

FALANGE: A HISTORY OF SPANISH FASCISM

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September 11, 2026

Nobody except a total halfwit maintains that the great Francisco Franco was any type of fascist, even aside from the notorious difficulty of defining fascism, exacerbated by the Left's constant use of it to label any effective movement right of center. Yet it is certainly true that Spain, before and during its successful suppression of Left terror and tyranny in the 1930s, had a bona fide fascist political party, which was not electorally successful, but was influential. That party was the Falange Española, the "Spanish Phalanx." This 1961 book from Stanley Payne, the leading English-language expert on Spain in this period, as well as an expert on fascism itself, precisely explicates the Spanish fascist phenomenon.

Of particular interest, and this is often of underrated importance in modern history writing, Payne wrote this book when it was still possible to talk in depth to many significant figures involved. (He was only twenty-seven when this book was published; he is now ninety-two.) We often think that more recent history writing is more accurate history; very often, the opposite is the case, as contemporaneous knowledge disappears and ideologically driven authors instead insert their own version of events. Thus, this book remains an essential work on the Falange. And the Falange will be our focus today; I have earlier written both on Franco and the Spanish Civil War, so I will not repeat what I said earlier.

Payne begins by noting that fascism, a short-lived phenomenon of the 1930s (we will return to whether it has a future), was a notably varied phenomenon. "It has been obvious for many years that the fascist movements of the thirties were not cut of whole cloth, and that the various fascist parties differed considerably in character and composition; the Spanish essay in fascism is here viewed as a particularly Spanish phenomenon, the product of Spanish conditions and Spanish feeling. Its ideological content was usually less definitive than its emotional tone. . . ."

Despite this variability, much has been written in the past hundred years attempting to define fascism, a good deal of it mendacious, given that "fascist" has become an all-purpose epithet of the Left, used as a type of linguistic kill shot, in the term of the late Scott Adams, thereby

avoiding the need for any discussion or debate, and also used to dehumanize and mark political opponents for extermination. Thus, my children were forced in school this week to watch a stupid video full of lies, from a “historian” on YouTube, whose computer displayed a prominent sticker, “This machine kills fascists.” That phrase is, of course, what the Communist singer Woody Guthrie wrote on his guitars, which only goes to prove that political killing is and always has been an essential component of all Left political action. Forgetting this, or pretending it is not true, is a grave mistake.

The illustrious Paul Gottfried a few years back wrote an excellent exploration, *Fascism: The Career of a Concept*. (Payne also wrote a broader work on fascism, in 2000, as well as a second book on Spanish fascism, in 1983, but I have not read either yet.) When examining this definitional question, Gottfried largely endorses Payne’s typology, worked out in detail later in his career, which describes characteristics common to all fascist systems, typically arising from, but heavily modifying, existing “traditional,” “conservative” opposition to Left destruction of national traditions. These include “a permanent nationalistic one-party authoritarianism”; “the search for a synthetic ethnicist ideology”; a charismatic leader; a corporatist political economy; and “a philosophical principle of voluntarist activism unbounded by any philosophical determinism.” Gottfried accurately summarizes this as a “grab bag of ideas,” and as we will see in Spain, only some of these elements were involved in the Falange.

Fascism in all countries, however, despite its high variability and vague parameters, was always a combination of nationalism and a type of corporatist socialism or syndicalism, sometimes more of the former, sometimes more of the latter, which also advocated an authoritarian overlay, seen as necessary to cut the Gordian Knot. It was never aristocratic or monarchical, and was always opposed in principle to those political currents, if sometimes willing to ally with them, especially to the extent nationalism was the prime emphasis in a given country’s fascist movement. Neither, however, was it lower class or proletarian, though its economic program often appealed to portions of the working classes. Instead, it was always a movement primarily of the middle classes, the result of wholly-justified fear of Left proletarian rebellion and violence, combined with economic struggle and uncertainty.

