

Within the lecture series

**2008 – EUROPE'S HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
COMING TO TERMS WITH EUROPE'S TRAUMATIC PAST – AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON**

(curated by Ruth Wodak)

the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue kindly invites to the following discussion:

ITALY AND SPAIN TODAY

Fascist Past and Democratic Present

Laura Balbo | Fernando Vallespín Oña

Moderator:

Werner Perger

Thursday | May 8 2008 | 19.00 h

Laura Balbo: Professor of Sociology at the universities of Milan, Rome, Padua, on leave during mandates as Member of Parliament (1983-1992) and as Minister of Equal Opportunities in the Italian government (1998-2000). President of the Italian Sociological Association, Visiting Associate Professor of Sociology, University of California, Santa Cruz, Visiting Scholar at the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Studies. Presently Laura Balbo is president of the Association *Italia-Razzismo* (Rome) and the International Association for the Study of Racism (Amsterdam). Main research areas: the emerging "European identity", issues of racialization and racism, the welfare state and social policies, women's studies, the sociology of daily life. Numerous publications on issues of racism and racialization.

Fernando Vallespín Oña: Professor for Political Science at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, on leave; since May 2004 Director of the Institute for Social Investigations (CIS), the leading Spanish institution for opinion polls. Fernando Vallespín Oña was Visiting Professor in Harvard, Frankfurt and Heidelberg, author of several books on contemporary theories in political science. Until his call to CIS he was a regular columnist of the leading Spanish daily *El País*.

Werner Perger: PhD 1969 in Law, University of Vienna. He began his career as journalist at the *Die Presse* (Vienna) and moved as correspondent to Bonn (1970). After leaving *Die Presse* in 1979 he worked for the Austrian weekly magazine *Profil*, the German weeklies *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, *Stern* and (since 1991) for *Die Zeit*. He authored and edited several political books (among others *Gegen die Zeit*, a book about meetings and discussions with the former Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky). Werner Perger also made political TV-documentaries and radio-features for *WDR*, *ZDF* and the *Deutschlandfunk*.

2008 – EUROPE'S HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS. Coming to Terms with Europe's Traumatic Pasts – An International Comparison: All societies have to come to terms with traumatic pasts, since all attempts at repressing/forgetting/tabooing them are bound to fail. Past events inevitably influence (visions of) the present and the future: People may deliberately distance themselves from certain events or actors; or identify with them. They may try to find culprits and/or to name victims after the event. The way we deal with the past/s is part of "*Vergangenheitspolitik*" (policies of dealing with the past, cf. G. Sandner 2003; H. Heer, W. Manoschek, A. Pollak, R. Wodak 2003, 2007): Different groups, parties or politicians prefer different interpretations with a view to aligning their own positions (as advantageously as possible) with the official version of history. Hence, history written with hindsight and instilled with meaning like a "narrative" must be invariably perceived as a construction. Historical contexts need to be understood as the outcome of a social process whereby past events that are regarded as worthy vehicles for moral concepts are selected and made the objects of remembrance. This process is wrought with opposition and controversy over the selection of the hegemonic "image of history". "Images of history" ("*Geschichtsbilder*") consist of normatively established relationships, of interpretations of interrelations between actual events - and thus post-hoc narratives. (Ruth Wodak, Distinguished Professor in Discourse Studies, Lancaster University, UK).

Gertraud Auer

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. This evening tonight is one in a series of debates that we initiated this year in the framework of our yearly program "Europe's Historical Consciousness. Coming to Terms with Europe's Traumatic Past. An International Comparison". We prepared this program in cooperation with an Austrian academic, Ruth Wodak, who unfortunately cannot be here tonight. But she gave the input for the whole idea of this program. I would like to very shortly quote Ruth in her introductory contribution: "All societies have experienced traumatic events in their pasts, be it war, war crimes, revolution, torture, mass killings, rape etc. Sometimes taboos surround such events in the public sphere and reformulate the interpretation of historical facts and events according to the interest of specific political actors or groups. Collective memories, thus, cannot be equated with history, but is linked to it and has multiple effects on the future. The construction of national identities always draws on narratives which relate to the past, present, and future in specific ways." And it is in this context that we chose today's subject on Italy and Spain. I am very honored to welcome our distinguished guests of tonight, Prof. Laura Balbo, and Prof. Fernando

Vallespin. Both will be introduced by our moderator, Werner Perger. Werner Perger is a friend of the house since many, many years and he doesn't need a specific introduction. But I would like to underline that among many publications that Werner Perger, who is regularly writing in *Die Zeit* and working in TV and radio features in Germany, and also the most important publication for us is the book that he published on Bruno Kreisky *Gegen die Zeit*, with beautiful photos done by Konrad Müller, and written by Wolfgang Petritsch and Werner Perger. The only thing which is unfortunate for us is that he is working so much that he is rarely in Vienna. Werner, the floor is yours, and thank you very much for being with us.

