

SOME EUROPEANS: *STOLT OG FRJÁLS FÓLK, LOS INDIGNADOS* and *OI AGANAKTISMENOI* (Part two) *

by George Venturini

SPAIN has been in serious economic difficulties long before the latest jolt to ‘The System’ - that delusional and criminal fairyland which soon turned into the Global Financial Crisis. The Spanish economy, the European Union's fifth largest, slumped into recession during the second half of 2008, reeling under the twin blows of the collapse of a labour-intensive construction boom and of the G.F.C.

Eighty years from that sublime act of peaceful liberation which was the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931, the enemies of the time have returned - not in the same guise - but with the same end: the exploitation of the peoples of Spain. Some would say that those enemies have never left the scene.

The 1931 Spanish Republic antagonised the Catholic Church by introducing a secular education system, the large landowners by instituting a land reform, the army by reducing the number of top officers, the capitalists and the *bien-pensants* by promoting social reforms. Five hundred years of obscurantism and ill-gotten privilege struck in July 1936 in what was not a civil war but a military *coup* against the peoples of Spain, the expression of a class struggle by the top brass of the army, acting on behalf of those powerful interests - the oligarchy. The intervention of Fascist and Nazi forces and the feigned ‘non-intervention’ by Britain and France made Franco’s ‘Crusading’ victory possible, also through history’s first aerial bombing of civilian populations: Guernica by the Nazis, Barcelona by the Fascists. The Pope sent his blessing.

That combined foray of ‘western powers’ into Spain was the first occasion for the betrayal of the Spanish Republic and its peoples. Franco’s victory, officially proclaimed on 1 April 1939, led to a personal dictatorship which only ended with his death in 1975.

The second traitorous event occurred when the Spanish Republicans in exile were told that they should have heeded the British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's desire for the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty as part of the plan for the expulsion of Franco. That 'suggestion' provided the fuel for a conflagration which exploded among Spanish Republicans in 1947 and 1948. Juan Bourbon, son of the deposed Alfonso XIII, was living in Portugal and giving every sign that he was available for the throne, whether the restoration was initiated by the Franco regime or its opponents. On 31 March 1947 Franco had promulgated a 'Law of Succession', which provided that the new king must be 'of royal blood' and a Catholic. Juan rejected this law with the assertion that he was already king and needed no other tests of his fitness, although he met both conditions. Arrangements were made to reach an agreement with the Socialists - if possible - for an acceptable formula for Juan's accession to the throne. The arrangement was to be that, firstly, Juan would be named king, and, secondly, a plebiscite would be held in which the voters would choose between a monarchy and a republic. But Juan refused to agree to step down in case of an adverse decision at the polls, and this stalled the negotiations, which eventually just petered out. On 8 June 1947 Franco's subservient *Cortes* approved the 'law' - by a unanimous vote, of course. A referendum was held on 6 July. The regime issued its own figures, for what they are worth: 12,628,983 yes; 643,501, no; 320,877 blank or void. This pseudo-monarchist activity - as De Madariaga labelled it - was a kind of homeopathic cure the regime was taking in advance against a possible understanding between Socialists and Monarchists, towards fulfilling the conditions adumbrated by the three powers - France, the United Kingdom and the United States - in their note of 5 March 1946. In September 1947 the Spanish Socialist Party in exile published a statement favourable to such an understanding. In October 1947 the Socialist leader Indalecio Prieto and the Monarchist leader José María Gil Robles met in London and were received by Bevin - one of the few remaining 'enemies' of the regime. This move was a success. A statement was prepared at the end of the meeting which answered the requirements of the three-power note of 5 March 1946 and of the United Nations resolution of 15 December 1946. This statement was forwarded by both Socialists and Monarchists to the governments of Belgium, Britain, France, Holland, Luxemburg and the United States.

Opposition to the monarchist-republican negotiations split the Spanish Republican political organisations, especially the moderate parties, including those of the Left. Premier-in-exile Álvaro de Albornoz, speaking at the Congress of the *Izquierda Republicana* - Left Republicans in December 1947, dubbed Prieto's call for Spanish solidarity the "solidarity of the wolf and the lamb under the mask of philanthropy." The Left Republican Party in Spain itself passed a resolution which accused the British Government of being "the driving force of restoration of the monarchy and as such, the greatest enemy of the Republic." It also accused "the British and American governments of being responsible for Franco's continuance in power, for the hunger, for the misery and for the ruin of the nation." Prieto's role in Spanish and international politics was - to say the least - disconcerting to many of his compatriots. His advocacy of a partnership with monarchists and conservative republicans in the construction of an *interim* government stemmed from his own fears of Communist hegemony in any new Spanish government and the fact of Bevin's strong interest in the proposed solution.

Franco, in fact, had been considered giving the Spanish throne to Juan Carlos's cousin Alfonso, Duke of Anjou and Cádiz. It was in response to that that Juan Carlos started to use his second name *Carlos* to assert his claim to the heritage of the Carlist branch of his family. Juan Carlos was born in Rome in January 1938. His father had offered to volunteer against the Republic, but had been turned down because Franco regarded him as too 'liberal'. Juan Carlos is the grandson of the former king of Spain, Alfonso XIII who abandoned Spain in 1931 and escaped to Fascist Italy, preferring the safety under the protection of a proto-Fascist Pope Pius XI, of the Fascist Savoys and their *Duce* to the uncertainty of politics in Britain. More importantly, Juan Carlos is the great-great-grandson of Queen Victoria.

Juan Carlos was moved to Spain in 1948. There he was 'educated' by the Jesuits and in the State's military academies, lived at the Zarzuela Palace and attended every official ceremony. As De Madariaga pointedly asked, "what were [Spaniards] to think, however, when they saw the education of the young prince being conducted exactly like that of his dethroned

grandfather (Alfonso XIII) under artillery officers and Jesuits, to prepare him for attendance at a military school the first director of which had been General Franco himself ? ”

Juan Carlos seemed - and in time turned out to be - the ideal candidate for a *Francoism-without-Franco*, run by army men and technocratic, ‘non-political’ ministers. He married Princess Sophia of Greece and Denmark in 1962. She is the daughter of so-called king Paul, pretender of Greece. She was Greek Orthodox but converted to Roman Catholicism with a view to becoming Spain's Queen. Madrid was worth a mass.

The period of so-called *transición* from dictatorship to democracy, which includes the passing of the Amnesty Law of 15 October 1977 and the signing of the Moncloa Pacts of 25 October 1977 - the first destined to become an amnesia law of all the Francoist crimes and the second being a bargain signed by non-representative personalities - is almost exemplified by the progression in the career of Manuel Fraga Iribarne. He was born in 1922, graduate in law, economic and political science, became Franco’s Minister of Information, of the Interior - and thus in charge of the hated political police, and of Tourism 1962-1969, ambassador to the United Kingdom until 1975, and subsequently vice-president and Minister of the Interior of the Francoist government of Carlo Arias Navarro - a man of the *transición*. Manuel Fraga would be the founder of *Alianza Popular* which became a refuge for ‘reformed’ Francoist high-brass and later transformed into a *Partido Popular* still an extremely Right-wing formation. In 1964, to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of the civil war, Manuel Fraga, as Minister of Information, had organised the most massive propaganda: ‘XXV years of peace.’ As Minister for Tourism he coined the slogan: “Spain is different.” as an indicator of abnormality and uniqueness of the political situation in Spain, compared with that of the ‘western democracies’. He would be one of the writers of the 1978 Constitution. The 1978 Constitution makes of the Spanish State a “parliamentary monarchy” - a concept difficult to swallow in logic, because a parliament renews itself periodically while a monarchy is in the rancid rhetoric of monarchic jargon ‘continuous’ and, if just no longer ‘divine’, ‘sacred’ for sure, sacred in the spirit which is meant to be conveyed by the declaration that the present king, Juan Carlos I de Borbón, is “the legitimate heir of the

historic dynasty.” In the history of Spain, twice in seventy years, with Isabella in 1870 and with Alfonso XIII in 1931, the Spanish peoples invited the Bourbons to vacate, and accompanied them to the border - quietly and peacefully.

In 1989 Manuel Fraga would promote the election of José María Aznar as the party's new president and future prime minister, 1996-2004. Fraga was then appointed as honorary president of the *Partido Popular*. He remained an unrepentant admirer of Franco and perhaps because of that was chosen as a Senator by the Parliament of Galicia in 2008. He was the President of Galicia from 1990 to 2005. He is an authoritarian relic of the Franco era who failed to lift his native Galicia and its people out of poverty and unemployment. Now almost 89, he is still visited by foreign correspondents and revered for his opinion. It is, basically, that Franco was ‘authoritarian’, yes, but also ‘the greatest European and Spanish leader of the twentieth century’. But Fascist? No, not Fascist! - indeed he was the silent benefactor of present day ‘democracy’. In that opinion he is not alone.

Juan Carlos has been known for saying: “*No consiento que se able mal de Franco en mi presencia*” - quickly translated: not a bad word about Franco in my presence. Queen Sofia is known for having defended Franco, even in a recent interview, denying that he was a bloody dictator. He was - she said - a soft, authoritarian figure, like a father to her husband. This is no fortuitous *lapsus*. A successful project of the Francoists has been that of defining the regime which existed between 1939 and 1978 as an ‘authoritarian regime’, which would have been adapting to change in the country and become later - under the guidance of Juan Carlos - a modern democracy similar to other European democracies. After Franco's death, *Falangism* - Spanish Fascism - was able to dictate the terms of the ‘transition to democracy’.

The third - but by no means the last betrayal of the peoples of Spain - took place on 20 May 1977, when the leader of the only recently legalised *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* - P.S.O.E., Felipe González Márquez, accompanied by Javier Solana, visited Juan Carlos at the Zarzuela Palace. The event represented a key endorsement of the monarchy by Spain's

political 'Left', which had been historically republican. Left-wing support for the monarchy grew when the Communist Party was legalised shortly thereafter, a move for which Juan Carlos claimed credit, despite enormous Right-wing military opposition at that time, during the Cold War. Fundamentally, the principle of democratic accountability is denied in a monarchy. A monarchy breeds a culture of servitude and sycophancy to which even some Leftists are not immune. There is much more than a suspicion that Juan Carlos was deeply involved in the 23 February 1981 attempted *coup* through his former instructor and confidant General Alfonso Armada.

To a large extent *Franquismo* is alive and well. One has more than the impression that the passage from dictatorship to 'democratic life' was in fact 'controlled' by the very same persons it was supposed to send packing their bags, if not to gaol. They had, for sure, stolen a huge share of Spanish wealth, and no measure of restitution was provided for; the same 'positional goods' are still in the hands of the remnants of *Franquismo*: one can see that easily on checking the directorships of large corporations and 'transnationals'. In time the Socialists would become furious centralists and not-so-reluctant supporters, in substance, of the *status quo* of the dictatorship, mingling in the process easily and fluently with the powerful remnants of the Francoist regime.

The fourth betrayal of the peoples of Spain was perpetrated in the 'transition to democracy' in 1978, which was carried out on terms very favourable to the Right-wing forces controlling the Spanish State, led by the king, who regarded Franco "as one of the greatest patriots in the history of Spain, saviour of the nation against the Red forces."

When the Socialists came to power in 1982 with Felipe González and the P.S.O.E. their major concern soon became that of reducing social spending, not of increasing taxes on the wealthier classes. Thus began a policy of austerity in public spending - including social - continued and expanded by the neo-Francoist Aznar Government. The revenue to the State, instead of being applied to reduce the deficit in social spending, would be invested in reducing the State deficit. González would become responsible for a long period of

government, won in 1982 on the basis of a programme which amounted to a very simple word: *cambio* - change. What the change was from, and into what, was hardly spelled out. Few basic promises were soon reneged on. This was made possible by the appearance of a phenomenon - not new, really. If one reads the newspapers of the time or listens to radio or watches television, one realises that words such as 'status', 'privilege', 'bourgeoisie', 'petty bourgeoisie', 'working class', above all 'class struggle' - all terms used extensively and quite honourably by the two major sociological traditions of the 'Western world', both the Weberian and the Marxist, during most of the twentieth century - have disappeared from the media and daily political discourse.

In 1982 Spain joined N.A.T.O. and in 1986 became part of the European Union. From then to the G.F.C., with a few hiccups, it seemed to be upwards all the way, as Spain modernised and 'caught up' with Europe. However, membership of the E.U. rapidly led to foreign takeovers of most of Spanish industry and retail distribution. The exceptions were the banks, construction, the state-owned electricity and telecommunications companies. Later electricity and telecoms would be privatised, leading to the setting up of Spanish multinationals - the biggest being *Telefonica*, which bought up privatised utilities in Latin America and became the dominant players in the region. At the same time the big Spanish banks B.B.V.A. and Santander also became major players in Latin America.

The incantation of 1982 lasted until 1996 and in the process produced other magic passwords: pragmatism, compromise, moderation, productivity, competitive capacity, modernisation, development - with the occasional soaring rhetoric, but without any correspondent radical reform. This is the Atlantic business *patois* of Globalisation, which would usher in the G.F.C. In the process it seems that some 40,000 new seats were to be found and occupied by the posteriors of new, greedy members of the P.S.O.E.

What remained of the fourteen González years as an ‘aspirational exercise’ in neo-liberalism turned into a realisation of ‘Atlantic’ faith and collaboration during the eight years of the José María Aznar regime. With Aznar *Franquismo* returned without any restraining guise.

At the end of the dictatorship, the concentration of income and property was the highest in Europe, and social backwardness, lack of cultural and economic development were the largest on the continent. And the impression that not much has changed lingers on.

With limited and singular exceptions the essentially corporative nature of the country seems to endure precisely because there has hardly been a role for individual political action, nor have there been institutions in which, and by which, an individual’s voice must be taken seriously. At best what counts is the ‘interest group’ - again the ‘corporate group’, perhaps protected by a *fuero*, which counts; the individual voice, no longer organised by the *cacique*, is still subordinate to the ‘general will’ and expressing what the *élites* say it should be.

The results are there for everyone to see: recent data from Eurostat, the collection agency of the European Union, show that Spain is one of the E.U. countries which spends less public money on its welfare state - which includes health care, education, housing, home services, social services, pensions and other related measures. This is not because the country is poor. Statistically speaking, the poverty line is defined in the E.U. as 60 per cent of median disposable income, and the indicator of poverty reduction also measures the redistribution impact of public policies. Such impact is much lower in Spain than in the rest of the E.U.: only 4 per cent, compared with the average E.U.-15 - the group of the richest countries of the E.U. - at 10 per cent, with Denmark and Finland at 16 per cent, and Sweden at 17 per cent. In Spain the care of the poor is left to charity, the Catholic Church mainly, and the ‘do-gooders’, in the soothing resignation that ‘poverty always existed’.

Measured by Gross Domestic Product per capita Spanish wealth is quite close, at about 93 per cent, to the average E.U.-15. In contrast, social spending per capita is only 71 per cent, placing Spain towards the end of the queue in such a community. Only 10 per cent of the adult population works in such services, as compared with 15 per cent in the average E.U.-15 and 25 per cent in Sweden.

The results can be measured not only in terms of general welfare, but also with reference to the social development, the democratic culture, and the civic values of the population. Complicity in the insensitivity of certain voices on the Right should outrage anyone with a democratic conscience. Spain may not be the only country in which the judiciary is assaulted by a bullying executive; but it is the only European country which would set out to persecute Judge Baltasar Garzón for daring to prosecute the Franco regime. That is the enormous power those reactionary forces inherited from that regime.