Fascism came late to Spain. The country was mostly sleepy and poor in the early years of the twentieth century (and remained poor until the 1950s, in large part due to the Left-dominated West's isolation of Spain for more than a decade after Franco's defeat of the Left). The middle classes were "lethargic" and not politically organized; political changes, such as they were, revolved around the financial oligarchs and the monarchy. Nor was nationalism a powerful political or cultural force; for the most part, an inactive backward-looking traditionalism ruled Spain, though under the surface the Left was growing in power and ferocity, as international leftist movements infiltrated their poison into Spain. Even the rightist Carlists (whom Payne characterizes as "clerical reactionaries and monarchical corporatists") were not nationalist in the modern sense; they had no interest in "welding the nation into an instrument for new glory and accomplishment."

In 1923, General Miguel Primo de Rivera seized power in a military coup, after a period of political sclerosis alternating with chaos. He ruled for seven years in a completely non-ideological way, combining a fuzzy patriotism and false claims to competency with, for himself, wine, women, and song. Still, for a while, only the anarchists continued to cause trouble, and not much at all happened for the seven years of Primo de Rivera's rule. But this period was just kicking the can down the road—the economy stagnated, while the parties of the Left grew increasingly restless at no progress toward their desired social changes, though they retreated a little from their default demand, violent revolution. In other words, nobody in Spain was satisfied, except perhaps the dictator.

In time, in 1930, Primo de Rivera resigned. His health was failing and the King, theoretically still in charge, was growing discontented at being effectively sidelined. The dictator vaguely hoped for a restored constitutional monarchy. But the King, Alfonso XIII, had unsurprisingly lost the confidence of nearly everyone across the entire political spectrum, and so in 1931 he left the country, in favor of a new thing in Spanish history, a republic. Thus, the doors opened to entirely new political opportunities in Spain—always a dangerous position for any country. "Behold, I make all things new" is not a good political program.

Yet this was not the common feeling, for the common feeling, foolish in retrospect, was that Spain was experiencing a new dawn. Politics was

still dominated by the usual political parties. On the Left, the revolutionary Left, meaning nearly all the Left parties, in the Pact of San Sebastián, agreed to ally and give themselves collectively the name "Republican." Confusingly, that name, often used for the Left during the Civil War and since, was explicitly meant to identify the revolutionary Left, rather than to identify a group devoted to republican government. The latter was something the Republicans were most definitely not interested in, if it meant any possible success by any party right of center. These Left parties dominated the early Republic. The first government of the new Republic, as Payne wrote in a later work, under Prime Minister Manuel Azaña, "held that the Republic must be a completely leftist regime under which no conservative party or coalition could be accepted as a legitimate government, even in the remote possibility that one were democratically elected. . . . Such an attitude made the development of a genuinely liberal democratic regime almost impossible." On the Right, the only significant group was the Carlists, who wanted a restoration of the older monarchical line, the Bourbons, and who despised the Left but "were content to drill their militia and await developments." And in the center, there was no party of significant power.

New parties of the Right soon arose, however, the first being a tiny Spanish Nationalist Party, led by a "fat, leather-lunged neurologist" named José María Albiñana. Non-party movements also arose, and one such was a new newspaper, *La Conquista del Estado*, edited by an atheist "penniless postal clerk," Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, which for six months in 1931 published somewhat confused propaganda pushing "National Syndicalism," praising Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, and Joseph Stalin, trying to "appeal to every non-Marxist revolutionary force in Spain." This publishing effort soon fell apart for lack of money. Still, Ledesma's efforts, Payne says, were the origin of Spanish fascism.

It was syndicalism which always characterized Spanish fascism. Syndicalism was very much in the air from the late nineteenth century until around 1950, although it has now died away entirely as a relevant political philosophy. Like fascism, it had many variants, but at its core it advocated organizing industrial workers into unions which held political power. Usually it was a movement of the Left, sometimes the extreme Left, but fascism adopted syndicalism in part to oppose excessive concentrations of oligarchic economic power, and as a tool to

strengthen the nation. Syndicalism was, in some variants, compatible with corporatism, the idea that all important groups in society should be represented as groups in the political system (an organizing principle which came to its fullest fruition in Portugal under António Salazar).

