

GÉOPOLITIQUE

ISSN 0723-1691

REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF GEOPOLITICS



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GÉOPOLITIQUE

ISSN 0723-1691

REVUE DE L'INSTITUT INTERNATIONAL DE GÉOPOLITIQUE PRINTEMPS 1989

Spain and Latin America

The double challenge

Rhetoric? Political compromise? Hispanism? Improvisation? Personalism? State policies or individual policies? Good intentions? Calculated ambiguity or confirmed efficiency? Such questions are both easy and difficult to answer where Spain's policy towards Latin America is concerned. It is an area of contradictions and ambiguity where good intentions and policies limited to declarations have been a constant.

These apparently pessimistic remarks cannot be interpreted to mean that Spain lacks interest, and even less that it takes a negative attitude to the subject. However, analysis of Spain's relations with Latin America reveals that actual results of economic, cultural and technical cooperation fall far short of the objective possibilities of two countries or groups of countries having fruitful relations.

Right from the start, Franco's regime was distinguished by an ideological and hegemonic streak, Hispanism, which took the form of dual nationality treaties and the establishment of the "Fiesta de la Raza" and the Institute of Hispanic Culture with more than 30 branch offices set up in various Latin American countries. The offices were attached to the most conservative sectors of the countries in question. But, with one or two exceptions, this ideological outlook did not meet with the Latin American countries' support.

Later, Spain's industrial growth in the '60s helped to transform its political strategy into a "neo-Hispanism" aimed at developing a cultural community of elites and increasing trade. For

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example, according to Hills, 5,000 Latin American students were admitted to Spanish universities in 1959, and 12,000 in 1969. This represented a cost of \$92.5 million, "the equivalent, many times over, of the total assistance Spain has received since 1955". Spanish exports to Latin American countries also rose from \$501 million in 1959 to \$1.9 billion in 1969 and the percentage of trade between Spain and Latin America went up from 37 in 1960 to 215 in 1969.

The end of secular isolation

At the end of the Franco period in 1973, Spain also increased its investments, particularly long-term private investment, in Latin America. Though positive, such initiatives did not lead to good relations, for the authoritarian system prevailing in Spain was in sharp contrast to the trend in Latin America where many countries were moving towards democracy.

The period known as the "democratic transition" was marked by a determination to break with Spain's age-old isolation. It began in 1976, thanks largely to two figures — King Juan Carlos I and Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez Gonzalez. All the political

experts agreed that the king's visit to the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela in 1976 marked a new stage in relations between Spain and Latin America. It was during this visit that the Spanish prime minister publicly spelled out Spain's policy toward these countries. It was a policy emphasizing the defense of democratic values and human rights and asserting Spain's determination to join in regional and international bodies and cooperate at all levels.

The king has always been central to decisions concerning Spain's diplomatic relations with Latin American countries. That role has in fact been specifically assigned to him under the Spanish constitution's Article 56 which makes him the state's representative in international relations, "in particular with the nations of its historical community".

Adolfo Suarez pursued a progressive "left-wing" policy, at least symbolically: an official visit to Cuba in 1978; diplomatic relations resumed with Mexico after a 30-year break and a visit to the country in 1977; the Institute of Hispanic Culture turned into the Institute of Iberian-American Cooperation; Spain's joining CEPAL; and a special plan set up to aid Nicaragua. These were the main examples of the new thrust in Spanish policy and its altered image.

It was also during this time that financial and trade relations with Latin American countries went into higher gear. The amount of private Spanish capital placed in these countries on a long-term basis, including loans and investments, rose fourfold between 1975 and 1982 — from 13.3% to 36.4%.

The share of Spanish exports penetrating the Latin American market rose steadily from 1.6% in 1970 to 2.7% in 1982, with exports covering roughly 70% of imports between 1978 and 1982.

The percentage of effective cooperation reached 0.13% of the GDP — a figure which has never been exceeded — towards the end of Suarez's UCD (Union of Center Democrats) government. But such marked and positive progress did not mean that cooperation had acquired a substantial reality and had become sufficiently effective, for after staying at this level for some time, it declined under the next Socialist government.

With the formation of the PSOE government, Latin-American expectations of cooperating with Spain and its social-democratic policies rose to giddy heights. Though the new government was initially faithful in its political program towards Latin America to the lines broadly laid down by the "transition government", it pointed out that concrete solutions needed to be found to the problems of scientific, technical, social and cultural cooperation. Latin America was advised to drop the rhetoric and give democracy a decisive hand. And Spain saw the conflict in Central America as something which had to be analyzed as an offshoot of social and structural factors, not as an East-West issue.

