

3 Effects and results of the Spanish Civil War

Timeline

- 1939** Second World War breaks out; Franco maintains neutrality
- 1942** Law of the Cortes
- 1945** referenda on major issues introduced at Franco's discretion
- 1946** Spain is suspended from United Nations
- 1950** relations with US are restored
- 1953** Spain–USA defence treaty
- 1959** Basque terrorist group ETA set up
- 1959–64** Spanish 'economic miracle'
- 1961** law to establish equal rights for women
- 1969** Prince Juan Carlos appointed successor to Franco
- 1975 20 Nov:** Franco dies

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client state A state which, usually in return for economic or political support, gives uncritical allegiance to another state.

Key questions

- What were the political results of the war?
- How did the war affect Spain's economy?
- How did the war affect Spain's position in the world?

Overview

- Spain's population in 1936 was 24 million. By 1938 there were 2 million people in the armies of the contending sides. Of these, half a million died in battle. Many more were wounded and post-war Spain had many severely mutilated inhabitants. There were also 250,000 exiles, many of whom did not return until after Franco's death in 1975. Thousands were homeless and the war destroyed a considerable number of homes and buildings.
- The war caused a great deal of bitterness and a desire for revenge, with concentration camps, reprisals, punishments and executions continuing for years afterwards.
- Politically, Franco established a dictatorship that lasted until his death in 1975, but which had more in common with a military dictatorship based on tradition and support for the church than with the fascist states who supported him in the 1930s.
- Spain stayed out of the Second World War and was not invaded by the Allies. Following the war, it experienced isolation from Europe. For many in Europe, Spain was an outcast state tainted by repression, a thinly disguised dictatorship and association by its ruler with the failed Nazi and fascist regimes brought down in the Second World War. Only with the Cold War and the US need for allies did it emerge from isolation and begin to shake off its pro-Nazi reputation. These circumstances led Spain into closer relations with the USA, but as a **client state**, receiving large amounts of aid.
- Economically, Spain stagnated until the late 1950s, but then saw economic growth and the development of the modern tourist industry.
- The war ended the social changes and reforms getting underway in the 1930s, and Spain seemed increasingly old-fashioned by the late 1950s. It was only after 1975 that the country modernised socially and politically.
- Franco did look forward near the end of his rule by fixing the succession on the future King Juan Carlos.

What were the political results of the war?



General Francisco Franco in 1936

Dictatorship after 1939

Franco ruled until 1975, but he did not attempt to introduce a fully fledged fascist state. Repression in Spain was greater than that in Mussolini's Italy, but there was little in the way of compensating social policy. The historian Paul Preston has written: 'From 1939 Spain was governed as if it were a country occupied by a victorious foreign army.' There were restricted educational opportunities and expenditure on health and welfare was among the lowest in Europe. The dictatorship was, by and large, backed by the pre-war élites in business, the Catholic Church and the army. The 1938 Labour Charter established syndicates of workers and employees to discuss conditions, but its main policy was to make the right to work fundamental. It also made strikes a crime against the state.

Caudillo Like Hitler's title *Führer* or Mussolini's *Il Duce*, Franco's meant leader. There was a 'cult of Franco' but he did not encourage this to the extent of other 20th-century dictators.

Regional self-government had to wait until the post-Franco era: the events of 1939 were a victory for the dominance of the centralised Castilian Spanish-speaking state. There was a façade of constitutional government. The law of the Cortes of 1942 established a parliament, but this was powerless and, like the cabinet, or Council of State, consisted largely of people appointed by Franco, who reserved the right to rule by decree as the supreme leader or **Caudillo**. A law of 1945 introduced referenda, or direct voting on key issues, but this remained at Franco's discretion. The constitution most resembled that of another military dictator – Napoleon I of France (1799–1814). Like Napoleon, the Franco regime kept a tight hold on regional and local government.

Spain was to be traditional, Catholic and monarchical – Franco was merely a regent and could nominate a royal successor. After his death the Bourbon monarchy did in fact return by his wish. In place of politics, there was the National movement – a mixture of pre-war Catholic, fascist parties, administrators, and professional and technical experts. Talk was of 'family' rather than class or party.

In 1966, these constitutional arrangements were confirmed, but overt fascist terms were removed. Behind a façade of elections and referenda, the old authoritarian dictatorship continued, supported by the church and army. Censorship and oppression of opposition continued for 26 years after 1939, but Franco did not establish a totalitarian system – obedience, but not wholehearted commitment, to an ideology or total control of the economy was required. In this respect, the results of the civil war were very different from those of Russia or China. The fascist Falange had little real influence, especially after most of its key leaders were killed in the civil war.

There was a reaction against the reforms of the Second Republic: civil marriage and divorce were not permitted; trade unions were prohibited, as were all political parties except the National movement; regional independence and official use of the Basque and Catalan languages were forbidden. Land was returned to the landlords and strikes were punishable as treason.

How did the war affect Spain's economy?

Spain's economy was burdened by economic dislocation of trade and industry and a large war debt owed to Germany and Italy. The loss of labour, of economic expertise, and the diversion of resources to war production took their toll. In 1951, wages were at only 60% of 1936 levels.

