

GENERALISSIMO FRANCO

The death of Generalissimo Francisco Franco removes from the world scene a dictator who wielded power without interruption for over 35 years in Spain. Hailing from humble origin, Franco joined the infantry and, by sheer efficiency, rose to higher ranks in a short while. He achieved national prominence when he quelled the miners' revolt in 1934 with unprecedented harshness and severity. When Spain was plunged in a civil war, in which "volunteers" from democratic and fascist countries freely participated, Franco emerged as the master of a desolate Spain. It may be recalled that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru gave his strongest support to the republican forces and the Congress Working Committee passed resolutions supporting the liberal forces in Spain. The British Labour party sent a number of volunteers to fight on the side of the Republicans. After assuming control, Franco let loose on the country ruthless repression and mass massacre, which shocked the civilized world. Trade unions



and student movements were suppressed with severity and brutality. Sporadic outbursts in favour of freedom of the individual and expression were nipped in the bud. The utter indifference with which the appeals for clemency from European States in favour of nationalists condemned to death for killing some policemen were treated is still fresh in our memory. So bitter was the European reaction to Franco that Spain could not get admission into the European Economic Community or the NATO.

Franco played his cards with subtlety when World War II broke out. He promptly declared

his neutrality in spite of the great help rendered by Germany and Italy during the civil war. Nevertheless, he maintained cordial relations with Hitler when he was at his door after the fall of France. In spite of his black record in the suppression of human rights, Franco pulled up the economy of Spain and improved the conditions of life almost to the level of other European countries. The extraordinary recovery that Spain made during the last 30 years is, in no small measure due to the direction that Franco gave. Spain did not stick to its colonial possessions, realizing the utter futility of fighting against the spirit of the times. After the U.N. had adopted the famous charter on decolonization in 1960, Spain did little to stick to her possessions and yielded them without fight. It is true that Spain could not have afforded the costly luxury of campaigns against freedom movements, but few realize the truth in time. When history records the death of Generalissimo Francisco Franco, it will also throw on him a few flowers along with the stones cast at him.


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