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The Policing of Mass Demonstration  
in Contemporary Democracies

The Policing of Social Protest in Spain:  
From Dictatorship to Democracy

OSCAR JAIME-JIMENEZ

RSC No. 97/8

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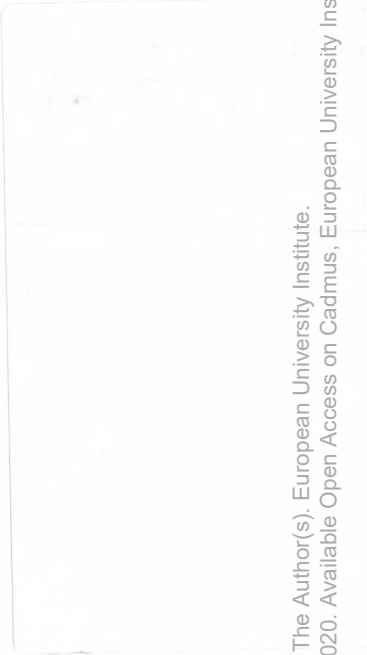
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**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE**

**ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE**

**The Policing of Mass Demonstration  
in Contemporary Democracies**

**The Policing of Social Protest in Spain:  
From Dictatorship to Democracy**

**OSCAR JAIME-JIMENEZ**

A Working Paper written for the Conference organised by the RSC  
on *The Policing of Mass Demonstration in Contemporary Democracies*  
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## Introduction

In analysing the evolution of the police model in Spain during the country's shift from dictatorship to democracy, the approach employed in this working paper is grounded on the premise that *police knowledge* is conditioned by their professional culture; in other words, by the image the security forces themselves have of the functions they fulfil, and by the cultural environment which is made up of the perceptions they have of the external reality.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, one would expect to find tangible differences between democratic and non-democratic systems<sup>2</sup> in relation to the formation of police knowledge. In the latter case, the functions carried out by the police are of an explicitly political character. Their main objective is the surveillance of social groups which could represent a threat to the survival of the regime. The state does not seek to institutionalize or integrate those groups which challenge, to a greater or lesser degree, the established power, but simply to eliminate them or at least to control them. The police model in this case is, to a large extent, comparable with the ideal model of the *Staatspolizei*,<sup>3</sup> characterized by a mentality wholly concerned with the maintenance of 'law and order' and the supreme interests of the state. Any unrest or criticism, no matter how moderate, is perceived as a threat against the very foundations of the state and is thus met with a disproportionately harsh response. Demonstrations are regarded with suspicion and distrust because they disrupt harmonious relations between the state and society. In short, the police force in a non-democratic state is specifically moulded by the state to defend its own interests and rulers. On the other hand, tolerant political systems, characterized by a broadening of participation and depending to a greater extent on public cooperation, tend to facilitate the development of a *Bürgerpolizei*; namely, a force which is closer to the citizen, whose primary objective is not to

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<sup>1</sup> Donatella della Porta proposes this model in *Police Knowledge and Public Order*, a research proposal (draft), European University Institute, June 1993.

<sup>2</sup> We accept the ideas of authoritarianism and democratic systems proposed by Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason. Right Wing Extremism in America 1790-1977*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978 and Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>3</sup> A precise description of the characteristics of the main ideal police models is given by Martin Winter in his contribution.



protect the state's interests but rather to defend the basic rules which ensure the existence of democratic society.<sup>4</sup>

This working paper focuses upon the evolution of a police model - the shift from a model characterized by its principal task of defending the interests of an authoritarian state controlled by a narrow range of elites towards one which is at the service of a significantly broader range of political elites dependent on a greater number of interests (polyarchy).<sup>5</sup> We shall look at how *police knowledge* has evolved within those units of the security forces which represent the state's last resort for the imposition of public order. For certain social groups these units embody the true face of the state's structural violence in its purest form. In many cases, the citizen's image of state action is determined by contact (head-on confrontation) with these police units. In social protests these units represent the naked oppressive power of the 'system'. For this reason it is vitally important to understand how this part of the state apparently differentiated from the rest - views the citizenry and tries to live up to its expectations. Likewise, we shall focus our attention on the evolution of police perception within a framework of the continual interaction which takes place between the security forces - let us not forget that they too are composed of citizens - and the citizenry at a critical time; that is, the profound political transformations in Spain during the transition period (1977-1982) and the subsequent democratic consolidation.

### A Historical Note on the Evolution of the Police

In the evolution of police responses to social protest from the time of Franco's victory in the Civil War (1936-1939) until the present day, it is possible to distinguish four different stages. The first period, from the end of the war in 1939 until 1960, was, socially, a very peaceful time, with no significant disturbances. The second period, from 1960 until Franco's death in 1975, was marked by a weakening of the regime's iron grip on society as a result of the emergence of significant social groups which began to openly dissent from the

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<sup>4</sup> The distinction between 'Staats-' and 'Bürgerpolizei' does not automatically correspond to the functions assigned to the police in a repressive state and a tolerant one, respectively. Rather, it corresponds to the degree of openness of the political elites in relation to new politico-social demands and the institutionalization of excluded political elites.

<sup>5</sup> See Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

political principles on which the regime was based. The intensity of protest increased until the breakdown of the regime, which occurred formally in 1976. A dynamic of progressive political change, intertwined with residual elements of the former regime, began in the following period. Uncertainty about the immediate future characterized this period, and there is no doubt that it not only conditioned police perceptions of the external environment but also their actions in various fields. This period of democratic transition ended in 1982 with the victory of the Socialist Party at the general elections, from which moment we may consider democracy to have become consolidated. Thus began a period of progressive accommodation of the security forces to the new socio-political reality. Any threat of regression had been practically eliminated.

With the end of the Civil War, a new political regime emerged, characterized by the authoritarian and personal power of General Franco. The most reactionary sectors of Spanish society had contributed to Franco's victory and subsequently enjoyed a privileged relationship with the new regime, although bitter confrontations which were difficult to conceal divided the different elites. During the first years of the regime, close ties were maintained with fascist countries. However, the end of the World War and the consequent defeat of the fascist regimes brought a distinct cooling in relations. Within Spain, the regime displayed a marked hostility toward any kind of political dissent. This animosity logically translated into the development of security forces whose main concern was to combat threats to the regime.<sup>6</sup> Post-war repression was severe and, in many cases, indiscriminate. Between 1939 and 1944, nearly 200,000 members of the political opposition were executed, and in 1940 more than 250,000 people were held in prison (8 per cent of the working population) for political reasons.<sup>7</sup> The political opposition initially chose to fight the regime by means of guerrilla warfare; a strategy which was, however, successfully and pitilessly defeated by the state security forces. With the

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<sup>6</sup> The nature of the Francoist period has been analysed by Juan José Linz, 'Una teoría del régimen autoritario. El caso de España', pp. 1467-1531 in Manuel Fraga, Juan Velarde and Salustiano del Campo (eds.), *La España de los años setenta*, vol. 3; *El Estado y la política*, Madrid: Moneda y Crédito, 1974.