Also in 1931, Onésimo Redondo Ortega founded another right-leaning political party based on three goals, combining “national unity, the primacy of traditional ‘Spanish values,’ and social justice with vigorous Roman Catholicism.” Redondo and Ledesma knew of each other; they didn’t like each other, but Ledesma needed money, which Redondo had some of, and Redondo needed a network, which Ledesma had. And they both realized their political programs had much in common, including contempt for the wealthy oligarchs and admiration for the small farmer and tradesman. Thus, the last issue of Ledesma’s newspaper announced a new political party, fusing their two groups into one: the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (Councils of National-Syndicalist Offensive), or the JONS, whose members were “Jonsistas.” Their symbol was the “yoked arrows of the Catholic kings . . . a fitting symbol for those who dreamed of reviving Spain’s imperial grandeur”—later the symbol of the Falange, and the universal symbol of Spanish fascism (displayed on the cover of this book). For colors, they adopted the red-black-red banner of the Anarchists, “to demonstrate their radical aims.”

The JONS fusion was not an immediate success. Redondo supported the abortive military coup of 1932, and briefly fled to Portugal when it failed. “During its first two years of existence Spanish national syndicalism accomplished nothing more than a certain airing of ideas, which might better be described as noisy suggestions. Redondo and Ledesma rarely agreed and still more rarely made sense. In effect, there was neither a national syndicalist movement nor a national syndicalist program at the beginning of 1933. . . . No theory of syndical organization was worked out, and no one had the vaguest idea what national syndicalism would really mean in practice.” Payne quotes another scholar’s acid judgment, “One cannot well ascertain if [Redondo] dreamed in order to act or longed for action in order to dream. Nor could he himself.”

Yet there remained a crying need for a nationalist party that would fight the Left’s rabid hatred of Christianity and the Church, combined with violent demands for an economic Year Zero; such a party was

“what most of the Spanish bourgeoisie wanted.” To some extent this need was fulfilled by the growth of the CEDA (the Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rightist Groups), a center-right party supported by the Church and led by José María Gil Robles. The CEDA had no interest in destroying the new Republic; in many ways like today’s American catamite Right of *National Review*, Rod Dreher, and the Babylon Bee, they merely wanted to slow down the worst excesses of the Left while keeping their distance from the effective Right. The Left in turn viewed Gil Robles as the Devil. It is, after all, in the nature of the Left that any opposition that threatens in any way to slow the permanent revolution must be destroyed. Regardless, the CEDA quickly captured much of the support of the middle class, which it retained until the Civil War began in 1936. Despite the ink spilled on it and its prominence in Left propaganda, fascism was never a majority movement in Spain—in fact, it was never more than a small minority movement, but ultimately influential, as we will see.

What brought the more aggressive Spanish right to the fore was one man: José Antonio Primo de Rivera, eldest son of the dictator (who had died in 1930, within a few months of giving up power). José Antonio in 1933 was barely thirty years old and extremely energetic. “It was he who eventually brought together the divergent currents of Spanish fascism during the Republic.” An intense autodidact, he had realized after reading everyone from Vladimir Lenin to Oswald Spengler to José Ortega y Gasset (one of his teachers, from whom he took that elite rule was important) that both conservatism and liberalism held nothing for modern Spain. Almost alone among prominent Spaniards, he honored the memory of his father, yet saw he had not gone far enough in, or even attempted, reconstructing Spain. And, naturally, José Antonio occupied a prominent place in the mind of the nation, given his parentage.

Thus, he began to search both for a program and platform to implement his vision for Spain. He corresponded with scores of prominent and not-so-prominent men, and he had valuable contacts with rich businessmen looking to fund a new party to advance bourgeois interests (although many of those were very skeptical of anything seeming too radical). He also had to deal with the increasing hostility of the more and more openly radical Left government (which as promised refused to allow the CEDA any share of actual power, despite election results, in

another standard Left tactic, insisting that any Right victory is *ipso facto* illegitimate—as one sees today in the German regime's treatment of the increasingly popular Alternative für Deutschland). The government, in fact, often arrested those suspected of organizing in a fascist direction (especially after Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, making the Left fear a contagion of Right success).

