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The Crumbling of Francoist Spain's Isolationism Thanks to Foreign Currency Brought by European Tourists in the Early Years of the Golden Age

Joan Carles Cirer-Costa

ABSTRACT

The 'Golden Age' refers to an era of rapid economic growth which led to dramatic changes within European society. The steady rise in income coupled with recently introduced paid holidays encouraged the new middle classes to emulate the lifestyle of the glamorous and privileged trendsetters of the Belle Époque and the 1920s. The outward trappings of this included the purchase of a car and annual holidays in the Mediterranean, amounting in the 1950s to a sort of yearly pilgrimage. In the Balearic Islands and the Costa Brava an ample tourist sector flourished against a political background that was essentially in opposition to it – the autarchic stage of the Franco regime. Tourism, in the end, became one of the determining factors which provoked radical changes to this regime, leading eventually to complete abandonment of its militant isolationism.

Keywords: Golden Age, late development, tourism, Spain, francoism, autarchic period, social change.

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1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 1950s Western Europe as a whole witnessed a period of rapid growth, a veritable Golden Age, while Spain languished in a particularly deep economic depression, so severe that the years immediately preceding are recalled in most parts of the country as the 'Years of Hunger' (Arco 2006). As will be seen, inbound tourism proved crucial to launching the Spanish recovery in a twofold manner. In the first place, it served as a link between Europe's thriving economies and Spain's moribund one; throughout this decade tourist spending became an invaluable source of foreign currency for the nation. Secondly, the sheer number of tourists overwhelmed the capacity of Franco's regime to deal with them, creating serious ideological contradictions and also helping to disrupt and dismantle the fragile economic structure on which the new state was attempting to base itself.

The present work is, therefore, dual in a double sense. At the geographical level we shall examine a market whose demand lay in Western Europe, above all France, followed by the United Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries and Germany, while the supply lay in Francoist Spain. There is, however, another duality in our analysis, as we will be looking simultaneously at economic development and tourism. The latter is more complex, while the first – European and Spanish economic development in the 1950s – has produced a vast literature among historians. Tourism, by contrast, has barely been addressed.

Beside the data contained in this article, we shall be presenting several new factors which help explain the progress of the Spanish economy during those vital early years of spectacular economic growth, which culminated in Spain's entrance into the European Union. We shall also be examining the origins and early development of an industry that ended up becoming the leading sector in the national economy. Spain is

now by far the leader of the Mediterranean tourist market, with five Spanish hotel companies currently among the fifty largest in the world.¹

With regard to Europe, our analysis of visitors coming to Spain will help to show how tourism evolved between the 1930s and the 1950s, developing from an exclusive activity reserved for the privileged few into a true mass phenomenon enjoyed by the new middle classes, who converted their annual Mediterranean holiday into a veritable social hallmark.

2. THE UPSURGE OF TOURISM AS AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

While the Industrial Revolution changed methods of production and created new social groupings such as entrepreneurial mill-owners and workers, it also caused changes in the privileged echelons of society who stood outside the new economic framework, but still received a substantial portion of the additional income it generated. No one has described the new state of affairs better than Schumpeter:

“The king, the court, the army, the church and the bureaucracy lived to an increasing extent on revenue created by the capitalist process, even purely feudal sources of income being swelled in consequence of contemporaneous capitalist developments.” (Schumpeter 2003: 136).

These privileged individuals, mostly members of the aristocracy and not involved in economic activity of any kind, found tourism to be the perfect leisure pursuit to display their elevated social rank. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, as trains and steamers improved steadily and transport networks expanded and were linked to one another, the journey abroad became a comfortable and regular activity (Böröcz, 1992:712). It was eagerly pursued by the British upper classes who, by the end of the century, had already become the “travelling classes” (Pemble 1988: 1).

The holiday format for this privileged minority changed over time, initially based around indoor hot-water spas and bathing resorts by chilly seas. As the twentieth century progressed, however, scientific advances undermined medical beliefs on which these traditional holiday centres had been set up, favouring instead direct exposure of

¹ According to rankings compiled by *Hotels* magazine in 2014, five Spanish companies featured among the 50 largest hotel companies in the world. These were *Meliá*, *NH*, *Riu*, *Barceló* and *Iberostar*, all of them Majorcan except the second, based in Madrid.

the body to the sun (Hunt et al. 2012; Kevan 1993; Tubergen and Linden 2002). Thanks to this paradigm shift in medical and social practice, the period between the wars saw the Mediterranean beach enshrined as the new object of desire for European tourists.

As occurs with any emerging market, increasing demand saw a rise in provision, and thus a whole new business sector appeared. In the United Kingdom Thomas Cook was the pioneer who sold the first all-inclusive tourist packages (Simmons 1973), while in Belgium the *Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits* was born, and in Germany *Baedeker* began to publish his tourist guides. The receiving countries were mainly Switzerland, France and Italy, and in all three a wide-ranging hotel industry was established whose infrastructure necessitated substantial investment.

The processes of social diffusion quickly spread the taste for leisure travel far and wide, first from Great Britain to the other ruling classes in Europe, then to the emerging middle classes, and finally in the 1930s to skilled workers in Britain and France (Furlough 1998; Pope 2001; Walton 1981; 2011). Shortly before the outbreak of the World War II paid annual holidays began to be established legally, although the process was not consolidated as a right for all employees until after the War (Cross 1989; Hubermann and Minns 2007). In 1950, workers in France and Germany already enjoyed an average of four weeks' annual leave, which was slightly less in the case of Great Britain (Jones 1986: 332).

At first Spain stood on the periphery of these social trends, appearing timidly in the European tourist firmament only at the very end of the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by the late publication of the original Baedeker guide to Spain and Portugal (1898). At that period only the city of Malaga attracted a considerable number of foreign visitors – the sick and infirm fleeing wet British winters and travellers seduced by the Orientalist myth of the Spanish south, disseminated by authors like Washington Irving and Prosper Mérimée (Barke, Mowl and Shields 2010). To the Andalusian city was soon added Palma de Mallorca, where the period 1900–1910 saw the construction of several distinguished hotels which aspired to compete with Nice; this initiative did not meet with the hoped-for success, but the new-born tourist sector on Majorca managed to survive by redirecting its commercial energies to the middle (as opposed to luxury) sector of the tourist market (Cirer 2012).

During the 1920s new hotels with international tourism in mind rose in both Malaga and Palma de Mallorca, but the onset of the Great Depression and the declaration of the

Second Republic in 1931 drastically reduced the volume of tourists arriving in the Iberian peninsula. Only in the Balearic Islands did the situation improve, but it was much more than that – between 1930 and 1935 the archipelago enjoyed a massive tourist boom. In just five years the number of hotels in Majorca grew from 88 to 135, while tourist numbers doubled, reaching 40,000 per year (Cirer 2014). Majorca's tourist surge spilled over to the island of Ibiza, where 1933 saw the opening of hotels directed at foreign tourists – and even to Formentera.

In the previous paragraphs we have referred solely to international tourism, but in Spain there were also flows of domestic tourism, in this case, with their epicentre on the Cantabrian coastline. San Sebastián had begun its tourist development in the mid-nineteenth century and within a short time had set its sights on becoming the holiday capital of Spain. It was followed by the nearby city of Santander, thanks to the pioneering initiative of the Pombo family, who furnished the city with its first top-class hotels and in the early twentieth century succeeded in bringing Spain's royal family to its beaches at El Sardinero (Walton and Smith 1994: 27). For both cities the clientele came essentially from Madrid, but San Sebastian alone managed to attract a small quota of foreign tourists (Shelmerdine 2003: 73). Within Spain's domestic market, the second most important source of tourists was the city of Barcelona, whose wealthiest residents could afford to build second homes on the Costa Brava or at Sitges south of Barcelona, while the new middle classes generally opted for the nearby island of Majorca (Farreras 1973; Priestley 1984).

3. THE 'GOLDEN AGE' AND SPAIN'S AUTRACHIC PERIOD

The first key concept to be considered is the 'Golden Age' itself, a period whose initial phase is linked to the reconstruction that followed on from the disaster of World War II, with some countries reaching particularly high levels of growth (Crafts and Mills 1996: 425; Vonyó 2008: 235). Thanks to this phenomenon, GDP per capita enjoyed continual growth throughout the period. Between 1950 and 1959 it attained an annual average of 3.4% in real terms, and in France and Germany reached the extraordinary annual average of 7.1%. Great Britain grew more modestly, at 1.9% per annum, but as it started out from a stronger position it still maintained economic leadership among these three

nations, retaining a high capacity for sending tourists abroad (Crafts 1995: 435; Maddison 2003). Of particular concern to us is data relating to wages and salaries, which in real terms, did not rise quite as fast (Eichengreen and Vazquez 2000: 91-92; Toniolo 1998: 262). Despite this, two factors acted as accelerators of disposable income for the nascent European middle classes, offsetting the previously mentioned factor: the transfer of large numbers of agricultural workers to industry and services, where they received higher wages; and secondly, the steady increase in the proportion of skilled jobs.² The latter increase was particularly marked in France and Germany and, to a lesser extent, Sweden.

When we turn to Spain, the economic policy of the Franco regime in its early years was characterized by two basic elements: suffocating interventionism and strict isolationism. As soon as the new regime came to power, it began introducing detailed regulations that conferred enormous discretionary power on the state bureaucracy, creating extensive de facto monopolies which relegated the market to a minor, supplementary position (Arco 2006: 245; García 1985: 136; Prados, Rosés and Sanz. 2011: 46; Viñas 1980: 89). Isolationism was not so much a chosen economic policy as a much deeper ideological obsession. During this era all contact with the outside world was considered unpatriotic, and everything beyond Spain's borders was identified with a general unspecified 'enemy' (Sanchís 2015: 260; Viñas 1980: 65). The new regime sought to control all aspects of daily life, managing the economy directly and isolating the country from the 'contaminating' outside world, a goal which culminated in the formation of an entity which strove to unite all state activities within the industrial sector. Its original name leaves no room for doubt about its underlying aims: *El Instituto Nacional de la Autarquía* – the National Institute of Autarchy.³

The end result of this new policy was disastrous, sending the country into a deep depression unrelieved by the conclusion of World War II (Sánchez 2010: 339). With its GDP per capita falling sharply, the downward trajectory of Spain's economy stood in marked contrast to the upward path of its neighbours (Maluquer 2009: 38-39; Pons and Tirado 2002: 18). Moreover, the drop in income, was not spread evenly among the

² The movement of labour away from the agricultural sector at a European level has been analysed by Temin, (2002: 11). The rise in qualifications of French workers is highlighted by Anderson, (2001: 104).

³ 1941 saw the establishment of the Instituto Nacional de Industria, designed to be the keystone of the new state's economic policy. In fact, this name was the result of a last-minute change, as its original label was 'Instituto Nacional de la Autarquía' (Gómez 2000: 28).

various sectors of society, but fell most severely on wage earners, who in many industries ended up with just 50% of their relative earnings prior to the Civil War (Vilar 2004: 110). By contrast, the income of those with capital assets, land above all, rose substantially (Prados and Rosés 2009: 19).

This economic situation started to improve slowly in 1950 when the regime found itself forced to rethink this isolationism, gradually gaining access to a more comfortable international position. The changes, however, were very slow up to 1959, when the Stabilization Plan was implemented. 1960 is the year in which Spain truly ceased to be a closed country, and set itself firmly on the road to economic growth (Sachs and Warner 1995: 25).

It is common to point to three factors from 1960 on which helped Spain obtain the foreign exchange necessary to underwrite its accelerating economic growth: tourism, emigration and investment from abroad. Each of these had to overcome a range of political and legislative obstacles before becoming a factor in the national balance of payments. To begin with, thanks to the regime's ingrained nationalism, it is hardly surprising that the Francoist authorities were bitterly opposed to emigration. Blocked at every turn, not until the 1960s were legal changes made to facilitate this (Fernández 2005: 96). As for foreign investment, a severely restricting law was passed in 1939 which led many foreign companies to abandon the Spanish market altogether, while also discouraging new investment (Álvaro 2011: 362). The relevant legislation was not modified until 1959. As a result, tourism was the only factor among the three previously mentioned to make significant contributions to the external financing of Spanish economic development prior to 1959. In addition, it continued to be the main element in the decade that followed, contributing 50% more foreign currency between 1960 and 1970 than the other two sources combined (Sánchez 2006: 173).

4. A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT FOR TOURISM

With the end of the Civil War, Spanish tourism faced a particularly bleak scenario as it attempted to revive itself. But not only did World War II break out just a few months later, from the very outset the new regime manifested a special animosity towards the tourist industry. Franco himself, during his time as Military Commander of the Balearic

Islands between February 1933 and October 1934, had made his abiding distrust of foreigners quite clear. Back then he had instigated legislation which more or less implied that all tourists were little more than potential spies who should be strictly controlled and monitored, totally ignoring any economic benefit their presence might bring (Cirer 2009: 109).

The Catholic Church, the regime's fundamental pillar from the very outset, had already expressed its determined and explicit opposition to new habits and customs filtering into Spain which affected the dress and behaviour of Spanish women, especially in their leisure hours.⁴ In 1926 this subject led to the publication of one of the few pastoral letters issued by Spain's archbishops back then, in which the impact of 'modern trends' from abroad, and from France above all, was roundly lambasted. Later on, during the years of the Second Republic, continuous complaints were made at every level of the ecclesiastical hierarchy about perceived nakedness on Spanish beaches and the tolerance shown towards this by the civil authorities (Lannon 1999: 65). In other words, one of the most important institutions of the Franco regime had long declared its own private war on one of the most common manifestations of the new leisure tourism: enjoying the sun at the beach.