Werner Perger

Ladies and Gentlemen, the topic is about two Southern European countries, similar they seem, yet they are very different. They had two elections, one on the 9th of March and one in mid-April, with very contrasting results. We are going to discuss first of all what has happened, what do we learn from these results about the present situation of these two countries, but also what do these results and the atmosphere that led to these results tell us about the past and how these two countries are dealing with the past in the context of the program. We have two distinguished and authoritative speakers here tonight. We will start with Laura Balbo. Laura is Professor of Sociology. She has taught at several universities in Italy and outside Italy, is now teaching at the University Padua. She was also active in politics, was a Member of Parliament between 1983 and 1992, and then she was Minister of Equal Opportunities from 1998 to 2000 in the government that followed Prodi's change to Brussels which was led by Prime Minister D'Alema. Actually as I understood in Parliament you were a member of a group of independent, leftist intellectuals on the list of the Democratic Socialists. She is also President of the Association Italia-Razzismo in Rome and also of the International Association for the Study of Racism which is located in Amsterdam. The main research areas are the emerging European identities, issues of racialization and racism, the welfare state and social policies, women studies, and the sociology of daily life. The floor is yours, Laura.

Laura Balbo

Good evening and thank you. It has been a very useful opportunity for me, these last weeks and days, to think about these issues in a "special" way. The results of the elections, and then two weeks later the election of the new mayor of Rome, and then just today the swearing in of the government. In this span of time, also the elections in Britain. Preparing for this meeting and to discuss these issues here has helped me to focus on events and problems that are of course important for us in Italy, but also to look beyond, to think about Europe more generally. Let's keep in mind Italy and Spain, but also this wider scenario. I am not a detached intellectual, partly because of my past experiences, but also because I have strong feelings about politics and am not at ease with the future of my country, or more widely Europe. So I spend time and pay attention trying to understand what is going on. Coming back to our title: how can we come to terms with Europe's troublesome present and address questions as to the future.

I will very briefly indicate a few points about what has recently happened in my country. The general elections took place April 13, 14. We have more or less expectedly but to some extent unexpectedly seen that the center right is now in power possibly for the next five years or longer, and then immediately after that this new mayor in Rome. The picture is that the center left has been weakened, in fact it has not the support many of us had thought it had built in the past months, as an interpreter of Italian society. Berlusconi is a charismatic leader, a person with great visibility (also internationally). He is a powerful media person, an entrepreneur, businessman, of great success. We do not know how he will deal with the many very serious problems in our country; also his attitude on international issues is relevant. *La Lega* has become much stronger. It was seen as a "local" organization in a few areas in the North but now it turns out to be an important political subject at the national level. Votes came from all regions in the North in much greater numbers than was expected. And now they are going to have an important role in government. And there is the neo-fascist party: the mayor in Rome now is from *Alleanza Nazionale*, and its leader, Fini, occupies a relevant institutional position in Parliament. What this word *fascism* means at present, and the term *neo-fascist* which is what they used to call themselves. I don't know whether this term will still be in use. And of course the point is what all these changes entail. So, a complicated picture.

I have been worried by the fact that some very important issues have not been adequately addressed in the past two months during the electoral campaign on both sides. One is *immigration*. Numbers and characteristics of mobility and migration already are changing Italian society. But we speak about immigrants and not about ourselves: Will we be able - and willing - to redefine many aspects of the functioning of our society or will we resist change. All these major elements of the future scenario have been largely (or I should say totally) ignored during the debate (except, of course, for the most aggressive exponents in the right who think in terms of "security", hence we need to reduce the number of immigrants, and put forward suggestions that cannot possibly become viable social policies).

The issue is much more complicated than that. Let me add other policy areas which are crucial for the future: the economy, the labor market, the welfare system, gender inequality, issues defined as “innovation”, the “knowledge society”. No matter which comparative statistics we look at, Italy is down below other countries in Europe. Other issues are the illegal activities and actors in Italian society and in Italian politics, the Mafia. Maybe we shall have time to come back to that. We have to raise many crucial questions and we have to ask whether the present government and the other political forces are able, will be able to cope. I think the agenda and the priorities have been partly discussed, but not really addressed courageously. It takes a lot of courage during an election to face difficult problems. It is much easier to leave the most complicated issues out. That is what I see as a major problem. We could come back to some of these issues.

Werner Perger

Thank you very much for this introduction. We come back to several points especially when we try to connect contemporary questions with historical questions, and then I might even ask you, since you called this government a center-right government, whether this was a slip of the tongue or the right term because sometimes one has the impression center-right is a much too modest description. But that is what they call themselves. Then we may have to make it clear whether the center-left has just been weakened, as you said, or whether it has been destroyed.