After much consideration, and having rejected a union with the JONS because he wanted to be the sole leader, at the end of October, 1933, José Antonio launched both his new party, the Falange Española, and his political career, at a meeting of two thousand people in Madrid. Technically it was the fifth party launched by the radical Right during the Republic, but it quickly surpassed the others, immediately gaining thousands of members. For the first few months, José Antonio spent his time working on the political theory of the Falange. In Payne's words, this revolved around his view that "Great enterprises were formed only by the free and enthusiastic union of individuals. Individuals bound together by historic tradition, material cooperation, and mutual destiny formed a nation." This was all very vague, but José Antonio was certain of two things: Western liberalism was dying, and violence could not be ruled out as necessary to achieve national renewal, especially given the Left's open devotion to violence as the chief tool of achieving their aims.

In early 1934, in part due to the Falange's greater success gaining members, and in part due to the CEDA's victory in parliamentary elections draining support for the radical Right (though the government tried to cancel the elections because of the CEDA's success), the JONS voted to merge with the Falange. Ledesma and Redondo formed a triumvirate with José Antonio to head of the new party (still generally called the Falange, though technically it had a longer, unwieldy name). Yet José Antonio was a poet and aesthete at heart, who dearly wished to gain the support of Spain's intellectuals such as Ortega (he didn't get it). Nonetheless, his poetic bent "provided the Falange with a vocabulary of mystical exaltation, sacrifice and violence, national mission and emotional revolution, a mixture that proved intoxicating to the young." In particular, university students flocked to the Falange (disproving the Woodstock-obsessed Boomer myth that the young are inherently leftist, a ludicrous claim belied by all of history).

The Left immediately began a campaign of violence against the Falange (not helped by the Falange's own frequent, but rhetorical in practice, talk of violence). At the end of 1933 and beginning of 1934, several Falangists were murdered by the Left. The Falangists failed to respond, and wits began to call the party the "Funeraria Española," the Spanish Funeral Parlor, and "to declare that the new party looked more like Franciscanism than Fascism." Still, and despite his rhetoric, José Antonio opposed actual violence. But the rank and file did not, and they were tired of being a punching bag. Finally, in June of 1934, the Falange organized their own death squads to respond to the Left's, and a seemingly endless series of reprisal killings began, which continued until the war started.

The government, with the support of the CEDA, tried to suppress the Falange, raiding their headquarters and arresting their members. Nor was the Falange getting much electoral traction, and the party was chronically penniless. The leaders diverged on their approaches; Ledesma, who had the most sympathy for socialism, tried and failed to build alliances with leftist unions (there was always a strong minority current of "Left Falangism"). José Antonio therefore organized a successful vote to make himself sole leader of the Falange, sidelining Ledesma and Redondo. He then rejected organized cooperation with any other party of the Right, including the monarchists, despite the general common interest in corporatism (nor did José Antonio accept the label "fascist," continuing to prefer "national syndicalist"), as well as with the military. The Left violently revolted across the country at the end of 1934 (because three CEDA ministers were allowed into minor positions in the government); the Falange, in a few towns, helped to crush the rebellion (though the only major fighting was in the Asturias mining region, where it was suppressed by Franco, summoned from Morocco by the more moderate elements of the government).

Thus, at the beginning of 1935, the Falange was wholly the instrument of José Antonio. He pushed "a strong state dominated by a revolutionary elite," but rejected both the label of radical and German National Socialist racialism (and had no ongoing contact with the German or Italian fascist parties). "It was doubtful that José Antonio had the temperament of a fascist, in the conventional sense of the term. He continued to dine, albeit secretly, with liberal friends; he was too willing to

admit that the opposition was human, too friendly in personal relations, to fit the pattern." He wanted Spain to be great again. "José Antonio later declared that 'Fascism is a universal attitude of return to one's [national] essence,' and insisted that every nation had its own native style of political expression." Primarily he focused on "far-reaching economic reform" with a nationalistic bent. To the extent the Falange had a defined program, it took in some ways after Mussolini, but only in some ways, and not at all after National Socialism. "The Falangists preferred to compare their ideology to the nationalist policy of Spain's Catholic Kings of the late fifteenth century. Their propaganda differed radically from that of most European fascist groups in its emphasis on Catholicism and Christianity."

