

How Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Nobel Laureate Camilo Jose Cela Collaborated with Spain's Fascist Regime

They Worked for Franco

By VICENTE NAVARRO

One of the most notorious events of the post Cold War period in Europe has been the deafening silence that has existed in Europe and in Spain concerning the enormous repression by the Franco fascist regime against the democratic forces during the period 1939-1978. Franco led a military coup in 1936, overthrowing a highly popular democratic government. The popular resistance to that coup was so strong that it took three years of a bloody war and repressions by the Franco fascist forces to succeed, even though it had the active military assistance of Hitler and Mussolini. The Spanish Army, with the support of the Spanish Catholic Church (and the Vatican), the bankers (the major banking institution, the Juan March Bank, founder of the largest foundation of Spain, similar in its influence in Spain to the Rockefeller Foundation in the U.S., funded the military coup), the large land owners, and the industrialists, defeated an elected government that had introduced a public school system (which antagonized the Church, who controlled the school system previously), the social security system (which was opposed by the banks), land reform (which affected the land owned by the much hated terratenientes), and the reduction of the size of the Army (whose major forces were in the Spanish colonies carrying out imperialist wars). This predictable cast of characters rose against that popular government, and with the support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and with what until now was believed to be the passive neutrality of the western democracies (only the Soviet Union supported the democratically elected government), Franco won, initiating one of the most brutal repressions in Western Europe during the XX Century. In the period of 1939-1945 alone, 200,000 people were assassinated for political reasons, assassinations that continued during the whole period of 1939-1975, until the year of Franco's death, 1975.

What has been remarkable in the history of Europe is the deafening silence (with very few exceptions) that has followed these events, a silence that continued even when the socialist party (PSOE) governed Spain from 1982 to 1996. Jorge Semprun, one of the best known Spanish writers, who had written extensively about Nazi concentration camps and about the Spanish civil war, remained silent while serving as Minister of Culture of the Spanish Socialist government, failing to use his considerable influence to denounce or reverse that silence. Judge Baltasar Garzon, who is paraded internationally as a great defender of human rights because of his attempt to take the Chilean dictator Pinochet to the Spanish courts to account for those Spaniards who were killed and whose bodies had disappeared, has remained remarkably silent about the 30,000 desaparecidos during the Franco

dictatorship. Not one judge certainly not Garzon has instructed the Spanish authorities to find those bodies or has threatened to take to court those responsible (many of them are still alive and occupy major positions in the current Public Administration) for these political assassinations. One of those people is Fraga Iribarne, who was Minister of the Interior of the Franco's regime and head of the Spanish Gestapo (the much hated political police) and who supported the death sentence of one of the major leaders of the pro-democratic forces, Julian Grimau. Fraga is the Honorary President of the Popular Party which governed Spain from 1996 to 2004, under Aznar, Bush's best friend in continental Europe.

Only recently has there been some movement by the newly established Spanish Socialist Government for breaking this silence. Still, the Socialist new Government is very afraid not to offend the Armed Forces who played the key role in the military coup of 1936. When the new government wanted, for example, to pay homage to the Spanish Republican troops who fought in the liberation of Paris, France, the Spanish Armed Forces pushed to also honor the Fascist Spanish troops the Blue Division that fought side-by-side with the Nazi troops in Russia. The Spanish Socialist government accepted the Army's proposal, creating a global uproar among the democratic forces. On the National Day (12 October), the Government honored both.

The Socialist Spanish government, however, has authorized the opening of police files, and surprising facts have subsequently been uncovered. One is that the winner of the Spanish Nobel Prize of Literature, Camilo Jose Cela, great friend of the current Monarch of Spain, was a spy working for the Spanish Gestapo. According to a new book, *Dissidence and Suppression*, published by Pere Ysas, Professor of History of the autonomous University of Barcelona, Cela infiltrated the pro-democracy Writers Association, reporting its activities to Fraga Iribarne. For example, he passed information to the Spanish Gestapo about the writers who signed protest letters during Franco's savage repression against the coal miners' illegal strikes (in Franco's Spain all strikes were illegal), and advised the fascist regime on how best to repress those expressions of protest, including the payment of large amounts of money to "weak dissidents" that could be bought by the fascist regime. Among these weak dissidents was the well-known writer, Lain Entralgo, who was later named by the Franco regime President of the Spanish Royal Academy.

But it is not only Spanish files that are being opened. National Archives files in Washington, D.C. have been opened as well, and some of these files have shown (as Carl Geiser has documented) how major corporations from the U.S. helped Franco win the war with assistance given by Cordell Hull, the U.S. Secretary of State during the Franklin Roosevelt Administration. To be fair to Roosevelt, he supported lifting the ban that prevented the Republicans from obtaining military equipment. Nonetheless, his Secretary of State, a Catholic, facilitated the delivery of 12,000 military trucks to Franco, as funded by Ford, General Motors, and Studebaker, military deliveries far more substantial than the those provided by Hitler and Mussolini put together (3,000). Those deliveries have not been known until now and certainly were not known in the U.S. at that time, when 76% of those in the U.S. who had an opinion about the Spanish civil war indicated their support for the Republican side. Franco won the war on April 1st 1939, five months before World War II began. The cost of this war was 50 million deaths. In 1946 Cordell Hull received the Nobel Prize (similar to Cela, another Nobel recipient). We know now that Hull actually assisted Franco in winning his war, the prologue to World War II.

Vicente Navarro is Professor of Public Policy at Johns Hopkins University, USA and Pompeu Fabra University, Spain. Navarro contributed an essay on Salvador Dali's

fascist ties for CounterPunch's collection on art, culture and politics: [Serpents in the Garden](#). He can be reached at: navarro@counterpunch.org