish and to develop a political party system, that civil rights and liberties have been unknown in practice, that the large majority of the Spanish people has been expelled from any form of political participation, that working-class political organizations and trade-unions have met great difficulties to develop and that even middle-class organizations found strong obstacles.

One of the consequences of this historical situation was the development of the so-called "peripherical" nationalism,mainly the Catalan and the Basque nationalisms. This nationalism was developed firstly by industrial middle-classes as a way to enforce a reform of centralism and to obtain a significant position in the ruling class. The central oligarchy answered calling the Army to fight against this middle-class nationalism.

As a result , the Spanish Army became itself the main depositary of Spanish great-nationalism, that's to say, the main interpreter of the "true" sense of Spanish nation as opposed to peripherical nationalisms, which were systematically presented as separatisms contrary to the "true" concept of Spain as a unified nation.

The opposition between these two nationalisms developed as the main problem of the Spanish politics, with the subsequent rebounding on symbols, flags an so on. As Catalan and Basque middle-classes looked for compromises with the central oligarchy before every social problem, these middle-classes were finally displaced by more radical sectors in the leadership of peripherical nationalisms.

The second great result of the impermeability of the Spanish State was that working-class political culture and organization developed not only out of the State but against it.The main features of working-class political culture, both in Socialist and later in Communist organizations, as well as in Anarchist organizations were anti-monarchism(that's to say, republicanism), anticlericalism and antimilitarism. The Catholic Church and the Army were seen largely as political enemies, and that was true also from the side af the Church and the Army as regards working-class organizations. In fact, one of the main problems of the transition to democracy after the death of general Franco was to cope with these two opposed but coincident traditions and to compromise working-class political interests with Monarchy, the Church and the Army.

It's easy to see that political and social pluralism were not the dominant features of Spanish political and cultural modern history.

The economic system was closed. The main decisions were not the result of bargaining between social organizations but decisions imposed by force throughout instruments of political power. This fact explains, for instance, the great development of anarchism among the industrial working-class as well as among agrarian workers. In the same way, trade-unions developed more as great political organizations.

From the political point of view, pluralism was extremely restricted.Political parties were weak, social organizations were reduced in number and weak in social influence. In most parts of Spain these social organizations were even leaded by the Church and only in the more developed zones as Catalonia, the Basque Country and Madrid social and civic organizations developed as a lay system of socialization.

. .

.

All these features reached an extreme acuteness during the Franco dictatorship. After the bloodiest civil war in modern Spanish history, followed by a terrible political repression that not only killed or exiled all the leaders of left political parties and trade-unions but destroyed as well all the working-class organizations and the middle-class nationalistic movements, the Franco dictatorship was installed and developed with the following main features:

1. A single-party system,stronly forbidding the reconstruction of any political party, even a right-wing one.

2.Enforcement of centralism and destruction of previous attempts to descentralize the State (as the political autonomies of Catalonia and the Basque Country under the Republic).

3. Rough destruction of civil rights and liberties.

4. Outlawing of class trade-unions. A "vertical" (that's to say, a fascist like "corporate") trade-union was organized. Wages were established by law and strike was declared a crime against the State.

5. Elections were forbidden. Only some referenda were organized to legitimate the main decisions of general Franco.In the last period of Franco's regime some corporate elections were held inside the corporate trade-unions,the municipalities and the corporate Cortes (or Parliament), but they were all restricted.

6. The executive power took the main legislative decisions. All powers -- executive, legislative, administrative and mili-

tary -- were concentrated in the hands general Franco.

7.A strong censorship was imposed in all cultural life. Censorship was put in the hands of the Catholic Church,mainly.

8. The State reached and important degree of economic intervention, but at the same time free entreprise was proclaimed as an essential objective of the system.

This general structure remained through the forty years of general Franco's regime.But,obviously, it coexisted with significant social and economic changes.

After 1960, Spain entered into the stream of accelerated economic development of all the capitalist system.Foreign investments, tourism and some degree of planification were the sources of development.But, at the same time, State owned enterprises remained largely bureaucratic and non competitive, financial capital controlled indisturbed the process, Spanish capital was largely invested in speculative affairs (building por example) and new large corporations coexisted with and ocean of small and middle size enterprises in an economic space limited by a very strong protectionism.