The early years of the *transición* saw a mobilisation of the working class more intense than it would have been in Europe since the sixties. In 1976 there were 1,438 days of strikes per year per 1,000 workers - the average in the European Community was of 390 days. In the metal-mechanical sector the impact was higher: 2,085 days of strikes per 1,000 workers - the average in the European Community was of 595 days. Protests succeeded in forcing some changes but, because of the enormous power of the oligarchy, they were not sufficient to break the dominance of the conservative bloc. That remains huge. Here are some indicators of the consequences. Spain remains:

1. the country with greater E.U.-15 income inequalities - at a level similar to that of Britain, Greece and Portugal;
2. the country of the E.U.-15 with higher tax evasion committed mostly by the banks, the employers and the wealthier sectors of the population, for an amount equal to 10 per cent of G.D.P.;
3. the country with per capita social spending lowest in the E.U., being at the bottom of countries with similar economic development level, *i.e.* the E.U.-15;

4. one of the countries with more polarised welfare state in Europe;
5. the country of the E.U.-15 in which a worker who dies because of an occupational disease or accident is more likely not have that cause recorded in the death certificate, due to the enormous power and collusion between an employer and social insurance system;
6. the country providing large public funds to one of the most reactionary Catholic hierarchy in the whole of Europe;
7. the only country where one cannot criticise one of the most rapidly and mysteriously enriched heads of state;
8. the country where a central exacerbated nationalism, inherited from the Franco regime, oppresses the peripheral nationalities, and prevents the effective recognition of a truly multi-ethnic State;
9. the only European country which long suffered under a dictatorship, and where thousands of the victims of that dictatorship are still missing, while the State is reluctant to recover those victims and pay them the honour they deserve.

These indicators, among many others, should question the definition of that *transición* as a model. The insistence on presenting it as such strengthens the conservative forces which dominated the process. The diffusion of this myth by the media has the result of discouraging expectations of change among the population, of reducing the objectives to which the democratic forces should aspire, and of further hampering much-needed change if the country is to reach the quality of life its people deserve.

By 2004, with the return of the Socialists to office, Spain was still back in the line of the E.U.-15 in public social spending. The Euro and E.U. integration had come about at the expense of the welfare state.

The government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero proposed major changes in social areas, in the name of a *Nueva vía* - New way, earning the well deserved applause in important areas affecting the quality of life of Spanish citizenry. Under pressure from the Left parties, the Zapatero Government somewhat increased public social spending, but not enough to cover the huge deficit Spain has with respect to the E.U.-15. In fact, this deficit in 2006 was higher than that in 1982 when the austerity in social spending began. What is surprising is the silence of the politicians and of the media on the existence of this large deficit. This is so because of the enormous power of a class of some 30 per cent of the population, whose income has increased in the meantime, and which is not prepared to invest in public social spending, largely because that class uses private services, while refusing to pay taxes as due. In addition to class power there persists a kind of gender power. *Machismo* is responsible for major shortcomings of the welfare state, precisely those services, such as support services to families, which impact more on the women of Spain.

The non-existent *pacto del olvido* - a pact of forgetting, which was said to have been entered into sometime after the death of Franco, was nothing more than a continuation of *Franquismo*, in which the people, who should have been deeply engaged in the reconstruction of the country, were invited to stay away from their political interests, because 'they would be looked after' and everything they had to do in return was and is, simply, to forget everything which happened between 1936 and 1975 - better still between 1931 and 1975. Is it any wonder that, come election time, the most frequently heard complaint is that people under forty refuse to vote? They have grown up under the pernicious influence of 'telenews'. When they have gone beyond that, they have seen the consequences of the lies and omissions by parents, schools, and political representatives - and lost confidence in themselves and their future. Two generations which could have been re-born to freedom have lived in a 'closed system' in which only recognised 'historical' and economic sectors such as church, parties - and to a very limited extent docile unions - exist.

With hardly any place for individual expression, and if need be dissent, new ideas hardly enter into the political discourse. The corporative system is by definition closed, self-perpetuating. At the apex of it, almost *naturally* - that said albeit in a perverse sense -

is the monarchy, more often than not a corrupt and corrupting institution which has the advantage of being of 'divine origin and responsible to no one'. Below it are the parties, structured organisations which dispense the 'social cake' and usually organise ceremonial functions during which the populace divides itself into Right and Left - the fiction of the 'alternative politics': on one end is the government of her/his majesty, on the other her/his majesty's 'loyal opposition'. If that may sound *Gilbert-and-Sullivan-esque* one should only look at a system which has the dubious privilege not so much of being ancient - one should say decrepit, but of generating that kind of 'stability' which only comes from sycophancy and feeds on it. In a 'system' like that there is hardly any difference between the two political parties: both of them are fighting for the conquest of 'the middle ground', more often than not the vote of the 'uninvolved'. In that fight the rhetoric and presentation of non-issues are more important than the reasoned solution of problems.

There are, of course, concessions, often extracted from governments after strong, lengthy, costly disputes, on matters which give the appearance of social conquest, but are simply recognition of basic demands. Example of that, and still dealing on generalities and as far as Spain is concerned, is the recognition of the equality of sexes. Who would argue against that? Well, give a chance to the backward attitude of the Catholic Church, and the answer is glaringly available. There is the 'granting' - not always the acknowledgment - of divorce, as a solution to unviable, forced unions. Who would be opposed to that? One has known 'who by' for a long time. There is the quiet acceptance of different sexual proclivity. A civilised country would say about that, simply, rationally: what goes on between four walls is of no concern to the State. But there is plenty of opposition to that, too, and one knows where it comes from.

Now, standing up to the prevarication, bullying, blackmail that such modernising, reasonable social achievements cause is neither socialist nor conservative. It is just recognition that the world, or part of it, has moved on from a medieval, backward, superstitious, ignorant view of life.

Things become more difficult, problems more difficult to solve, when one comes to human rights, the distribution of wealth, social services, a modern school system, the recognition of labour no longer as a commodity but as a personal, human, contributing, sacred value, which all translates in a demand for the reallocation of power and the reaffirmation of values in a true 'Common-wealth'.

The Spanish electoral system reflects the preference for 'respectable' positions. There is a very marked bias in the existing electoral system, which greatly limits the expression of the popular will. Taking the most recent national elections, those of March 2008, it appears clearly that parties of the Left, broadly speaking, had won the popular vote and yet the government did not gain a majority of seats. The votes for those Left parties were many more - 1,486,896, in fact - than the votes for Right-wing parties. This has happened in all elections to the Spanish *Cortes* during the 'democratic' period from 1977 to 2008, with three exceptions: in 1977 and 1979 - still under the strong influence of the repression from the dictatorship, and in 2000 - when the abstention, predominantly on the Left, reached unprecedented levels. In all other elections the votes of the Left were much higher than the votes of the Right: 2,677,061 more votes in 1982, 1,460,497 in 1986, 2,174,278 in 1989, 2,014,027 in 1993, 1,250,822 in 1996, 2,152,514 in 2004 and 1,486,896 in 2008. These figures show that most voters in Spain prefer the Left.

The situation reflects a discrimination against Left-wing voters, and shows the great mastery of the Francoist-conservative forces in the drafting of the electoral process and during the *transición*. The 'transition from dictatorship to democracy' took place in a manner very favourable to the Right. In Spain that means *Franquismo* and its surviving progeny.

Since the 2004 election, the *Partido Popular*, the Catholic Church and sections of the army have spent much time and energy in an aggressive political campaign to destabilise the Zapatero Government, initially portraying the P.S.O.E. victory as a virtual *coup*. The *Partido Popular* has launched repeated provocations on the issues of regional autonomy,

negotiations with the Basque separatist E.T.A., secularism, abortion, gay rights and the denouncement/defence of *Franquismo*. It can always count on the support of the backwoodsmen of the Catholic Church. Questioning the model character of the *transición* is just not the done-thing. This dogma is still played today, despite the evidence which has accumulated during the past thirty five years.

Speaking about the past is regarded as ‘unpatriotic’, and is branded as ‘opening old wounds’ which were supposedly closed during the *transición*. That the remnants of the Francoist regime are the custodians of those wounds, for which they were initially responsible, is hardly ever discussed. If that is attempted, the *pacto del olvido* is called into play.

Another subtle argument used against ‘reopening old wounds’ is that of historical relativism, which is alright when it suits the highest Catholic hierarchy, but is condemned to the point of inventing a ‘dictatorship of relativism’ if it is identified with something not approved of. The position of historical relativism is that each individual or each social group has its own history and no historical version should prevail over others, although there remains the duty of the State to proclaim and impart the official truth, as written by approved historians. They alone, as specialists in the field, know how to organise the narrative.

Some things might have begun to change, particularly during the past ten years and largely because of the work of the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* - Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory.

Legislation approved by the *Cortes Generales* at the end of 2007 provided for the investigation of all claims of human rights violations by victims and survivors of the Franco regime. The Law of Historical Memory also offered compensation for those exiled, gaoled, and held in forced labour camps by the regime, and set guidelines for the removal from public view of monuments honouring Franco and the ‘heroes’ of his Crusade. But what is offered by that Law is simply this: you continue to do the dirty work, to bring to light the

victims of *Franquismo*, you do it at your own expense, and then a recalcitrant Spanish State will see whether to validate your finding. There is almost a challenge to common humanity and decency in that discourse.

The enduring potency of Spain's deep political schism is evident again in a current dispute over the country's best-known *Audiencia Nacional* - Supreme Court Judge, Baltasar Garzón. In October 2008 Judge Garzón attempted to bring surviving members of the Franco regime to trial to face justice over human-rights violations under the dictatorship - including the assassination of an estimated 114,266 *desaparecidos*, people who disappeared by the hands of the Franco regime; later the list was expanded to 133,708. This approach sought belatedly to emulate what several Latin American countries had done after the military dictatorships of the 1970s-1980s - and Germany after 1945; what made it harder in Spain is that the country - through the *pacto del olvido* - had already chosen a different model in the post-1975 years as it sped from dictatorship to parliamentary democracy. Argentines, too, took a close interest in the proceedings, and in time an Argentine federal judge would want to know.

Judge Garzón was stopped, forced to halt his own investigations. He did, but passed them on to regional courts. His effort had inflamed opponents of his initiative, and now the only person to have attempted to investigate the dictatorship's atrocities finds himself facing a private prosecution for overstepping his powers.

The initial writ against Judge Garzón - who had once briefly been a member of the P.S.O.E., but who had nonetheless zealously pursued politicians of all stripes - was brought by a far-right group, which was then joined by Franco's own *Falange* party. There is an element of revengeful glee in the effort - Judge Garzón's near-celebrity status as well as his political leanings made him a hate-figure for many on the Right. But the more worrying aspect of this case is that it again highlights Spain's inability - or refusal - to face

the truth of its past. The idea of two Spains - Left and Right, liberal and reactionary, European and parochial - often descends into *cliché*.

Judge Garzón was indicted in April 2010 for knowingly and willfully exceeding his competence when investigating crimes committed by the Franco regime which were said to be covered by an amnesty. He had - as charged in March 2010 - twisted the limits of his jurisdiction to by-pass the Amnesty Law of 1977 and thus to be able to engineer a case when there was none. The specific charge against Judge Garzón is: *delito de prevaricación*. Accepting that charge, the Supreme Court declared admissible three criminal accusations against Judge Garzón. *Prevaricación* means in the case the use by a judge of his authority intentionally to subvert the course of justice. This is a very serious criminal offence, punishable by suspension from any judicial activity for up to twenty years. The contested *delito* consists in the Judge having knowingly overstepped his judicial competence by opening a probe into the disappearances of 114,266 people - part of the crimes committed by Franco between 17 July 1936 and 31 December 1951, the bloodiest period of Franco's dictatorship.

Judge Garzón was suspended on 14 May 2010, pending trial. It is not known why the judicial authorities did not previously institute any internal inquiry or disciplinary proceedings - for example: following the public debate after the Judge had ordered to open suspected Francoist era mass graves two years earlier, in September 2008 - but instead preferred to rely on criminal accusations, brought by two neo-Francoist organisations: a fictitious trade union called *Manos Limpias* (Clean hands) and another seedy *Libertad y Identidad* (Liberty and Identity), and the resurrected *Falange*, and declared admissible on 26 May 2009.

The judicial action against Judge Garzón drew an outcry around the world from institutions, community groups, legal experts, human rights organisations, personalities of culture and

most political parties. They expressed support to Judge Garzón and described as an absolute disgrace the process opened against him.

More than two hundred organisations defending human rights and jurists all around the world, including former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Ms. Carla del Ponte, signed a petition supporting Judge Garzón. They emphasised that the United Nations Committee on Human Rights requested Spain in 2008 to revoke the post-Franco amnesty law and “to guarantee the imprescriptibility of crimes against humanity.” “Enforced disappearances” which focused Judge Garzón’s investigation are crimes “which cannot be prescribed or amnestied, without violating international law, which is part of the Spanish judicial system.” they stated. From Brussels, the President of the European Union Council, Herman van Rompuy, raised his voice in solidarity with the Judge.

Spanish trade unions called for a mass-meeting on 13 April 2010 to support Judge Garzón. The meeting had been organised by the Workers’ Commissions - CC.OO and the General Union of Workers - U.G.T. the most powerful trade unions in the country, and was to be held at the Faculty of Medicine in the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*. It was intended to protest against the decision by Judge Varela who gave the announcement of the forthcoming trial. CC.OO and U.G.T. believe indispensable for Spain not to fall into amnesia but defend the cultural and political significance of historical memory. Thousands gathered in cities across Spain in support of Judge Garzón, chanting slogans and displaying flags of the pre-war Republican Government assassinated by Franco.

The International Commission of Jurists considered that Judge Garzón’s short-lived inquiry did not justify disciplinary action, let alone criminal prosecution, adding that the prosecution of judges for carrying out their professional work was “an inappropriate and unwarranted interference with the independence of the judicial process.”

“This is something truly scandalous. I think.” said Esteban Beltran, Spanish Director for Amnesty International. “This is outrageous. As a matter of principle, Amnesty International does not take a position on the merits of the specific charges made against a person under investigation by a court, but in this case - where Judge Garzón is being brought to justice for investigating past human rights violations - the organisation cannot remain silent.” said Widney Brown, Senior Director of Amnesty International.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture had just recently - and once more - warned that Spain should repeal the Amnesty Law. The Committee members reiterated to Spanish authorities that enforced disappearances and torture are not subject to amnesty and that statutes of limitations do not apply to such crimes.

Amnesty International urged Spanish authorities instead to concentrate on finding justice for the relatives of the estimated 114, 266 *desaparecidos*.

Human Rights Watch said that the European Union member states should express their concern over the prosecution and the potential suspension of Judge Garzón. “[The Judge] sought justice for victims of human rights abuses abroad and now he is being punished for trying to do the same at home.” said Lotte Leicht, E.U. Advocacy Director at Human Rights Watch. “The decision leaves Spain and Europe open to the charge of double standards and undermines the E.U.'s credibility and effectiveness in the fight against impunity for serious crimes.”

Judge Garzón’s decision not to apply Spain’s Amnesty Law seemed unassailable according to international conventional and customary law, which impose on states a duty to investigate the worst international crimes, including crimes against humanity. The sanctions against Judge Garzón were not only a blow to the families of victims of serious crimes in Spain,

Human Rights Watch said. The sanctions also risked undermining the E.U.'s collective credibility and effectiveness in seeking justice for current human rights crimes.

Should Judge Garzón be removed from his position over this issue it will serve as a warning to the rest of the Spanish Judiciary from those who seek to prohibit any attempt to come to terms with the past. Ironically, perhaps, the Argentine courts are taking the issue further as a case is being examined in that country to investigate what the senior ranks of the Spanish Judiciary seek to hide from view.

Prosecuting a judge for issuing a controversial decision, even one overruled on appeal (in a split decision), is a dangerous attack on judicial independence. Many undemocratic rulers would love to use criminal sanctions to silence meddlesome judges. The assault on Judge Garzón - there are two other cases against him in the pipeline - comes on the heels of the Spanish Government's decision to curtail its law permitting the prosecution of foreign atrocities which had been used to indict Pinochet, convict an Argentine official for 'dirty war' killings, investigate crimes in El Salvador and Guatemala and issue warrants for top Rwandan leaders. But after cases involving powerful countries such as China, the United States and Israel - for alleged crimes in Tibet, Guantánamo and Gaza - created headaches for the Spanish Government, both major parties agreed that the law would be limited.

Thanks to Judge Garzón, Spain became a symbol of justice for atrocity victims around the world. Now justice itself may be the victim in Spain.

