

TOWARD A HISTORY OF MODERN SPAIN

ESPAÑA: ENSAYO DE HISTORIA CONTEMPORÁNEA. By SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA. 10th ed. rev. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1974. Pp. 730.)

AN HISTORICAL ESSAY ON MODERN SPAIN. By RICHARD HERR. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974. Pp. 308. \$3.65.)

As Spain moves into the post-Franco era, Franco's regime, as well as the Republic and the Civil War, will take their places in the wider sweep of Spanish history. Until they do, anyone trying to understand modern Spain is likely to run into a tangle of conflicting perceptions and beliefs, often passionately held, and a collection of "facts" that fade in and out like Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat. Despite such hazards, modern Spain has attracted many distinguished interpreters, including the two under discussion. Both are concerned with broad questions of Spanish development, but their approaches and their conclusions are very different from one another.

To the English-speaking world, Salvador de Madariaga is perhaps the best known Spanish intellectual, since his career has been far more cosmopolitan than Spanish. His long bibliography includes essays, novels, plays, poetry, and works of historical reflection such as the one under review here, the tenth Castilian edition of a work originally published in English in 1931. The most recent English edition appeared in 1958 (many sections unchanged since 1931), and it has been reprinted since then. The edition under review is almost identical to the 1958 English one, with minor revisions and the addition of some new material toward the end. The time has come to reconsider the book's usefulness for an understanding of Spain and, by extension, of any area touched by Spanish culture. This is particularly important for American readers, since Madariaga has already informed several generations of American journalists and history buffs, and his influence seems likely to continue.

Madariaga writes from the premise that there is such a thing as national character and that it is the interplay of national character and events that determines history. He spends some time describing regional variations in physique and character type, but he identifies the central characteristic of all Spaniards as an extreme individualism, the product of history and geography. In social relations, as in history, Spanish individualism has encouraged a tendency to "dictatorship" and "separatism," both very broadly defined. As every male is a dictator to his family and a potential dictator wherever he finds no resistance, so the country as a whole can fall under the spell of a strong leader, a super-dictator for a nation of petty dictators. In addition, the separateness of individuals in personal relations can be echoed by regional separatist movements in politics.

This is an attractively simple thesis, and Madariaga neatly packages Spanish history before the late nineteenth century to fit within it. His real interests come into focus with chapters 7 and 8 of book 1 (more intelligently placed in the 1958 English edition), beginning the events of his own lifetime that

comprise over 90 percent of the book. For this is a work of historical reflection, a memoir, much more than it is history. Madariaga deeply admires the work of late-nineteenth-century writers, teachers, and other intellectuals who tried to bring Spain closer to the modern world and to fashion new ideals for her future. That they failed was due to the weight of tradition and to what Madariaga sees as manifestations of Spanish individualism. In an overlong and rambling series of chapters, he seems to be saying that all of Spain's problems, as well as her history, can be reduced to that single, universal character trait. This approach is disturbing to an historian, and it is unconvincing as well. Regional separatism is not just Spanish individualism writ large, and there are other reasons for the strength of the Church than the lack of alternative collective institutions to challenge it.

In chronicling political events from Alfonso XIII's reign on, Madariaga is on firmer ground, though he continues to rely too heavily on simple cultural explanations of complex phenomena. For example, he presents the military dictator cum prime minister Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–30) as the embodiment of the dictatorial tendency in all Spaniards, who lasted because they could not combine effectively against him. When the monarchy yielded to a republic in 1931, a moderate political center failed to develop because of the "unyielding and absolute nature of the Spanish character" (p. 386 of the 1958 English edition). Madariaga is at his best in character sketches of Republican figures such as Manuel Azaña and Alejandro Lerroux, two key politicians whose mutual animosity helps to explain the difficulties of various Republican governments, and in his descriptions of political factionalism in general. His personal tone recaptures for later generations the political passions of the 1930s and the bitterness and dismay of moderates when the Republic belied its early promise. But we cannot really accept Madariaga's conclusions that the left Socialists of Largo Caballero bear major responsibility for initiating public violence under the Republic, or that the "dictatorship" and "separatism" inherent in the Spanish character caused the Civil War.

Madariaga's disgust with both sides in that conflict prevents his seeing their human and ideological complexity, and it leads him to superficial portraits of such important figures as Juan Negrín and General Franco. Madariaga clearly deplores the cynical use foreign powers made of the conflict, yet he seems to view the Russians as greater villains than the Germans and Italians, because they came to control rather than merely to aid Spanish forces. His treatment of the Franco regime is similarly full of easy judgments without the proof to support them. It is also frozen in Cold War attitudes. Madariaga sees Russian communism as the main enemy, and Franco, far from being a bulwark against it, as unwittingly preparing Spain for a Communist takeover by an economic policy of "state socialism," a reign of terror, and an alliance with the rigid and elitist Catholic Church. Despite ostensible revisions in this latest edition of his work, Madariaga's Spain is unrecognizable to anyone who has studied the last twenty years of the country's history.