In this context, the underground fighting against the military and clerical dictatorhip changed some of the foundations of the system.Imnportant political vanguards developed,underground trade-unions began to be organizaded -- as Comisiones Obreras --, the University became an essential focus of political and cultural new pluralism in a continous battle against the rigidity of officals and institutions. In Catalonia and the Basque Country the battle for democracy mingled wiath the fight for national rights and with the revival of a new national culture.

One of the main causes of the final decline of Franco's regime was,in fact,its incapacity to cope with the new social conditions created in spite of itself. Economic development in the sixties and the opening to foreign experiences,for example, created a strong demand for political and social pluralism. Even among industrial and financial leaders

there was a feeling about the incapacity of the system to offer them full posibilities inside and abroad. The reorganization of underground trade-unions destroyed the stiffness of governmental imposed wages and opened the way to some forms of collective bargaining and, consequently, to some forms of trade-union pluralism.

The same thing happened in the cultural scene. Some sort of pluralism in the press began to appear, strong censorship in the cinema, the theatre and the litterature began to recede and political parties began to organize themselves even in open forms or inside legal institutions.

After the death of general Franco in 1975 all these processes precipitated and after the Reform Law of 1976 and the first general elections of june 1977 the way was opened to democracy and pluralism.

* * *

Is it possible to sum up the general results after a short period of eight years ? I am not sure that the present situation in Spain offers all the elements for a definite conclusion.

From a formal point of view it is sure that the Spanish political system, as established by the 1978 Constitution fills all the requirements of a theoretical definition of pluralism.

"Political pluralism" as a such is explicitely recognized as one of the main values of the Spanish democratic State in the first article of the 1978 Constitution, side by side with such traditional higher values as freedom, justice, and equality.

The Constitution includes some very important forms of pluralism, in the general framework of parliamentarism, such as national and regional pluralism to be expressed in political autonomies (art.2), linguistic pluralism(art.3), institutionalization of political parties as the main expression of political pluralism an as instruments of political participation (art.6), recognition of trade-unions and entrepreneurial associations as corporate instances for defence and promotion of sectorial interests(art.7), definition of the constitutio-

nal role of the Armed Forces (art.8) and of the Police and Security Forces(art.104),recognition of Professional Corporations as organized forms of the so-called liberal professions (art.36) and so on.

Ideological pluralism is ensured in art.16 in its forms of ideological and religious freedom and separation between State and Church; freedom of thought and opinion, with full abolitions of any form of censorship (art.20) and freedom of teaching and school organization (art. 27) are also proclaimed. Consumer's organizations, youth organizations an all kind of professional organizations are mentioned and promoted by the Constitution(arts. 51,48,52).

As to the economic model, the Spanish Constitution calls free entreprise in a market economy as a main feature(art.38) but also the possibility of democratic planning and of public ownership of means of production are mentioned as great items (arts.131 and 129).

Collective bargaining between trade-unions and managerial organizations is established as the general system of wages regulation (art.37).

Last but not least,proportional system is established for general and local elections.

And,most important of all, the Constitution opens the way to a general reorganization of the Spanish State in the framework of political self-government.The centralized State must change in a federal-like way,as a general system of Autonomous Communities must be organized.

. .

.

In the general perspective of Spanish political history, the 1978 Constitution is an enormous step forward to effective pluralism.

But I have reminded the main features of this political history to put the question in its real terms.

The transition from military to constitutional democracy

was not a smooth process. Antifranchism reached to develop important vanguards but it did not develop in a large mass movement. Contrary to similar models of dictatorship (Mussolini's fascism,por example), the Franco's dictarship was not crushed by a military external defeat or by a popular armed uprising inside. Antifranchism was able to stop the continuity of franchism after Franco but it didn't won the battle against the Franco State system.

Certainly ,the more specific features of general Franco's regime desappeared,like single party, corporate trade-unions, censorship,extreme concentration of powers,military rule,non elected Parliament and supression of civil and political rights.

