

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

Volume 8 | Number 1

Article 13

3-31-1960

Report on Spain

Jose Marie Y Trani

Follow this and additional works at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/phstudies>

Recommended Citation

Y Trani, Jose Marie (1960) "Report on Spain," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*: Vol. 8: No. 1, Article 13.

Available at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/phstudies/vol8/iss1/13>

This Commentary is brought to you for free and open access by the Ateneo Journals at Archium Ateneo. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints by an authorized editor of Archium Ateneo.

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

Report on Spain

Jose Maria Mata Y Trani

Philippine Studies vol. 8, no. 1 (1960): 163—167

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

Poets will then run freely over the shattered lands,
Glad to move and be, upright, just like the many.
People will listen to them then, hooray!
If there are any.

H. B. FURAY

Report on Spain

What is happening in Spain? That's the first question a Spaniard hears once he crosses the Pyrenees. For many people Spain is, to the life, the mythical country in which dictatorship, a secret police, bullfights, a strange tradition and the official Catholic Faith amalgamate to produce something bizarre and out of this world.

The truest answer to this question is also the simplest. What is happening in Spain? Nothing; nothing is happening in Spain that does not and could not happen in any other European country. Spain has peculiar economic, social and political problems, granted; so does every other European country. Spain has its own geographical and historical context, in which alone its problems can be understood, granted; what nation does not?

But the myth? Could we forget it for the moment? Instead, could we take a straightforward look at what the various Spanish social classes are and do today? The myth is made up mostly of misinformation. Perhaps a little information will balance the scales.

THE PEASANTS. Spain is still a country with a basic agricultural economy. Until a few years ago the tillers of the soil, the *peones*, outnumbered every other class. Now, with the push for industrialization, there are more industrial workers. But the number of peasants is still very great.

The life of the peasantry is hard but it has its compensations. They live close to sun and soil and have a hard, earthy wisdom that has made them, in the past, the spine of the country. Work is seasonal—planting and harvesting time—and pay is low; but the cost of living in country towns is low, too. It is a peaceful life and its tempo gives time for a very sound moral and intellectual growth. Of the old-style peasant one could say: this is what he will think, this is what he will say, this is what he will do. Not that he was a pawn; he was nobody's man but his own, at least in spirit. What he stood for he stood for firmly and, to some extent, predictably.

Today, the young people are leaving the land and going to the city. Higher salaries, machine-made entertainment, these are siren calls. Unfortunately the average young peasant has no special skill

and his place in the "modern world" is the underprivileged one of the unskilled laborer. Small pay, greater lures. What this will do to the traditional face of Spain is as yet unclear. But it is happening.

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS. This group is important. It is growing fast because agricultural Spain is trying to become an industrial nation overnight. There is a great demand for skilled workers, so qualified carpenters, metal-workers, mechanics and electricians are very well paid. The trouble is that there are very few such technicians; most of those who flock to industry are wholly unskilled and get correspondingly thin pay, although the cost of city living is six or seven times higher than in the country. Some effort is being made to provide suitable training; the Jesuits, for example, have opened more than thirty vocational schools in the last twenty years.

Many who were members of the Communist Party during the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1936) are today workers in industry. They are still communists. Consequently well-organized communist cells are active beneath the surface in many factories, stirring up dissension and discontent, sometimes even engaging in "slow-down" sabotage of production. If freedom of political association were allowed in Spain, a strong Communist political party would unquestionably emerge.

These men are Catholics but their religious education is almost nil. They are baptized, they marry in the Church, they have their children baptized, they try to get to confession before they die—and that's the lot. Apart from this their involvement with religion during their lifetime is in just two things: first, a fanatical and superstitious devotion to this or that image of Our Lord, Our Lady or some saint; second, a vocal conviction, against all twentieth-century evidence, that the avarice and lust of priests are phenomenal.

THE WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS. These are salesclerks, secretaries, owners of their own small stores, garages or factories and their employees, and government workers. They are a cut above the manual workers but they do not have the money, position, ability or education to be a true middle class. Salaries in this group range widely. Some private firms, for instance, Osborne & Co. Sherry Wines, Puerto de Santa María, pay well; other employers, the Government for example, pay poorly.

The average white-collar worker has the equivalent of a high-school education. He reads the daily papers, weekly magazines and popular novels, but little more. He is a devout fan of soccer football, Spain's national sport, and often follows his favorite team from city to city at a cost which he can ill afford. It is often said that this extravagant fondness for sports is encouraged by the Government: when men spend the ensuing week talking about last Sunday's game, they have no time to talk politics.

By and large this group is non-communistic, even anti-communistic. Newspapers and magazines have persuaded them that a dictatorial regime of the Russian type, based on fear and the police system, is completely wrong and out of date. If there were any political possibility of it, they would probably gravitate towards a socialism similar to that in France and England. Right now, lacking any organization whatever (as does the white collar worker everywhere), they are merely apt raw material for socialism.

THE MIDDLE CLASS. Here are the professional men, physicians, lawyers, engineers, more well-to-do business men, more important government officials, etc. They make out very well economically, perhaps too well. For the difference in income between the white-collar workers and the men of the middle class is astounding. One instance (probably an extreme one) may serve as illustration. In the RENFE (Spanish Railways Company managed by the State) an office manager of the white-collar class gets about 30,000 pesetas a year; a general manager in the same firm gets about 300,000 pesetas or even more a year. A "ten-times" chasm between two degrees of management in government is, to say the least, surprising.