<sup>7</sup> Figures provided by Stanley Payne, *Falange: Story of Spanish Fascism*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961, quoted by Francisco Sánchez, 'Conflictos laborales en Madrid durante la dictadura y la democracia', pp. 169-214 in *Malestar cultural y conflicto en la sociedad madrileña*, Madrid: Colección Documentos, Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid, Consejería de Integración Social, 1991. The data on the number of prisoners are provided by this author.



realization that this strategy was a costly mistake (4,500 guerrilla fighters had been killed without having achieved anything), the opposition developed a new set of tactics at the beginning of the 1950s which was based on political activity in the workplace. During this period, the population was either too afraid or too passive to initiate a revolt. In fact, broad sectors of Spanish society were satisfied with the principles of the regime. Until the end of the 1950s the dictatorship did not experience any real threat, either from the weak internal opposition forces or from external actors.

Historically, the first national police system was the *Guardia Civil* (the Spanish Civil Guard), created in 1844 by an army officer. Its structure was militarized due to the army's powerful influence. Following the Civil War, the *Guardia Civil* underwent profound changes, becoming an even more radically militarized force as a result of the role assigned to it; namely, that of a static surveillance agency with the maintenance of public order as its first and principal function. This paramilitary force took a very active part in the fight against the political opposition. Gradually, however, the importance of the *Guardia Civil* declined in the fight against the political opposition. The golden days of the struggle against the communists and anarchist guerrilla *maquis* belonged to the past. With increasing urbanization, the importance of the rural areas diminished in favour of the cities where the growing population became a potential source of political and social unrest. Thus, the role of the new urban police force rapidly grew in significance.

After Franco's victory, the civilian police system and structure were radically changed. At the beginning of the 1940s, the republican *Guardia de Asalto* was renamed the *Policia Armada*, and more and more personnel were employed and resources spent in response to a presumed latent social unrest and the fear of leftist activism. Public order in large cities was so important to the dictatorial regime that in 1959 the armed traffic police was dismantled in order to increase the number of policemen deployed on the streets. Having become part of the armed forces, it too, like the *Guardia Civil*, had a militarized structure. This new force was largely made up war veterans, who were aware of its repressive political function and who developed a deeply authoritarian organizational culture.

Franco's repressive system was highly effective during the first decades. After the war and during most of the 1950s, social protest was almost non-existent. Neither the *Policia Armada* nor the *Guardia Civil* were used to confronting social protests or strikes in the streets. Public protests were



forbidden and heavily punished. In a situation of potential unrest, the usual procedure was for the *Guardia Civil* to send a *pareja* (pair) of Civil Guards to the site; if the unrest had already abated, the mere presence of the pair of men should have been enough to deter any further action. If this did not suffice, the *pareja* could always use their regulation weapons to reestablish public order. This was the normal procedure during those years and was, in fact, highly effective.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1950s, the working class began to organize itself in order to defend basic social and economic rights, though this proved to be very difficult due to the initially low level of organization. The former trade unions and political parties had been dismantled and the regime's control over the official trade unions was strong. There was no real need for the government to develop sophisticated means of control of public order during these years; the whole decade was extremely peaceful. The regime no longer felt threatened by the international community as Franco believed that he was a necessary arm in the Western fight against the communist world; moreover, the internal communist threat was not strong enough to present a real problem.

The 1960s marked the beginning of a very important period of economic development which, however, did not favour so much the emergence of a political consciousness as an individualistic desire for economic improvement. It was only from the 1960s on, when the impact of the Civil War and the post-war period had been partly surmounted and new generations who had not experienced the war were appearing in the political arena, that the regime's overwhelming control was really defied, with a serious attempt to undermine the old values and the power of the political elites. Real problems for the regime in terms of public order started as the 1960s opened. At the end of the previous decade, the workers' organizations, well-organized and led by efficient and experienced communist leaders, rocked the apparent peacefulness of the regime. Moreover, large numbers of students began to voice their disaffection with the lack of public freedom and the absence of freedom of speech.<sup>9</sup> This sudden source of unrest had not been foreseen by the government.

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<sup>8</sup> This procedure has been described by Manuel Martín Fernández, *La profesión de policía*, Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1990, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> On the resurgence of the democratic opposition in Spain, see Jose María Maravall, *Dictatorship and Political Dissent. Workers and Students in Franco's Spain*, London: Tavistock, 1978.

In order to defend the continuity of the political system, the regime's repressive strategies and tactics had to be adapted to the new situation. Several important measures were thus introduced. In 1959, the Public Order Law, which detailed the procedures to be employed in confronting public demonstrations, was passed. This law remained in force until 1992. Second, some specific units of the *Policía Armada* received training in anti-riot tactics in urban areas. Franco's dictatorship was aware that Spanish society was changing very rapidly and that the opposition was developing new strategies to fight against the regime. In order to meet the new public order challenges more efficiently, the *Compañías de Reserva General* (General Reserve Companies) were created in 1969 as specific anti-riot force units. They were based throughout the national territory, concentrating however on the most critical urban areas. The values, discipline and structure as well as the administration of this new force were a copy of those of the army. Despite the use of the new units and anti-riot equipment, the number of deaths caused by the police at demonstrations remained very high. The reason for the deaths was sometimes the inappropriate use of the new equipment and sometimes simply the brutality waged against demonstrators during the suppression of unrest. Third, aware of the advancing age of police officers, the government developed a recruitment programme aimed at young people for the *Policía Armada*. A further measure was the establishment in 1964 of the *TOP* (Public Order Court), a special court to deal with issues relating to public order offences. A few years later, this court would demonstrate its full capacity when thousands of people appeared before it. Fifth, the articles of the Penal Code relating to social and political offences were modified to increase the severity of punishments. Sixth, the *Guardia Civil* received anti-riot equipment, although this only came about after the *Policía Armada* had already been so equipped as the use of such measures was considered less important in the rural areas. Finally, the well-developed information service network of the *Guardia Civil* was increasingly focused on detecting political opposition organizations and, more specifically, their leaders.