But the more important institutions of the State remained untouched as democracy began to develop. I mean the Army, the Police, the Public Administration, the Judicial System and, of course, the economic public and private system.

The political weight of these State institutions was really enormous in face of political parties emerging from clandestinity or simply created at the very eve of general elections.

General Franco's regime had also a lasting effect on another crucial item. The dictatotship obstructed the emergence of a large network of civic organizations. In fact, between the isolated citizen and the all-powerful State there was nothing -- or nearly nothing.

At the beginning of the transition todemocracy this lack of civic organizations made extremely difficult to create an opinion and to organize a large support to the new democratic institutions against the hostility of the traditional apparatus of the State.

Political parties and trade-unions were weak,public opinion was dispersed and scattered,,political leaders were new and hardly knowledged.

The economic crisis was also a strong burden. At the beggining of the transition to democracy the rate of unemployment exceeded 12 % -- at this very moment exceeds 19 % --,which strongly contributed to public opinion confusion on the benefits of democracy.

Lastly, the continuing political terrorism in the Basque

country was a very strong obstacle for the integration of the Army and the Police in the new democratic system and also a great obstacle to the smooth acceptance of autonomies and descentralization.

As a result, normative pluralism, as recognized in the Constitution and other legal implements has found very strong obstacles to become a reality in the social and political life. Political parties, por example are, after eight years, very weak and loose. The total number of all Spanish political parties membership, including right-wing, centrist and left-wing parties, is about half a million people. In reality they are electoral structures and not at all participation structures. As a result their relationship with people is very poor and their role in political socialization very low.

Trade-unions are also weak -- and divided. They hardly ornize, all together, 20 % of the Spanish workers. Their bargaining power is not very high. This applies also to entrepeneurial organizations. The Government has, then, an important role in the fixation of wage rates, establishing the limits in which bargaining can proceed.

Social and civic organizations have developed but in a scattered way and without a significant weight in general decision-making, even if some right-wing social organizations -- as in education and in health services, por example -- have showed recently an important capacity as pressure groups.

Traditional State institutions, on the contrary, continue to have a very signficant role. A large part of governmental decision -making comes directly from corporate pression by the Army or the Administration elites or from other great organizations like the Catholic Church or the financial managerial elite.

The most important challenge is, anyway, the building of Autonomous Communities. that's to say, the general self-government regional system. Till now this building process has made some important steps forward, but the reluctance of traditional State institutions -- specially the Army and the Administrative elites -- and the political contest between the

Socialist government and the nationalists in power in some Autonomous Communities ,like Catalonia and the Basque Country, have showed to be strong barriers to effective descentralization and self-government. Actually,the building of autonomous regional institutions has not yet resulted in increasing popular political participation.

Even more: the building of autonomies means that at the same time the central State institutions must change,must descentralize and some of them even must desappear. Till now this result has not happened, so that the building of autonomies is coupled with the maintenance of the central State apparatus, which means doubling bureaucracy and making public Administration more expensive.

The weakness of political parties gives way to another very important limitation of Spanish political pluralism. I mean the trend to personal leadership. Political life be - comes more and more leader-centered. The parties become supporting structures of the leaders and the elections become more and more plebiscites. In my opinion this is a very dangerous trend, which obviously is not specific of Spanish politics but it is reinforced by the great weakness of political parties.

In general, the socialist experience of government,two years after their great success in 1982 general elections has improved some aspects of this general description, as for example, the integration of the Army in the democratic system. But in others the situation has not changed significantly. Public Administration, for example, has not been reformed and the exercice of rights and liberties has not showed any significant progress. The recent aproval of a new antiterrorist law, which seriously restrains some rights and liberties, has been feeled as a step backwards. In general, the great dilemma of left political movements in Europe, which is the dilemma between reformism or adaptation to the logic of State apparatus has not been solved by socialist government in Spain. And this is of the utmost

importance for the analysis of political pluralism in a country where the State apparatus and institutions have such a hard history behind and such a strong weight in the present.

25. gener 1985
Per "Democrazia e Diritto"
Roma.
(A cura di Guido Fazio)

(Trascrizione da la cassetta inviata da Gobbi da Bielefeld sobre "The limits of pluralism" settembre 1984.

—