This is not the ordinary procedure in dealing with a judge, and never mind the *etiquette* ! But present Spain - by which one must understand the Spanish Establishment - is not a place given to old-fashioned, and truly republican, civility. Accused by Spanish 'conservatives' of harbouring grudges and seeking the media limelight with his pursuit of high-profile cases, but also as a result of his investigations, Judge Garzón attracted wrath, both from sections of the

very nostalgic Spanish Judiciary and from the much corrupted Spanish political class - and not only conservative. The Spanish Judiciary is the only non-democratic power in the country with unchanged structures linking it to the dictatorship. It makes for sordid consequences. Mannerism is the substance, manners are something else. The Spanish Establishment is the successor of an oligarchy which inflicted upon the Spanish peoples the *coup d'état* of July 1936, the brutality of three years of civil war, and between 1939 and 1977 - at least - what may be called the National-Catholic Regime of *Generalísimo* Franco. It is therefore, consequential - in a perverted sense, 'natural' - that an indomitable Judge of modest origin, such as Garzón's, be dealt with that way.

After the suspension, events moved rapidly. Judge Garzón was given permission to work at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for seven months from May 2010, and - as usual - he spoke freely about that as well.

On 10 April 2010 the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* - Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory had announced that it intended to file a criminal complaint against Judge Varela for violating international law in the application of the Amnesty Law. The Association expressed its "deep indignation" over a trial which had been initiated by "Fascist" Franco's "ideological representatives." The Association also sued Supreme Court Judge Juan Saavedra, president of the chamber which had rejected the appeal lodged by Judge Garzón. Members of the Association announced that, if need be, they would file a suit against Judge Varela in courts in Argentina and Chile under universal jurisdiction. And so they did, punctually: on 14 April 2010 Argentine-born lawyer, Carlos Slepoy, who lives and practices in Madrid, and human rights groups filed genocide charges in a federal court in Argentina for the 1936 murders by Francoists of three Spanish and one Argentine persons. The complaint relied on the application of the principle of universal jurisdiction. According to the petitioners' lawyer, the lawsuit was based on the crime of genocide committed by Franco' and associates and is aimed - amongst other things - at compiling a list of ministers and military leaders from the Franco era who are still alive and who can be prosecuted. "There are still many of them sitting in the Spanish Parliament. The

genocide committed from the beginning of the military uprising until the end of the Franco dictatorship, without prejudice to the largest mass crimes, occurred in the first two decades of the regime. Also, in the case of Argentina's dictatorship, which lasted seven years, many human rights violations occurred in the first three years, but this did not prevent judicial inquiry being extended to the entire period of the dictatorship. Both Spanish tribunals and now the Argentine courts which overturned laws were dealing with criminals."

Mr. Slepoy strenuously defended Judge Garzón. He said: "Judge Garzón had acted in compliance with Spanish law ordering the prosecution of crimes injurious to mankind, even when committed outside Spanish territory. *A fortiori*, the same crimes should be prosecuted when committed in the territory. So it is incomprehensible that he is accused of malfeasance at this time. In any case, Judge Garzón's decisions were essentially confirmed by both chambers of the Criminal National Court and of the Supreme Court."

The Federal Court of Buenos Aires assigned the case to Judge Maria Romilda Servini de Cubria, who is known and highly respected for her independence. She undertook to seek the opinion of an Argentine prosecutor and then to decide whether to take the case. If so, it would have been the first time an Argentine federal judge invoked universal jurisdiction for crimes committed outside the country. Judge Servini has presided over major corruption and politically controversial cases in the past twenty years in Argentina.

On 18 May 2010 Judge Servini notified the claimants that their appeal had been admitted. Spain, and the world, may now look towards Argentina to provide the forum which has been denied in Spain and to advance further in the asserting of universal justice for human rights atrocities. Judge Servini took up the case and, invoking the principle of universal jurisdiction, she indicated that her court would investigate allegations of genocide, tens of thousands of assassinations and the fate of stolen children - if Spain could not demonstrate it would do so.

In working to undermine Judge Garzón, the Spanish Establishment may have created a foe it cannot best - the international community. As Judge Servini's investigation proceeds, the Spanish Establishment will not be able to sidetrack it like it did with Judge Garzón's. Really, this was to be expected once Spaniards began petitioning the Argentine court.

On 14 October 2010 Judge Servini formally petitioned the Spanish Government "to inform this court whether in your country there is an investigation into the existence of a systematic, widespread and deliberate plan designed to terrorise those Spaniards who supported representative government via their physical elimination, and of a plan of legalized disappearance of children whose identities were changed." If it was not possible to investigate and prosecute these crimes in Spain due to the 1977 Amnesty Law, Judge Servini would be ready to open her own investigation into numerous cases of "torture, assassination, forced disappearances and the stealing of children" which took place in Spain between 1936 and 1975.

On 14 January 2011 the Supreme Court halted the case against Judge Garzón until the matter of Judge Garzón's recusation of five judges of the Criminal Division had been resolved. The Court gave three days to the Prosecutor and the complaining parties - the ultra-Right-wing *Manos Limpias* and the similar *Libertad y Identidad* - to declare whether they accepted or rejected the grounds for recusation. The challenge to the impartiality of the five judges had been issued on 17 December 2010 and the Court had delayed one month to issue the order to start the process.

On 20 January 2011 the Prosecutor's Office, reporting to the Criminal Division, acceded to the request for disqualification submitted by Judge Garzón against five of the Supreme Court judges designated to decide his case. This was the first time that a prosecutor had supported the disqualification of judges, but he felt obliged to do so under art. 219 (11) of *Ley Orgánica del Poder Judicial* - the Judicial Power Organisation Act. Accepting the first ground submitted by counsel for Judge Garzón, on the general principle that those who participate in

the investigation of a case are unfit to prosecute that case, Prosecutor Navajas explained that the prosecution should guarantee “objective impartiality” of the Court for Judge Garzón. Considering that - according to the Act - there would be no appeal, it was important to remove any “frightening shadow of suspicion that could tarnish the proper exercise of judicial function.” Instead, the Prosecutor rejected the second ground submitted by Judge Garzón’s counsel that the recused judges had an “indirect interest” in the litigation, in that they attempted to safeguard their own jurisdiction over the prosecution of Judge Garzón.

This is how the situation stands at the moment of writing:

1. In 2008 Judge Garzón initiated an investigation into the disappearance and/or assassination of 114,266 persons by Francoist forces.
2. In 2010 Judge Garzón was accused of *prevaricación* for having initiated that investigation, and was suspended from his post as a Judge.
3. In October 2010 Argentine Federal Judge Servini, invoking the concept of universal jurisdiction, expressed interest in pursuing these crimes against humanity, given the apparent lack of interest in Spain. She asked Spain to confirm or deny the fact that they are not investigating those crimes - there being two main criteria which justify the invocation of universal jurisdiction: a) the crimes must be “crimes against humanity”; b) the national courts of the country in question must balk at the chance of carrying out investigations.
4. Eight months later, Spain responded to the Argentine judge, claiming that it is in fact investigating those crimes - one of the main pieces of evidence behind this claim: the reports prepared in the first place by Judge Garzón, those very documents which engendered the charge of *prevaricación* and which brought about Judge Garzón’s suspension from the bench and his forthcoming trial.

If this is not *Montypythesque* one wonders what is !

In June 2011 also two items of news were competing for interest. On one hand was the recent appeal by a pugnacious Judge Garzón to the European Court of Human Rights in response to charges against him for attempting to investigate human rights violations during the Franco regime. On the other hand was the recent controversy sparked by the publication of a pro-Franco dictionary, the latest in a string of developments which highlight Spain's continuing tussle with its historical memory. The recently published *Diccionario Biográfico Español* - Spanish Biographical Dictionary contains an entry on Franco, written by 86-year-old historian Luis Suárez, and portraying Western Europe's longest-serving dictator in a favourable light, extolling his military prowess, describing him as a courageous figure who set up an "authoritarian, but not totalitarian" regime.

The year 2011 also marked the publication of the map of the location of over 2,000 civil war graves compiled by the Spanish Government, although there are no plans for a state-led attempt to excavate and identify the bodies. While this is an important step towards the recognition of the suffering of both sides of the conflict of 1936-39, for many, it is a case of too little, too late. For others, the necessity of the movement for the recovery of historical memory in a country where the last remaining survivors of the civil war are dying out, is questionable.

These developments are merely two examples of the ongoing memory battle which continues to grip the country, more than 70 years after the war's end. While groups demanding public recognition of Francoist repression now have to align their objectives according to the limitations of the 2007 Law of Historical Memory, this symbolic measure has not brought both sides any closer to reconciling their memories of the past, as originally intended.

The monument to Franco at the Valley of the Fallen outside Madrid is an embarrassing blight on the landscape of an otherwise dynamic Western European country. It also remains to be seen whether justice will be served to the families affected by the 'stolen babies' scandal, which began with the forced separation of mothers from their children in Francoist prisons.

But given the recent nationwide protests against the political class, it could be argued that the Spanish Government has bigger fish to fry than a re-examination of the country's troubled history, such as soaring unemployment and a disgruntled youth.

By mid-2009 it appeared that the Spanish economy was collapsing like a house of cards.

From the 1950s onwards the growth of the economy had been based largely on tourism and construction. The construction industry depended to a considerable extent on the needs of the expanding tourist industry - hotels, infrastructure, *et cetera*. But building housing accommodation for new homeowners became increasingly important. Spain went from having a majority of people living as renters in the 1950s to 87 per cent home ownership in 2007. Later on property developers and the construction industry also profited from the demand for middle-class second homes and foreign holiday homes. As regards the tourism/construction axis, there was continuity from the late Franco era through succeeding governments of the *Partido Popular* and of the P.S.O.E.

In the decade before the United States subprime crisis gave way to the G.F.C., Spanish house prices were rising at 12 per cent per year and providing credit for their owners. The credit-fuelled boom concealed the fact that real wages were stagnant or falling and social expenditure was low. The gaps in the State's social safety net were compensated for by migrant workers who took over child care, domestic work and care for the elderly.

After years of dramatic growth, the pointers had all moved to red. The real estate fever and job security had given much hope. At the height of Spain's decade-long property boom banks were handing out loans of up to 100 per cent on the value of homes - literally to anyone. But the crash which hit in 2008 would leave more than 700,000 newly built homes unsold. Prices had fallen and banks had become major residential property owners, mostly because of unpaid loans by developers.

The number of house repossessions began swelling as unemployment hit 21 per cent and Eurozone interest rates rose. It was reliably estimated that about 278 homes a day were being repossessed. Later the real estate market would crash and crack the economy, which still had displayed, in 2008, a growth figure of more than 3 per cent. The flourishing economy which had generated the happiness of neo-liberals of all kinds had collapsed. By early 2009 Spain was facing a run-away recession at 2.9 per cent. With more than 4,100,000 unemployed, the country had one of the highest levels of unemployment in Europe. It would exceed the worrying threshold of 20 per cent in 2010. In a state devoid of real social security, the risk of marginalisation was obvious.

There were then three million empty apartments. As interest rates shot up, many immigrants, the first victims of the crisis, had begun to give their apartment to the banks. The banks had become the largest real estate agents.

Early in June 2009 Prime Minister Zapatero had announced the principle of substitution belonging to the growth model of “replacing bricks by computers” - to use his turn of phrase. It seemed a catchcry and memorable slogan - but there was a problem: the Spanish growth model was built above all on the insecurity of jobs and, though one could have interchanged the sectors on which this new growth model depended, the problem would remain in its entirety if pressure was continually put on the employees, and badly-paid, above all unstable, jobs were generated for those with few qualifications. In addition to job insecurity, it was becoming clear that Spanish capitalism was resting on two other pillars: family debt and an enormous foreign deficit. Meanwhile the Spaniards were asked to tighten their belts. Those in insecure jobs, which represent more than 30 per cent of employment in Spain, survived thanks to their relatives - ‘the safety net’, as it were. But with the G.F.C. this backbone also tended to bend.

At the end of May 2010 the Spanish Parliament approved a Euro 15 billion austerity plan with the aims of reducing the government’s budget deficit and regaining ‘confidence in the

market'. Observers had feared that a government defeat could have forced new elections, with disastrous repercussions on financial markets already nervous about the poor state of public finances. "The stock market would plunge and our debt would be hit. Our responsibility is to ensure that Spain does not fall into a deeper hole. I do not want Spain to come under protection like Greece." said Prime Minister Zapatero.

There were job cuts, in addition to a Euro 50 billion austerity package announced in January and designed to slash the public deficit in the Eurozone limit of 3 per cent of G.D.P. by 2013. Unions representing public sector workers had called a strike for 8 June over the plan while Spain's largest trade union, the CC.OO., let it be known that it would 'probably' also call a national general strike. The highly unpopular decision, according to which all civil servants would have suffered a 5 per cent pay cut, was approved by just a single vote: 169 members voted for, 168 against and 13 abstained from voting. The provision received the support of the P.S.O.E., while all other parties including the *Partido Popular* either opposed or abstained from voting. Spain's Finance Minister Elena Salgado had requested the parliamentarians to vote in favour of the bill, describing it as 'painful but inevitable'. Apart from the pay cut, parents would no longer be given Euro 2,500 for the birth of children, which was a step taken by Prime Minister Zapatero to help increase the falling birth rate. The decision was expected to bring down the deficit of 11 per cent of the G.D.P. at the moment of approval to 6 per cent by the end of 2011. The previous austerity measures had included an average 5 per cent pay cut for public sector workers from June and a pay freeze from 2011. Pensions, except for the poorest, would also be frozen in 2011.

A poll published in the conservative daily newspaper *La Gaceta* on 11 July 2010 showed the main opposition *Partido Popular* enjoyed a 9.6 percentage point lead over the ruling Socialists.

On 25 July 2010 Prime Minister Zapatero warned that the government would adopt more unpopular measures if needed to revive the economy and reduce the public deficit. "I know

very well that the measures which I have adopted are unpopular. I am going to apply these measures and maintain them.” he said in an interview with the *El Pais*. “I will do it over my future political aspirations. And no one should doubt that if I have to adopt new measures, I will adopt them.” Zapatero had seen his popularity sink amid a downturn in which the property market had collapsed, unemployment has risen to over 20 per cent, and the government had been forced to impose deep budget cuts.

The government also planned to raise Spain's retirement age from 65 to 67, having already adopted an overhaul of the labour market which would make it easier and cheaper for employers to dismiss workers. The austerity measures had been seen as a policy U-turn on the part of unions and even some members of Zapatero's P.S.O.E. who accuse the government of abandoning its commitment to social policies.

In order to reduce the jobless rate, in September 2010 the government approved a sweeping overhaul of the labour market designed to slash unemployment and revive the economy. Main trade unions CC.OO and U.G.T., as well as minor ones, rejected the plan as it made it easier and cheaper for employers to hire and fire workers. They voted for and carried out a general strike on 29 September. It was to be the country's first general strike since 2002 and the first since Zapatero had been elected in 2004

The government was determined to deepen its reforms, however, and to cut a jobless rate which hit a 13-year record of 20.33 per cent at the end of 2010, the highest in the industrialised world.

During the rest of the year, the government went on with economic reforms and in January 2011 it raised the retirement age from 65 to 67 after reaching an agreement with the main trade unions so to do by 2027. The retirement deal includes exceptions, for example allowing

people with dangerous or arduous jobs to retire before 67, as demanded by Spain's two biggest unions, the U.G.T. and the CC.OO. Anarcho-syndicalist unions and other minors ones rejected the plan and called for a strike on 27 January in Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque Country. Demonstrations were also held in Madrid and ended up in clashes. The raise was also rejected by the majority of Spaniards.