Economically, Spain reverted to self-sufficiency as a result of the war; wages were very low but prices rose because of shortages in the 1940s. Unlike other European countries, Spain could not benefit either from Marshall Aid after 1947 or from the communist bloc's subsidies from the USSR.

Rather, as in the case of post-Mao China, Spain had to relax its controls and self-sufficiency. The USA, eager to sustain an anti-communist regime, encouraged investment and there were relaxations on economic activity. However, as in China, there were no relaxations of the dictatorship. From 1956, Spain's economy began to modernise and there was more contact with other European countries.

It was not until the later 1950s that post-war isolation began to give way to modernisation. The 1960s were a period of economic growth, greater prosperity and a resurgence of industrial unrest. It was as though Spain had been frozen from the late 1930s, and only after 25 years did there seem continuity with the pre-war period. With the prosperity and the arrival of mass tourism in the 1960s the regime began to relax, permitting greater religious toleration and less stringent censorship. In 1969, Franco named his heir, Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón, giving some hope for a New Spain. Juan Carlos succeeded Franco in 1975, after which there was a return to democratic government. In the 1970s, with Basque terrorism and demands for regional autonomy, the right to strike and political freedom, pressure for change finally began to make its mark.

How did the war affect Spain's position in the world?

Franco was favourably inclined to the Axis powers, but despite a meeting with Hitler in 1940, Franco restricted this to allowing German aircraft and submarines the use of Spanish facilities and allowing 'volunteers' – some 18,000 men of the **Blue Division** – to fight in Russia between 1941 and 1943. When the tide turned, Franco was careful to cultivate better relations with the Allies and was 'benevolently neutral' in 1944. This defused Stalin's suggestion that the Allies invade Spain in 1945.

The Cold War led to the USA lifting restrictions on trading with Franco, and offering financial aid in 1950. The 1953 Pact of Madrid made Spain a virtual US ally and more aid flowed in. The reward for not being an enemy to the winning side was considerable US support in the Cold War period, when Franco was seen as a bastion against communism. Thus his dictatorship, like that of the Portuguese dictator Salazar, lived on while those of Hitler and Mussolini did not.

European countries were not willing at first to allow Spain to join NATO or the EC, but a trade agreement in 1970 came close to bringing Spain back into better relations with Europe, apart from Britain, with whom there was a long-standing quarrel over Gibraltar.

Blue Division These were the 18,000 Spanish volunteers that went to fight for Germany in Russia in 1941. In total, 45,000 Spaniards served with German forces and suffered some 14,000 casualties. They wore red berets at home – the uniform of the 19th-century Carlists. They saw themselves in a tradition of defending Christian values against communism.

Discussion point

What would have been the consequences if Franco had been defeated?

Historians should not really think counter-factually (i.e. try to think what *might* have happened as opposed to what *did* happen), but it has been suggested that:

- A successful republic would have been heavily dependent on the Soviet Union. The communists had purged their enemies and by the end of the war had managed to install a pro-communist prime minister.
 - A virtual Soviet colony dominating the Mediterranean would have had enormous consequences, not least for France and Britain.
- 1 Would these countries have been so ready to go to war with Germany in 1939?
 - 2 Would Hitler have been seen much more as an anti-communist saviour and would he have avoided a two-front war?

In conclusion, it is worth considering the consequences of a republican victory for Europe. The initial rebellion was not guaranteed to succeed, and victory was only achieved after a long, gruelling war. Would a republican victory have given Spain a better future or more sustained and continuing violence and repression? Would it have been safer or more dangerous for the Western democracies? Would it have had a major effect on the outcome of the Second World War? Do you think that this sort of 'guess work' has any value? Should a historian even attempt to think 'counter-factually' and speculate on what might have happened?

Probably the sad truth is that the divisions in Spain by 1936 were so profound that whatever the result, the mixture of social conflict, ideological extremism, regional tensions and a lack of strong democratic tradition would have resulted in a tragic outcome.

End of unit activities

SOURCE A

With all my heart, I pardon all those who declared themselves my enemies, even if I did not regard them as such. I believe and wish it to be the case that I never had any other enemies than those who were the enemies of Spain.

From the deathbed testament of Franco, 1975. Quoted on www.altafilms.com/las13rosas/descargas/FrancosCrimesCrome.pdf.

SOURCE B

In mid-July 1939 Count Ciano, the foreign minister of fascist Italy, arrived in Barcelona (on a state visit). Having been an enthusiastic advocate of Franco's cause during the war, he was assured of a warm welcome. Among the entertainments ... was a tour of the battlefields. Near one of them, he was shown a group of Republican prisoners working. He noted 'They are not prisoners, they are slaves of war'. He described Franco to a friend, 'That queer fish of a Caudillo (leader) ... surrounded by mountains of files of prisoners condemned to death.'

Preston, P. 1986. The Spanish Civil War. London, UK. Harper. p. 317.

Activities

- 1 Compare the impression of Franco given in Sources A and B.
- 2 Which do you find more reliable and why?
- 3 What additional knowledge would confirm or challenge Ciano's view in Source B?