But relations between Spain and Latin America were marked by growing disillusion. As Bodemer points out, Utopian socialism — especially in Central America — underwent a change, "forsaking socialist principles and giving priority to foreign policy".

Equally, Roitman has noted the conflicting and shifting attitude of the Socialist government, which treated relations with Latin America "rather superficially, particularly where social and political problems affecting that continent were concerned".

The government's desire to counter the old rhetoric in fact gave rise to a policy of "declarations" that were even more rhetorical still. Hispanism, which had now become the "Fifth centennial of the discovery of America", was glorified. An opportunity was there, which has yet to be seized, for uniting

parties in a new "encounter" which could have given rise to political, educative and cultural cooperation initiatives and the elaboration of scientific, technological and economic development programs. The "Fifth centennial" thus became a political weapon that cut both ways, and many people in Latin America rejected its outward appearance as nothing more than a "declaration and a celebration" devoid of any real substance or spirit of cooperation.

A tentacular superstructure

As Luis de Velasco points out, the problem of Latin America's foreign debt has caused a fall-off in the economic sphere, which has been still further aggravated by restrictions attendant on Spain's entry into the EEC. During the Socialist government's first two years, the export-to-import cover rate of all trade with Latin America fell by half, sliding from 70% in 1978-82 to 35.9% in 1983 and 37.4% in 1984.

Spain has, however, made a modest contribution towards narrowing the Latin American deficit, bearing in mind that its trade deficit with these countries was already \$1.182 billion in 1984. Spain's entry into the EEC, however, could have been expected to have had an influence on its imports and, in particular, to have modified the trend.

In November 1988, Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez began reorganizing, for the second time in two years, the administrative machinery of international cooperation. Changes made to the state secretariat for international cooperation and Iberian-American relations reduced the part played by Latin American countries in Spain's international cooperation program. The Institute of Iberian-American Cooperation seemed to have been devalued in certain respects, for it was now dependent on Spain's International Cooperation Agency, just like the Institute for Cooperation with the Arab World.

The "tentacular superstructure" of Spain's international cooperation administration is quite out of proportion to the low level and infrequent develop-

ment aid it provides. Official development aid (ODA) provided by Spain in 1970-71 was 0.02% of its GDP. At the outset of the 1975-76 democratic transition, it amounted to 0.04%. It rose to 0.13% in 1982.

The percentage dropped abruptly in 1983 — the first year of the Socialist government — and rose to 0.10% in 1985, only to decline again to 0.09% in 1986. The OECD report on development cooperation published in December speaks for itself: the volume of ODA in terms of GDP fell to 0.06% in 1987. The decrease, noted the report, took place despite major budgetary allocations and a reorganization of the Spanish development aid administration. It was prejudicial to the objectives set by the Spanish government which, in the broad lines of its development aid policy, had considered substantially increasing aid: 0.15% of the GDP in 1987 and 0.30% in 1990. But the report concluded that, in view of the results of recent years, Spain was highly unlikely to be able to attain the goal it had set for 1990.

When it comes to providing economic aid and technical assistance to Latin America, the Socialist government has on the whole stuck to a conventional format, sending out voluntary aid workers, distributing a few student grants and taking symbolic cultural measures. The Spaniards have copied some European cooperation plans but have not included in them the more innovative aspects.

This analysis of a few significant facts should not be read as critical of government policy, which has in fact scored some real successes. They are, however, fairly isolated and bound up with economic conditions as a result of inadequate planning and policy and institutional definitions.

The will to carry through an effective policy of multiple-level relations with Latin America has generally faltered through lack of experience and the absence of a combined effort on the part of Spain's social and political forces.

In addition to cultural affinities, a shared language and roughly similar levels of economic and technological development, there has recently been a convergence in political development,

facilitated by the advent of democracy in Spain. The lack of information and research, however, combined with the difficulties involved in implementing new policies, have had the effect of undermining Spain's relations with Latin America.

While Spain's integration with the EEC leaves some hope for a reinforcement of the Community's flimsy ties with Latin America, it is also potentially a negative factor: for it could act as a brake on bilateral relations, particularly

where trade and economic relations are concerned. Spain is thus faced with a twofold challenge:

- it must substantially modify its social, technical and cultural cooperation models and promote more innovative and effective ones in its relations with these countries;

- it must cooperate with other European governments in forging a policy that will allow root-and-branch changes to be made in Community relations with Latin America.

Certain interests in Europe are likely to favor a major opening of this kind, which would need to consist of a program of cooperation with Latin America that answered not only to trade needs but to financial and industrial ones as well. It would have to be geared to these countries' development levels and related to their obvious cultural and political identification with Western values.

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