On 2 February 2011 government, unions and business leaders signed a 'grand social pact' in an attempt to revive the economy and cut a sky-high jobless rate. The pact was regarded as critical to a campaign 'to convince the markets' that it could push through difficult labour reforms so as to speed up the economy, cut spending, and finance the debt. Lurking in the minds of investors was the fear that Spain could fall into the debt quagmire which swamped Ireland and Greece, forcing it to request a bailout from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. "This agreement has three objectives: growth, jobs and the sustainability of our public finances." Prime Minister Zapatero said in a speech after the signing ceremony. "We will show that we belong to the group of great nations that knows how to stand up and walk again after going through a period of serious difficulty." The pact also introduces a new subsidy of Euro 400 to jobless workers whose benefits have run out and who are in training and incentives to hire unemployed youths. Zapatero said that the pact included an agreement on the 'basic principles' of a reform to Spain's collective bargaining system, which ensures joint wage rises across sectors and industries are also in the pact. The system has been blamed for making Spain's workers uncompetitive but - Zapatero said - the pact would simplify industrial relations and make wage negotiations at the company level more frequent. "This is a great advance." he said.

The agreement was welcomed by the markets, nervous that social security payments could spiral out of control in the decades to come as pensioner numbers expand. Unions had threatened to call a general strike if the government pushed ahead with a reform of the pension system without taking their demands into account.

Even during the boom years Spain had a relatively high rate of unemployment, between 8 and 12 per cent. This was not structural unemployment, but a reflection of an economy where a third of the labour force was engaged in temporary work and many people worked in seasonal jobs in tourism and agriculture. People, especially young people, were not so much unemployed as permanently rotating between jobs. The G.F.C. and the bursting of the housing and property bubble changed all that. This time the unemployment rate was real and structural: over 20 per cent overall and 40 per cent among people under 25. And among those who could still find work, much of it was precarious.

The Spanish economy had emerged with tepid growth of 0.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2010 and 0.2 per cent in the second but then had stalled with zero growth in the third. The government estimated it rose by about 0.2 per cent in the fourth quarter. The I.M.F. predicted that Spanish economy would post growth of 0.6 per cent this year, 1.7 per cent in 2012, 1.9 per cent in both 2013 and 2014 and then 1.8 per cent in 2015.

At the end of March 2011 Spain was hit hard with one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe, reaching a Eurozone record of 21.3 per cent, with the number of unemployed people at 4,910,200, up about 214,000 from the previous quarter, while youth unemployment rate stood at 43.5 per cent, the highest in the European Union. It was then that the heads of state or government of the Eurozone, along with six other countries - Bulgaria, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania - signed an accord with which they intended to tackle the crisis and the debt problem which had been generated in Europe.

Through this accord they established a series of common obligations, and made the commitment that the various governments would apply the necessary economic measures in order to put the obligations into effect. The accord became known as the Euro Pact and provided for all the measures it entailed to be subjected to the authority of the European Commission. The latter, moreover, would become the principal supervisor and evaluator in the Pact's application and development.

The Pact's signatories declared that their general objective was to tackle debt by raising the competitiveness of the Eurozone, which is to say, facilitating the commercial performance of firms in those countries which use the Euro in global markets. To achieve this objective the Pact established four pillars designed to frame the main lines of economic action on the part of national governments.

The first pillar for reaching this general objective is the fostering of competitiveness, and the signatories of the Pact believed that this can only be achieved by lowering prices, and that in turn, prices will only come down if wages are lowered. To this end, the need had been agreed to control so-called unit labour costs. Since unit labour costs are related to the rapport between nominal wages and productivity, in order to lower them one must either lower nominal wages or raise productivity. The Pact proposed measures in both directions.

On close examination, it is clear that the Pact aims for a type of competitiveness which is doubly impoverishing. It is not based on improving the quality or the value of the products supplied by European firms, but rather, on lowering European wages to match the rest of the economies of the world, thereby lowering the income of the vast majority of the population and impoverishing European workers. The Euro Pact is a pact against European workers. In addition, it will ultimately depress the European economy, since the reduction of wages will also reduce spending conducted in Europe, which will translate into less sales for thousands of small and medium enterprises which live off the purchases made by European wage earners.

From this point of view, the only beneficiaries of the Pact would be the large European firms which are active in global markets, not just the European market, and the profits of which, as a result, do not depend solely on spending conducted in Europe, as is usually the case with the majority of small and medium enterprises. For this reason one can state that the Euro Pact is also a pact against small and medium European enterprises.

The second pillar of the Pact is intended to foster employment in Europe. This is sought by assuming that unemployment is caused by a faulty functioning in the labour market which means that, in order to avoid it, reforms are needed which modify its regulation and its structure. Concretely, the Pact proposes measures such as ‘to promote flexicurity’, the ‘reduction of undeclared work’, the ‘increase in labour participation’, and ‘life-long learning’, in addition, of course, to the reduction in labour costs already mentioned. To achieve this end the Pact also recommends the ‘lowering of taxes on labour’ - that is, social contributions - a proposal which is doubly negative and harmful for the vast majority of the population. Firstly, because it weakens the public pension system, the sustainability of which neoliberal leaders claim so often causes them worry. Secondly, because what it means in reality is a reduction in wage bills, and as such, the generation of more inequality, more impoverishment and less spending, with the problems that these bring.

What the Euro Pact is likely to achieve is to make employment even more precarious in Europe, making it more insecure and temporary, as well as cheaper. And as such, it will become less productive because with the spreading of this type of work it will be progressively more difficult, in Europe, to foster economic activity which is of high added value and more competitive. What the Euro Pact will achieve will be to organise Europe in the supply of cheap labour along with the supply of low quality personal services, as has already been happening with countries such as Spain, where these policies have been brought forward.

As to the third pillar, ‘enhancing the sustainability of public finances’, the Pact stresses the need to guarantee the application of the Stability and Growth Pact which demands the reduction of budget deficits to below 3 per cent. To this end the Pact recommends reforming the pension system, the health system and social benefits, which is to say, expenditures which have the most direct impact on social welfare, but, of course, which point to very profitable provision of goods - private pensions, private health, private care - for private firms.

In particular, the Pact recommends ‘aligning the effective retirement age with life expectancy’, ‘limiting early retirement schemes’ and ‘using targeted incentives to employ older workers’, all of which amounts to weakening the public pension system and thereby fostering its progressive privatisation, which is what is being sought in reality. The most likely outcome is that these measures end up producing an equivalent or similar fall in earnings, because they reduce economic activity and, as a result, the generation of receipts for state funds, which ends up preventing budget imbalances from disappearing. They only serve to raise social malaise, social shortages and even a lack of public resources needed by private capital for the creation of activity and employment.

The fourth pillar of the Pact - reinforcing financial stability - demands the realisation of a programme of ‘tax policy co-ordination’, but without specifying how it should work beforehand. In fact the signatory states simply ‘commit to engage in structured discussions on tax policy issues’, which shows that the will to progress towards a necessary European treasury with powerful tax measures which promote a more productive and sustainable type of economy with a more just distribution of income, or towards the co-ordination of effective combat against fraud and tax evasion, is practically non-existent.

The Euro Pact was conceived only to favour the profits of the banking sector and large firms because while saying it is trying to combat the debt what it will cause, with the type of measures it proposes, will be less employment, lower revenues for wage earners and for small and medium enterprises. As a result, the debt will rise even further in future. The real cause of the brutal increase in debt in Europe has been the drop in wage incomes in recent years, and the drop in tax receipts, caused by the policies so strongly advocated. What the Euro Pact calls a struggle against debt is, in reality, a struggle against public spending destined towards the provision of social goods and services to the population on lower incomes, so as to justify its conversion into private business through the privatisations it proposes. Reliable evidence of this is the fact that the Euro Pact contains no provision about public spending dedicated to subsidising big business groups, banks, or military industry when it comes to saving public money.

The Euro Pact does not address the real problems of the European economy and society: nothing is done to ensure that the banking system functions and goes back to providing finance to firms and consumers; nothing is proposed to rein in the speculators who are the real culprits for the crisis and who are now gilding themselves thanks to the issue of debt; the Pact remains silent over the spectacular increase in inequality, or the criminal use of tax havens within European territory itself, to name but a few.

In late 2008, when the G.F.C. started to unfold, Prime Minister Zapatero's government had injected billions into the banking sector to save Spain's failing financial institutions. It was money that Spain did not really have. The debt subsequently skyrocketed, pushed by the I.M.F., rating agencies, and rumors spread by German Chancellor Angela Merkel that Spain would need E.U. assistance. Prime Minister Zapatero's sole reaction was to cut the salaries of public servants.

While unemployment reached record highs across 2010-2011, the 35 largest companies at Madrid's stock market announced profits of Euro 50 billion, 24.5 per cent more than in 2009. *Telefónica* caused an outcry when the company fired 6,000 workers in Spain while announcing Euro 450 million in bonuses to its executives and Euro 6.9 billion in dividends to its shareholders. The economic divide grew steadily. In February 2011 44.6 per cent of those under 25 were unemployed. Unemployment would continue to climb in the first quarter of 2011 reaching a record rate of 21.19 per cent. The number of unemployed people in Spain stood at 4,910,200 at the end of March 2011, up about 214,000 from the previous quarter, while youth unemployment rate stood at 43.5 per cent, the highest in the European Union.

Spain's young generation has been hard-hit by the crisis. Most had temporary contracts, making them cheap and easy to fire. Many highly-qualified graduates are forced to work as low-paid interns for years and a growing number have moved back home to live with their parents. Increasingly frustrated, they have finally found their voice.

Despite a catastrophic job market, growing unemployment and record corporate profits, a different divide accounts for the *#spanishrevolution* - the digital one. 92 per cent of Spain's young people are Internet users - 12 points above the European average. Only 10 per cent of Spanish members of Parliament use *Twitter*. This goes a long way to explain why Ángeles González-Sinde, Minister of Culture adopted one of the most antiquated Internet laws, the *Ley Sinde* the Sinde Law, an anti-internet download law which allows for a judicial order to close within four days down any web page which shows links to illegal matters or illegal downloads of copyright content.

The law provoked a cyber-revolution. In January 2010 *Sustainable Network* - a digital platform of resistance - was born.

But something was missing: a spark to light the fuse. Unemployment was still on the rise. Companies continued to announce huge profits. The parties revealed their candidates for the regional elections, including figures who had illegally profited from the housing boom - and subsequent bust. When the conservative Francisco Camps, to whom *The New York Times* would - and seriously - refer as “the Spanish Berlusconi”, provoked the revolt smiling for the cameras unapologetically, the bomb exploded.

How did the digital outrage turn into analog protests? The scandalous persecution of Judge Garzón, with the attendant self-evident non-existing separation of the judiciary from politics had fed the outrage, and caused the formation of a collective: *Franconohamuerto.com*, Franco-is-not-dead, the initial goal of which was to raise money on the Internet for advertisements on buses in support of the Judge. The cause of Judge Garzón had revived a number of leftish people.

Franconohamuerto.com was just one out of many protest groups. Hundreds of movements emerged on the Internet. The hurricane was approaching. The group *Estado del malestar* - State of discomfort was another protest group. It called its members out into the streets with megaphones.

A new precarious and students movement had been born in Madrid. It was called *Juventud sin futuro* - Youth without a future. It had been launched by student collectives of the various Madrid's universities to fight against the black future facing the young generation - with 40 per cent of young unemployment, 60 per cent of temporary jobs, the commodification of the education, and social cuts made by the government under pressure from economic power-groups. The main slogan of the movement was: "With no home, with no job, with no retirement, with no fear". The movement had organised a demonstration for 7 April in Madrid; it hoped that it would be the beginning of a great movement all around Spain.

The revolution was knocking at the door, but no-one seemed to take notice. Another group of protest to get off to a start was *#nolesvotes* - Do not vote them in, an initiative calling on the electorate not to vote for Spain's mainstream parties, accusing them of taking advantage of electoral law to perpetuate, in Parliament, "alarming levels of corruption in Spain." *#nolesvotes* became the focal point of the online movement. Soon after the group *Anonymous* joined. There followed calls to parties from web movements such as *Avaaz* and *Actuable* to strike from their electoral lists all politicians indicted or convicted of corruption.

The groups were unanimous in identifying the major problems. Corruption had reached alarming levels. It was not just cases of urban corruption, bribery, prevarication, and so on. It was one which widely affected the major parties: corruption in the very foundations of the system. In this context it was identified in the perpetual alternation of political organisations clinging to power for decades, ostensibly with no other purpose than to achieve their own

goals, without permeability of new ideas without allowing the active participation of citizens, stifling any possibility of democratic regeneration.

At the 1993 general elections, P.S.O.E, *Partido Popular* and *Convergència i Unió* - Convergence and Union, CiU (Socialist government + Conservative opposition + Catalanian nationalists) obtained 78.48 per cent of the votes and 90.58 per cent of the seats. In the last general elections in 2008, P.S.O.E, P.P. and CiU obtained 86.80 per cent of the votes but won 95 per cent of the parliament seats. The increase suggested that it would be all but impossible to dislodge these parties from power. Since 1993 P.S.O.E. and *Partido Popular* have taken turns in the Moncloa Palace with the support of Catalanian nationalists. From changes in the electoral law - a system which promotes the bipartisanship of conservatives and socialists while completely sidelining all other options, to easier access to the labour market, with unemployment among young people above 40 per cent, and only one in three youngsters having a chance to a quality job - Spanish society had become accustomed to a political class which thinks that the best way to solve a problem is just to wait and see.

The electoral law had been reinforced to favour major parties and to penalise disproportionately the representation of minorities. Unlike other countries with a healthy democracy, the Spanish Parliament does not reflect the ideological diversity of Spanish society. The *partitocracy* had become more professional: politicians who come to power are not the best but very young, who are dedicated to managing influences and discipline in the hierarchy. The will of the people is ignored in making important decisions which are taken under the influence of lobbyists representing only the interests of minority or economically powerful media. Bills are drafted without consultation with the citizens, by manipulating information or providing fraudulent reports.

At election time the major parties would invariably resort to closed and blocked lists, encouraging campaigns of fear, while soliciting a 'useful vote'. *#nolesvotes* objected to the tone of pre-elections discourse which, in a context of brutal economic crisis, appealed to fear

more than ever. *#nolesvotes* suggested the remedy: ignore them. But it put to the citizens that they could also become aware of their power as citizens: to open their eyes and to get involved personally in the network of citizens who could use their power to improve the situation. They could help to have more discussion of important issues, by being informed correctly and objectively, by making the big decisions depend not only on two or three *cabals*. A vote should not be a blank cheque for a party for four years, so that it may continue to ignore the popular will. That policy decisions depend on financial lobbies or media is the symptom that something is very wrong in Spanish democracy: the result of the divorce between citizens and the major parties alternating in power.

Finally, *#nolesvotes* called for the electors not to vote for any particular group or ideology, but to satisfy themselves about the alternative possible policies which may best suit their views, their interest and what is to the advantage of a developed democracy. “Democracy - as *#nolesvotes* puts it succinctly - is you, and millions like you.” “Without your vote is nothing. In the upcoming election do not vote.”

The more powerful of such social networks had become *¡ Democracia real YA !* - Real democracy NOW ! It was set up in January 2011 with the support of a federation of organisations such as *ATTAC - Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide aux Citoyens*, *Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens*, *Intermón Oxfam*, *Ecologists in Action* and *Juventud Sin Futuro*. The organisers claim to have been inspired by the Arab spring, or the student uprising of May 1968 in Paris. But if one is looking for a parallel for the anti-political protests which have swept across Spain, maybe it is to be found in Argentina in 2001-02, when years of recession ended in debt default and rowdy mobs shouted *Que se vayan todos* - Let them all go to ...

The *¡ Democracia real YA !* website has since 15 May become the reference to the movement, mentioned customarily as 15-M. Its *Facebook* page has 330,000 people signed up. At the time of the demonstrations, the *¡ Democracia real YA !* website had the

support of over 500 diverse associations. To find the beginnings of this movement, its spark, one should look back to the *Ley Sinde*. The major parties had voted together to pass that law, without listening to the voice of the people who were largely against it - hence the feelings of denial of democracy. That sentiment would give its name to a keyword on *Twitter* and then a website. This spark, the defence of absolute freedom on the Internet, explains the *Anonymous* masks - the *hacktivist* group - which could be seen in the resulting crowds.