An entirely different picture in Spain, although maybe it was not all that a shattering victory that the Socialists there experienced and it wasn't all that much of a defeat for the Conservatives although they missed what they wanted, a change of government. Fernando, you will give us some details. But first I want to tell you who Fernando Vallespín Oña really is. He is Director of the Institute for Sociological Research in Madrid. He has done that for four years now and will be now going back to his duties at the University Autonoma in Madrid where he is a teacher of political science. He is the author of several books on political science related questions. He is working on a book about Thomas Hobbes and his meaning for us nowadays. I may even tell you that Fernando has plans for another book which I am waiting even more for, but will take some time. And this will be about politics of lying and truth in modern democracies.

Fernando Vallespín Oña

Guten Abend. Ich bin begeistert, wieder in Wien zu sein und freue mich sehr über die Einladung.

I will try to be as brief as possible, but I would like to start by underlining some of the issues that happened throughout the last legislature in our country that conditioned a lot of the results of the elections. I will start by making a brief portrait of our president of government, of Mr. Zapatero, because when we talk about questions related to the past and the present I think he represents some of the very important features of new Spain. He was born in 1960 which means that he could vote when he was 18, and he has been voting all the time afterwards. So in a sense he is our first president of government who has lived for most of his life during the democratic period. I think that has in a way shaped all his political measures. But on the other hand he always refers to his grandfather who was executed by Francoist troops. In that sense he is absolutely contemporary, modern, but he keeps aligned with the most traumatic part in recent history which was the civil war. It is important to know that and to start with that.

Let me go back to the main policy decisions of the Socialist government during these last four years. It started with the withdrawal of the Spanish troops in Iraq which was a shock to the United States. We never recovered a good relationship with Bush's America. We still have a problem. Zapatero is the only Prime Minister in Europe who has never met officially the American President. The second issue I would like to underline is immigration. He also started out by regularizing hundreds of thousands of immigrants which was a shock to other European countries. His immigration policies were very open. He has very deep moral standards in terms of immigration. In a certain sense he has also helped to make certain pedagogical moves for the Spanish public in terms of trying to present immigrants as part of Spanish success. You must understand that we have now more or less five million immigrants which is about 12% of the overall population. But they all came in the last ten to twelve years. In the end when the elections came and the rightist party started to pick up the immigration issue as one of its main issues for attacking the government then they somehow had to reinterpret most of the discourse in terms of saying, we just want legal immigration, we don't defend illegal immigration. So they had to be very explicit on that topic.

There were no major changes in economic policy. We had for the last fifteen years a very high growth, much higher than the average European economic growth. But in the end it collapsed or at least it slowed radically. It was an unexpected move because no one thought the economy would be an issue in the election period. And it became an important issue as well. What you probably know best about our Prime Minister, he did some moves that were surprising in a supposedly Catholic country, which was gay marriage and the possibility to adopt children on the part

of gay couples, which provoked a shock to the Spanish church. The relationships between the government and the church were extremely bad and have been bad for a long time, and they will probably keep on being bad during these next years. Yesterday the Vice President said that one of the key issues in this new legislature will be secularization, a sharp division between state and church, more than was the case during the last legislature. On the one hand, the government said yes to gay marriage, for instance, but on the other they gave the church all the money it needed, and respected most of their educational privileges. That keeps being a very sensitive issue.

Perhaps the most difficult question they had to face was the reform of the Catalan statute and also of other statutes of autonomy. We have a very peculiar federal system. It is really an asymmetric federalism in the sense that some of the regions have far more powers than others. In that sense it is always very delicate to make moves in order to give more power to a certain region and not to the others. It continues being an internal debate within Spanish politics, and particularly the reform of the Catalan statute was the most troublesome part of Zapatero's last legislature.

I would finish this part underlining some of the social policy measures that the government issued, which were very progressive, and also the Law on Equality among Men and Women. Werner Perger called Zapatero "der Präsident der Frauen", and it is true. Under his first government he had just as many women as men as ministers and now he has more women than men. One of the ministers, the Minister for Equality, is just 31 years old. And she was born already when Spain was a democracy which symbolically is quite important.

I will present a very brief powerpoint. I start with the evaluation of the economic situation. That is something that we do every month in our institute, asking people about how they view the economic situation. As you can see, when we were approaching the elections, the majority felt that the economy was running badly. This perception has been increasing throughout the last part of the legislature, and in the end economic pessimism was the main point of discussion. That changed completely the discourse before the elections. And also what people evaluated as some of the worst things that could happen in Spanish politics was that the political situation was also incredibly bad. Because of the constant fighting between the two main parties it was a very tough legislature, particularly on the part of the main oppositional party, the Partido Popular, which kept on a very aggressive campaign against whatever the government did. So the perception on a part of the people was that the political atmosphere wasn't peaceful at all, that the political situation was really terrifying in a certain sense.