As if that were not enough, the Falange, another of Francoism's main buttresses in its early years, joined the anti-tourist crusade which seems to have constituted a key element in the new state's moral ideology. Thus a Navarre newspaper proclaimed in September 1936:

"Tourism must be replaced by the sacred military journey. The Falange will strictly prohibit, under severe penalties, tourism per se. Instead Spaniards will undertake journeys, resolved to conquer in a heroic (epic) manner. Sacred journeys, praying in Flanders, praying in Italy, praying in Germany. Military trips, fighting in France: the South against the North."⁵

As events show, these declarations of intent did not remain mere rhetoric, and were soon inspiring the legislation which emanated from the new state. Within a short time the focus of the authorities and law-enforcing bodies was on 're-Christianizing Spain', an ideal that required its isolation from all sources of outside moral contamination

⁴ "Reparation was made to the Sacred Heart to atone for the offences offered to God by the world and, in the early twentieth century, these were strongly associated with immodesty and licentiousness" (Vincent 2009: 243).

⁵ Text by García Serrano which appeared in the journal *Arriba España*, Pamplona, on 24 September, 1936. This quote has been extracted from Estivill (1979: 177).

(Sánchez 1999: 167). In applying these new criteria strict police control was implemented on all foreigners who wished to travel through Spanish territory, assuming the form of ponderous and expensive bureaucratic procedures including a visa of previous entry with points of entry and exit, and the “trptych” (*tríptico*), a document in which all the tourist’s movements had to be recorded.⁶ This meticulous control extended to the hotel sector, which found itself obliged to fill out expensive and useless cards for police purposes (Fernández 1991: 472).

Having once established its undisputed power in moral matters, the Church directed its efforts towards the repression of any vaguely sexual behaviour which lacked as its sole purpose procreation within Catholic marriage (Regueillet 2004: 1030). In line with this, a strict segregation of the sexes was imposed in public places, especially at beaches and swimming pools where, in addition, it was mandatory to use a bathrobe when entering and leaving the water, as well as a beach hut for changing in and out of swimwear (Iglesias 2008: 1357; Grup d’Estudi 2000). Classic examples of the fervour and missionary zeal surrounding such regulations are the ‘National Congress of Morality in Beaches and Pools’ (1951) and the ‘Association of the National Crusade for Decency’ (est. 1954), while the ‘Congress of the Spanish Family’ was still pressing in 1958 to maintain segregated and strictly supervised beaches (Sánchez 2007: 212).

So far we have looked briefly at ideological and moral issues, but three economic factors also deserve a mention, since they held back tourism in Spain and were a direct result of the Franco regime’s economic policy: the exchange rate, militant industrialism and all-pervading interventionism. Routine overvaluation of the Spanish currency became a governmental obsession, with every possible method being used to maintain this policy, resulting in a marked increase in the cost of travel to Spain (Prados et al. 2011: 52). Between 1940 and 1948, the official peseta/dollar exchange rate was 11–13 pesetas to the dollar, climbing to 25 pesetas/dollar in 1949, and reaching 40 pesetas/dollar by 1951. The latter value underwent minor devaluation up until 1958, when it stood at 44 pesetas/dollar (Martínez 2003: 57).

After the Spanish Civil War the Francoist state adopted a profoundly interventionist economic model which blurred the distinction between national economics and private

⁶ The ‘trptych’ was a complicated and difficult document to fill in, which ceased to be required in 1952, except for tourists entering Spain in their own vehicles; in the latter case it remained in force until 1961 (Vallejo 2014: 20).

businesses (García 1985: 142; Prados et al. 2011: 49). The position occupied by each economic sector in the regime's mental framework had lasting consequences, as leading companies according to this vision were assured of ready access to whatever might be necessary for their subsistence and maintenance, whether imports, raw materials or bank loans. As Fraile Balbín comments:

“Despite the all-embracing nature of this interventionism in every sphere – a pattern that has its parallel in another typical manifestation of state intervention, tariffs – interventionist rhetoric insisted from the outset on the vital importance of the industrial and mining sectors.” (Fraile 1998: 127).

Tourism, of course, was not one of the industries to enjoy protection under the new regime, barred from the sort of bank-based funding monopolized by companies and sectors under official protection, e.g. the steel industry and railways. Being excluded from the protected sector had its benefits, however, as it was accompanied by a lack of interest or control from those supervising the state economy, so that tourist companies were left to manage their meagre resources as they thought fit (Cals 1982; Hernández and Mancha 1980; Ramon 2001). Thanks to its very nature, tourism required no foreign currency to operate, nor did it signify dangerous concentrations of workers and quotas of precious raw materials. As a result, it was barely affected by the ‘limiting factor’ which underlay the economic policy of the first Franco years (García 1985: 142).

As might be expected, Francoist interventionism in its early years did have some impact on the hotel and catering industry. Regulations such as those of 1939 and 1944 controlled business operations in minute detail, identifying scores of categories of establishment and hundreds of different types of employees. Other regulations forbade business contracts between Spanish hoteliers and foreign travel agencies (Esteve and Fuentes 2000; Fernández 1991). But of all the Franco regime's interventionist measures, the most harmful was fixing maximum prices of hotel rooms, which failed utterly to take into account actual running costs.

5. TOURISM IN SPAIN IN THE 1950's: THE DATA

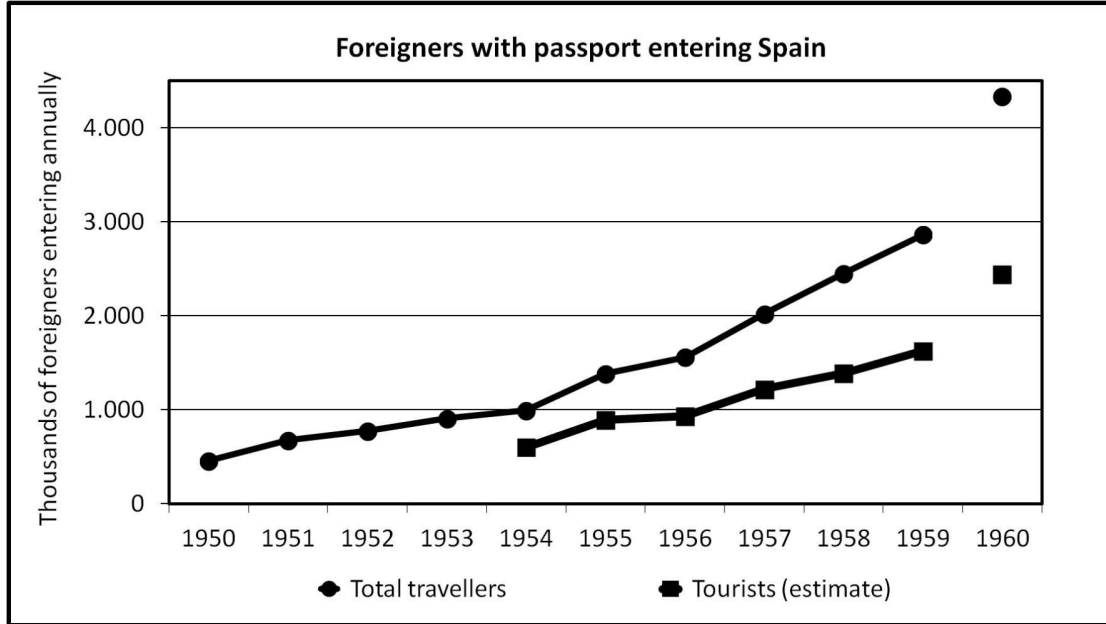
In this section we will examine the data provided by the Spanish Statistical Office (Instituto Nacional de Estadística or INE), to understand the pattern of tourism in Spain