The main preoccupation of the Spanish police forces during the 1960s was the fight against growing social unrest. Serious public order problems began for the police in 1962, when the workers' groups started to display a high level of activism and organization. As a consequence, the *Policía Armada* increased its members rapidly. During the last years of the regime it was the main force used to deal with social protests on the streets of the industrialized urban areas. These riots were one of the prime concerns of the dying regime during the 1970s, leading thus to further increases in the number of *Policías Armadas* in the



middle of the decade - a doubling of the ranks from 30,000 to 60,000 occurred over a short period of time. Attitudes within the hard-core regime elite demonstrated that powerful sectors, such as the falangists and the army, were not ready to allow a peaceful political transition.<sup>10</sup> Some public statements issued by high-ranking army officers encouraged the elite's most conservative sectors to resist and the police to exercise tough control over the political opposition.<sup>11</sup>

As we will see, some changes in the behaviour of the security forces did begin to slowly take place from 1976 on, during the period of political transition. The police forces withdrew from the universities and intervened less frequently in labour conflicts.<sup>12</sup> There is no evidence that this change of attitude was ever the result of tacit agreements between the police force and demonstrators, as occurred in some other countries.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, despite the few changes introduced, the anti-riot units continued to respond to breaches of public order in almost exactly the same way: between 1975 and 1979, the police caused the death of 36 people in street confrontations.<sup>14</sup> In 1978 the new democratic Constitution was approved. The concept of public order as an issue relating to the internal security structure was almost absent from the text, but there was still a confusion between the concepts of public order and *seguridad ciudadana* (public safety). The constitutional text allowed for a broad interpretation by the different political forces.

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<sup>10</sup> For an excellent study of the Spanish extreme right during this period, written from a historical perspective, see José Luis Rodríguez, *Reaccionarios y Golpistas. La extrema derecha en España: del tardofranquismo a la consolidación de la democracia (1967-1982)*, Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> In 1974, Lieutenant-General García Rebull declared to the press that 'As a falangist, I do not accept any kind of associations. Associations are a dangerous evil for the whole of society.' Quoted in Manuel Ballbé, *Orden público y militarismo en la España constitucional (1812-1983)*, Madrid: Alianza, 1983, p. 452.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 455.

<sup>13</sup> During the political tumult at the end of the 1980s in Hungary, the existence of such a tacit agreement was perceived, no doubt fostered by uncertainty regarding the immediate future. See Máté Szabó, 'Policing Mass Demonstrations in Hungary', paper presented at the conference, "The Policing of Mass Demonstrations in Contemporary Democracies", 13-14 October 1995, EUI, Florence.

<sup>14</sup> The data are taken from Manuel Ballbé, *op. cit.*, Ch. 13.

In the 1980s, and especially after the socialist victory, the anti-riot forces became less harsh in their actions and demonstrations began to be conducted in a more moderate manner. Workers' demonstrations were less influenced by the largest socialist trade union which tried by every means to decrease pressure on the new socialist government. Furthermore, the student movement almost completely disappeared. In response to this new public order situation, which was closer to that of the Western democracies than to the former dictatorial and post-Franco period, the structure of the anti-riot forces changed. Deployment of these forces had been a response to a critical political and social situation which no longer obtained. In addition, it was increasingly clear that the average age of this specialized police force was too high for them to perform their functions properly (policemen were assigned to these special units and remained there for the rest of their professional lives). Thus, in 1989, new units, known as the *Unidades de Intervención Policial* (Police Riot Squads), were formally created.

### Factors Conditioning the Evolution of the Police during the Transition

The model of political transition seized upon in Spain and the way it unfolded in different phases are issues which remain subject to diverse interpretations. Debate has turned upon the specific character of the Spanish transition; that is, whether this meant a radical break with the past or a reform of the essential structures of the previous regime in order to adapt them to a new socio-political context. With regard to the phases during which the transition occurred, we shall opt for an operative approach to the data, highlighting the political rather than the institutional aspect. In the following, we take July 1976, when the King dismissed the last Prime Minister of the Franco regime, Arias Navarro, as the starting-point of the transition; and we consider it to have concluded in October 1982, when for the first time a change of government was brought about by electoral means with the victory of PSOE (Spanish Workers' Socialist Party).

The dictator's death in 1975 ushered in a period of intense political and social uncertainty. In 1976, a process of political change was set in motion. Various factors contributed to this, particularly the consensus achieved between the different political sensibilities - those surviving the decay of the old regime and those of the opposition. While this consensus gave rise to a stronger tendency towards change, at the same time it limited more resolute and profound progress in some areas.<sup>15</sup> Other contributing factors were the influence of a public opinion in favour of moderate political change, and the positive influence

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<sup>15</sup> See Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *op. cit.*



of other democratic countries.<sup>16</sup> The new situation which emerged after the fall of the Franco regime was the result of the rehabilitation of the old structures to bring them in line with the new political necessities. The most important opposition parties implicitly accepted the new situation, subjecting themselves to a set of ground rules despite the fact that they had not participated in their formulation. Subsequently, the apparent stalemate - the opposition forces were unable to provoke radical political change and the political establishment was no longer able to keep broad sectors of Spanish society under control - led the most moderate political sectors of the former regime to negotiate with the most significant opposition parties in order to give shape to a new political regime for the post-Franco era. Progressively, the transition took the form of an 'agreed rupture', which meant that the political rules changed radically, political parties and trade unions were legalized and a Parliament was established which could foster a standard Western democracy. On the other hand, a king was still on the throne and the state administrative structures remained practically untouched. The civil servants, imbued with the ways of the former regime, remained and established the basis of the new regime. The army endured as a sacred untouched island, impervious to the new way of thinking. So too with the old security structures and agencies - the judges and policemen who had harassed the opposition movement for many decades - remained at their posts. At the beginning of the political process of transition, police behaviour barely changed at all. The same people were using the same repressive methods, as before.

### A. Factors which Slowed Down the Pace of Change

The 'agreed rupture' of the Franco regime meant that state structures would hardly be affected by changes which were approaching as a result of agreements between the different political sectors. The state bureaucracy remained practically unchanged and, even during the transition period, former members of the vertical unions and the traditional fascist organization, *Movimiento Nacional* (an evolved form of the earlier *Falange Española y de las JONS*),

<sup>16</sup> See, Jose Felix Tezanos, Ramón Cotarelo and Andrés de Blas (eds.), *La transición democrática española*, Madrid: Sistema, 1989; Ramón Cotarelo, *La transición española*, Madrid: Editorial, 1989; and Ramón Cotarelo (comp.), *Transición política y consolidación democrática*, Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1992.

were incorporated into the civil service.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the elites of the Franco regime continued to play an important role in the political decision-making of the state. Their presence, legitimized by their new affiliations to parties of the right and centre and by their royal appointment as senators, thus conditioned the evolution of the new regime.<sup>18</sup> During the period of political change, highly-placed politicians in the Ministry of the Interior were constantly overreached by formerly influential politicians of the previous regime.