The differences in confidence between Zapatero and the main leader of the rightist party are very sharp. The different ratings of each of them keep on being at the same distance throughout the legislature, but this contrasts heavily with the vote intention. Every three months we make an opinion poll on voting preferences. That is how we come to this picture. As you can see, the two times when things got worse were the debate of the Catalan statute and the ETA bombing. Zapatero kept on peace talks with ETA in order to bring terrorism to an end. I must say that one of the main criticisms that has been made to Zapatero's politics was that he introduced a rather "ethic" and "naïve" legislature in the sense that he wanted to get rid of some of our deepest historic political problems -terrorism, the organization of the state, modernizing civil rights, bringing women back to a key role within all of Spanish society, etc.- just in four years. But that didn't make him so popular as it seemed at the beginning. The opposition was still quite strong. And in the end they had very good results. The Socialists won by just 3.5 points. It was not an easy victory.

These were the main party strategies throughout the elections. The majority of the population in Spain is center-left, sociologically. The Socialists always think that if the turnout is high they win. It is not necessarily so, but it was an impression that was based on certain sociological data as well as on the experiences of former elections. What they mainly tried was to mobilize voters. Their idea was: "vote with all your strength". In Catalonia the Catalan Socialist Party had a marvelous slogan which was: "if you don't go they're back". In a poster you could see the shadows of the main figures of the Popular Party as a menace, but "if you vote, we win". That was really the main strategy which was not so much based on arguments but on a supposedly sociological fact. What the PP tried badly was to retain its voters and gain more voters to the center which was rather paradoxical considering their discourse throughout the whole legislature. So in that sense they were very radical to the right. When they in the end tried to appear more moderate lots of people didn't really believe them. The United Left party tried to minimize its losses, and the nationalist parties tried to fight polarization and emphasize its key role in certain areas, particular in the Basque country and in Catalonia.

Here you have the turnout in last year's elections. As you can see, in 2000 when the right got the absolute majority the turnout was very low. In 2004 when the Socialists got back after the Madrid bombings the turnout was very high. People were mobilized. And then again in 2008 people kept being much mobilized.

The funny thing is that both parties won votes. So it wasn't a negative sum game. In the end it was a positive sum game in the sense that the right got votes from the Socialists, from that part of the Socialists who are Spanish nationalists and who were critical towards the policies of the Socialist government regarding particularly the Catalan issue, but also the peace talks with ETA and all that. The PP probably got 500.000 to 600.000 votes from those. And the Socialists got votes from parts of the leftist groups, particularly the United Left, and also from some of the nationalist parties in Catalonia and the Basque Country. This is interesting. As far as I know it is the first time that an overall Spanish party gets so many votes from nationalists in either Catalonia or the Basque Country. So it was a way to pay out. Zapatero thus got paid by his sensitiveness towards the exceptionality of those regions. But, as I said, both won. Of course, the PP lost in the end because it didn't get the government, which is the measure of all things in a democracy.

This slide shows how the last elections fit into the pattern of what we call "the third phase" in the evolution of our electoral behavior. It started in 1993, when for the first time we had very high competitiveness and small differences between the two main parties.

One of the most interesting results of the last elections is the high concentration of the votes in the two main parties. 84% of the votes and 92% of the seats went to the two larger parties. In that sense we are a two-party-system but with certain peculiarities, which is that none of them gets the absolute majority, and so either the PSOE or the PP is forced to bargain with the nationalist parties. I think that is healthy for a democracy if we want to keep on living together.

As we can see in this other slide, what is interesting about 2008 is that the whole of the Spanish territory is either *red* (socialist) or *blue* (conservative). In 2004 the Basque Country was still *green* in the sense that the nationalists had more votes than either PSOE or PP. And if you go back to other elections, Catalonia had also been *yellow*, which implies that the Catalan nationalists had had the greatest share of the votes. What that means is that the two main parties were also majoritarian in those two regions, but it means also that the whole of the Spanish map is changing slowly. Madrid is a conservative city with a large majority vote for the Popular Party. Both of the Castilles and most of the Mediterranean except for Catalonia, and the large cities of Andalusia except Seville have a majority vote for the conservatives. The Socialists are winning in Aragon and above all in Catalonia. If it weren't for the results in Catalonia they would have lost these elections. And the big question for the Socialists is now, that if they keep on being sensitive and sympathetic to what we call peripheral nationalism, Basque Country and Catalonia, they lose votes in the rest of Spain. But if they change the discourse and bring in a new discourse that emphasizes Spanish nationalism, then they lose the votes in Catalonia and the Basque Country. So they are in a double bind which will be difficult to maintain. But on the other hand the Popular Party has an even greater problem. They will probably never win if they don't have good results in, particularly, Catalonia. They are forced to change the discourse as well.