during the 1950s. We begin our analysis in the year 1950, since that was when tourism returned to roughly the same level as 1935, the tourist influx being already very low that year as a result of the industry's steady decline during the Second Republic (1931–36). 1950 is also when the phenomenon of tourism began to be regularly reflected in the main statistical publication of that era, the INE's *Anuario Estadístico* (Statistical Yearbook), which allows the phenomenon to be assessed quantitatively. In graphs 1 to 4 we have summarized the main tourist data presented by the INE in its Yearbooks during the decade under question.

The first diagram shows the numbers of foreign travellers arriving at Spain's borders between 1950 and 1960, together with an estimate of the proportion of tourists, given as 58% on average⁷. The graph's gradient shows a rise we might call explosive: between 1950 and 1960 the number of foreigners crossing Spain's borders almost tenfolded, and within the general pattern three periods can be singled out. In the first, which covers 1950 to 1953, the average growth was 134,000 foreigners per year, while in the second, between 1954 and 1959, it rose to 374,000 per year. Finally between 1959 and 1960 the increase comes close to one and a half million foreigners in just one year. This final surge is a leap of extraordinary importance which marks the end of one epoch and the beginning of another – hence the decision to end our analysis in 1959.

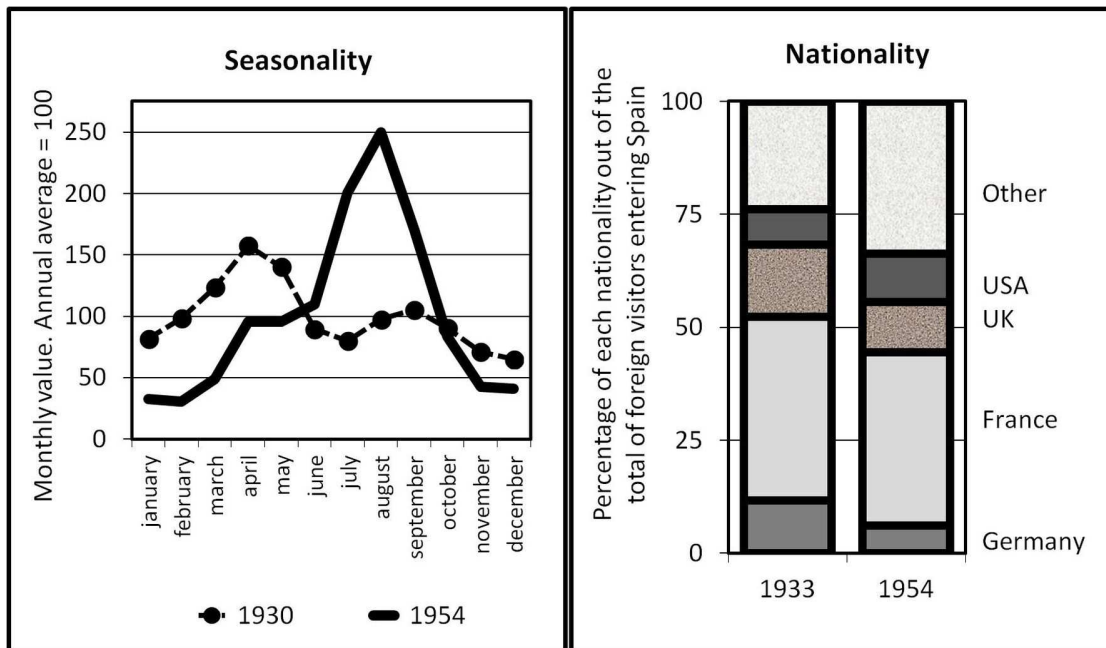
⁷ This estimate for distinguishing between tourists and non-tourists is based on seasonal patterns for entries into Spain. By nationality, the estimates show that 70% of British, Dutch and Swiss arrivals in Spain were tourists, dropping to 57% for French arrivals. We believe this method tends to underestimate the proportion of foreign tourists in the total, giving a minimum figure for the volume of tourists entering Spain through its frontiers.

FIGURE 1
TRAVELLERS ENTERING SPAIN, 1950-60



Source: Based on data from the *Anuarios* of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1953-62

FIGURE 2:
DISTRIBUTION OF TRAVELLERS ENTERING SPAIN
BY SEASONALITY AND NATIONALITY.



Source: based on data from the *Anuarios* of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1931, 1934 and 1955.

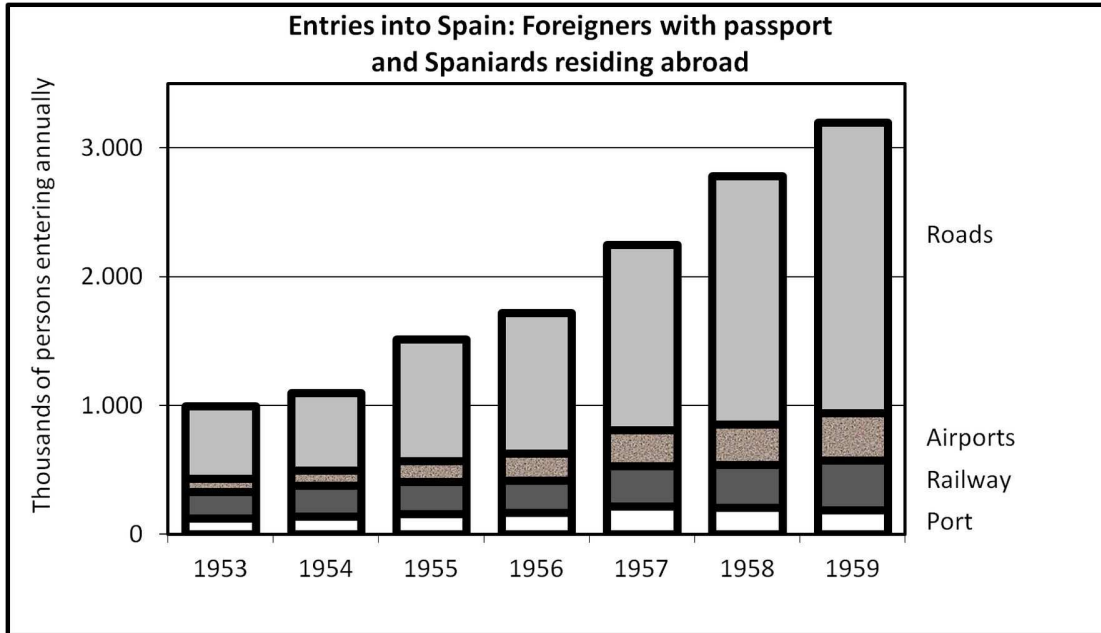
The timeframe of tourism shows a temporal growth which neatly matches the political evolution of Francoism in its early stages. As already mentioned, 1950 was the year in which tourism broke out of the marginal position it had occupied since the beginning of the Civil War, but it also coincides with the Franco regime positioning itself timidly on the international stage: ambassadors were returned to Western nations, traffic was resumed on the French border, and the first foreign currency loans were obtained (Torre 2011: 188). This allowed the regime to greatly reduce customs procedures, eliminate bureaucratic obstacles for internal travel, and substantially improve the exchange rate of the peseta for tourists. As a result, visitor numbers began to grow steadily.