Overall the work is dangerously simplistic, and it has probably done more harm than good, both in Spain and in the rest of the world. His attribution

of Spain's historical difficulties to national character is an intellectual dead end, which might have become a self-fulfilling prophesy. It leads Madariaga himself to warn that Spaniards are probably not suited to representative democracy, and, until recently, Spaniards had been told this so often that many of them were terribly afraid it was true. But in the end Madariaga is wrong, and not just because of the peaceful dismantling of the Franco regime. He is wrong because, as a nonhistorian, he makes the fatal mistake of assuming that human history is simple. His work will remain important as a memoir of the early twentieth century, both intellectually and politically. It should no longer be considered a serious work of history.

To deny Madariaga's cultural determinism is not to claim that Spaniards are interchangeable with Swedes or Italians, of course. It merely reminds us that culture, geography, language, and history are only parts of a larger whole. Richard Herr has this firmly in mind in his *Historical Essay*, based in part on his own work and in part on other historical scholarship. An American historian currently at the University of California, Berkeley, Herr writes with the assumption that Spaniards are ordinary human beings, shaped by history and geography like everyone else, but not imprisoned by them. He explicitly rejects the older generation of cultural determinists exemplified by Madariaga and follows instead those who would "place Spain within the broad patterns of modern history" (p. 34).

Herr dates the divisions of modern Spain from the eighteenth century, when enlightened reformers challenged the intellectual and economic structure of Spain. Vested interests opposed change, though not always for selfish reasons, and intellectual battlegrounds formed on three major fronts. The first was ideological, centered on the power of the Church. The second was economic, concerning the condition of agriculture and landownership in central and southern Spain. And the third was geographic, dealing with the divergent cultural and economic identities of the agrarian center and the industrial peripheries. Permeating these three conflicts and often exacerbating them were the extremely difficult geography of the peninsula and the profound differences between urban/progressive and rural/traditional society. Economically, as Spain followed the path common to all Europe, these conflicts often slowed her progress and widened the differences among sections of the elite and between the elite and the rest of society. Politically, any given issue confronted "two Spains" and two antagonistic groups of Spaniards, though their personnel shifted from one issue to another. This was the reality underlying Spain's modern history.

Herr is particularly good at making sense of political and economic developments from the nineteenth century on. Ideas of limited constitutional monarchy and secularism found eager adherents in Spain, but equally determined opponents. Eventually, however, a stable parliamentary system emerged, dominated by the liberal Moderados, who represented the enlightened wealthier classes. Despite challenges from the left and the right, they remained more or less continuously in power from the 1840s to the 1920s. The revolutionary period 1868–74 produced the First Republic and alarmed the established order, but without toppling it. Under an extended suffrage in the late nineteenth century,

election results were predetermined by a patronage network extending from the center to local bosses (*caciques*), and rival factions of the elite alternated in power by agreement. At the same time Spain was belatedly joining the ranks of the industrialized nations and experiencing social dislocation and sporadic labor violence in addition to its habitual divisions along geographical and ideological lines. Thus, though the political system looked more cynically manipulated in Spain than in other European countries, it may be seen as a way to preserve social stability before the economy and society had developed sufficiently to sustain a true parliamentary system.

That this had not yet happened by the 1930s is evident in the tumultuous history of the Second Republic. Without a literate and well-informed voting public to hold its leaders responsible, it was all too easy for politicians to fall into extreme positions. And, as Herr perceptively observed about the 1820s, "Without a consensus on the nature of authority there could be no loyal opposition" (p. 81). The left rebelled against the entry of right Republicans into the government in 1934; the right rebelled against the Popular Front government in 1936. The Civil War in some ways was a logical culmination of the unresolved tensions in Spanish society dating from the eighteenth century, even though it was fought under modern labels and with modern weaponry.

The most effective parts of Herr's synthesis deal with the evolution of Spanish society from the 1950s on and the parallel relaxation of repression under the Franco regime. With rapid industrialization, improved education, and the influx of foreign tourists and investments, the old polarities began to fade: an increasingly well-informed and sophisticated public emerged under the stimulus of economic development; urban/rural differences lessened with migration to the cities, which also relieved the traditional problem of agriculture and land distribution in the center and south; even the Church changed dramatically, inspired by Pope John XXIII and the renewed quest for social justice exemplified by Vatican II. To Richard Herr (writing in 1971) and to others who have observed the process, it was quite clear that Spain had outgrown the Franco regime years before Franco died. And it should be emphasized that his was an authoritarian, not a totalitarian, regime. As repressive as it often was, the regime left considerable space for the growth of private opposition, and Franco encouraged ideological and practical rivalries inside the leadership, and fostered capitalist economic development and the rise of a talented managerial class.

In Spain's modern history, there are many similarities with the processes of industrialization and social and political modernization as experienced elsewhere in Europe. The unfortunate thing was that political ideas often leapt ahead of economic and social evolution and affected only a tiny proportion of the population. In addition, the geographical barriers to economic integration of the peninsula made it very difficult to overcome regional differences and mend the divisions created in the eighteenth century.

Specialists will no doubt find points with which to quarrel in Richard Herr's excellent historical synthesis. For the nonspecialist, it is enough to note that he has made intelligent use of modern scholarship, which he surveys ef-

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fectively in a bibliographical essay. His work places Spain firmly in the “broad patterns of modern history.” It should be an inspiration to scholars looking for alternatives to cultural determinism in analyzing other areas of the world, mostly Latin America.

CARLA RAHN PHILLIPS
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities