

Spain: The Monarchy's clash with Socialism

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On August the 1st 1969, Time magazine quoted Generalissimo Francisco Franco saying; "Conscious of my responsibility before God and history and taking into account the qualities to be found in the person of Prince Juan Carlos of Borbón, who has been perfectly trained to take up the high mission to which he might be called, I have decided to propose him to the nation as my successor." With this statement began the formal relationship between Spain's present king and the country's fascist dictator.

In November 2007 at the Ibero-American Summit in Santiago de Chile, the King of Spain Juan Carlos pointed his finger at Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and asked him, "Why don't you shut up?", after Chávez had called José María Aznar Spain's former Prime Minister a fascist, and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero the current Spanish Prime Minister was trying to defend him.

This scene from the Ibero-American Summit has now travelled the globe through every mainstream news media channel, however it has been used once again as an opportunity to attack Hugo Chavez for his rudeness and out of line commentary, when in fact not only is it a fairly accurate statement, but it also should be used as an opportunity by political analysts worldwide to bring out the extent to which fascist factions are still very much alive in Spain's political reality.

It is important to note that this incident in the Ibero-American Summit is not an isolated one. Already earlier this year, Chavez called Aznar "a fascist who supported the coup (of April 2002) and who is of the same kind as Adolf Hitler, a disgusting and despicable person who you feel sorry for, a true servant of George W. Bush". This statement was made shortly after Aznar made a call "on the United States, Europe and the Latin American democracies, to close ranks and defeat Hugo Chavez's 21st century socialism."

Even Spain's Minister for External Affairs and Cooperation, Miguel Ángel Moratinos on November 2004, during an interview in the program '59 segundos' of TVE, acknowledged Aznar's support for the coup against Hugo Chavez in 2002; "During the previous government, something unheard of in Spanish diplomacy took place, the Spanish Ambassador received instructions to support the coup, something which is not going to be repeated in the future. This is not going to be repeated because we respect the wish of the people."

The fact remains that Chavez during the Ibero-American Summit was verbally attacking a man who had supported a coup against him, a fact which should have been made clear during the mainstream media's coverage of the incident. Instead, the reporting of the incident between the Spanish King and Hugo Chavez, has clearly managed to ignore this, and the historical facts which made the King of Spain react with so much anger upon

hearing the word 'fascist'. In order for the whole incident to be put into perspective, it is also important to understand, first, Aznar's background as a supporter of fascism and second, the fact that the King only has his crown thanks to the father of fascism in Spain, Francisco Franco.

In regards to Aznar, it is important to highlight his membership in the Frente de Estudiantes Sindicalistas (FES), a student branch of the Falange Española Independiente (FEI), and part of the official party charged with developing the ideology for Franco's regime once the war had ended. It is also important to emphasize the fact that throughout his career, Aznar has never denounced the Franco regime and when democracy was reintroduced in Spain in 1978, he opposed the new constitution. Aznar's loyalty to Franco was further made clear when he denounced the municipal government of Guernika - best known as the scene of one of the first aerial bombings by Nazi Germany's Luftwaffe - for wanting to change the name of their main street from "Avenida del General Franco" to "Avenida de la Libertad".

In regards to the King of Spain, it is important to note that his grandfather King Alfonso XIII left Spain on April 14th, 1931, when the dictatorship of the aristocrat and military official Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja whom he had supported, came to an end and the Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed. Then in 1936 the Civil war broke out, and it was not until years later after millions of Spanish people had suffered through the war and a brutal dictatorship, that in 1969 General Franco officially designated a heir and gave the title of Prince of Spain to Juan Carlos, the current king of Spain. Therefore reintroducing the monarchy through a young prince he had personally groomed, who in his investiture in the Cortes kneeling at Franco's left swore his loyalty "to his Excellency the Chief of State and fidelity to the principles of the National Movement, and the fundamental laws of the Kingdom."

According to a Time magazine article titled 'A Crown for Juan Carlos?' dated August 23, 1971, it was clear for Franco that the only way to bring back the monarchy was if he brought it back himself; "Franco, a lifelong monarchist, knows that in Spain there is no great affection for the crown... If Franco does not put a king back upon the throne, no one else will." So just before his death on the 30 October 1975, he gave full control to Juan Carlos and on the 22 November, following Franco's death, the Cortes Generales proclaimed Juan Carlos as the King of Spain. Only a few days after Franco's death, Juan Carlos said of the brutal dictator; "An exceptional figure has entered history. Remembering Franco will constitute for me a demand for good behaviour and loyalty."

So, although under the leadership of King Juan Carlos, Spain did formally complete its transition from dictatorship to democracy with the Spanish Constitution of 1978, leaving in place a constitutional monarchy, it would be hard to believe that someone who swore loyalty to a brutal fascist would have no animosity to such ideals. For this reason as a Spaniard, it is disappointing for me to see how people around the world receive the media sound bites regarding the heated exchange between a King and a president, without being granted the opportunity to understand the historical events which lead to such a situation. Both Aznar and the King of Spain have embraced fascism at some point in their lives and have built their power upon its foundations, so although one today would struggle to openly prove the statement that they are currently fascists, it can at least be said of them, that at one point both of them certainly were.

For this reason, I choose to do two things, one is to correct the statement by the Spanish

newspaper El Mundo; “The King has put Chavez in his place in the name of all Spaniards,” – by saying that he has certainly not done so in my name, and secondly, I wish to address all those moralists discussing Chavez’s manners, by asking them whether they think it was good manners for Aznar to support a coup against Hugo Chavez, and whether they think it was good manners and a show of love to the Spanish people, when the King swore loyalty to the brutal dictator who killed so many of our relatives.

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