1953 is the year in which the dictatorship reached a reasonably comfortable position abroad, due to signed agreements with the United States and to the Concordat with the Holy See (Viñas 1980: 80; 2003: 84). The new political situation led to a rapid increase in tourist entries into Spain, as seen in Figure 1, i.e. from 1954 onwards. Finally, the abrupt tourist surge between 1959 and 1960 coincides with the Stabilization Plan, which brought a drastic devaluation of the peseta, Spain's return to the international markets and the official end of the extreme autarchic policies.

In Figure 2 we compare the final set of tourist data available for the pre-Civil War period and the earliest comparable set for the 1950s. With regard to nationality, it is worth underlining the drop in German and rise in North American tourism. The French maintain a clear leadership, followed by the British with numbers similar to twenty years earlier. Turning to seasonality, there is a radical turnabout, as can be seen in the second part of Figure 2. March, April and May had received the majority of tourists in 1930, but these months now switched to being low season, with July and August the new boom months in 1954. This altered pattern provides clear evidence of entirely new interests for the visitors now streaming into Spain.

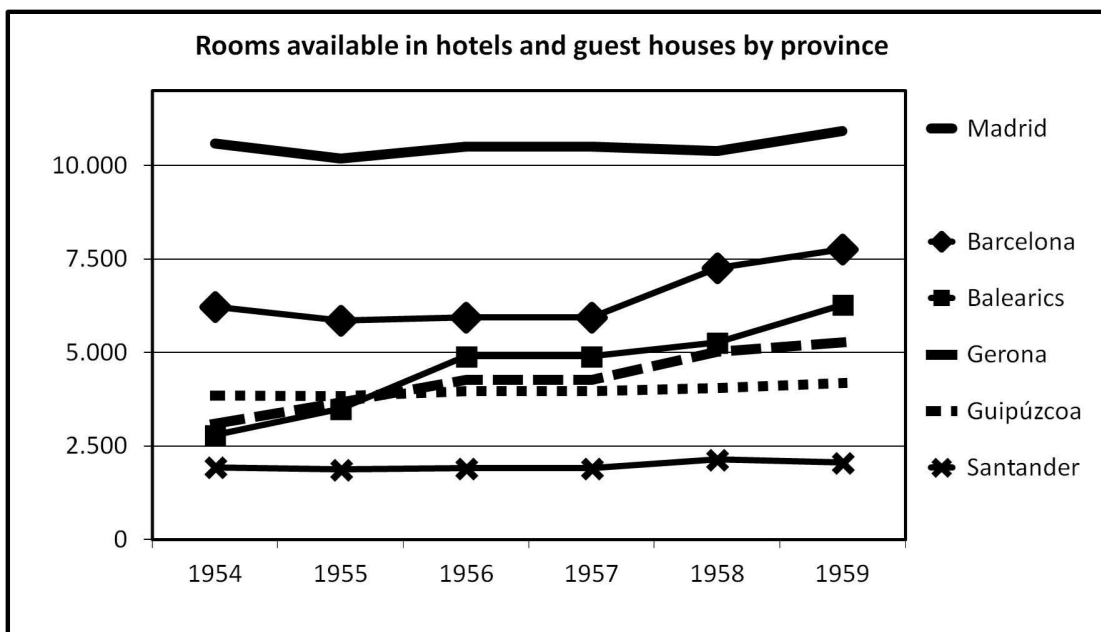
In the 1930s, foreign visitors headed for the most part to the south in order to visit the cities of Granada, Malaga, Cordoba and Seville, drawn there by the various Orientalist myths; they either crossed Spain by rail from north to south, or else travelled by boat to the ports of Gibraltar or Malaga, doing so in the spring or autumn, only rarely in summer (Alonso 2009; López 2001; Valero 1991). Twenty years later visitors of this type still existed, but their presence was now diluted by the avalanche of avid sun and beach tourists arriving in the warmer months of the year.

FIGURE 3
 DISTRIBUTION OF TRAVELLERS ENTERING SPAIN
 ACCORDING TO METHOD OF TRANSPORT.



Source: Based on data from the *Anuarios* of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1954–60.

FIGURE 4
 PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ACCOMMODATION
 IN HOTELS AND GUEST HOUSES (PENSIONS).



Source: Based on data from the *Anuarios* of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1955–60.

The method of transport used by visitors (Figure 3) helps to confirm the previous point, namely that tourists in the 1950s were very different from those who had come in the 1930s, the disparity increasing steadily over time. In 1953, visitors arriving by road were already more than half of the total number, a figure which had risen to 70% by 1959. Passengers arriving by boat and by train, clearly a majority in 1935, only grew by 75% over those six years, while arrival at airports grew by 365%, and those crossing the border by car or bus rose by a factor of four. It should be said, however, that tourists arriving by boat increased more in quality than quantity, since the majority were Americans on cruise ships with very high purchasing power. It is estimated that in 1955 about 115,000 American passengers used this route of entry (Cerchiello 2013: 160).

The data presented above clearly show that tourist demand underwent remarkable growth between 1954 and 1959, which must have put tremendous pressure on the provision of accommodation. The statistics of the time show a rise of just 28% in tourist provision in Spanish hotels and pensions, a remarkably low figure that contrasts with the rapid growth of demand. The discrepancy indicates that there was a sizeable reserve of underused accommodation, which allowed most destinations to absorb the new customers without any major problems. But if we break down the increase geographically (15,765 rooms in total), it turns out that more than a third of the growth (5,660 rooms) was concentrated in just two provinces, the Balearics and Gerona, which doubled their tourist provision in five years. Given their special relevance, we will analyse in detail the tourist trajectory of these two areas in the section that follows.

Figure 4 compares the evolution of these two provinces with Madrid, Barcelona, Guipúzcoa (a Basque province), and Santander, each of which had a long tradition of tourism and hostelry. It is clear from this that the tourist business was rapidly changing its patterns of geographical distribution, since Madrid and the two northern provinces grew by only 5.1% in these five years. The Mediterranean was clearly winning the game against the Cantabrian coast.