¡ Democracia real YA ! made large use of *Twitter* and *Facebook* to call on “the unemployed, poorly paid, the subcontractors, the precarious, young people...” - collectively *los indignados* - to take the streets on 15 May in up to some sixty cities, large and small. The suggested means would be demonstrations, civil disobedience, civil resistance, sit-ins, online activism and protest camps occupations. The so-called *Kitchenware revolution* in Iceland would be identified by *El País* as inspiration behind the protests. In Barcelona the means of expression would become, much as in Reykjavik, banging drums, pots and pans - *la cacerolada*.

On its website *¡ Democracia real YA !* announced more rallies to be had in Berlin, Bogota, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Vienna between from 12 and 15 May in city squares or in front of Spanish Embassies. Further rallies were also planned in Birmingham, Bristol and Edinburgh in the United Kingdom, and Padua and Turin in Italy. On 15 May solidarity demonstrations were expected in Amsterdam, Bologna, Dublin, Istanbul, Lisbon, London and Paris.

This first wave broke and was then drowned by the burst of anger from a generation of youth crushed by 45 per cent unemployment, increasingly precarious living conditions and a feeling of not being heard. Despite an ever growing presence on the streets - in Barcelona, Bilbao, Córdoba, Madrid, Valencia, Zaragoza - everywhere, the Internet remained at the heart of this movement. It is a tool which allows one completely to forego usual structures:

meetings, leaflets, delegates, spokespeople. Battle cries would be traded on *Twitter* - *#spanishrevolution*, *#NoNosVamos*, *#AcampadaSol*, *#YesWeCamp* - and on *Facebook*. Followed by about 150,000 people, all communications were done online; the protesters had even installed a *webcam* to monitor live the *Puerta del Sol* protest camp.

After passively submitting to the crisis, young Spaniards had finally taken to the street. Breaking out on the eve of municipal and regional elections, the protests had been inspired by those in Iceland which led to the fall of the government in Reykjavik in 2009.

The Internet has become a structural element of the movement. What is expressed is anger, a desire for radical change and a rejection of all traditional forms of politics. This explains the refusal to be co-opted by any political party or trade union, the fierce independence from all institutionalised political ideology and the calls to spoil ballot cards or vote blank. Confidence in the Spanish democratic system was broken; *los indignados* conveyed the impression that their voices are never heard. The descent into the street would come naturally, as an extension. The street is also where they wanted to be heard - hence one of the main slogans: “We will not be silent”.

Before the demonstrations, *¡ Democracia real YA !* would stage several symbolic events, such as the occupation of a bank in Murcia on 13 May.

The most frequently heard and seen slogan was: “*No somos mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros* - We are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers.” The first protest was focused on opposition to what the protesters called “antisocial means in the hands of bankers”, partly referring to the changes made in 2010 to contain the ongoing European sovereign debt crisis through bailout of the banks, that Spanish society saw as responsible for the crisis, while at the same time the government kept announcing social programme cutbacks. Protesters also demanded more democracy, a new electoral law and end to political

corruption as well as other claims, such as banks nationalisation, and there seemed to be a strong belief that neither of the two main political parties really represented the protesters.

Los indignados intended to take the promise of democracy seriously, and this is the very reason why they rebelled against the false democracy which sprang from the bowels of *Franquismo* and was enshrined in the highly touted Moncloa Pacts. It is a democracy which those camped in the *plazas* denounced as a hoax, a sham which hides a persistently cruel dictatorship under its perfumed robes, a dictatorship which discharges the burden of the crisis unleashed by the capitalists on the shoulders of the workers. What the 'exemplary' Moncloa democracy proposed as a way of confronting the crisis was market despotism, the irreconcilable enemy of any democratic project: by facilitating worker layoffs, salary reductions, slashing labour rights, freezing pensions and raising the retirement age, cutting public employment, health and education budgets, privatising government businesses and programmes and, to top it off, reducing taxes still further on the wealthy and businesses so that the excess money might be invested in new undertakings. Once again, the rancid and endlessly refuted 'trickle-down theory', was paraded - to take people for idiots by ignoring or not taking into account that if the rich have more money at their disposal it would take an extraordinary event for them not to succumb to the temptation of the G.F.C. instead of investing in new businesses and new sources of employment.

The possibly unintended result of that false democracy had been over-mighty and unaccountable party bosses. Corruption, though the exception, had often gone unpunished. So there is a case for looking at electoral reform, and especially at introducing an open-list system which would allow voters to pick and choose amongst individual candidates.

The response to the G.F.C. by false democracy - in reality, the product of a sordid plutocracy that young people want to dislodge and replace with a democracy worthy of the name - provoked by the insatiable greed of the bourgeoisie was to extend capitalism by applying I.M.F. prescriptions until a society bled and drowned in despair and misery will

accept a ‘neofascist solution’ to reconstitute the lost ‘order’. No change is possible within that pseudo-democracy because its famous bipartisanship has proven to be nothing more than the two faces of a single party - that of capital.

On 15 May 2011 around 150,000 people took to the streets in 60 Spanish towns and cities to demand *Democracia real YA!*, marching under the slogan “We are not commodities in the hands of bankers and politicians.” The protest was organised through web-based social networks without the involvement of any major unions or political parties. The protest was not only about unemployment. It was about the unfair political situation which exists in Spain. *Los indignados* were saying: “We are not just asking for jobs. We are asking for a change in the political system. As things stand, we have no option but to vote for the two biggest parties in Spain, which are more or less the same. They are unable to solve any problem, they are just a nest of corruption. We are tired. In short, we want a working democracy. We want a change. We protest against the political situation which allows more than 100 people who are accused of corruption across the country to stand in the next elections.” Moreover, the protesters wanted a change to the electoral law, which has a vote computing system which advantages the big political parties, leaving the small ones without any chance of being heard. These were the common complaints. “They want to leave us without public health, without public education, half of our youth is unemployed, they have risen the age of our retirement as well.” a protester complained. “This is an absolute attack on what little state welfare we had.”

In sum, the movement was an anti-capitalism, anti-market-ruled society, anti-banks, anti-political corruption, anti-degraded democracy and pro-real democracy protest.

At the end of the march some people decided to stay the night at the *Plaza del Sol*, iconic meeting place in Madrid’s centre. They were forcefully evacuated by the police in the early hours of the morning. This, in turn, generated a mass call for everyone to occupy his or her local squares that thousands all over Spain took up. Sixty five public squares were being

occupied, with support protests taking place in front of Spanish Embassies from Buenos Aires to Vienna and, indeed, London.

There were other slogans, equally expressive: "You take the money, we'll take the street", "If you won't let us dream, we will not let you sleep" on the banners in *Puerta del Sol*. To the cries of "We have the right to be outraged" thousands of demonstrators invaded *Puerta del Sol* and a proper camp was erected. "We are staying here until the elections." to be held on 22 May. said a spokesman. "It is a new movement being born; we are still putting together our ideas and organising meetings for social change." he added.

The *Twitter* account of *Wikileaks* was busier than many international newspapers recommending the text *The Icelandic revolt of Spain*. It saw a clear parallel between the *#spanishrevolution* and the people in the Atlantic who refused to pay for the mistakes of the banks. The link appeared so clear that Hördur Torfason, the man who prompted Icelanders to fight politicians and bankers, recorded a greeting to the Spanish people. The rage against a world governed by rating agencies and financial speculation had become one of the seeds of Spanish indignation. "When we grow up, we want to be Icelanders!" cried one of the leaders of the organisation during the march on 15 May before a column of young - and not so young - parents and children, students and workers, the jobless and pensioners. *Los indignados* firmly identified those responsible for their condition when they chanted: "Thieving bankers are to blame for the crisis."

It is estimated that the protesters that day were followed by about 130,000 people throughout Spain.

At the end of Madrid's demonstration, protesters blocked the *Gran Vía* avenue and staged a peaceful sit-in in Callao street, to which police responded by beating protesters with truncheons. As a result of the clashes and the following riots, several shop windows were destroyed and trash containers burnt. 24 people were arrested and five police officers injured.

On 17 May ; *Democracia real YA !* would reject having any relation with the incidents and condemned the brutal police repression. After the incidents, a group of 100 people headed to *Puerta del Sol* and started the camping in the middle of the square, what would result in the following day's protests.

The Spanish Electoral Commission had announced on 12 May that demonstrations would not be allowed on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22, but some demonstrators had already let it be known that they would disobey the restrictions. According to *El Pais*, the leaders of the youth movement had called a general assembly to decide whether or not to yield to the banning of demonstrations. But at the *Puerta del Sol*, the epicentre of the contestation, the majority of the demonstrators had already decided to carry on with the mobilisation.

Perhaps Spain was re-embracing its radical past, its popular movements, its anarcho-syndicalist traditions and its republican dreams. The 15 May 2011 would become the reminder to those in power that Spanish direct democracy is still alive and has finally awoken. There is a faint echo of Spain's anarchist tradition in anti-party, anti-union slogans, mixed with familiar anti-globalisation rhetoric.

Unaccustomed to mass demonstrations everyone was wearied and frustrated by the ongoing effects of the G.F.C.

The 15-M movement takes its name from those demonstrations by thousands of students, pensioners, low-paid employees and disgruntled citizens, under the slogan *No les votes* - Do not vote them in. The organisers decided to repeat the protests each night right up till Sunday 22 May, when local and regional elections were to be held.

Started in Spain, the movement had reached Europe and was nudging at France. There, too, proceeding from the Internet direct to the streets; there was no middleman. French protesters were chanting: *Soyez réalistes, demandez l'impossible !* Be realist, demand the impossible !

After a first demonstration outside the Spanish Embassy, the French *Indignés* found themselves on the *Place de la Bastille* and intended to make that symbolic place a daily *rendez-vous*. The movement has its keywords on *Twitter*, *#frenchrevolution*, *#démocratieréelle* or *#indignezvous*. Invitations from associations such as 'Black Thursday' and 'Precarious Generation' to join the mobilisation could have helped it to take off but might also have blurred the message. Would the political parties - the two associations mentioned above were headed by Europe Ecology/the Greens councillors - and the trade unions have allowed the movement to grow on its own ? Links with the pamphlet *Indignez-vous !* - Time for outrage ! by Stéphane Hessel were in any case often cited. *Twitter* seemed the best place to monitor a possible take-off of the movement in France. It could also be followed on the *Democracia real YA !* site, with the slogans of the movement, and a calendar of rallies planned in France.

In Madrid the protests had registered a huge success with ten thousand people at *Puerta del Sol* on 16 May. Spanish media related the protests to the economic crisis; to Stéphane Hessel's *Time for Outrage!*; to the "ni-ni" generation (for the Spanish "neither-nor"), meaning by that "Not in Education, Employment, or Training"; to the protests in the Middle East and North Africa; to Greece, Portugal as well as the Icelandic protests in 2009. The student demonstrations in Britain, the riots in Greece, and the union protests in France, Italy, and Belgium were all born of the same frustration. On 16 May groups of people gathered in *Puerta del Sol* and decided to stay in the square until the elections on 22 May. Meanwhile, 200 people started a similar action in Barcelona's *Plaça Catalunya*, although police had first tried to disperse the crowds. That day the tag *#spanishrevolution*, as well as other ones related to the protests, became a trending topic in *Twitter*.

On 17 May large groups of demonstrators returned to protest in various cities. This time the protests were not called together by *¡ Democracia real YA !*. In a few cities, the police permitted the protesters to camp out, as took place in A Coruña, where more than 1,000 people had arrived on 15 May. In Madrid about 200 protesters organised into an assembly, during which they decided to organise themselves to spend the night in *Puerta del Sol*, creating cleaning, communication, extension, materials and legal committees. Previously they had received a great deal of help from small businesses in the form of food. In the evening more than 12,000 people were gathered there.

On 17 May it seemed that Spain was finally waking up with major protests taking place all over the country. The protests were seen by some as influenced by the ‘Arab spring’ and as the result of the European sovereign debt crisis. Principal grounds for the protests were unemployment, economic conditions, welfare cuts, political corruption and excluding bipartitism. The aims of the protests were to improve democracy and to reduce the influence of economic powers in politics. *Los indignados* were refining their platform: “We are individuals who have come together freely and voluntarily. Each of us has decided, after the gathering on 15 May that we are determined to continue fighting for dignity and political and social awareness. We do not represent any political party or association. We are joined by the singular cause of change. We are brought together by integrity and solidarity with those who are unable to join us. We are here because we desire a new society which puts lives above political and economical interests. We demand a change in society and an increase in social awareness. We are here to make it known that the people have not fallen asleep, and we will continue fighting - peacefully. ‘Better to risk and lose than to lose without having risked at all’.”

The slogans and the signs expressed the mood of Spain-reality and of an extraordinary cynicism: “Liberty, Equality and Corruption. Do we know who our politicians are working for ? It is called democracy and it is not it !” “We have the right to dream, and for it to

become true.” “No corrupt politicians, businessmen, bankers.” “They call it democracy, but it is not.” Such slogans revealed a profound spirit of indignation and aspiration, and this has put neo-liberalism on the dock in Spain where the tenets of neo-liberalism were being implemented under the stewardship of the Socialists.

The protesters began to formulate a programme of reforms: they wanted to have a referendum on electoral reform, and called for the dissolution of the Spanish Parliament’s second chamber, which they believe is a waste of time and money. They also wanted to see an end to a policy of ‘salaries for life’ for Spanish politicians, and demanded greater media freedom. The media in Spain, they said, are too heavily influenced by the political and religious Right, with ownership of the most powerful broadcasters and newspapers concentrated in the hands of a few. The movement also believes that there is a major problem with corrupt politicians, and have produced a list of those they claim should be investigated for taking money in return for favours - in some cases, allegedly, from large Spanish corporations.

Protests and nighttime camp-outs took place in 30 cities. The protests gained the support of people in the United Kingdom, who announced that they would sit outside of the Spanish Embassy from 18 until 22 May. The protest in *Puerta del Sol* on the night of 17 May consisted of about 4,000 people according to the authorities. 300 of them stayed until the dawn of 18 May.

One very significant slogan was seen on 17 May. It read: *Error del sistema* - The fault [is] in the system, and it proposed *#spanishrevolution*.

In Madrid the protesters put up a large tarpaulin canopy with the intention of spending the night there between the 17 and 18 May. According to a reporter from *El País*, many of them wore carnations, much as happened during the Portuguese Carnation Revolution. In addition, they organised a food stand which provided food donated by local businesses and set up a

webcam to provide news from *Plaza del Sol* through the website *Ustream.tv*. The protesters were advised not to drink alcohol or to organise into groups of more than twenty people, as these acts could provoke a police crackdown.

In addition to *The Washington Post*, which covered the protests on 15 May, news reports appeared on 18 May in various foreign media outlets. Among them, *Le Monde* noted the rarity of such large scale protests in Spain. *Der Spiegel* remarked on the importance of the effects of what has been called ‘The Facebook Generation’. The Portuguese *Jornal de Notícias* reported on the protests in Madrid on 18 May as soon as it became known that they had been prohibited. *The New York Times* cited *El País* and noted the strong organisation of the protesters, particularly the 200 people who had been placed in charge of security and the use of *Twitter* to ensure dissemination of their messages. *The Washington Post* again reported on the protests in *Puerta del Sol*, mentioning the word ‘revolution’ with reference to them and estimating the presence of 10,000 people on 18 May afternoon's protest and comparing it with those in Cairo's Tahrir Square. The *B.B.C.* emphasised the peaceful nature of the protests in *Puerta del Sol*.

The various organisations of protesters agreed to hold meetings of their organising committees each day at 1 pm and assemblies at 8 pm.

In the evening, the President of the Regional Electoral Committee of Madrid issued a statement declaring the protests illegal because “calls for a responsible vote can change the results of the elections.” Police units at *Puerta del Sol*, however, received orders from the Government Delegation not to take any further action.