The Falange, then, was not much of a political party (aside from that it was philosophically anti-parliamentary, another reason the CEDA viewed it with a jaundiced eye). Not only did it have no electoral strength, "[t]he party was strikingly immature, with sixty or seventy percent of the Falangists under twenty-one years of age." "Less than ten percent of the members had any notion of party ideology. . . . All they knew of their program was that it was radical, ultranationalistic, and stood for social reform. . . . Their enemies were the Left, the Center, and the Right; they hated the Left and the separatists most of all because these groups disparaged the notion of *patria*; in their minds separatism was linked with decadence." Nor was José Antonio a successful organizer; his "worst defect as a party leader was his difficulty in choosing capable subordinates." At heart, he was an intellectual, not a political leader.

In the crucial elections of February, 1936, the Falange explored joining forces with the National Front, the coalition of Right groups, but could not come to an agreement. Thus, they ran their own candidates, stressing "land reform, the promotion of local industry, and full employment." The National Front complained this was merely subtracting votes from the Right coalition, the usual complaint of moderate conservatives about anyone to their Right. Regardless, the Left won an extremely narrow victory (and the Falange zero seats), in large part the result of violent vote suppression and fraud. Payne has written, "In a four-step process, electoral results originally almost evenly divided between left and right were rigged and manipulated over a period of three months until the [Left] Popular Front commanded a majority of two-thirds of

the seats, which would soon give it the power to amend the constitution as it pleased. In the process, democratic elections ceased to exist." The Republicans immediately unleashed a nationwide assault against the Right. Payne, again: "How bad was the situation by July 1936? The frequent overt violations of the law, assaults on property, and political violence were without precedent for a modern European country not undergoing total revolution." These included looting, arson, massive theft, "virtual impunity for criminal action by members of Popular Front parties, manipulation and politicization of justice . . . and a substantial growth in political violence, resulting in more than three hundred deaths."

José Antonio, however, wasn't displeased by the election results, because he reckoned the result would bring more people to the harder Right. Several score Falangists had now been murdered by the ongoing violence of the Left, with the increasingly well-organized Falangist militia responding in kind, though haltingly and without José Antonio's direct approval. The result, unsurprisingly, was no punishment for the Left, for then as now their paramilitaries are approved extensions and tools of their supposedly more moderate allies, but rather the outlawing and suppression of the Falange, in March, 1936. Most of their leaders, including José Antonio, were imprisoned. Few of them would survive the year.

As war approached rapidly, violence on both sides increased, rather than dying down, regardless of the legal status of the Falange. One theme of Payne's later work is that the Left wanted civil war, figuring they would win and that would cement their power permanently, since Spain was not only sharply divided, but no group had notably more power than the others, such that the result was political deadlock without some *deus ex machina*. "Thus in the final days neither the government nor the leftist parties did anything to avoid the conflict, but, in a perverse way, welcomed military revolt, which they mistakenly thought would clear the air."

Anyone on the Right could see the threat from the Left's Assault Guards, the formal wing of the Left's death squads, and so money flowed to the Falange militia, "still slated to be the shock troops of the reaction." "On May 6 and May 14 the new prime minister, Casares Quiroga, declared in the Cortes that the illegal Falange was the government's main enemy. He explained that people not officially connected with the

party were also being arrested because the police now had Falange files listing the arch-reactionaries who were secretly aiding the movement." Thus, everywhere Falangists were being arrested, wherever throughout Spain the government could find them, while street violence continued.

How the war began, in response to the attempt of the Left to violently remake Spain into a Left dictatorship, I have covered in great detail elsewhere, and Payne gives an excellent *précis*. The spark that lit the fuse was the murder by Assault Guards on the night of July 12 of José Calvo Sotelo, a prominent monarchist parliamentarian with a friendly relationship to the Falange, and now "the leading spokesman of the organized Right." The war began with a military revolt on July 18. In its hour of near extinction, the Falange overnight became the dominant political force on the Right. "The party seemed to offer a dynamic new political orientation for all those who wanted to join the fight against the Left on a civilian basis. . . . Membership increased enormously and soon passed all manageable proportions. Two thousand Falange militiamen are said to have volunteered for party service during the first twenty-four hours of recruiting at Zaragoza." The new elected leader, in José Antonio's absence, was Manuel Hedilla, a provincial party leader. Hedilla was no José Antonio, but he was "honest, forthright, hard-working, and had great moral firmness and constancy. He understood the Falange program, and he did not intend to be turned aside from it. At the same time, he felt the pressing military needs of the hour, and he lent all the force at the Falange's disposal to help meet the requirements of the Army."