Before I finish, I would like to make a reflection which shows the dramatic situation of the right in Spain. If they win without a significant number of votes in Catalonia or the Basque Country, what would happen in those regions? What would be the overall result for Spain as a unified country? I think it would have been very dangerous for the future of Spain, because it would have radicalized nationalism in Catalonia and the Basque Country. In that sense, I think the Socialists represent much better than the Popular Party the complexity of a country such as Spain. And that is also what Felipe Gonzalez used to say, the only party that really represents the whole of Spain is the Socialist Party. I would like to finish with this. It seems a bit like a party statement, but, though I vote for them, I'm not a member of the Socialist Party. But I wanted to end with this reflection, which shows that we are a complicated country. No other country in Europe has this complexity of integrating regions that have contradictory loyalties which are really identity loyalties. Thank you.

Werner Perger

Thank you very much for trying to explain a really complicated situation, and the complexity of problems, and the political situation that is not very familiar to us. Of course, there is this interesting point of 92% of the seats in the hand of the two parties which means this would really be a great coalition. But thank God this will never happen as far as we can tell.

From here we should build the bridge to the main topic of our talk tonight. This is the relation of today with history. Both countries, although very different, have a past that was partly shaped or influenced by dictatorships. This is not very differentiated, but authoritarian regimes one might call fascist regimes before the war, and in Spain going on a long time after the war. In one way or the other both have a fascist past even if in Spain it is not called a fascist past. But we will go into definitions right away. Both countries are also very much connected in this part of the history with the big fascist history of Central Europe and especially the Nazi history, of course, but also with Austrian history

which doesn't play a great role for the two countries. But the fascist Italy was very important for the fascist Austria. They had the illusion that Mussolini might protect them against Hitler, one of the illusions the fascists had. And Spain was connected with Austria. First of all the Austrian civil war, as short as it was, preceded the Spanish one with the same parties fighting each other. A lot of Austrians were fighting in Spain in the international brigades. Austrian socialists, communists, Jews, many of them were also socialists or communists. So there is a long history that we should try to compare a little bit.

I am going back to the Italian present. We picked up over the last days a quote by one Italian right wing politician, Daniela Santanche', who said publicly – and this is new to us us, in Austria or in Germany you couldn't say that – “I am proud to be a fascist”. There was no outcry against that, you can say that nowadays. And on the other hand we heard about violence of right wing skinheads, two men killed, a third man in Verona. The reaction of the papers was not calling them fascists, but calling them Nazi skins, pointing out that they were Nazis not fascists. This is maybe not so important for the grand course of history, but it is actually for defining what is going on and is there a change in public awareness, in public consciousness in this country. Could you explain to us what is actually going on.

Laura Balbo

I'll try to put together the main elements which are included in our topic. And of course I'll go back to the issues we intend to address here, “from the fascist past to today's democracy”, taking - from the title of a book by Robert Heilbrunner - what I consider a useful approach. It suggests four “scenarios”, or steps, *The distant past, yesterday, today and tomorrow*.

Many observers and scholars have insisted in saying that in our understanding of what has taken place in “the distant past”, from the mid-twenties to the mid-forties, there have been no adequate efforts to go deeply into the complexity of the events and related changes in the society. We have not opened a thorough discussion to develop an adequate understanding of what fascism means today and what those decades actually involved. It was poverty, migration, extreme backwardness in a large part of the country; the colonial experience in Africa, racism. Dictatorship, violation of basic rights, and the alliance with Hitler Germany, World War II, the Holocaust. This is our “distant past”. Of course, some scholars have gone back to events and responsibilities of those times. But it is a fact that we try to take a distance from all that took place in those (many) years, as though it was only *yesterday* that matters.

Yesterday was the years between the late 1960's and the 1970's and 1980's, the years of economic development in some parts of the country, of radical change in the economy, in the social system, and also in politics: democracy, and what has been called the “Italian miracle”. Let me add that asking why Italy has chosen not to come to terms with the different parts of its history is in fact a relevant question. The *distant past* and its tragedies are left out of present discussions and necessary attempts to redefine to-day's politics and culture.

If some people now refer to *fascism*, it's more a way of presenting oneself as someone who is courageous, provocative. In my opinion the responsibility of saying “I am a fascist”, I am proud of being that, is something most people, young people for sure, totally ignore. That is also why this did not raise too much media excitement. Let's remember that in both cases that you mentioned the media are the main element. It is not what happens, it is how the media present it to the public and then how the public reacts. And this manipulation is something we should address because we are part of it, we are victims of this process. Of course, there has been a strong reaction. Some leaders have said, you cannot use these words. Some people have also considered the events in Verona as particularly indicative of how “Nazi-skins” or “fascist” youth may define themselves. But this in my opinion is not something to be put at the center of our analyzing, even less, of our building the present and the future.