On 18 May the Electoral Commission declared illegal the rally at *Puerta del Sol*, as it could “affect the election campaign and the rights of citizens” to vote freely. But *los indignados* had

decided nonetheless to carry on with their occupation of the square. “Outlaws”, led *ABC* on its front page. The conservative daily believed that, yes, “there are reasons to be discontented faced with the crisis,” but that “objectively”, the responsibility is borne by “a leftist government, and not ‘the system’ called into question by the demonstrators.” The latter, “sociologically on the left,” were demanding not a “change of government but a rupture, which is a way of contracting and distorting the democratic framework: either the left, or reform of the system.” “The government allows the banned demonstration to go ahead and the P.S.O.E. supports the protests.” was the angry headline from *El Mundo*. Yet, the demonstrators did not direct their protests against the government, but against the dominant system, without identifying those accountable. Public opinion on the other hand, as revealed by polls, held the government responsible for the crisis.

Since 18 May support protests took place daily in several major cities outside Spain, including Berlin, Dublin, London and Paris.

The police ordered protesters to disperse in Las Palmas, Tenerife and Valencia. There were some arrests. Speeches continued on throughout the afternoon. The protests grew to include León, Seville - where a camp-out started as of 19 May, and in other provincial capitals. Support groups were set up on social networks for each camp out through *Twitter* and other national and international networks. *Google Docs* and other servers began to receive download requests for documents needed to seek permission for new protests. In the morning, the *Federación de Asociaciones de Vecinos de Barcelona* - Federation of the Association of Barcelona Neighbours announced its support of the protests in the city.

On 19 May Prime Minister Zapatero commended the thousands of people who had taken to the streets to protest the economic crisis, saying that they “deserve our respect.” He expressed some sympathy for the protesters, noting their “peaceful manner”. “My obligation is to listen, be sensitive, try to give an answer from the government so that we can recover the economy and employment as soon as possible.” he told radio *Cadena Ser*.

According to *The Guardian*, “tens of thousands” were camped-out in Madrid and throughout the country on the night of 19-20 May. On 20 May gatherings had been summoned by a profile of the *Facebook* site entitled ‘Italian Revolution. *Reale Democrazia Ora*’, launched the day before. They were to be had in Bologna, Florence, Milan, Padua, Pisa and Rome. The calls made specific reference to the protests in Madrid to which they expressed their solidarity. And the story was being repeated all over the world. *Izquierda Unida* - United Left appealed the Central Electoral Board's decision to ban the protests, and the State Prosecutor presented his arguments shortly after before the Supreme Court. Spain's public broadcaster R.T.V.E. reported that the State Prosecutor upheld the decision taken by the Board to ban the rallies. Meanwhile, the police announced that they had been given instructions not to dissolve the crowd at *Puerta del Sol* provided that there was no disturbance of the peace. R.T.V.E. later reported that the Constitutional Court had been deliberating since 7.30 pm whether to review an appeal against the decision of the Central Electoral Board. At 10.08 pm R.T.V.E informed that the Constitutional Court had rejected the appeal on the ground that the appellant had not appealed first to the Supreme Court. *Izquierda Unida* had until midnight to appeal. At 22:47 *Izquierda Unida* announced it would appeal the Supreme Court's decision before the Constitutional Court.

In Barcelona, Madrid, Malaga and other cities 21 May started with a minute's silence followed by cheers and applause. Smaller cities, such as Granada, decided to start before midnight to avoid disturbing the neighbours. These protests occurred even though protests on the day before elections are banned.

Around 28,000 people, according to the police, crowded *Puerta del Sol* and the neighbouring streets despite the prohibition. Other cities also gathered large numbers of people: 15,000 in Malaga, 10,000 in Valencia, 6,000 in Zaragoza, 4,000 in Seville, 1,500 in Granada, 800 in Almeria, 600 in Cadiz, 200 in Huelva, around 100 in Jaen. 8,000 people gathered in Barcelona, 1,000 in Vigo, 3,000 in Bilbao, 2,000 in Oviedo, 2,000 in Gijón, around 800 in

Avilés, 3,000 in Palma. There were demonstrations in other European cities, with 500 protesters participating in Amsterdam, 600 in Brussels, 200 in Lisbon and 300 in London. Minor demonstrations occurred in Athens, Berlin, Budapest, Milan, Paris, Rome, Tangiers and Vienna, in what *The Guardian* described as a “youth-led rebellion ... spreading across southern Europe... united by a rejection of mainstream politicians and fury over spending cuts.”

Amidst local and regional election campaigns, with the banners of the different political parties plastered across the country's streets, people were saying ‘Enough!’ Disillusioned youth, unemployed, pensioners, students, immigrants and other disenfranchised groups were emulating their brothers and sisters in the Arab world and were now demanding a voice - demanding an opportunity to live with dignity.

Voters would be deciding on 8,000 city councils and other positions in 13 of Spain's 17 regional governments. The elections were seen as a test of how much the P.S.O.E.'s support had crumbled amid soaring unemployment and its handling of the country's financial crisis. Opinion polls showed that the Socialist Government would have fared badly. But the protesters in *Puerta del Sol* were no happier with Spain's Right-wing alternative.

On 22 May, election day, just after 14:00, *los indignados* who had gathered at *Puerta del Sol* announced that they had voted to stay at least another week, until noon on 29 May.

Early analysis of the elections suggested that the protest movement could have contributed to losses by the P.S.O.E. and to increased numbers of spoilt or blank votes, which reached record levels. The results revealed another, more dangerous divide than the digital or economic: the democratic one. The international press highlighted the demise of the

Socialists. The national press declared the Conservatives winners. But the most important political forces were those who abstained, a majority of 33 per cent of the votes.

The *Partido Popular* was now set to govern 9 of Spain's 17 autonomous communities, and to have a say in the running of several more. As its mayors will also be in charge of 36 of Spain's 50 provincial capital cities, the party will be faced with one of thorniest problems - overspending in city halls and regional capitals. It had a model to follow in the *Partido Popular*-controlled Madrid regional government, which boasts the lowest deficit of all - although Madrid's *Partido Popular*-controlled city hall has one of the highest debts. With elections out of the way, the full size of the regional overspend would now become apparent.

The most dramatic event on 22 May elections was the collapse in the Socialist vote, confirming a heavy disapproval of the P.S.O.E. neo-liberal policies. From 66.2 per cent of voters who voted only 27.81 per cent voted for the ruling party, against 37.34 per cent for the *Partido Popular*. Prime Minister Zapatero's party saw its support nationwide fall by 19 per cent compared to local elections four years before, against a *Partido Popular* rise of 7 per cent. The only reaction of Prime Minister Zapatero on facing this historic defeat was to "regret not having been able to explain the dimension of the crisis." The Socialists lost control of traditional strongholds like the city halls of Barcelona and Seville, and the regional governments of Castilla La Mancha and Aragón.

After such clamorous rebuke, the Socialists were due to set about the business of choosing a candidate to replace the unpopular Mr. Zapatero, who had announced in April that he would not lead his party into the next general election. Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, the deputy prime minister, and Carme Chacón, the defence minister, were the front-runners to replace him, although both were Zapatero loyalists and neither represented anything new in policy terms.

An extra dimension in the vote was an explosion of support in the northern Basque country for a new radical separatist party, *Bildu*, a Left coalition which won 25 per cent of the vote.

Many people outside the Basque country would see Bildu as the successor to *Batasuna* - a banned front party for Basque terrorist group E.T.A. - although it formally disavows E.T.A.'s violence. On 1 May *Bildu* had been banned by the Supreme Court from running in the local elections, but the decision had been overturned by the Constitutional Court. Even though Basque Country was dominated by the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, the Basque Nationalist Party, P.N.V, *Bildu* became the second force with 25 per cent of the votes and the biggest number of members elected in the region.

Izquierda Unida became the third political force with 6.3 per cent, increasing the number of votes and elected representatives in comparison to 2007. I.U. also took the opportunity to reiterate its support for the ongoing social movements in Spain and in particular for the thousands of people who were demanding 'Real democracy' and who had been occupying *Puerta del Sol* since 15 May.

All together that of 22 May was a vote expressing solidarity with the struggle in Europe against the austerity policies and the Euro Pact which aims to systematise precariousness and deprive people even more of their economic and financial sovereignty.

In Murcia, some 80 people gained access to the headquarters of the television channel 7 Región de Murcia, avoiding security staff, in order to read a manifesto denouncing media manipulation. Likewise, some 30 people gained unobstructed entry to the Tarragona office of the Ministry of Economy and Finance and shouted slogans against the political and economic systems, before moving to several financial sites in the city centre to do the same. In Málaga, the Ministry of Defence decided to relocate various activities for Armed Forces Day planned for 27 May. Protesters had already been occupying the *Plaza de la Constitución*, where the events were scheduled to take place, for eight days.

On 25 May the most significant aftershock from Spain's political earthquake was felt in Greece, where 15,000 gathered in Athens and 30,000 nationally to protest against the social democratic P.A.S.O.K. government's imposition of austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank. Protesters chanted, "Thieves, thieves," outside the Greek Parliament, demanding, "It is time those who created the crisis left." One should recall that in March, 300,000 protesters, mobilised by the *Geração à rasca* - Generation of junk web site, marched in eleven cities across Portugal. The movement seemed to have evaporated, even as all the major parties were competing to win the 5 June general election based upon promises to impose savage spending cuts and tax rises in return for the Euro 78 billion bailout agreed by the European Union and I.M.F.

On 27 May the Spanish State decided to bare its teeth on behalf of the oligarchy. It is all very well for young people to be out protesting in favour of democracy whenever such protests have precisely no public impact. But whenever chambers of commerce and the tourism industry tell the ruling political parties that they are making the place look untidy on account of their mere presence, the State authorities have no compunction in acting with gross brutality and impunity.

At approximately 7 am on 27 May a serious incident occurred when the city council of Barcelona decided to send 350 police officers from the *Mossos d'Esquadra* - the Autonomous Police of Catalunya - and another one hundred or so from the *Guàrdia Urbana* - the Urban Police - to vacate *Plaça de Catalunya* so that it could be cleaned ahead of the final of the Champions League final on 28 May, in which F.C. Barcelona were playing. Football, for goodness sake ! The resulting violent clash ended in 121 light injuries and provoked new calls to protest in all squares still occupied across Spain. The majority of those injured suffered bruises and open wounds caused by police truncheons, with one protester leaving with a broken arm. Shortly after midday those protesters vacated had already returned to the square.

Similar incidents also occurred in other Catalan cities, where *Mossos d'Esquadra* officers dismantled the protesters' encampments. According to police figures, more than 12,000 people gathered in Barcelona through the course of the day, angry about the earlier actions of the police, painting their hands white and carrying flowers as symbols of protest. They demanded, among other things, the resignation of the head of the *Mossos d'Esquadra*, Felip Puig. They also claimed that following the incident the encampment would likely not be taken down on 28 May, as had previously been stated. The clearing of the Barcelona camp was broadcast live by two Spanish television channels, and was also widely dispersed through social networks such as *Twitter*. The Catalan ombudsman opened an investigation into the incident to check if police action was disproportionate and if it violated citizens' rights.

Demonstrations continued during June. As things stood at the beginning of the month, according to a survey published by *El País*, there existed wide support - up to 80 per cent - amidst the Spanish population for the movement. In fact, in addition to public intellectuals such as Vicent Navarro, Arcadi Oliveras, or Eduardo Galeano giving their support, political figures such as Cayo Lara, *Izquierda Unida*'s coordinator, had aligned with the movement's views. Even Rosalía Mera, who is Spain's richest woman according to *Forbes* magazine, had expressed public support for *los indignados*.

It seems clear, when one takes an in depth look into current events unfolding in Spain, that the protests had hit a nerve throughout Spanish society, and although the movement was practicing a form of nonviolent direct democracy which is not familiar to most Spaniards - indeed to the majority of citizens in Western style democracies, the Spanish political, social and economic climate was beginning to be shaped, at least partially, by its cries of indignation.

On 4 June representatives from 53 assemblies around Spain gathered in a mass assembly in *Puerta del Sol*. Following 25 days of permanent presence in *Puerta del Sol*, on 5 June

activists from 15-M began to dismantle their camp from the doorstep of the capital's regional government headquarters. But they intimated: "We are not leaving, we are expanding." Not all of the protesters agreed. So, while some of the encampments had already been taken down across the country, a hardcore of fewer than 100 protesters in Barcelona's *Plaza Catalunya* vowed to maintain their nightly vigil, apparently against the wishes of the Catalan organising committee, which had voted the previous week to abandon the permanent settlement in favour of concentrated efforts in individual neighbourhoods and temporary protests, including a human cordon to be set up outside the regional Parliament. Those who elected to remain in *Plaza Catalunya* argued that leaving would go against the stated principle of the movement's original goal: a permanent and indefinite presence.

The date soon to replace 15 May as the movement's rallying cry was going to be 19 June, when mass marches were planned across the country to reiterate the protesters demands for political change.

An assembly in *Puerta del Sol* finalised the platform into a four-point manifesto. The agreed demands were: 1) electoral reform which will guarantee better representation and increased citizen participation in government; 2) clear strategies to fight public corruption by increasing transparency in government; 3) a complete separation of public powers; and 4) the setting up of mechanisms which will demand better performance from politicians and more responsibility from the government for its actions. These were particularly acute issues after the P.S.O.E administration's mishandling of the crisis leaving more than 20 per cent of the work force unemployed and a swath of corruption cases in recent years involving top officials from both the major parties - government and opposition.

In response to these numerous events, commissions of *los indignados* from squares across the country met in Madrid's *Puerta del Sol*, to discuss the future of the movement. Through a long process of popular assembly, they agreed to three important actions: first, to boycott the country's city halls as the new governments were sworn in following the recent regional and

local elections; second, to abandon city squares, and move their social action into city neighbourhoods - in an attempt to broaden the movement's involvement with the rest of the citizenry; and third, to continue organising protests on specific dates focused on particular issues - including a firm commitment to a global protest of *los indignados* on 15 October.

No politician from either end of the spectrum had yet offered to meet with the protesters.

'Revolted' campers in towns and cities throughout Spain were planning a major demonstration on 19 June, and intended to continue their peaceful protest until then.

A highly-organised community, *los indignados* had formed a council with representatives from at least 56 cities to make decisions and discuss the future of the movement. They intended to organise a 'massive public act' - as yet undefined - on 17 July.

On 8 June hundreds of protesters took to the streets outside the National Parliament to condemn plans by the government to reform the collective bargaining system. "We are here because they are going to approve a law which gives all the power to employers." said one of the protesters. "They always talk about flexibility but never about the obligations of employers." Unions and employers had been negotiating for months over reform of the collective bargaining system, considered a crucial plank of labour, banking and pension reforms aimed at reviving Spain's battered economy. Prime Minister Zapatero had said the previous week that his government would have approved the reform by 10 June even if there was no agreement with unions by then. In the view of the International Monetary Fund and the Bank of Spain the collective bargaining system, which includes industry-wide agreements which cannot be modified, is too rigid.

In Barcelona, around 50 people protested outside the Catalan Parliament against Felip Puig. In Valencia, dozens of people decided on a sit-in in front of the regional Parliament. In the morning of 9 June police clashed with protesters in Valencia, injuring 18 of them. As a response to the police violence, demonstrators called for a protest in the city later that day, which gathered around 2,000 people. The re-elected president of the Valencia region, Francisco Camps, was under investigation for corruption in a scandal involving members of the *Partido Popular*. Since February 2009 Camps had been found implicated in a scandal known as the *Gürtel* Case relating to an alleged criminal network controlled by businessman Francisco Correa. *Gürtel* is the German translation for the businessman's surname, Correa/belt. In March 2009 Camps was one of several *Partido Popular* figures accused by Judge Garzón of taking bribes. On 20 July 2011 he proclaimed his innocence - and resigned.

Demonstrations in support of the Valencia victims were held in Barcelona and Madrid, the latter ending up in front of the Parliament for a second night. Barcelona's protest finished in front of the *Partido Popular*'s office.