When it comes to hotel category, change was minimal in the Spanish market as a whole, with the average hotel category going from 2.6 in 1954 to 2.7 in 1959. But behind this was a highly significant geographical distribution, with the average Balearic

category rising from 2.5 to 2.9 and that of Gerona from 2.2 to 2.4⁸. Both these provinces experienced major growth accompanied by rise in quality, above all the Balearics. As might be expected, the new hotels were of higher quality than the previous ones.

6. NEW MODES OF TRANSPORT FOR A NEW TOURIST MODEL

The Spanish tourist boom of the 1950s would not have been possible without the improvement in Europe's road network and the growing availability of private cars for the rising upper-middle classes. Following World War II, European governments, especially that of France, were concerned about repairing the railway network as quickly as possible, but the Marshall Plan modified this policy in practice by favouring the improvement of road links in accord with US economic planning. The improvement of European roads was accompanied by the rapid elimination of customs barriers for private cars and buses, since it was far easier for Europeans to agree to liberalize this type of traffic rather than that of goods (Schipper 2007: 221).

One immediate result of this improvement was the development of tourist companies which used coaches as a means of transport. Although slower than trains, these were far cheaper and, more to the point, allowed great flexibility in the design of itineraries. In the 1950s a multitude of companies in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia offered 'all-inclusive' trips to the European continent. The longest routes extended as far as the Costa Brava and Majorca, the latter including a necessary ferry transfer at the port of Barcelona (Kaiserfeld 2008; Walton 2011).

When we turn to the car, this ceased to be a sign of affluence and became a central element in the lives of middle class Europeans, a process which began in Great Britain in the 1920s and spread to the continent in the post-War era (Cassamagnaghi et al. 2010; Pope 2000). In France, clearly the key country in the present context, car ownership grew rapidly from 1949 onwards, when the country began to recoup lost ground *vis-à-vis* other European nations (Dezert 1965: 145). In 1953 two-thirds of

⁸ The corresponding values employed are: Luxury hotels = 5-star, First A = 4-star, First B = 3-star, Second = 2-star and Third = 1-star. These values are not entirely comparable with current categories, but are useful for quantifying the average quality of hotels at the time.

French company managers and more than half the country's businessmen and independent professionals already owned a car, and by 1960 a quarter of employees and workers had acquired this new consumer durable (Méot 2010: 110).

We have already seen that the second method of transport which increased most in terms of foreigners arriving in Spain was the aeroplane (365% between 1950 and 1959). Here the phenomenon has two very different aspects: American tourism on the one hand, and European tourists attracted by sun and sand on the other. American tourism to Europe was actively promoted by the US government as a civilian adjunct to the political and military structure which grew out of the Cold War.⁹ In keeping with this general policy, the United States began to alter its attitude toward Spain: tourist contacts were resumed, and 1948 saw the inauguration of direct TWA flights between Spain and the United States (Vallejo 2014: 20). As the US already had its own prominent destinations for sun-and-sand tourism, American visitors to Spain were attracted by the myth of the Spanish south together with all its exotic features, abetted by an official propaganda that promoted a 'Flamenco' image of the country as a whole.

To understand the connection between sun-and-beach tourism and air travel to Spain, we have at our disposal a number of analyses that cover the British and Swedish markets (Kaiserfeld 2008; Lyth and Dierikx 1994). In both cases the geographic element was essential, since the overland journey was long and arduous. Aboard a DC3 aircraft, however, a Briton could reach the Spanish costa in six or seven hours, while a Swede took twelve. Majorca was already the preferred destination, followed by the Costa Brava, the local airport in this case being Perpignan in French territory (Barbazza 1988: 360). The first charter flights directed specifically to Spain can be dated to somewhere around 1952–53, from which point their growth was extremely rapid (Papatheodorou 2002: 383). Air transport did not in fact expand as fast as it might have done in the 1950s due to the slowness shown by the administration in building new airports capable of absorbing the growing traffic in tourists. Airports such as those of Ibiza, Gerona or Malaga were not built or adapted until well into the 1960s.

⁹ "For U.S. policymakers, American travel abroad represented an economic and cultural tool that could help win the Cold War, a view also promoted by patriotic travel writers and by American business leaders in the international travel industry." (Endy 2004: 2).

7. MAJORCA AND GERONA EPICENTRES OF THE TOURISM REVOLUTION

Earlier on we mentioned that in the 1930s the island of Majorca had become the great tourist destination of the Spanish Mediterranean as it was included in global maritime networks, both those of cruise ships and others dedicated to the colonial traffic linking the great European metropolises with the rest of the world (Cirer 2014). As a destination it specialized in foreign visitors above all, with Catalan tourists as an additional extra.

During the years of the Spanish Civil War, despite island tourism being reduced to zero, Majorca's economy enjoyed a situation of relatively prosperity thanks to its diverse industry and modern agricultural techniques, capable of adapting to the new situation, at least at first. The smaller islands of Minorca, Ibiza and Formentera, by contrast, were plunged into a dismal spiral of poverty and isolation as they saw their ties with the outside world abruptly severed. The Majorcan situation worsened after the 1940s, however, when industries for consumer products were no longer considered a priority by the new regime, and many Majorcan firms found themselves forced to close due to lack of supplies and spare parts. Inflation soared and there were serious food shortages (Ginard 1999).

The grand hotels of Majorca all closed their doors for a time, and their flagship, the Grand Hotel de Palma, never reopened, its stunning Art Nouveau building mutilated and converted into offices. Smaller hotels and family pensions managed to remain afloat thanks to commercial travellers as the Majorcan economy slowly revived. From 1946, with other hotels reopening for newly married couples above all, the overall picture started to improve, helped by the reappearance of foreign tourists whose Majorcan vacation had once been part of an annual routine before the Civil War.

1950 marks the end of the post-War period in tourist terms and the dawning of a whole new era in Majorcan tourism. In that year, more than 90,000 tourists stayed in Majorca's hotels, 22,000 of them foreign (mostly French) and one third arriving by plane (Barceló 2000). The previous year saw the first incoming charter, a DC3 from Luxembourg, and Majorca's airport at Son Bonet opened its first international route, Palma–Algiers, to which Palma–Paris was soon added. By 1950 the island's entire hotel

industry was working at full capacity, and the first post-War hotel opened – the Maricel, a luxurious establishment of respectable size (Soriano 1996).

Tourist numbers in the Balearics stabilized at around 180,000 between 1951 and 1954, but in 1955 they began to grow again with the sudden influx of English, Scandinavian and German tourists, practically all arriving by plane. In that year there were already four foreign companies flying to Palma de Mallorca – BEA, Air France, KLM and Sabena – linking its airport with cities like London, Paris, Amsterdam and Brussels (Vives 2005: 218). The number of visitors from the Spanish mainland, which stood unchanged around the 60,000 mark, went from representing two thirds of arrivals in 1950 to less than a quarter ten years later. The French, while increasing their numbers in absolute terms, fell in relative standing from 19% to 12%. In 1959 more than half the tourists who came to the islands were Britons or Scandinavians who used aeroplanes as a means of transport. It should be noted that by this stage the Majorcan airport of Son Bonet was receiving three quarters of all charter flights coming into Spain (Pack 2009: 157).