There is no point in denying that this is a heavy part of our past and that it is very dangerous if it comes back in such terms. But as I see it now it doesn't imply that people know enough about the past and they actually want to choose that kind of society and culture. I rather see it as sort of playing with these words. They don't really mean that there is a growing feeling of authoritarianism. Italy is a democracy in that people vote, people participate. The great majority feel we have to keep this system. Of course, there are problems. I agree that there is a difficult future: problems, challenges; no easy solutions.

The two most visible leaders of the post-fascist party (we don't know how to name them because they don't want to be indicated as *fascist*), Alleanza Nazionale, are Fini, who has the leading position in Parliament, and the new Rome's Mayor, Alemanno. Immediately after winning their different roles both have emphasized the need (and their willingness) to have a dialogue with the center-left, to do things together, to build a common platform. So we are in a period of possibly shifting alliances and trying to build a new common political culture. I don't know how things are

going to be. A lot depends on how the “left” (political actors as well as the general political culture) will define their role in the future scenario. Not just Italy, Europe. I think it is very important to remember that we are part of Europe.

I define something which has been happening in the past decades an “echo effect.” Whatever happens in other parts of Europe, in political institutions of the EU, also in the media, in a variety of events, has a sort of echo effect, because we cannot ignore them. We know, we learn, we react. In this sense what is going on in Europe is very important for us. We have paid particular attention to recent events in Spain, to Zapatero as someone who can achieve results, stay in power, change his country: a very important example. We don’t seem to know how to handle the complicated mechanism of contemporary democracy. Other leaders in Europe have attracted great attention, Sarkozy at some point, of course in different terms. The situation is unclear. We don’t seem to be able to anticipate our *tomorrow*, which is the crucial issue we have to face. A very diversified, unstable country. So there is danger.

Let me add that the results of these elections were not anticipated by the majority of opinion makers, scholars, politicians, pollsters. They didn’t know the country because it is not just voting results, it is a geography of the North. The titles in the media were “The Tsunami” and the “discovery of the North”, as though we had ignored, and in fact we did ignore the areas of Italy that became visible because of the (largely unexpected) vote. We had thought it was, as to its social and political structure, “naturally” part of the contemporary European setting. It is not.

And as to the question about the future of Italy. Berlusconi has his “vision” and plans. Among his followers there are probably different visions and plans. The rest of us are worried. But it is not easy to predict the future dynamics.

Werner Perger

He may even have a project or a plan, but we won’t find out tonight. You said Italians cannot ignore Europe. Europe better not ignore Italy and the development that we are observing. There is this party called the Neofascist Party or has been called the Neofascist Party that in this name goes back to history. There is another one that is new, that has no history, that is the Lega Nord. Looking at these two parties from outside one has the feeling that especially looking at the xenophobic platform that the Lega Nord follows, that the Lega is even more of a fascist party than the former neofascists who some commentators start to call post-fascists like they used in the 1970’s or 1980’s to call the communists the post-communist party. Do we see here a former fascist party that has turned into a democratic party? Or is it a fascist party with a human face in alluding to this British term of compassionate conservatism? Do we have here a compassionate fascism which then is playing a front for us with two nice guys who are conservative, but who also pay a visit to the Jewish community in Rome or who denounce anti-Semitism like Fini did in the Turin book fair business? But the rest of them are still the old guys, and also they are working together with Lega Nord. They need not be so much fascist anymore because the Lega does this business anyway. I am saying this, but there is a question mark behind that.

Laura Balbo

It is the words *fascism* and *neofascism* which summarize some of their attitudes. But I would rather use other words and this I consider the most serious threat we face, *xenophobic* attitudes, *racist* attitudes. Fini and his party in particular are the ones who in the coalition support social policies, welfare. They are keen to build a welfare system, they have plans about the future. As to the Lega, I don’t think they consider fascism in terms of its historical tradition or legacy, their culture and values are “traditional”, they look backwards, at the past. But of course they have the most openly aggressive “anti-immigrant” policies. They have built their own vision as a “local” heritage they want to preserve. They want to be visible, stronger, and coherent: their part of the country is what matters to them. What worries me about the Lega is this very particularistic and outdated vision of the country and of the future. But I don’t think that the two that you mentioned necessarily go together: they don’t have a common background. Of course, in politics everything is possible. So I wouldn’t deny the possibility that at some point for electoral reasons, to gain support, or for some immediately “political” alliance they might go together.

Werner Perger

It is a reaction to new problems.