The defeat of Portugal's Socialist Party government in the 5 June general election brought forth a plethora of articles on this latest example of the rout suffered by Europe's social democratic parties at the hands of the Right wing. *The Economist* noted the scale of the political downturn: "Ten years ago almost half of the 27 countries that now make up the European Union, including Germany, Britain and Italy, were ruled by left-wing governments. Today... the left is in charge of just five: Spain, Greece, Austria, Slovenia and Cyprus." *The Guardian*'s "Why the right won yet again" said of the victorious leader of the Portuguese [conservative] Social Democratic Party, Pedro Passos Coelho, that he "was aided by [Socialist Party leader Jose] Sócrates's failure to acknowledge the depth of Portugal's crisis, and his hesitancy in spelling out the consequences of austerity." Clearly, much as with Labour in Britain, and most likely in Portugal's larger neighbour, Spain, in the very near future, the Socialist Party's defeat was due to the corrosive mixture of a long-matured alienation, fuelled by the hostility generated by the party's imposition of the very austerity

measures now being advanced as a panacea. It was Sócrates and the Socialist Party who negotiated an Euro 78 billion loan and agreed in return to the savage cuts demanded by the European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank. It was they who mortgaged the future of the working class to the very financial gamblers responsible for an economic crisis which has produced record unemployment and driven millions more into poverty.

A feeling seemed to unite young people throughout Europe, namely the belief that they will not be able to attain the same level of prosperity as their parents did. They feel that they have no future. They are well educated and well-trained, and yet they are not finding any jobs. This feeling has been smouldering for years, affecting the generation of ‘crisis children,’ who grew up in a world shaped by economic and other crises, but who never took to the streets to fight for their interests. There had also been the hope that a fundamental change could take place. On 12 March, 200,000 people marched down the *Avenida de Liberdade*, the Avenue of Freedom, in Lisbon. It was the biggest demonstration in Portugal since the 1974 Carnation Revolution, a march of the lost generation. The protesters had called upon the *Geração à rasca* - Generation of junk, to join together with them. “We, the unemployed, the underpaid and the interns, are the best educated generation in the country's history.” they wrote. “We are protesting so that those responsible for our precarious situation quickly change this untenable reality.” Portugal is the fourth-poorest country in the Eurozone. Even in Greece, the per capita G.D.P. is higher. Unemployment has almost doubled to 12.6 per cent in six years; among people under 25 the jobless rate is 27 per cent. Of those who do have jobs more than half are working in temporary positions. Many are pseudo self-employed, earn very little and must pay a tax rate of up to 50 per cent. They receive no social insurance benefits.

On 12 June, four weeks after the protests had begun, protesters in *Puerta del Sol* began to leave, dismantling the *acampada* - camping, packing up tents, libraries, shops, and removing protest signs from surrounding sites. Two days later thousands of people assembled in front of Barcelona's *Parc de la Ciutadella* and organised themselves to spend

the night, in order to start on the following day a blockade of the Catalan Parliament, which is inside the park, thus preventing deputies from entering the building, where the debate on the 2011 budget, which would result in cuts in education and health, was to take place.

On 15 June police confronted demonstrator outside the Catalan Parliament. Clashes between protesters and *Mossos d'Esquadra* occurred in the early hours of the morning when hundreds of protesters gathered in front of the police cordon, while officers fired plastic bullets in order to disperse a group of protesters who had set up barricades using rubbish containers. Hours later scuffles broke out as *Mossos de Esquadra* pushed protesters back so that the deputies who arrived on foot could get in. Some deputies were jostled, heckled and sprayed on their way in, while other used police helicopters to reach the Parliament. Among those was the president of Catalonia Artur Mas. Despite that lawmakers managed to enter the Parliament and the scheduled session started with only a 15 minutes delay. By midday most of the protesters remained outside the Parliament, while some confronted police with rocks and bottles. At least 36 people were injured, 12 of them *Mossos d'Esquadra*, and 6 people were arrested.

The protest was criticised by politicians across the country, and during a press conference, Mas warned of a possible “legitimate use of force” in case demonstrators remained outside the Parliament, and called on the public to be understanding. Some politicians went so far as denouncing an attempted *coup d'etat*. *Acampadabcn*, the organisers of the event, and *¡ Democracia real YA !* deplored the use of violence and denounced the criminalisation of the movement by the media. On *Twitter* and other social networks many users suggested the possibility that secret police, infiltrated to cause the violence, had started most of the clashes. At the end of the day demonstrators left the area and organised a march towards *Plaça de Sant Jaume*.

On 19 June there occurred the largest mass demonstrations since the G.F.C. had reached Spain. The protests were an enormous success. They focused on the Euro Pact, agreed by

Eurozone politicians purportedly to stimulate competitiveness across the bloc, while the protesters feared that it would mean harsher austerity measures. *Los indignados* regarded the Euro Pact tantamount to a 'loss of sovereignty' for individual States in favour of 'non-democratic' organisms. *El Pais* reported that "tens of thousands" took to the streets. This includes 42,000 in Madrid and 98,000 in Barcelona. In fact the protesters were many more in both cities.

In Barcelona the demonstration was of similar or probably larger size than that which had taken place on 29 September 2010 during the general strike. According to the trade unions, that march had 400,000 participants. Organisers in Seville claimed that 70,000 marched there. There is no question that, along with the huge demonstrations in Bilbao, Murcia, Valencia and many other cities, the combined total of *indignados* who marched on 19 June added up to many hundreds of thousands, almost certainly surpassing the 1.4 million who had marched on 29 September 2010. In fact, it was estimated that on 29 September 2010, some 10 million workers, nearly 70 per cent of the Spanish workforce, had supported the 24-hour general strike. Afterwards, fearful that this massive opposition to the P.S.O.E. would escalate beyond their control, the trade unions refused to organise any further action.

Huge demonstrations by the 15-M in 97 Spanish cities and towns brought at least 250,000 people onto the streets on 19 June. This vast and peaceful turnout marked a new phase in the rising struggle against the austerity policies of the country's 'parties of government' - the P.S.O.E., the *Partido Popular* and the Catalan nationalist Convergence and Union - as well as against the recently adopted Euro Pact.

15-M is driven by anger at the savage measures to make ordinary people carry the burden for G.F.C. caused by the big banks - and the complicity of often corrupt politicians.

The impact on Spanish politics is best measured by two events. After 15 June, 15-M was on the defensive, especially in Catalonia. It was painted as a violent minority attacking the institutions of democracy. Yet six days later, on 21 June, the Spanish Parliament, influenced by 15-M's demands, unanimously adopted a non-binding resolution on "measures to deepen the credibility, transparency, austereness and democratic controls of the institutions and powers of the State."

The 15 May initial demonstrations had triggered some reactions from the main political parties, which issued statements on 16 May. On 15 May, the day of the first demonstration, almost every party was willing to be quoted on the events. Jaime Mayor Oreja, Member of the European Parliament representing the *Partido Popular*, was critical of the protesters' alleged intention of not casting ballots on the forthcoming election. So was P.S.O.E. member and Minister of Public Works and Transport José Blanco. *Izquierda Unida* had a positive view of the protesters' demands, but admitted not having been capable of connecting with them. The party's political coordinator Cayo Lara defended the protesters' refusal to become a 'lost generation' and was critical of their removal from the *Puerta del Sol* on 16 May. Other politicians, such as José Antonio Griñán, showed sympathy for the protests, while insisting that not voting is not a solution. Esteban González Pons, general deputy secretary of the *Partido Popular* linked the demonstrations to the "antisystem far left". Former Prime Minister Felipe González compared the protests, that he considered "an extraordinarily important phenomenon", with those staged in Arab countries, pointing out that "in the Arab world they are demanding the right to vote while here they are saying that voting is pointless."

The demonstrations were still made up of youth mainly, but they were also marked by a huge participation of workers, families and even pensioners. And they had gone to protest and not merely to show their support for the movement of the youth. In Barcelona, blocks of postal, refuse, hospital and education workers were out in force, among many others. It is clear that many workers have begun to see 15-M as their own. The main trade union leaders, from the CC.OO and U.G.T., had changed their approach over the few days leading up to 19 June

calling for participation by their members. This was welcomed by the movement. But their last-minute support probably came after it became clear that, with or without their call, union members were preparing to flood the streets on 19 June. On that day two frequently seen slogans had been: “You know the story: all they want is everything.” and “For a Europe of the people, not of the markets”.

After more than three decades of neo-liberalism, which started in the United States and spread like a plague over most of the rest of the world, the struggles against it have been reaching new levels. Recently one could have seen mass opposition to the austerity measures that the ruling classes of various countries had tried to foist on their people. The attempts to make the ordinary people pay for the G.F.C. led to mass demonstrations, not only in Spain but also in Greece, in the United States - with the occupation of the State Capitol in Madison, Wisconsin for instance, in France, Britain, Portugal, Ireland, Italy and across eastern Europe.

Yet, in Spain, within both major parties the dominant belief persisted that the crisis in the economy can only be resolved through austerity - that is, making the majority shoulder the burden rather than taxing those who caused the problem and can afford to pay.

In the view of the majority globalisation was held responsible for accelerating the crises of traditional, national political systems, reorganising and transforming the nature of power, relocating it to international political bodies. The institutions of the European Union - the European Commission, the European Council, the European Central Bank - were seen as undemocratic representatives not resulting from the will of popular majorities. Instead they were regarded as representative of the bureaucratic and technocratic structures instituted to permit capitalism to continue to expand its hegemony on a continental and global scale. Within the revolutionary process underway in the world, Europe was attempting to cut its own vital space pointed towards monopolising planetary resources. The size of this space would be determined by the European Union's capacity to develop a new regime of accumulation, integrating territories, capital and consumers/workers. In fact, the real

revolution of the unification of world markets was not the vaunted 'liberal' revolution, but instead a financial revolution, affecting all the peoples around the Mediterranean Sea. So it seemed that Europe was entering a Mediterranean Spring of its own.

15-M reveals that, far from being the passive agents that so many analysts take them to be, citizens have been able to organise themselves in the midst of a profound crisis of political representation and institutional abandonment. The new generations have learned how to shape the web, creating new ways of "being together", without recourse to ideological *clichés*, armed with a savvy pragmatism, escaping from pre-conceived political categories and big bureaucratic apparatuses. One was witnessing the emergence of new "majority minorities" which demand democracy in the face of a war "of all against all" and the mindless atomisation promoted by neo-liberalism, a majority which demands social rights against the logic of privatisation and cuts imposed by the economic powers. And it is quite possible that at this juncture old political goals will be of little or no use.

Finally, it is important to remember that the 15-M movement is linked to a wider current of European protests triggered as a reaction to so-called 'austerity measures'. These protests are shaking up the desert of the real, leaving behind the image of a formless and silent mass of European citizens which so befits the interests of political and economic *élites*. They are the protests of the campaigns like the British 'UK Uncut' against the Cameron Government's policies, of the mass mobilisations in Portugal, or indeed of what took place in Iceland after the people decided not to bail out the bankers.

A failed European project - with its borders quickly being reinstated, a collapsing Euro currency, and the examples of Greece, Portugal and Ireland are the reminders to those on the streets of what it is they are fighting from which to disassociate themselves, and of the freedoms towards which they are working. The economic and political project of the country's *élite* has destroyed the economic dreams of whole generations of naïve and apathetic Spaniards; it has left the country in the hands of bond speculators and central

banksters - and Spaniards will have to pay that price. Nevertheless, the debt accumulated by the Spanish peoples, has also earned them the education with which they can understand what is going on.

What began at *Puerta del Sol* and was being echoed in almost sixty cities across the country is the crystallisation of a popular movement for freedom, which has no intention of fading away. The people have no choice: if they do not take city squares as symbols of their struggle, their message will never be heard. The government knows this and that is why it has quickly responded by trying to disperse the crowds with its repressive police force. Yet, following some arrests, the people are back with more strength.

A silent revolution has begun in Spain, a nonviolent revolution which seeks democracy through democratic means, justice through just means, and peace through peaceful means has finally captivated the imagination of the Spanish peoples, and now there is no turning back.

The *Manifesto* released by *¡ Democracia real YA !* shows that the protesters are a mixture of ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives’, some with ‘clearly defined ideologies’ and others ‘apolitical’. Remaining inclusive and pluralist is important of course, but the notion of a post-political movement is deeply troubling. It appears to have become part of the narrative surrounding *los indignados*. Perhaps it is a strategic move, intended to broaden the appeal of the movement and make it appear palatable and non-threatening to the media. This is an approach many social activists, including groups and organisations fighting cuts in other countries, have been tempted to adopt. It could be misguided. A politics of emancipation is, and always will be, about the formation of collective identities around points of conflict and antagonism. There is nothing unseemly about this. Failure to realise it reinforces a diluted, centrist politics trapped by the demobilising logic of the lowest common denominator. Naturally, the idea that the Western world has entered a post-political age, in which earlier political orientations and conflicts are irrelevant, suits the powers that be quite nicely. Indeed,

a central dynamic of neo-liberalism is the removal of ever more spheres of social life from political control. Public services are privatised, whilst economic policy decisions are handed to technocratic bodies insulated from popular pressures.

The *Manifiesto* of *los indignados* provides a stinging critique of the collusion of politicians with a financial system which treats people as ‘the gears of a machine’ destined to enrich a ‘tiny minority’. The *Manifiesto* asserts the right of the Spanish peoples to determine the fundamental questions of where power lies and how resources are distributed. Much of *los indignados*’ anger is directed at the two main political parties, and their entrenched duopoly, whilst professing that they are non-partisan. This anger stems from a rejection of the neo-liberal policies common to both parties and a demand for greater openness, democracy and participation. These are both irreducibly political claims. To dress them up as anything different only serves *élites* who choose to dismiss any rejection of parties and representative democracy as ‘anti-political’. The Left-and-Right polarity, meanwhile, is a key orientation around which a number of political oppositions - between mass and *élite*, progressive and traditional, inclusivist and exclusivist - are organised.

Organising outside the established channels of opinion, through online networks and people’s assemblies, *los indignados* have a far more robust politics and critique, which reflect the urgency of their concerns. Currently, the governing institutions of neo-liberalism at the behest of which the Spanish Government is acting - the E.U., the I.M.F., the World Bank, credit rating agencies - deny that what they are doing is about politics and power, hiding behind the *façade* of ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’ economic rules, which ‘dictate’ the necessity of the measures being enacted. Should they have their way, then in Spain - much as in the rest of Europe, the expropriation of public wealth by the banks will be ‘the new normal’.

During the past three years the G.F.C. has been the subject of much investigation by United States authorities. A report, release in mid-April 2011, dealing with *Wall Street and the financial crisis: Anatomy of a financial collapse*, is particularly instructive. It was prepared

by the U.S. Senate, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and was examined extensively by *The New York Times* of 13 April 2011. In it Senator Carl Levin, the chairman of the Subcommittee, as usually minced no words. He is reported as saying: “The report pulls back the curtain on shoddy, risky, deceptive practices on the part of a lot of major financial institutions.” The usual suspects are examined - among them: Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs, Moody’s Investors Service, the Office of Thrift Supervision, Standard & Poor’s, and Washington Mutual. “[T]hose institutions deceived their clients and deceived the public, and they were aided and abetted by deferential regulators and credit ratings agencies. ...They gained at the expense of their clients and they used abusive practices to do it.”

“At least 10,500 people with criminal records”, noted the Committee, “entered the [mortgage-broker] field in Florida, including 4,065 who had previously been convicted of such crimes as fraud, bank robbery, racketeering, and extortion.”

Before committing the first US\$ 85 billion to salvage the American International Group, Inc. - A.I.G., the United States Government “failed to exhaust all options” said the United States Congressional Oversight Panel in one of its monthly reports in mid-2010. As A.I.G. went to the verge of collapse, the U.S. Treasury attempted to save it with more than \$100 billion. The report was not certain whether taxpayers, who had provided the money, will ever be repaid in full. The Panel said: A.I.G. had an “insatiable appetite for risk” accompanied by “blindness to its own liabilities.”