The Left murdered José Antonio on November 20, after a show trial. Most of the other Falange leaders, except a few who had fled the country early, were already dead, killed out of hand, many in a prison massacre in Madrid on August 22. These included Ledesma. No surprise, perhaps, "The Civil War was very hard on the Primo de Rivera family. Besides José Antonio and his brother Fernando [also killed on August 22], an uncle and five cousins perished in the conflagration of those years."

Franco, thanks be to God, won the war. The Falange militia fought competently, if not with particular distinction. Redondo died fighting early in the war. Politics was effectively suspended; "the Nationalist government had no ideological orientation whatever." Franco was not a Falangist, or a member of any other party. Yet the Nationalist government had to put forth a political program, which largely fell to

Franco's brother, Nicolás. Only the Falange and the Carlists had not been discredited by their failures and weakness in the run-up to the war; officially they worked together and praised each other, though still with many political disagreements. Payne says of the Carlists, "Having maintained their anachronistic organization before the resistance of all modern Spain, they felt no need to compromise with a transient group of hypermodernistic fascists." The Falange internally were fractured among competing factions—those who supported Hedilla and a pragmatic, largely non-ideological approach of aggressive social reform; "legitimists" who sought the true successor to José Antonio; and various opportunists and newcomers who wanted to remake the Falange into a more traditionally conservative party.

Franco was displeased with his brother's failure to bring together a coalition of the Right to support him, so he turned to his brother in law, Ramón Serrano Suñer (who died in 2003 at the age of 101). Serrano was an extremely able man, and he had an axe to grind—the Left had executed two of his brothers, and he himself barely escaped the Left killing spree in occupied Spain. "Serrano was perhaps the only man at rebel headquarters with a clear notion of what he wanted to do. He wanted to construct a new Spanish state on a juridical basis, essentially authoritarian, which could prevent any future democratic excess like the one that had taken the lives of his two brothers. At the same time, the new state was not to resemble the ineffective monarchist creations of the past. A strong form of organized corporatism, resting on a solid conservative base, would have to be installed in order to dissipate social tensions and hold the country together as a single national unit."

Serrano was a college friend of José Antonio, but never joined the Falange. Yet surveying the landscape in 1937, he saw that only the Falange offered the platform on which he could build a new Spanish politics. Thus, he concluded that "[t]he Falange must be reorganized on a firm, conservative basis, which would then qualify it to become the state party of nationalist Spain." After much backroom maneuvering, Hedilla was forced out, and essentially by Franco's fiat the Carlists and the Falangists were "fused as the official party of the new Spanish state," with a very unwieldy title (the Spanish Traditionalist Phalanx of the Assemblies of National-Syndicalist Offensive), usually still simply referred to as the Falange, or alternatively the FET, and sometimes the National Movement.

This change, while opposed by Hedilla (who was imprisoned) and some other Falangist leaders, proved extremely popular. In hindsight, it was inevitable. Thus, the Falange only achieved power by losing all independent power; it lived only through dying.

The Falange soldiered on, through the war and beyond. "Franco and Serrano Suñer displayed extraordinary skill in balancing off the various incompatible and contradictory elements wedged into the FET. The party itself soon became hopelessly faction-ridden, which was just what the dictator wanted. No one really knew where the Caudillo stood on the long political spectrum reaching from national syndicalist revolution to clerical reaction." "The Caudillo did not ask for a rigorously ideological state, but only for a general theory of authoritarianism. His formula was a conservative syndicalism, bounded by all sorts of state economic controls, spiritually tied to Catholicism, ready for any kind of practical compromise, and always backed up by the Army."