Some of the tourists arriving in Mallorca in the 1950s were comparable to those who had done so twenty years earlier: owners of small- and medium-sized businesses and qualified professionals who wanted to ‘see’ things, touring the island during their stay and visiting places like the Serra de Tramontana (northern mountain range) and the caves of the southeast. But there were increasing numbers who adopted a far more stationary type of holiday, focusing their attention on the beach right in front of their hotel.

The change of visitor interests was linked to the new tourist’s lower economic capacity, and led in turn to radical changes in the structure of the whole hotel business. This ‘industrialization’ process included the adoption of codes of conduct, increasingly standardized recruitment models and procedures, and a sharp focus on reducing costs.

The Catalan entrepreneur Joan Riu was probably the first to redefine the tourist business with the overriding goal of achieving maximum economic efficiency. This hotelier, who arrived in Mallorca from Venezuela in 1953, purchased the San Francisco Hotel on Playa del Arenal in the Bay of Palma – a spot relatively isolated and unattractive by traditional standards. Here he began the first tourist business in which a foreign travel agency, the German firm of Dr. Tigges (which recruited tourists at place of origin and took care of charter transport) collaborated with a local establishment in

charge of accommodation. Every fifteen days a plane landed from Germany and unloaded its contingent of tourists before collecting the previous group, thereby reducing to a minimum costs of air transport, airport–hotel connection and hotel management expenses for arrival and departure of customers (Soriano 1996).

The rapid implementation of this new tourist formula, focused on satisfying the demands of medium-level customers, explains the rapid take-off in international tourism on the Balearic Islands from 1954, and the explosion of available tourist accommodation between 1954 and 1959, when the number of rooms surged from 2,791 to 6,276 according to data from the Spanish statistical office (INE).

Apart from Majorca, tourism had also become firmly established in the 1930s on Ibiza, where between 1933 and 1935 a dozen hotels opened, providing almost five hundred beds in total and directing their efforts at an international clientele. All of them closed during the Civil War and reopened timidly after 1946 – with disastrous results: the lack of regular transport links to the mainland and the meagre supplies available to their kitchens made it impossible for a hotel of international standing to remain open (Planells 1984). It was only in 1950 that the situation began to improve with hotels on Ibiza recording their first acceptable post-War season. From then on the situation improved steadily. In 1954 6,650 foreign tourists arrived on the island, rising to 16,647 in 1959. Growth still lagged behind what had been seen on the island of Mallorca, as Ibiza was unable to receive the new type of leisure tourist, lacking an airport open to international traffic. But this didn't stop the island's hotel infrastructure from expanding threefold between 1955 and 1960, amounting to 3,357 places (Ramon 2001). Ibizan entrepreneurs, like their Majorcan counterparts, had a firm belief in the potential of tourism and were willing to risk the scarce capital available to construct up-to-date hotel plant, comparable by the early 1960s to that provided in such long-established destinations as Santander or Malaga.

We will now take a closer look at the most surprising case thrown up by the development of Spanish tourism: the explosive emergence of an 'outsider' resort – the Costa Brava in the province of Gerona. Here tourism developed at a vertiginous pace despite the absence of any previous tourist infrastructure, distinguishing this destination sharply from the Balearic Islands. In the latter we can trace the origins of the tourist industry to the end of the 19th century, with the result that Mallorca by 1903 and Ibiza by 1933 enjoyed splendid hotel facilities focused on international tourism. For the Costa

Brava, by contrast, the touristic background prior to the Civil War is notably scanty: a number of coastal holiday homes belonging to the middle classes of Barcelona and the provincial capital (Gerona), and a handful of hotels of modest dimensions.

What makes the coastal area of Gerona stand out is its unique industrial past. Throughout the nineteenth century there had been a flourishing export industry dedicated to cork bottle stoppers, destined above all for France. Businesses were mainly small family affairs, similar in many ways to those now found in manufacturing parts of Italy (Becattini 2004: 19). Gerona's cork industry had experienced a golden age in the years immediately prior to World War I, but had then followed a steady decline, plummeting into deep depression during World War II and the immediate post-War period, when foreign markets were taken over wholesale by Portuguese producers (Parsons 1962; Zapata 1996).

Another unique element in tourism on Gerona's coastline is that it has a very clearly defined beginning: the première of *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* starring Ava Gardner and shot in Tossa de Mar (Cirer 2016; Molinas 1999). Released in 1951, this film brought the Costa Brava to the immediate attention of Europeans, and a number came down excitedly to see for themselves the landscapes and beaches that had made such a powerful impression in the cinema. This totally unexpected wave of pioneering visitors overwhelmed the meagre tourist facilities available in the area, and had a powerful ripple effect. Some of the new arrivals were journalists and writers whose own work contributed to the film's publicizing effects, spreading the myth of the Costa Brava right around Europe in record time. The sight of crowded hostelryes and tourists sleeping in their own cars after finding nowhere to stay prompted local businessmen to turn to tourism as a heaven-sent opportunity at a time of deep economic despair and depression (Mundet 2007). This particular business segment was poorly prepared, inexperienced in the tourist sector and with little access to serious funding. It was forced to improvise in the face of a demand that grew explosively by the year. But enormous economic benefits were gained, in spite of all this, and ploughed straight back into the industry, they ended up financing the establishment of a powerful local hotel sector (Cals 1982).

The first wave of visitors on Gerona's coastline were mainly Britons, who arrived by train and stayed in hotels, but these were soon eclipsed by the French who came by car (Besson 1964). In both cases, customers were of medium-high purchasing power in the

early years, but as the car became increasingly widespread among the French populace, the paradisiacal myth of the Costa Brava and low Spanish prices became the main draw behind this destination. The new type of tourist demand led to equally innovative provision, adapted to the factors of low budget and car availability, which crystallized in the appearance of newly built apartments and campsites. By 1960 the towns of Lloret, Platja d'Aro and Palafruguell were providing more than 13,500 places of these non-hotel categories of accommodation (Barbazza 1988: 282).

8. THE UNEXPECTED ROLE PLAYED BY TOURISM IN SPAIN

In preceding sections we have seen how Europe's tourist demand mushroomed, as well as the difficulties in developing adequate facilities to meet fast-rising demands among visitors to Spain, and also the growth of two leading tourist destinations that managed to overcome these problems. It is now time to recap and present an overview of tourism's evolution in Spain between 1950 and 1959, and the first thing we must bear in mind is the country's woeful political situation. The evolution of Francoism during this period was exasperatingly slow, the process of institutionalization from the end of the Civil War remaining sluggish, piecemeal and without vision (Thomas 1999). Back when the regime had yet to be consolidated, any change implied realignment of its powerful supporting social groups, which had meanwhile woven an intricate web of private interests into the autarchic ideal (Viñas 1980). If tourism managed to thrive under such inauspicious conditions, it was because of its peripheral nature for interests that perceived no inherent threat. As a result, when the tourist sector finally emerged with all its startling potency, it had already reached an irreplaceable position within the impoverished Spanish economy.