The members of the middle class vary a great deal in political ideas, since many factors sway them. To the extent that they concur it is because of the single most important factor, family tradition. Generally speaking, this class was monarchist when there was a king in Spain, republican with the Republic, and now professes great enthusiasm for the present regime. Presumably they will support anyone who assures them of the *status quo*. Nevertheless, although they "go along" with the existing situation, many individuals in this group do have particular political allegiances. There are partisans of the liberal monarchy (Don Juan), or of the traditional monarchy (Don Francisco Javier de Borbón-Parma), or of the Republic, etc.

Of recent years certain gifted members of this group have begun to talk about and move toward a Catholic Democratic party along the lines of the German KDP or the *Democrazia Italiana*. Spain's hope for an enlightened future seems to rest with these men and with a university group of similar mentality.

There are no communists in the middle class. They suffered too much from the communists during the 1936-1939 civil war, and they do not forget.

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. This group presents the most uniform features in that its members are all young men with no links to any given political position and they are nearly all intellectually searching for a better political climate. Economically they are dependent on their parents who fall mostly into the third or fourth group.

The students' political ideas play the field. They range from an intellectual communism to the extreme rightist position represented

by a renewal of *Falange Española*. Officially Falange is the only political party today. Its young adherents, however, think that as it exists now it is almost completely corrupted and that their mission is to bring it back to its original strength and ideals, that is, to bring it back to something like Mussolini's or Hitler's dictatorship. Fortunately this group is small and not very significant.

Last year not a few beards like Fidel Castro's might be seen at the University of Madrid. These were members of the ASU, the *Asociación Socialista Universitaria*, a deeply secret association as anyone could plainly see. Apart from the gaiety of the beards, it is significant that there are some at the University thinking along socialistic lines and that they want their affiliation to be known.

Still others, led by some teachers, profess to be monarchists. They agitate for the return of Don Juan as king. They say that they do not want the monarchy that ended in 1931 but another one, one more in accord with our present needs. But if they really do have any clear ideas about what type of monarchy this is, they have not yet revealed them.

These are the organized groups. But there are many other students, not formally organized, who are beginning to think with a European mind. They know that there is something wrong with a Spain unrelated to the rest of Europe politically, economically or culturally. They feel strongly that we Spaniards must integrate ourselves with other European countries. The first step must be our theoretical and practical agreement with the form of government common in Europe, that is, with democracy.

These young men remember very well what happened when the Council of Europe was created a few years ago. All the European countries this side of the Iron Curtain were admitted as full members, except Spain. Spain was rejected because the Spanish government would not agree with, and swear to, one of the basic articles, the one which granted to the citizens of every nation in the Council the freedom of political association. That is to say, the Spanish politicians were not ready to accept democracy.

This pan-European group although not organized is, together with the members of the middle class who are moving towards a Catholic Democratic party, the greatest hope for the political future of the country. At present they are waiting for a man, or an institution, to unite them.

THE MEN OF GREAT WEALTH. This is the smallest group but the most immediately influential. There are two types of rich men, the land owners (whose great properties are mostly in the South) and the tycoons, the men behind the banks, the shipping companies, etc. This is the class, it is said, whose money won the 1936-39 war; this is the class, consequently, whose present influence is real not

potential: they won the war and they are going to enjoy the victory. They back the present regime strongly. But even here, one suspects, what they are backing is not the regime but the protection which the regime gives their pesetas. They are opportunists; any other regime which gave the same protection would do just as well.

Everywhere in Spain the sense of private property is slowly becoming more social, more communitarian; but not among the very wealthy. They still live in ostentatious luxury and they can well afford to because capital-gain taxes are much lower in Spain than anywhere else. Indeliberately, they are fellow-travelling with the communist push for rebirth.

These are the most rabid and least thinking monarchists. They possess titles of nobility and great palaces in the most aristocratic cities: Madrid, Seville. Monarchy means to them the return of court occasions, the great royal parties, the dancing with a princess, the intimate gossip with a countess.

These men could do much, perhaps everything, for the future of Spain; but they will not. They are busy living in the past.

Two final notes, which are implicit in all the preceding.

First, Spain's disease is economic. We are far behind other European countries. We need more steel, more coal, more machinery, to strengthen the economic foundations of the nation. This is the only way to raise living standards for everybody, especially the lowest classes. Perhaps Spain's recent admission to the European Organization for Economic Cooperation (the OECE) will be the first step in this direction.

Second, Spain's disease is also political. Like it or not we are living in the middle of the twentieth century when every western country has come of age and endorses some form of democracy. We cannot remain isolated from this general political stream.

One hopes that our political leaders will soon see the greatness of the problem and the urgent need of a solution; and will apply the obvious remedies to both our economic and political illnesses.

JOSE MARJA MATA Y TRANI

The Sound of Stereo

Stereo phonograph discs have been on the market only about a year and a half. Stereo tapes arrived about five years ago, but because of the high cost of tapes and the inconvenience of handling them stereo sound had not caught the public fancy until stereo discs appeared. Stereo means there are two microphones used in recording sound. More than two microphones may be used, but if so, the re-