Serrano Suñer acted as lightning rod for the dissatisfied. "His first and bitterest opponents were not Falangists but monarchists, who realized that with the unification he was trying to lay the basis for a corporative, authoritarian, nonmonarchical state. This created an enormous, seemingly insuperable, obstacle to their plans for a restoration." In practice, Falange philosophy, whatever that was, was subordinated to Serrano's, and therefore Franco's, economic and political designs, including receptivity to a political role for the Church, anathema to the Falange. True believers were free to talk, and Franco cultivated the memory of José Antonio, conveniently dead, but their program was effectively ignored. "The Falange, far from controlling the state, was no more than an instrument for holding the state together. . . . Instead of a select, energetic political movement, the Falange had become a grand national honorary society."

During World War II, the Falange, and Spain, had little to do with Germany and Italy. "[Franco] replied to the entreaties of Nazi leaders by saying that Spain was quite willing to make a contribution to the struggle against Communism, but that such a war must be based on the principles of the Christian West, which meant that it could not involve hostility to the Anglo-Saxon powers." He had one unproductive meeting with Hitler, after which Hitler remarked he would rather have several teeth pulled than meet Franco again. Franco continued to adopt a

syndicalist system, but without reference to Falange doctrine, and often opposed by the faithful. The Falange, instead, got to take over national social services, through its "Women's Section," under Pilar Primo de Rivera, José Antonio's sister. Their militia was wholly subordinated to the Army (and in any case Payne estimates that sixty percent of the original members of the party were killed in the Civil War), which had no intention of allowing any equivalent to the German *Sturmabteilung*. Falangists eager to fight were channeled into the voluntary Blue Division, which fought with the Germans against the Bolsheviks on the Eastern Front. Many did not return.

After the war, Franco was able to gradually loosen political repression, including, in 1945, legislating a new bill of rights. Serrano, his usefulness as an end, was made a scapegoat. The West was not impressed, and under the excuse that Franco had been too close to Hitler, but in reality because even in that time the rulers of America and Britain already hated anything that smacked of Right success, tried to reduce Spain to penury. Yet internally Spain was quiet; extremes of both Right and Left were silent, either by choice or because they knew what was good for them. Whatever level of fascism had ever existed in Spain dwindled to zero, other than a few scribblers. "By 1955, if not before, Madrid was politically the most cynical city in Europe. . . . There was no sign that any significant part of the population really believed in anything, beyond the minority that attended church."

In 1950, open hostility from the United States government relaxed, and due in part to foreign investment, the economy boomed. In 1957, the few remaining actual Falangists lost any influence in government, as Franco turned increasingly to Opus Dei technocrats "as his logical alternative on the Right." "Twenty years of Francoism had brought nothing of the 'new Spain' that José Antonio had dreamed of." "By 1960 . . . neoclericalism and neo-Socialism prepared to contest the political stage, and most Spaniards could hardly recall that the Falange had ever existed."

Nor, in the seventy years since, has fascism had any traction whatsoever, in Spain or elsewhere. (Spain, of course, is sadly increasingly indistinguishable from the 1930s Left tyranny, with, at least today, less overt violence but with more totalitarian control, including criminalizing any favorable mention of Franco.) It seems unlikely that true

fascism ever will have traction; to the extent a revolutionary or radical Right exists in the future America (a topic I discussed at length in my review of Gottfried's book), it will not be fascist. The class structures that largely motivated fascism are long gone; economic organization is very different now, and political currents do not flow in the channels of syndicalism. Perhaps, to the extent fascism is simply used as a synonym for "authoritarian and nationalist," a form of fascism will return, but that makes the term worse than meaningless as a modern political label, because it imports irrelevant and incompatible historical freight into a modern analysis.

It occurs to me that in some ways there is, however, a fascist, or quasi-fascist, state existing today. Namely, China. Not that, at least in Payne's typology, China is precisely fascist, but the morphing of Mao's Red China into today's China shows that the most basic elements of fascism are an inevitable political alternative in modernity. China certainly has "a permanent nationalistic one-party authoritarianism"; it arguably has "the search for a synthetic ethnicist ideology"; a charismatic leader; and a corporatist political economy. The label may confuse more than aid clear thought, to be sure. But maybe this proves that no political theory of the modern age ever truly dies.