The army had been one of the props of the former regime, which therefore made it credible for a large part of the most reactionary sector to shelter within it. Though difficult to quantify, this sector indubitably wielded a very real power and was clearly dissatisfied with the initiation of a process of openness. The army was the power that most patently showed its hostility towards the democratic process; indeed, military authorities inhibited the government on many occasions with their attitude of open challenge towards the civil powers.<sup>19</sup> Rumours of a military coup d'état constantly circulated during the first years of the transition, leading up to an actual attempt in February 1981. Its eventual failure was largely due to the lack of real objectives and coordination within the rebel forces, and because of the widespread loyalty maintained by the military authorities towards the crown as the only prevailing institution legitimized by Franco's regime.

The security forces created during Franco's regime were composed of a dense network of loyal officials whose main task was to ensure the perpetuation of the existing political system. The police were modelled on a military ethos

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<sup>17</sup> See Jose Felix Tezanos, 'La Crisis del Franquismo y la Transición democrática en España', p. 9-30, in Jose Felix Tezanos, Ramon Cotarelo and Andrés de Blas (eds.), *La Transición Democrática Española*, Madrid: Editorial Sistema, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> In this sense, it is worth remembering that in 1979 19.96 per cent of the members of parliament came from the elite of the Franco regime. UCD members (centre-right) belonging to this elite accounted for 22.89 per cent, while for AP (Conservative) the figure rose to 81.85 per cent. Similarly, 70.73 per cent of the senators directly appointed by the king had been members of Franco's elite. Against this background, 'It is clear that the continuity in respect of the former regime has been propitiated by the person whom we must consider to be the engine of change'. See Mariano Baena del Alcazar and Jose María García Madaria, 'Elite franquista y burocracia en las Cortes actuales', *Sistema*, n. 28 (1979), pp. 3-50.

<sup>19</sup> In relation to the attitude of the civil powers towards the army officers, see Paul Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*, London: Methuen, Ch. 5.



according to which the maintenance of public order prevailed over other police functions. Indeed, the management of the police forces had been specifically assigned to military personnel. During the first years of the transition, police officers who had taken part in the harsh political repression of the opposition remained in their posts. Even those officials who had committed obvious abuses during the course of their work, such as police chiefs suspected of having participated in plots to destabilize the new regime, kept their positions.<sup>20</sup> Nor were significant changes introduced during the first years of the transition in terms of the methods employed to suppress demonstrations; things continued by inertia from the last period of the previous regime.<sup>21</sup>

The information services had played a very important role during Franco's time in the detection of opposition groups, and they were not able to completely cast off this function during the transition years. Likewise, they collaborated at different levels with groups of extreme right-wing foreigners that had been allowed to establish themselves in Spain, supposedly as a reward for certain 'dirty services' carried out by them for the Spanish security forces during the transition years (the 'dirty' war against ETA, actions against left-wing groups).<sup>22</sup> Some groups even began to collaborate with the security forces from 1975, after Franco's death.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, a certain passivity could be perceived on the part of the security forces in the investigation of crimes perpetrated by

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<sup>20</sup> Some commentators consider it feasible that members of the state security services were involved in certain terrorist actions which were carried out at crucial times during the transition period against high-profile individuals. See Fernando Reinares, 'Sociogénesis y evolución del terrorismo en España', pp. 353-396 in Salvador Giner (ed.), *España: sociedad y política*, Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1990.

<sup>21</sup> As Rodolfo Martín Villa, Minister of the Interior from 1976 to 1979, later acknowledged, reform of the security forces did not begin until 1979 because of fears of a possible rebellion. See Rodolfo Martín Villa, *Al servicio del Estado*, Barcelona: Planeta, 1984, pp. 150-158.

<sup>22</sup> As the Florentine judge, Pier Luigi Vigna, affirms, 'The Spanish secret services used radical and violent exponents of the Italian groups in the extremist provocations of the first years of the transition.' See Mariano Sanchez Soler, *Los Hijos del 20-N. Historia violenta del fascismo español*. Madrid: Ediciones Temas de Hoy, 1993, p. 167.

<sup>23</sup> In this regard see L.F. Rodríguez-Granero, 'Las tramas anti-ETA. La más sucia de las guerras', Dossier published in *Derechos Humanos*, nos. 21-22 (1988).

extreme right-wing groups<sup>24</sup>, while actions of the extreme left wing were answered immediately and forcefully. This state of affairs began to change from February 1983 as a result of the imprisonment of certain Italian, French and Spanish ultra-right wingers involved in international terrorist attacks.<sup>25</sup> Finally, some socially imperceptible changes began to take place from the beginning of the 1980s when the government sought to keep under control and to discipline the police units in charge of surveillance and investigation of ultra-right gangs.<sup>26</sup>

## B. Factors which Favoured Change

The progressive transformation of society was not only confined to its habits and customs, but also profoundly affected the political perception of the regime. The new socio-political situation, together with the generational change, favoured the emergence of a new society, one that was profoundly different to that which had existed 20 years earlier. During the final years of the Franco regime, a moderate political attitude on the part of the public could already be perceived and this was clearly at odds with the principles of the regime.<sup>27</sup> This was to be a decisive factor, one which undoubtedly contributed to smoothing the way for the transition and to avoiding serious social convulsions.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Between December 1975 and June 1976, for instance, more than 50 attacks were carried out by the extreme right, though the police did not make a single arrest. *El País*, 26 July 1976, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> See Mariano Sanchez Soler, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>26</sup> See Fernando Reinares, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

<sup>27</sup> In this regard see R. López Pintor and R. Buceta, *Los Españoles de los años setenta: Una versión sociológica*. Madrid: Tecnos, 1975.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, significant social convulsions did not take place either in favour of or against the change of regime. According to some authors (e.g. Rafael López Pintor and R. Buceta, *op. cit.*), anomie, a subject's attitude when faced with an environment which he is powerless to influence, prevailed among the Spanish population. Subsequently, during the transition, the public's passivity favoured the premeditated strategy of political 'normalization' practised by the elites. See Jorge Benedicto Millán, 'Sistemas de valores y pautas de cultura política predominantes en la sociedad española (1976-1985)', pp. 645-678, in Jose Felix Tezanos, Ramón Cotarelo and Andrés de Blas, *La transición democrática española*. Madrid: Sistema, 1989. These elites became practically the only actors to define the evolution of the new regime.