Laura Balbo

Yes indeed. They are afraid of new problems, of change more generally. So they address what is happening around them without any understanding, or vision, of *today and tomorrow*. It is not the fascism of the 1920’s and 1930’s, the entire (economic, political, cultural) scenario is different, of course. It may be a “new fascism”, if we want to call it like this, but it is a different attitude of discriminatory attitudes, violence in many cases, and xenophobia which is the main element. I think this is very dangerous and it has to be seen as that in the present Italian context. I wouldn’t

connect the two, the Fascist past and the present attitudes, in simplified terms. I also wish to add that we need to pay attention to new, “contemporary” elements of the picture, the present political and cultural extreme-right parties and movements in Europe.

Werner Perger

Okay, let’s leave it at this for the moment. I am turning to Fernando. It is definitely more complicated, also because nobody there calls himself or herself a fascist and being proud of fascism. But the PP historically does go back to the last people who did work for Franco, worked under Franco. One of Franco’s ministers is still a grand old man of the PP, and is one of the more liberal ones in the PP. How much of the past is still there? The Spanish Popular Party has been considered for a long time or still is considered among the European Christian Democrats as the right-wing of the European conservative party family. And this was especially the case under the second government of Aznar.

Fernando Vallespín Oña

Spain has a peculiarity, which is that we have two cleavages, not just one as the rest of Europe. In the rest of Europe the main cleavage is still left and right. But in Spain we have another cleavage which is *Españolismo* vs. peripheric nationalism, the regional nationalisms. And that makes things very complicated because you might be a perfect “progressive” if you follow the left-right scale, but still vote for the PP because, regarding the nationalist issue, you are closer to them. That is what happens to a large part of the Spanish urban middle classes, who are already sick of listening to the continuous complains of the Basque and Catalan nationalists. People, without being very political, ordinary people who are sick of keeping on with that discourse of we want more and more, and particularly if they are the wealthiest regions of Spain. If you look at the Basque Statute of Autonomy I don’t know what else we could give them except maybe independence. They have achieved the Lega’s ideal which is to keep the money to themselves, which is really incredible. At least the Catalans give a large amount of money to the rest of the country. They distribute, but not the Basques. Not Spanish nationalism necessarily, but a large amount of our citizens believe, that we should really think about something else, discuss something else, we want to discuss ordinary political issues, not just identity issues. But they are still there and you have to negotiate with them. That’s mainly the problem. It is very important to know this, because the key issue of the right is precisely Spanish nationalism.

As you know, radical nationalism even if it’s Spanish, Catalan, or Basque, has more to do with fascism than anything else. If I would have to pick up one of the defining characteristics of fascism this would be radical nationalism. It justifies everything. In the name of the country you are allowed to do whatever you think fit if it’s for the fatherland. That is one of the key elements. Of course, there are other elements to Fascism, like Führerprinzip, authoritarian rule, to create a corporate society with trade unions that are controlled by the state, but still being friendly towards the workers. The sensitive issue has to do with identities nowadays in Europe and has a lot to do with immigration on the one hand. And it also has to do a lot with a certain malaise with the future, we are in front of a new *Unbehagen in der Kultur*, to put it in Freudian terms.

What happened in these last times, and politicians don’t really perceive this as clearly as they should, is that the future has collapsed into the present. We got rid of the idea of Progress, with capital P. The future has always been looked at as something where most of our contradictions would be finally reconciled, where there would be a better man, a better society, where the task of the present was to achieve a better future for our children. But nowadays we are afraid of the future. The future has turned from being the promise of paradise to being the representation of all evils, with climate change and other menaces. And what happens if we don’t believe in the future? We become anxious in order not to lose our privileges. In Spain we have a saying which is, “Holy Virgin, let me stay as I am”. I don’t want to be better, but please I don’t want to lose what I have. Most of the societies in the developed West think like that, because they are afraid of competitiveness in this new global society, they are afraid of losing their collective identities through immigration, they are afraid of losing the securities of the welfare state, they are afraid of everything. And now they are afraid also of climate change. That’s the end of a certain political discourse that has accompanied the West since the Enlightenment. What happens then politically? In Spanish we have the distinction between *conservadurismo* and *conservacionismo*. I think we are all “conservationists” now. If you are a *conservacionista*, that means that you take care of the things that ought to be cared about. Whereas if you are a “conservative” you simply accept what is there. We live in a new “conservationist” era, which can be either conservative or progressive. “Progressive conservationism” I would define as trying to solve our problems using instruments beyond the nation-state, interacting national governments through the European Union and trying to face cosmopolitanism in a positive way. “Conservationists” who are “conservative”, on the other hand, find the only solution to their problems in the classical way, which implies a return to the state. If you are afraid, if you are anxious, the only thing that can calm your anxiety is the security of the state. Back to the borders, then, and to the soothing warmth of traditional identities.