During hearings before the U.S. Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission in 2010, a 14 January 2010 report provided information that the bankers had admitted mistakes as they accumulated risks which led up to the crisis. For instance, Lloyd Blankfein, Goldman Sachs chairman, spoke for many other ‘managers’ when he said: “accumulation of risk” was “the biggest problem” that financial institutions faced ahead of the crisis. “These are all exercises in risk management.” And no one was in charge over overseeing such “accumulation[s] of risk.”

For one, the Federal Bureau of Investigation had seen a radical cut in the number of agents available to investigate financial crime. During the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, which brought the failure of about 747 out of the 3,234 savings and loan banks, 1,000 F.B.I. agents examined the financial-crimes scene. In April 2011 only 240 were similarly engaged.

As *The New York Times* reported, civil actions by the government were limited. The Securities and Exchange Commission's broad guideline in 2009, never made public, made it cautious about pursuing action for hefty penalties from banks which had received bailout money. "The agency was concerned about taxpayer money in effect being used to pay for settlements."

Relying on data provided by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse *The New York Times* was able to write that in 1995 bank regulators had referred 1,837 cases to the Department of Justice. There had been 75 referrals in 2006. The following four years saw the number slide to 72 a year on average. The declining trend began under the Clinton Administration. The Bush Administration maintained it. Prosecutions for Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, and others were exceptions. From the summer of 2007 to the end of 2008, Office of Thrift Supervision-overseen banks with US\$ 355 billion in assets failed. That Office had not referred a single case since 2000. The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency had referred only three in the last decade. Mostly small banks faced civil enforcement actions. There is no stiff penalty. No senior executives have been charged or imprisoned, and no collective government effort has emerged.

The view from academia was sternly expressed by Professor Henry Pontell, a criminology, law and society professor from the University of California at Irvine, when he said: "When regulators don't believe in regulation and don't get what is going on at the companies they oversee, there can be no major white-collar crime prosecutions. If they don't understand what

we call collective embezzlement, where people are literally looting their own firms, then it's impossible to bring cases.”

Professor William Black, law professor at the University of Missouri, put it this way: “There were no criminal referrals from the regulators. No fraud working groups. No national task force. There has been no effective punishment of the elites here.”

The conclusion on such delinquency was drawn by Professor David Skeel, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania: “It goes to the whole perception that Wall Street was taken care of, and Main Street was not.”

And so *The New York Times* could report: “After the savings and loan crisis of the early '90s, 800 financial executives went to prison. Not only have most bank executives avoided prosecution this time around, but many are still gainfully employed by the banks that ran the economy into the ground.” and “[t]hree years after [the American] horrific financial crisis caused by financial fraud, not a single financial executive has gone to jail ...”

The New York Times wondered: “It is a question asked repeatedly across America: why, in the aftermath of a financial mess that generated hundreds of billions in losses, have no high-profile participants in the disaster been prosecuted ?” and concluded: “Answering such a question - the equivalent of determining why a dog did not bark - is anything but simple.”

All aspects of the Great Financial Crisis have still not been identified, debated and discussed. This is needed as the crisis is making impact, on the one hand, on the lives of the people, and on the other hand, on capitals, and classes which own these capitals, and dominate the present geo-economy and geo-politics. These will make far-reaching impact on the ruling classes and peoples' struggles in many lands.

Spain then is not alone. There are some who foresee a new phase in Spanish democracy. For that reason, the new protests which took place on 19 June are a breath of fresh air in a society threatened by the economic crisis, unemployment and, above all, the indifference of the justice system to cases of corruption in certain political circles.

Putting to one side political considerations and the criticisms of those who minimise the importance of 15-M, one reality stands out: Spanish society has displayed its discontent publicly. On the other hand, although some of the 'malcontents' in the protests questioned the public powers, the democratic system which exists, despite its weaknesses, has made possible this public space for debate. The question now is: are Spanish politicians up to the task of meeting the demands of the society they represent ?

After the 19 June demonstrations the movement began regrouping and planning for two forthcoming events: the march to Madrid, which had began towards the end of June from different parts of the country, and the larger event which was planned for 15 October.

There were dangers, of course, and some of them quite foreseeable. It is possible that the movement would be confronted with violence from the newly emboldened *Partido Popular*, the apparent victor of 22 May. There had not been many students, particularly university students, during the May-June demonstrations. It is reasonable to speculate that in September and October, a period less weighed down by exams, there could be in the colleges and academic institutions an upturn for 15-M which could give it a very welcome impulse. It remains to be seen whether in autumn there will also be mobilisations in the secondary schools. In general these institutions had remained distant from the excitement generated by 15 May events. At the 19 June the calls for a general strike had been quite frequent and quite strong. But the final decision and organisation rested with the more militant unions and it would be lamentable if they were intimidated from doing so: what could lead to failure would

be not to call a general strike. Finally, the holding of early general elections in Spain in autumn could have given a stimulus to the struggle. One explanation for the success of M-15 was its arising in the middle of an election campaign which was both sad and sordid.

Events began moving rapidly and beyond any prediction.

On 25 June *los indignados* began their longest protests march, leaving from Barcelona to cover 650 kilometres on their way to a major Madrid rally on 24 July. Six other marches had began from different points of the country. On the way they were telling people: “First we took to the streets, then we took the squares, and now the highways. After that we will take Europe.” They would have been joined by supporters who were travelling to Madrid by bus from over thirty cities. On 26 July they were to march through the streets of Madrid, with the demonstration ending in *Puerta del Sol*. Polls were showing that two-thirds of Spaniards sympathised with *los indignados*.

On 28 June, speaking in Parliament during the debate on the state of the nation, Prime Minister Zapatero expressed ‘respect’ for the young people’s protest movement which had swept the country for the previous six weeks, but he denied that unemployment had created a ‘lost generation’ and called for a ‘great collective effort’ to overcome the economic crisis. Democracy - he said - was ‘improvable’, but he disagreed with many of the proposals voiced by the protesters. He defended the government’s unpopular austerity measures and the neo-liberal economic reforms, pledging that they would not break Spain’s ‘social balance’. The debate on the state of the nation was taking place at a time when Greece’s financial problems were increasing pressure on Spain’s borrowing costs. The government had consistently stated that it would not follow Greece, Ireland and Portugal in needing to be bailed out by the European Union and the I.M.F. It was Prime Minister Zapatero’s last debate on the state of the nation, because he would not seek a third term. His successor was to be the Interior Minister Alfred Pérez Rubalcaba.

Suddenly in early July the name of Judge Garzón returned to newspapers' front pages. *The New York Times* reported on 6 July that Spanish judges were investigating hundreds of charges that infants had been abducted and sold for adoption over a 40-year period. So, here was the long footprint of Judge Garzón, the one who almost succeeded - had it not been for the complicity of the Blair Government - in extraditing Pinochet for the crimes of Chile 9/11; who had actively and in many cases successfully pursued State criminals - including the Interior Minister of the González Government in which Garzón had briefly served; who had investigated for corruption, sent to trial, and had convicted wrong-doing public officials - such as the former mayor of Marbella, a fashionable sea-side resort on the Mediterranean for the well-off and their 'play-things'; who pursued malefactors of private wealth - Silvio Berlusconi, for instance, of whom he sought, albeit unsuccessfully, extradition on the ground of tax fraud and breach of anti-trust laws; who had been the scourge of organised criminals - such as drug importers, money launderers and terrorists - even indicting Osama bin Laden; who had tried to reach for shadow war criminals - such as former State Secretary Henry Kissinger over what the United States Government knew about and did in the six-dictators Operation *Condor*; who had opened an investigation into a 'systematic programme' of torture at Guantánamo Bay, following accusations by four former prisoners; who in March 2009 had investigated the possibility of bringing charges against six very high-ranking former officials of the George Bush Junior's Administration for offering justifications for torture. The investigation - it is said - had gone pretty perilously close to Vice-President Cheney. Judge Garzón *had* to be stopped.

Judge Garzón, practically in exile since May 2010, when he went for a short while to the International Criminal Court, and in the time since busy collecting praise, honours and prizes, had returned to disturb the long *siestas* of some 'worthy' Spanish judges. Spain's Judiciary had been forced into action after the *Asociación Nacional de Afectados por las Adopciones Irregulares*, National Association of People Affected by Irregular Adoptions, *Añadir* - the *Castellano* verb "to add", an association formed to represent people searching for missing children or parents, had filed its first complaints in January 2011. The Association was

complaining about possible complicity by officials of the government, the Catholic Church and various hospitals in the international trafficking of infants born in Spain.

In 2010 Antonio Barroso had founded *Añadir* after discovering that he was adopted. Upon questioning, his mother revealed that she had paid a nun for a child and had concealed the facts of his birth from him. As president of the organisation he coordinates a growing number of citizens, now in their 60s and 70s, demanding a full accounting of the facts concerning their missing children. He believes that, from a culture of political repression, Spain grew into a hub of international traffic in babies for adoption.

A group of nuns were to go on trial over the so-called ‘stolen babies’ case. Several nuns had confessed to selling children without suggesting involvement by criminal networks. The Attorney General’s Office announced that a number of doctors and nurses were also to be called to testify in the scandal involving the theft of newborn babies from their parents. The news came as three graves were exhumed from the cemetery in La Línea, as part of the investigation. The Catholic Church declined to comment and, thus far, no government officials are implicated.

A possibly embarrassed Attorney General Cándido Conde-Pumpido announced on 18 June 2011 that 849 cases were being examined, adding that 162 already could be classified as criminal proceedings because of evidence pointing to abductions. The Attorney General said that it was impossible to estimate how many more cases would surface, and also suggested for the first time that organised crime ‘networks’ had been involved. He gave no details, saying only that he did not believe that “one single organisation” had masterminded all the abductions. The statute of limitations on most of the suspected crimes has expired, prompting lawyers to discuss whether a special statute could be adopted.

With this latest challenge to the politically polarised Spanish Judiciary the story had come full circle in many respects. It was an extension of an investigation by Judge Garzón into Franco-era crimes against humanity in 2008 which initiated the current interest in child

abduction in Spain. In those proceedings the Judge had extended an investigation into crimes during the Franco regime to examine whether Franco had ordered thousands of babies taken from women who had supported the Republic. Judge Garzón had estimated that as many as 30,000 baby thefts had occurred. Just recently he had been elected for his work to the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

On 24 July *los indignados* held a popular session in *Puerta del Sol* to voice their proposals and demands, and to collect them before forwarding them to the government in an event which lasted until midnight. Some minutes of silence would follow, intended by the protesters as a ‘silent scream’, in order to denounce the political and economic conditions of the country and to call for reforms within the current system but to the advantage of all citizens. Among the calls there was one for a nationwide strike and for the holding of a referendum on 15 October in order to change the political regime, taking decisions which would improve living conditions, providing work opportunities for youth, and revising the real estate mortgage law. Even a government cabinet member, the Minister for Defence, found the movement’s demands “plausible”.

On 25 July 2011 Nobel-prized economist Joseph Stiglitz participated in the *I Foro Social del 15-M*, First 15-M Social Forum, organised in Madrid and expressed his support to the Spanish protests. During an informal speech, he made a brief review of some of the problems besetting Europe and the United States, the serious unemployment rate and the situation in Greece. “This is an opportunity for economic [thought to make a] contribution [to] social measures.” argued Stiglitz, who spoke about the way authorities are handling the political exit from the G.F.C. He encouraged those present to respond to “bad ideas”, not with indifference, but with “good ideas”. “This system does not work, you have to change it.” he said.

And the proof? The ‘crisis’ is a one-way street. As a *Financial Times* analysis pointed out on 22 June 2011, “Millionaires across the world are richer than they were before the G.F.C.,

the latest sign that the wealthy have weathered the downturn far better than other groups.” The number of millionaires in the United States went from 2.7 to 3.4 million from 2008 to 2010 and, in Europe, from 2.6 to 3.1 million during the same time period. Italy was the only E.U. country which saw a slight drop in the number of millionaires: 179 to 170. The countries with the largest number of millionaires are, in decreasing order, the United States, Japan, Germany, China and Britain.

As for Spain, on 29 July José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, a very unpopular prime minister, announced new general elections for 20 November 2011, four months earlier than planned. Mr. Zapatero said that he intended to complete his own set of reforms by 26 September and would attempt to have new deficit-busting measures enacted in mid-August. An early vote - he claimed, and hoped - would help bring “political and economic certainty” to the fourth largest economy in the Eurozone. Many observers fear that if Spain were to follow Greece, Ireland and Portugal into an international bail-out, it could be enough to cause catastrophic consequences for the Euro. In the second quarter of 2011 the number of Spanish jobless dropped only slightly, to 21 per cent. It is still the worst rate in the European Union. It may get worse still towards the end of the year, as seasonal jobs disappear.

Spain remains in the front line of the Eurozone's debt crisis. Some analysts had suggested that calling an early election could help reduce pressure on Spanish debt. A recent editorial in *El País* urged an early poll and arguably might have influenced Prime Minister Zapatero's decision.

An end of July 2011 poll from the state-run Centre for Sociological Investigation indicated that the P.S.O.E. candidate for prime minister, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba had improved his position *vis-à-vis* an un-impressive Mr. Rajoy, leader of the *Partido Popular*. If Mr. Rubalcaba were to fail, there is a chance that Mr. Rajoy could find himself at the helm of a minority government. In that case he might find it harder to enact major reforms to Spain's sluggish economy. What a *Partido Popular* government would do in office remains largely

doubtful. Mr. Rajoy does not say much, except of course that he would cut business taxes “to generate growth and jobs.” To achieve that he also offers something which stretches credibility: austerity without pain. Whatever he would do should be checked against the necessity to meet tough budget-deficit targets. This year the aim is to bring down the deficit from 9.2 per cent of G.D.P. to 6 per cent. Next year the target is 4.4 per cent. It is easy to say - as he did - “I do not intend to make social cuts.” Mr Rajoy faces a dilemma over the coming months. To win votes he must seem moderate, but to gain respect from the markets and the European Union he must seem severe. For the moment, votes are what counts.

On the evening of 3 August *Puerta del Sol* looked like a ghost town. Until then *los indignados* had maintained a small, if ramshackle, presence in the *Puerta del Sol* in the form of the information centre and the few hard-core protesters who stayed to maintain it. On 2 August, however, the authorities had apparently decided they had had enough of that, too. Early that morning, the municipal and national governments jointly sent in police to clear the square of the handful of protesters asleep there and to dismantle the structures. By the afternoon, news of the police action had spread, and hundreds of protesters began to converge on *Puerta del Sol*. In an effort to keep the square free of them, police first began screening passers-by and eventually blocked their entry altogether. At 6 p.m. even access to subway and commuter trains at what is one of the biggest stations in the capital was closed.

In response, the protesters took to the streets, their numbers growing rapidly to several thousands as word of their march spread over *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Around midnight, they finally ended up in the *Plaza Mayor*, a historic square not far from the *Puerta del Sol*. There, as police helicopters circled noisily overhead, *los indignados* decided to make another attempt to return *en masse* to *Puerta del Sol*. It was met with police violence. And the reason for such drastic measures ? Benedict XVI was on the way, and as one of the protesters explained: “They want to clean the square before the Pope's visit.” Benedict XVI was due to arrive in Madrid in mid-August to celebrate World Youth Day. Many of the protesters, who had been blocked by riot police when they attempted to reach *Puerta del Sol*

on 3 August, began to chant slogans like “This isn't the Pope's Youth Day.” and “Fewer crucifixes, more stable work.”

Spain: “Fewer crucifixes, more stable work” - perhaps there is still hope.

* early August 2011.

Dr. Venturino Giorgio Venturini, formerly an *avvocato* at the Court of Appeal of Bologna, taught, administered, and advised on, law in four continents, ‘retiring’ in 1993 from Monash University. Author of eight books and about 100 articles and essays for learned periodicals and conferences, his latest work is *THE LAST GREAT CAUSE – Volunteers from Australia and Emilia-Romagna in defence of the Spanish Republic, 1936-1939* (Search Foundation, Sydney 2010). Since his ‘retirement’ Dr. Venturini has been a Senior Associate in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash; he is also an Adjunct Professor at the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University, Melbourne. george.venturini@arts.monash.edu.au