The political parties had remained underground since the end of the Civil War. Throughout the following decades, their presence was very weak and their position precarious in Spain. With the end of the dictatorship and the subsequent appointment of Adolfo Suárez as Prime Minister, a slow process of political accommodation began, involving the opposition parties which had been most active in the struggle against the Franco regime. Among these, the Communist Party stood out as being the largest and best-organized political force of the time. Nevertheless, other minor political forces which would later achieve considerable importance as well as figures from the former regime known for their liberal and democratic tendencies joined in this process. In this way, a series of solid links was sought, with the aim of developing implicit agreements between the different political sensibilities. It was intended that these links would create a propitious climate to facilitate the process of moving on from that politically critical phase. After the general elections of 1977, the main political forces signed an agreement establishing the conditions for a set of immediate political, economic and social rules which would help solve the deep-seated political and economic problems besetting the country. This agreement, known as the *Pactos de la Moncloa* (The Moncloa Agreements), set down some vague foundations for a reform of the police forces, which however lacked far-reaching goals. Indeed, the primary and immediate objective of the political opposition was to weed out those members of the police forces who had played a direct role in the political repression. With only some 'minor' structural changes, almost the entire structure and personnel remained. Only a few officials who had been involved in suppressive actions against the political opposition were actually dismissed.

The new police legislation was to a large extent the result of agreements between different political sensibilities. However, the military sector and, most significantly, conservative members of Parliament strongly influenced these different political sensibilities, thereby acting as a decisive factor in holding back and postponing a restructuring of the police forces. Changes were effected slowly and without great conviction since no target model of what a police force should be had been defined. In the new legislation, innovative elements showing a willingness to change were combined with others that merely served to perpetuate the militarized nature of the police force. This resulted in the drafting of legal texts that were difficult to interpret or, in many cases, contradictory.

The Police Law, passed in 1978, was the immediate outcome of the Moncloa Agreements.<sup>29</sup> While the influence of the army on the police structure decreased, it nonetheless remained very important. Prior to this basic reform, most of the officers of the *Policía Armada* came from the army. These military officers stayed on as members of the armed forces and received only brief training. After the 1978 law, most of the new officers came from a specific police academy; only a few military officers selected by the Ministry of the Interior could have access to the police structure, though training continued to be largely military-based and was given by army personnel. The most immediate significant change with the new law was that military courts no longer dealt with cases relating to citizens' free expression and the police forces ceased to be protected by military legislation. In 1986, new police legislation, the *Ley Orgánica de Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad del Estado* (State Police Law), was approved. Finally, thanks to this law, the non-paramilitary police forces rationalized their organization. But one of the most important outcomes of this new law was that the *Cuerpo Nacional de Policía* (CNP) became a fully civil corps, abandoning its military status.<sup>30</sup> A few years later, in 1992, the Public Order Law of 1959 was abolished and replaced by the *Ley de Protección de la Seguridad Ciudadana* (Protection of Public Safety Law).

Finally, even before the death of the dictator there was a move towards the development of a more open, pluralistic kind of press. Various periodicals began to be published in Spain which attempted as far as possible to be free of the influences and conditioning imposed by the regime. In part, this was made possible with the Press Law of 1967 which, by imposing self-censorship, made each publication responsible for its own content. The democratic press had backed a smooth change of regime and already possessed a certain degree of *savoir faire*. During the last years of the regime, and especially during the first years following Franco's death and the initial years of the transition, the press helped to bring to the public's attention issues which were delicate and sensitive for the governments of the time, particularly issues concerned internal security

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<sup>29</sup> The real effects of this law have been discussed by Manuel Ballbé, *op. cit.*, p. 471 ff.; Diego López Garrido, *El aparato policial en España*, Barcelona: Ariel, 1987, p. 14 and Ian R., Macdonald, 'The Police System of Spain', pp. 224 ff. in John Roach and Jurgen Thoma-neck (eds.), *Police and Public Order in Europe*, London: Croom Helm, 1985.

<sup>30</sup> The *Cuerpo Nacional de Policía* continued to have a partially military nature even until 1985, since one in three posts in the police administration from the highest levels down were occupied by career soldiers. See Manuel Ballbé, *op. cit.*, p. 484.



and terrorism. To the already existing publications, others were added, emerging now in a new political context devoid of authoritarianism.<sup>31</sup> The press reported the excesses of the security forces and any actions or attitudes on the part of the administration or nostalgic groups which recalled past times. Likewise, the press played an important role in helping public opinion adapt to the new political situation, assuming to a large extent the functions of political interpreter and educator.

### C. Interaction of the Different Factors

Given the interplay of these various factors, it follows that there existed powerful forces which ensured that the future model of the police force would be shaped during the years of transition and democratic consolidation. This model was formed within an ongoing interaction of forces, which favoured a dialectic between continuity and innovation. Unity within those forces which were hindering change broke down with the slow decomposition of the elites of the old regime during the years leading up to the death of General Franco. As a consequence, the conservative nuclei appeared as an uncoordinated front with very limited credibility as a political alternative. Each sector had different aims and plans (political sectors), and some did not even have viable projects of any specific nature (military sectors). They were merely trying not to lose the power they had enjoyed up until then. Nor, however, were the opposition groups unified and coordinated. Each shade of political sensibility sought to ensure that its point of view held sway over the rest. Nonetheless, a positive attitude prevailed as regards the development of a new political regime. The political organizations and those powers that had backed the process of change, as well as the greater part of the public, pushed together towards a political transformation without too much tumult.

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<sup>31</sup> For more information about the role played by the press during the transition period, see J. Giner, 'Journalists, Mass Media and Public Opinion in Spain, 1938-1982', in Kenneth Maxwell (ed.), *The Press and the Rebirth of the Iberian Democracy*. Westport; Greenwood Press, 1983. See also, Antonio Sanchez-Gijón, 'The Spanish Press in the Transition Period', in Robert P. Clark (ed.), *Spain in the 1980's*, Billinger, 1983.

