The paradox of Spain: a student's view

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"Spain is different" the travel
posters read. After living five
months in the midst of this
paradoxical country I could not
agree more.

Spain is a charming country
for the American visitor. One
can still attend exciting bull-
fights, directly indicative of the
Spanish character. One can still
visit picturesque pueblos whose
people live in the same way as
they have for hundreds of
years. One can still meet
An-
dalusian noblemen who main-
tain the same lands and the
same breed of bulls as did their
forefathers in the thirteenth
century. One can still have his
breakfast brought to him in bed
every morning by one of the
servants of his upper class
family.

But the American visitor who
lives in Spain senses the parado-
cox of its differentness. He
realizes that this country, al-
though attached to the Western
European continent, is just be-
ginning to evolve from its Medi-
 eval social, political, and eco-
nomic structure. To what does
Spain owe this tardiness? Per-
haps one could trace the pheno-
mena back to Ferdinand and
Isabel who sacrificed the Jew-
ish bankers, the potential bour-
geois, for religious and thus
political unity.

Franco Regime

At present, one must keep in
mind Spain's Civil War twenty
years ago. At this time, the
people's attempt for a republic
(completely doing away with
its deteriorated monarchy) fell
into the hands of General Fran-
cisco Franco. Since then Spain's
government has been a modified
police state. General Franco's
form of fascism not only has
isolated the country from the
rest of Europe for twenty years,
but has managed to stagnate the
social, economic, and intel-
lectual development of the
country.

About six years ago the
Franco regime began to mani-
fest concern for the critical
position of the country. Franco
realized that Spain, as a penin-
sula isolated economically from
a progressive Europe, was headed
for economic suicide in elimi-
nation from the Common Mar-
ket. Spain started to open up.
One senses the presence of new
industries in Spain. One senses
the yearning of the younger
generation to be like their
neighbors as British, French,
and Italian styles, singers, and
trends set the pace for the new
set.

Economic Problems

One also senses the gaps that
must be filled before Spain
catches up with her neighbors.
Although the national GNP in-
creased last year at a rate be-
tween 7 and 8 per cent, Spain's
economy is still drastically un-
balanced. One passes through
deserted pueblos on the Castil-
lian plain; their people have
left the agrarian life for the

city or for higher-paid work
outside Spain (nearly 250,000
flee yearly). This is not sur-
prising, since the average coun-
try dweller earns only $100 an-
nually. Spain must import the
bulk of its food, thus assuring
a rising inflation. The price of
living rose 12% last year. Spain
is maintaining a balance in its
lopsided economy only through
tourism, a very unstable factor.

Even though the government
is wrestling with Spain's eco-
nomic problems, the very pre-

cence of this government grates
on one accustomed to the rela-
tive freedom of the United
States. I still find it hard to
believe that my Spanish friends
tell me to cut our political
talks when we walk into a pub-
lic place or even get into a
taxi.

U. S. Support

The Spanish press is very
hard to face everyday, for one
gets a very different impres-

sion of the world from reading
the New York Times. I must
admit I tire of seeing reviews
of horseshows and Franco's
granddaughter's birth day
parties carrying the title of
Newsreels. The Spanish univer-
sity seems to have served Fran-
co in giving the aristocracy and
middle class a technical training
so that they will maintain the
status quo. The Spanish mind

has been so well subdued in-
tellectual that little of intelle-
tual interest ever touches the
average man.

And yet the United States
government has been Franco's
principle economic and military
support. We have taken the
position that by supporting
Franco's government economic-
ally we can maintain the NATO
bases there and at the same
time Spain will gradually be-
come strong enough to emerge
from its present-day bureau-
cratic police state. To be sure,
there is not sufficient enmity
among the people to resist the
Franco regime nor the moder-
ation of this regime which ap-
ppears will take over after the
Generalsimo's death. I keep
asking myself, however, exactly
how much appreciation for a
more democratic system of gov-
ernment our unquestioning sup-
port demonstrates.

Land of Paradox

These are some of the para-
doxes which have bothered me
during my stay in Spain. Mean-
while I continue to live one of
the most pleasurable years of
my life. I am enthralled with the
proud but warm Spanish people
and their appreciation for living
amazes me. American as I am,
I hate to see the Spaniard lose
his relaxed pace of living, eat-
ing, and drinking to the fast
pace of the tension ridden West.