Tourism in the 1950s was a peripheral activity in a double sense: on the one hand, economically speaking, it was completely removed from sectors that the Franco regime considered central to its sought-after industrial model of development; on the other, geographically speaking, it took place in two provinces which, according to the government schemes in Madrid, were of minimal importance. The regime devoted all its attention to large concentrations of manufacturing workers, ignoring what was going on in the Balearic Islands and Gerona, medium-sized provinces which in fact possessed

rich industrial and commercial traditions whose economic activity had always been channelled into economic sectors thought irrelevant to the Francoist industrial project.

In both provinces the explosive growth of tourism appeared spontaneously, completely unconnected with the 'economic planning' of the regime, which sought to control all economic activity. The stifling nature of state control meant that ignoring existing tourist regulations was of the essence – far easier in places considered not worthy of attention by the regime's hierarchy, i.e. Gerona and the Balearic Islands. It was thus possible for hoteliers to draw up contracts directly with foreign travel agencies, and use imaginative formulas to charge prices higher than those officially authorized (Cals 1982; Pack 2011; Vallejo 2014).

In addition, the regime's myopia with regard to what the 1950s tourist phenomenon actually signified helped it pass relatively unnoticed. Official propaganda concentrated its efforts instead on attracting upper-class visitors, supposedly eager for bulls, flamenco and castles, accommodating them in the rickety network of National Paradores (converted buildings of historic interest), in fact more suitable for receiving the regime's hierarchy during provincial tours of inspection, rather than as an instrument of tourist development.¹⁰ The reality was that for most foreigners crossing the border these traditional Spanish attractions, so highly valued by the regime, were of remarkably little interest. What they wanted was sun, beaches and fun (Storm 2013: 16).

The importance of tourism in the Spanish balance of payments grew steadily from 1947, and was firmly established as a vital element by 1954, when it exceeded a hundred million dollars (Martínez 2003: 38). Although this figure might not appear all that striking in absolute terms, in the context of a closed country which had drastically reduced all contact with the outside world, it was a sum of extraordinary significance. This was recognized in 1953 by one of the regime's leading newspapers, *Arriba*, which called tourism "the most valuable national export" (Vallejo 2014: 22). Revenue from tourism grew much faster than anyone had anticipated, making it indispensable to the viability of the Spanish economy – and thus the survival of the regime itself, covering more than 80% of the Spanish trade deficit (Vallejo 2014: 27). In fact, it was the only source of foreign currency with real growth potential, as from 1953 on Spanish exports lacked any competitive edge (Martínez 2001: 246).

¹⁰ In 1951 paradores were accommodating less than 10% of foreign visitors to Spain, a proportion that dropped rapidly in the years that followed (Pack 2009: 105).

The situation changed suddenly in 1955. Even though in that year tourist arrivals increased by almost 40%, the income generated from tourism, however, measured in dollars fell by 3% (Martínez 2003: 38). A disparity that showed not a simple statistical error, but that the black market for foreign exchange had reached macroeconomic proportions. The surcharges in hotel and restaurant exchange rates for tourists were now being diverted into channels that financed smuggling, extending rapidly throughout the Spanish economy just as the black market in food contracted.

People had for some time been familiar with the figure of the 'honest smuggler' operating in the markets of Morocco, Algiers or the south of France, acquiring raw materials or spare parts for Spanish industries, and without whose existence firms would have been paralyzed due to the extreme inefficiency of official channels in acquiring essential currencies (Serrano and Asensio 1997: 555; Torre 2011: 195; Fernández 2012). Moreover, once the more pressing food needs of the Spanish population had been met, the demand for 'modern' consumer products like penicillin multiplied, far surpassing the meagre production capacities of autarchic Spain (González and Rodríguez 2013: 1). During the 1950s the country's high demand for foreign currency knew no limits, and tourism became its main source.

The problem of diverting tourist currency became increasingly serious. Between 1954 and 1958, the number of foreigners entering Spain was multiplied by 2.5, while monetary income rose from 112 million dollars to just 85 million. The income gained from tourism fell by almost 75%, from over \$100 per tourist to less than \$25 (Martínez 2003: 91). With surprisingly rapidity and efficiency, illegal networks for securing foreign currency extended their networks abroad, with tourists exchanging francs or pounds at source, arriving in Spain with their pockets already full of pesetas. As explicitly acknowledged by a report from the Ministry of Finance in January 1959,

"the difference between the foreign and official exchange rates is significant [. . .] Last summer [1958] we found ourselves facing the scenario of all foreign tourists arriving with pesetas." (Vallejo 2014: 25).

Smuggling was probably a graver problem for the regime than the black market had been before, the latter a corrupt form of business managed by agrarian elites who supported Francoism (Gómez and Del Arco 2005). Smuggling, on the other hand, was based on social networks far older and traditionally opposed to the action of this or indeed any State. To combat it effectively the regime would have been obliged to resort

to a severe and wide-reaching campaign of indiscriminate repression which would have weakened its own social foundations and fragile international position, whilst also undermining the hesitant economic recovery. Nor was it feasible to oblige tourists to change minimum amounts of currency in Spain, a measure that had been in force years earlier and had finally been abandoned, since it would have harmed both tourism and the regime's international prestige.

Over the preceding years it had become clear that the main weakness of the Spanish economy lay in its inability to offer exportable products. This deficiency, together with the population's extraordinary appetite for new foreign products and industry's perennial needs to modernize, provoked a chronic imbalance of payments that in 1958 led to a virtual suspension of wages. One must bear in mind that at the time remittances from emigrants were decidedly scarce, 6-7 million dollars per year, while imports of private capital were practically banned. In short, tourism appeared to be the only resource capable of providing enough foreign exchange to alleviate the desperate external situation, albeit in part (Martínez 2003: 124). Losing control of that source of foreign currency presented a serious threat to the survival of the regime.

The tourist monetary fiasco actively contributed to the chronic deterioration of the external situation which pushed the regime against the wall and forced it to react. It had no choice but to initiate a comprehensive reform process that would allow it to regain control of the situation, even if that meant burying once and for all the autarchic ideal and yielding in the face of a strong devaluation of the peseta. The Francoist hierarchy was probably aware that their own survival was at stake, and therefore took up reform as an unavoidable lesser evil (Torre 2011).¹¹

¹¹ "Franco continued presiding over the impossible autarkic dream until 1959. He had no clue of how to modernize the Spanish economy. It was the clear and imminent danger of bankruptcy caused by the lack of foreign exchange which forced him to accept a change of direction. The Spanish economy and society modernized in the 1960s in spite of Franco, not because of him." (Viñas 2017: 128).

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