## The Evolution of Police Knowledge during the Transition and Democratic Consolidation<sup>32</sup>

In this section we shall analyse the evolution that has taken place in police perceptions of the outside world. We shall also compare the self-image of the present-day police forces as they carry out the functions with which they have been entrusted and that of former units charged with the maintenance of public order during the transition period.<sup>33</sup>

### A. Perceptions of the Past

Most of the members of the riot squads are young people who took up their posts in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, one of the purposes of the 1989 reform was to enable a renewal of staff so that it would be better suited to the objective necessities of the functions that personnel must carry out. The structure of the *Brigadas de Reserva* was hampered by a series of basic limitations,<sup>34</sup> which severely impaired their abilities when faced with immediate necessities. The generally young medium-ranking policemen and chiefs (group and unit chiefs) belong to generations which were socialized within a socio-political context postdating the dictatorship. Some of the high-ranking chiefs, on the other hand, did serve in those units during the 1970s, although they remain a minority since the 1989 reform affected all levels of the unit's organization.

Nonetheless, there is consensus among the officers of the riot squads regardless of when they joined, that significant changes have taken place, not so much in police mentality as in the socio-political and legal environment. They recognize that this has to a great extent determined the character and form of

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<sup>32</sup> I would like to thank the *Area de Prospectiva del Gabinete de Estudios y Prospectiva de la Secretaría de Estado de Interior* as well as the *Jefatura Central de las Unidades de Intervención Policial*, for their help with this part of my research.

<sup>33</sup> This analysis is based on in-depth interviews using semi-structured questionnaires and conducted among high- and medium-ranking officers of the *Unidades de Intervención Policial* of the *Cuerpo Nacional de Policía*. The interviews were carried out between 15 March and 19 December 1995.

<sup>34</sup> There was no age limit for service, policemen had to live in barracks, and there were no permanent training programmes.



their behaviour. These changes are perceived very clearly, as commented upon by a medium-ranking officer:

There was anxiety among the citizens ... During the previous years large gatherings were not possible, there was a bit of rowdiness, but not now. Everything is much calmer, more controlled on their part, more experience on ours. We anticipate events. Anyway, there is much greater freedom, now much more is allowed than before. Now, in Madrid there are collectives that can block a road like the M-40, they authorize it and everything's all right. A few years ago that was unthinkable (...). It's also true that it was much easier for the police, orders were much clearer: It's prohibited and we're going to break it up (...). Before it was more violent, but I don't think it was more difficult. It was a different method. (Interview No. 6)

This opinion expresses a widely-held feeling; although most of the interviewees did not experience the earlier period first hand, they consider that there is a considerable difference between that socio-political time and today. The public's attitude during those years is not criticized, but a link is constantly made with the present. The intolerance of those days is contrasted with the permissive character of today's society. Most of the interviewees regard the turbulent 1970s at arm's length, and not without a certain relief that those times now belong to a relatively distant past in people's minds as well as in years, even though in some respects they are still present. The nostalgia betrayed in certain interviews by Italian police for the time when the actors had 'comprehensible' end-goals<sup>35</sup> has not yet appeared in Spain, due fundamentally to the fact that the past decades, characterized by a high level of confrontation and manifest hostility on the part of many sectors of the public, are still very present in the inherited collective consciousness of these units.

Notable differences are also perceived between the 1980s and the present day, as may be seen in the following remarks:

[In comparison with the 1980s, control of public disorder today] is easier, above all because of the great experience we now have, and it's also true that the level of aggressive confrontation has diminished. There are more demonstrations, more public shows, but there is less violence. It's easier to control it, and there are clearer delimitations about what people can do within the bounds of legality. Now everybody knows the rules that apply (...). We have acquired experience and so have the citizens. (Interview No. 5)

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<sup>35</sup> See Donatella della Porta, *op. cit.*

In comparison with the 1980s, the present decade displays notably less aggressive confrontation in society. The fact that the actions of these units are, from a legal point of view, more restricted means that officials are freed from the obligation of taking decisions, thereby diminishing the likelihood of mistakes. Legislation on public order dating from 1959 remained in force until 1992, which meant that legal texts had not been adapted to the new socio-political circumstances. This was clearly perceived by the interviewees. They also observed that the public has moderated the expression of its grievances, conforming to legality and to what 'good demonstrations' and the 'demonstration culture' ought, from a police point of view, to be.

However, these transformations, particularly in relation to the 1970s, are perceived very differently by the high-ranking chiefs interviewed. They are much more reluctant to acknowledge that significant changes have taken place in police behaviour. In reality, however, as these high-ranking officers were members of this type of unit in the 1970s, their caution points to a need for self-justification. They find it necessary to show that important changes have not occurred in the unit's way of operating and that they themselves have not changed in the way they carry out their duties. By the same token, it must be pointed out that some officers who were in service during the earlier period did recognize that certain changes had taken place in police control of social protests after the death of Franco:

[In the second half of the 1970s] a certain disorientation developed. Unions and political parties were given authorization. And police principles underwent a transformation now that their main activity was to protect demonstrations. This period was a difficult one for the police (Interview No. 4)

According to other officers interviewed, a significant change occurred in 1982 when the Socialist Party won the general election. A high-ranking officer observed:

From 1982-3 a more important change took place. The provincial governors and the politicians told the brigades that they had to be more tolerant. So, for example, an unauthorized demonstration was then treated with great respect. During the UCD government, the law was interpreted more strictly. (Interview No. 5)

A further difference, relating to operational deployment and its criteria, may also be detected in the officials' comments, as the following illustrate:



Their form of deployment was not always the same but it was very similar. It's also true that demonstrations were broken up more than they are now. (...) It's true that we, the police, have become increasingly permissive, and it's also true that the groups are much less radical than before. The demonstration culture has entered into demonstrations more than before. We've all advanced, the police and the demonstrators. (Interview No. 9)

Before, the old reserve units stayed in their barracks and only left them when there was already a rumpus to sort out. (...) As the demonstration was developing there were police from that city there and when it began to get out of hand, the reserve were called out and acted forcefully. The technique they use now is preventive deployment. When the demonstration is developing, the police are already deployed and they control the situation by means of that preventive deployment (Interview No. 7)

A clear distinction is established between reactive and preventive forms of control over social protests. The handling of protests prior to 1985 (approximately) is considered purely reactive, whereas since that time it has been mainly preventive. This assertion explicitly establishes a clear distinction between two very different police models: one belonging to an authoritarian regime whose only objective is the maintenance of public order and a preventive model which is gradually being introduced into all areas of police administration. This latter model denotes an appreciable change in attitude with respect to the past. Greater forcefulness is acknowledged in those police interventions where the reactive model prevailed.

Some interviewees, particularly those who served in these units during the 1970s, establish a direct connection between their interventions, the relevant legislation and political power, and thus avoid making the security forces responsible. This form of argument continually cropped up in replies during the interviews.

The tactics employed by these units indicate to a large extent which model of police control a state has decided to apply. These tactics stamp relations between police and citizens with a very specific character, serving, in the Spanish case, as a reliable indicator of changes in police attitudes within the new socio-political context, as well as its adaptation to the European context. The following comments provide a clear example:

Nowadays containment is practised more than penetration. Ninety per cent of the interventions we carry out are a matter of waiting patiently, covering an area and saying 'you can't go further than this.' Then you see who can stand it longer (...) In Cadiz we didn't go into the docks. Before, we would have gone into the docks and got

them out. But on this occasion we limited ourselves to being there and preventing them from blocking the road into Cadiz. And waiting, waiting for hours. (Interview No. 5)

Now, we are increasingly moving towards massive intervention (...) Increasingly, they try to send more police to this type of confrontation so as not to have to act with greater harshness. (Interview No. 4)

Total tolerance. Now we carry the idea in our heads that we've got to try to avoid a worse evil. There have even been times when we've known something illegal is going on in a demonstration. And we think about it and see that it's better at that moment to ignore it, because intervening would mean a bigger problem which would then be more difficult to resolve. And so we tolerate it. (Interview No. 8)

The tactics employed are typical of a police force which tends to exercise a gentler control over social protests. The use of forceful and aggressive means has fallen into disuse. The foreign models which most appeal are those which display a more tolerant attitude towards citizens' grievances. The police are aware that forceful methods may have counterproductive effects which would be difficult to predict.

There have also been appreciable changes in the actual methods used, judging from the remarks of police officers:

The baton is what is most used because, in the long run, it causes less harm. The first thing we do is carry out a full-scale police deployment to try to dissuade people. Firing rubber bullets is very problematical because they are not weapons with a precise aim. Tear gas is problematical because it can cause serious injury. You don't know whether some person has a respiratory condition. That's why we try not to use it. What we use most is police presence, massive deployment and, as a last resort, the baton; in other words, hand-to-hand fighting. (Interview No. 8)

Water cannons. People associate them with South American dictatorships - Chile, for example. And here we say, if I use the watergun they're going to bracket me with those regimes, ...perhaps that's why we don't use them. (Interview No. 9)

Horses are the last resort. They haven't been used in recent years because it's a risky business. In Spain, the cavalry hasn't been used, and using it now would attract a lot of attention. (Interview No. 5)

Those elements which are most associated with the past have been relegated to the shelves of history as far as possible and are only employed when absolutely necessary. The use of pressurized water or horses fosters an



aggressive and violent image in the public mind, for which reason utilization is eschewed. The advantage of batons is that they are inexpensive, their use can be easily controlled and the consequences are predictable. Although there may be a general feeling within the public that the use of batons can lead to bloody scenes, the advantages easily outweigh the drawbacks. In general, techniques considered to be most harsh or shocking for the public tend to be used less. This tendency is also clearly evident in the case of Italy.<sup>36</sup>

## B. Perceptions of the Opponent

The police force as an institution dedicated to the defence of the state's interests and to the peaceful coexistence of its citizenry develops a perception of the environment which is conditioned by the functions it carries out and by its own experience. Analysis of this perception is of special interest in the case of Spain. It will allow us to gain an understanding of the extent to which the perception of the opponent has evolved from the repressive 1970s to the present day when an attempt is being made to emphasize the predominantly social function of the security forces. Most of the interviews highlight the problems these units have had to face in the Basque Country<sup>37</sup> and in labour conflicts. A medium-ranking officer explained the situation, without much enthusiasm:

You're in Cadiz and there are HB<sup>38</sup> people there, and now here in Madrid there's been a demonstration of conscientious objectors and there were advisors there who were pals of Jarrai<sup>39</sup> (...) The violent methods they use are the same: you find a device in Gijón, and you see the same one in Cadiz two months later. A Molotov cocktail is made with the same technique; a set of spikes for puncturing the tyres of police vehicles: you find one in Galicia and then another in Sagunto [Valencia County]. There is a connection there. (Interview No. 3)

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> The police riot squads are no longer deployed in the Basque Country, having been replaced by the mobile brigades of the autonomous Basque police (*Ertzantza*). However, they still operate in Navarre, where the radical Basque collective is also strongly represented.

<sup>38</sup> A legalized political organization considered to be the political arm of ETA.

<sup>39</sup> The youth branch of the Basque political organization, HB.

There is an idea, as the officer's remarks illustrate, of a sort of 'Spanish International', with Basque groups helping the most troublesome sectors to oppose the state.

Differences are also established within the police perception between 'good' and 'bad' demonstrators, as may be observed in the following:

Workers' conflicts are the same as they were 100 years ago, with the same tactics, the same organization, the same problems. They are peaceful people, normal run of the mill people who, at a given moment, get angry, organize themselves, use the methods they can, which are always the same (...) They become very radical. Someone who they're going to kick out onto the street has lost everything and refuses to accept it, and it's logical that he refuses to accept it. For us, these are the cases we most dislike, because often you see these people's situation and you say, hell... what are these men supposed to do if all they've got left is the right to protest. But, well, it's got to be done, and we do it. But they're the most disagreeable cases, and they're the people who become most radical. (Interview No. 9)

The 'good' demonstrators are those who protest about labour-related matters. Great sympathy is shown towards them, despite the harshness of the confrontations. Grievances of a politico-nationalist nature, however, are decried, as clearly expressed by a medium-ranking officer:

Normally, someone who demonstrates ... unless it's a question of ideologies, as in the case of the Jarrai lot, because they, well, they're not right about anything. But normally someone who demonstrates does so for strong reasons. (Interview No. 8)

This statement, which reveals a latent attitude, points to a clearly political element in the police evaluation of demonstrators as they deny the validity of collective grievances of a political nature or on the part of Basque radicals with whom they have traditionally had very harsh confrontations. This tendency shows a net contrast with other European cases, such as that of Italy where political protests are considered as 'positive' especially in relation to 'non-political' protests since the latter usually involve violent behaviour.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, in both Spain and Italy protests are more readily legitimized by the police when the demonstrators make claims about matters that directly affect them. In the case of Spain, this rule tends to hold regardless of the level of violence generated by the protest. While violent demonstrations motivated by specific grievances and with specific objectives - generally of a materialistic

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<sup>40</sup> See Donatella della Porta, *op. cit.*



nature - are more likely to be tolerated, those of an ideological nature are most despised by the security forces. This is possibly due to the fact that in a context of economic crisis, materialistic grievances are more readily understood by the policeman-citizen and at the same time they are less disturbing and threatening to the status quo.

'Low intensity' confrontations with other groups elicited fewer comments from the interviewees:

The problem with the students is that 90 per cent of them don't know why they're in the demonstration. There is a tremendous lack of information. Ninety per cent go because they know there's going to be a lot of larking about. The thing is that students are young people who enjoy having a good time. (Interview No. 3)

The thing is that these groups are always the same, that is, the squatters are conscientious objectors and they are anarchists and they are anti-capitalists and they are ecologists and when we go to the demonstrations they are the same. All those groups are the same people. (Interview No. 7)

The students are discredited by the police on the grounds that most of the demonstrators do not know what the objective of their protest is. A generally deprecatory attitude towards opponents is expressed here since all the groups are considered to be almost always the same: fringe youth groups. At the same time, in some cases the police establish links between young groups and organizations with more subversive targets, as explicitly recognized in the following statement:

[Behind the squatters] there are well-constituted organizations. They are given respectability by lawyers who attempt to misrepresent the illicit activity and focus on the possible irregularity of police activity (...) They exploit every mistake we might have made in the inquiry in order to set the media at our throats. (Interview No. 9)

A conspiratorial environment is perceived by the police, which perhaps harks back to earlier times when any sign of opposition to the regime was seen as the fruit of a conspiracy. In any case, the enemy's image is very clearly profiled.

In contrast to the assertion by some experts in the field that there is a natural tendency on the part of the police to display sympathetic attitudes towards ideologically right-wing positions,<sup>41</sup> no clear tendency of this kind, nor

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<sup>41</sup> See Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Why Cops Hate Liberals and Vice Versa', pp. 23-39, in William J. Bopp (ed.), *The Police Rebellion: A Quest for Blue Power*, Springfield: Thomas, 1971.

indeed of the opposite, came forth in these interviews. This was also confirmed in the Italian case.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, in the interviews with police officers, the way in which police perceptions have evolved in relation to their functions and to the surrounding social environment can be observed. Although a few perceptions survive in a partly altered form from earlier non-democratic times, it may clearly be seen that the preoccupations and tactics of these units do not greatly differ from those of neighbouring countries. It is also possible to conclude that there is an overt tendency to use methods and tactics appropriate to what might be called 'soft' control of public order, characterized by the adoption of an attitude of tolerance, generally speaking, by these units during outbreaks of violence.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusion

As we have been able to observe, the Spanish transition during the second half of the 1970s was characterized by a process whereby significant political and social elements from Franco's regime were combined with new forms of political organization. These latter were mainly demanded by an emergent political elite and by a society that had undergone a marked structural transformation throughout the preceding decades. This linking of the mentality, the forms of organization and interests of certain sectors of the former regime with new ideas about how the state and society should be reorganized brought with it, in many cases, new forms and hybrid structures. Depending on the particular circle in which this process of combination took place, the resulting new structures either inclined back towards the old forms or towards a break with them. In this sense, it may be seen that the administration was one of the areas that experienced a slower pace of transformation. Indeed, both its structure and personnel remained practically unchanged throughout the entire transition period. Within the administration itself, the armed forces, the judiciary and the security forces, in comparison with other institutions, underwent the least significant transformation. The police forces - independently of the pressure that the recently legitimized political forces were able or wished to bring to bear -

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<sup>42</sup> See Donatella della Porta, *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> The characteristics of a 'soft' form of control have been described by Olivier Fillieule in his doctoral thesis, 1994, p. 500, cited in Donatella della Porta, *op. cit.*



underwent minimal personnel changes.<sup>44</sup> With regard to police mentality and particularly the structure of the forces, the transformations foreseen from the political *Pactos de Moncloa* (Moncloa Agreements) did not begin to take noticeable effect until well after the transition. When they came, it was largely as a consequence of the generational turnover which was progressively taking place during that period. Despite the evident differences between post-war Italy and the Spanish transition, clear parallels are evident in relation to the evolution of the security forces.<sup>45</sup> The initial conditions as regards their assigned socio-political role and the police 'ethos' were significantly similar, largely as a consequence of the disadvantaged position of the progressive forces during the period of change.<sup>46</sup>

It should be underlined here that during the years of transition and democratic consolidation, the speed with which change occurred at the heart of the political organization varied significantly from one context to another. From what can be observed, we may deduce that those police sectors which were most closely linked with and committed to the former regime, those which were most impervious to external control (for example, the intelligence services), continued during the transition and following years to carry out tasks which did not fully correspond with the functions assigned to the police in a democratic regime, displaying attitudes and conducting activities which, in many cases, escaped political control.<sup>47</sup>

In other parts of the police forces, certain transformations, albeit at a slow pace of change, began to be observed in operations, as in the case of the police units assigned to the control of social protests. While it was not until the 1980s that such changes became noticeable and that they translated into a smaller number of victims in protests, it is true, judging by the officers' statements, that

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<sup>44</sup> Particular changes affected only certain members of the security forces who had been especially and directly important in the repression of the emergent political elite.

<sup>45</sup> Both in Spain and Italy the police were characterized by the militarization of their structures and the adoption of primarily surveillance functions. Officers came from the army, so they had only minimal experience in civil matters. The similarities between these two cases are surprising. See Herbert Reiter's working paper in this serie.

<sup>46</sup> In the Spanish case, from the beginning of the transition; in the Italian case, particularly from 1948 when the progressive parties were removed from government.

<sup>47</sup> Again, significant parallels can be established between Spain during the transition period and Italy in the decades following the fall of the Mussolini regime. See Giuseppe de Lutiis, *Storia dei servizi segreti in Italia*, Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1993.

members of these police units began to feel the changes during the first years of the transition. This change can only be explained within a three-tiered structural perspective. Firstly, as social protest began to be seen as a legitimate form of expression of dissatisfaction on the part of citizens in a democratic state, the political elites gradually shifted towards the adoption of a more permissive line in their regard. Politicians were not willing to accept the high political cost of disproportionate police interventions. In the second place, the modernization of police personnel and methods, together with a progressive demilitarization of their perception of the environment, led the security forces to moderate their interventions and the forcefulness of their conduct. Finally, the social demobilization advocated by the parties of 'the masses' and the subsequent victory of the Socialist Party in 1982 resulted in a diminution of the intensity of social protests. The election victory contributed to a moderation of demands on the part of broad sectors of workers. From the beginning of the 1980s, all of these factors undoubtedly worked together to favour an abatement in the virulence of confrontations. In turn, this development translated into a significant decline in injuries and particularly deaths, which became rare events from that time on.

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