Werner Perger

The preservation of structures.

Fernando Vallespín Oña

Exactly. Go back to the state because you believe that's the only thing that can really protect you. All those movements want borders back to feel more secure. That's what happened paradoxically with Sarkozy, what is happening all over the European Union. We are all reorganizing our borders. All our identity policies are getting back to a discourse of national history. We have forgotten the idea of a new Europe and of deepening the European unity. That is all part of this malaise with the future. Like Europe during the 1930's, the 1930's also were very difficult times. There was also no future for many, or so it was understood. We will have to deal with the idea of the future and how to deal with it in the present.

Werner Perger

What you describe is indeed a problem in all the European societies. All have different histories. My question is talking about Spain, how much of the historical answers to the historical fears then in the 1930's do we see in nowadays' more complex situation?

Fernando Vallespín Oña

The interesting thing about how Spain dealt with the civil war and particularly the years of Francoism which were bitter, was not through remembering, but through forgetting. Precisely because we remembered, we decided to forget. We remembered how bad it had been. We initiated a politics of forgetting. What does it mean? It means that we decided not to make the interpretation of history a political issue, at least in the beginning in the early 1970's. Let's not talk about the civil war because if we start talking about the civil war then we split the country in two again. So the best thing is to say, let's look at the future. The future was bright. We will enter into the European Community. We will become a democratic country. We will be "normalized". At last, we will be a normal European country. We did not look at the past. Because if we look at the past there is not future. But on the other hand, not politically but socially, people did remember those times. For the whole film industry in Spain there was practically just one subject, the civil war through the eyes of those who lost the war. So we practiced an *anamnetic* history, giving voice to those whose voice had been silenced for so long. It evolved spontaneously throughout society. We started printing books on the civil war, for instance, on someone who lived in a village during the early years of the post-war period in Spain, how the family was being affected by the fact that they were on the Republican side during the war and so on. So in a certain sense we did go back to the past.

Werner Perger

Maybe you should mention here that right after the civil war more people have been killed by the fascists than during the war.

Question

I would like to ask a question about the relationship between religion and fascism. What about ethics and forgiveness, and the role of the church in this period? And what I found is the relation between the regions which are rich and others which have to be fed something. I disagree with Belgium because there is also the argument of the Flamish ethnic group being in the economically more prosperous area who have not the political influence. But the relation wealth to political power is interesting. In Italy we have also the regional disparity in development. Is religion and the national identity and the regional identity the reason of underdevelopment?

Question

I am thinking about the young people in Spain and Italy. I am thinking about what is taught in the schools, not what is published in books. I would like to know what young Italians and young Spanish people, ordinary people who are not intellectuals, whose families are not intellectual are taught about the fascist past. You seem to have suggested that there was a new orthodoxy being taught in Spain, the orthodoxy of the underdog, the orthodoxy of the non-fascist. It has obviously been an interesting question in France recently, and of course in Russia there has been a new move in public education in terms of what people learn about Stalinism.

Question

The role of the King in Spain. From what I have heard he is really not the person that is allowed to be criticized. I heard that Zapatero was forming new laws about the history, about coming to terms with history, getting all the fascist symbols away. What is the perception in the population? How do people feel about this?

Laura Balbo

What are young people taught? That is very simple, nothing. They know more about the Romans or the Etruscans than about recent history. For a number of reasons, it is complicated to go back to a long history. Some of the questions we discuss here, most young people in Italy would not understand. We cannot address this issue here, but it is important to say that new generations have not the same perspective, the same “choice” as to what to remember, how to remember, and how to look at the future.

Werner Perger

So fascism is not a taboo for young people as it is in Germany for instance?

Laura Balbo

They don't know what it means. Not adequately I mean, only stereotypes. There are people who are concerned and “work” with issues of the past, but you are right, it is mostly intellectuals. “Ordinary people” have other priorities, other issues they are concerned with. Germany has gone through a very different procedure. A number of examples are very important. But we have done nothing similar.

It seems to me now that the Lega is much closer to what you were describing in terms of “regional nationalism”. They want to keep their resources to themselves. The Lega is against state policies as to taxes and public money. They say, *we* are hard workers, *we* don't want to give our money to the South, the “Mezzogiorno”: *they* are lazy, *they* are criminals. The mafia, Napoli, etc.

I think we should not ignore that this is highly meaningful in an European perspective. Many countries now try to react to the issue of migration by saying we have to close the borders. But the feeling is that if we close the borders and we live among ourselves things might be better, we will at least keep our wealth and privileges. The issue of immigration in these terms (Fortress Europe as we used to define it) is widely accepted or at least talked about. This is crucial in terms of our common future. And of course it cannot be addressed simply at the national or even at the European level.

Werner Perger

The old European xenophobia?

Laura Balbo

It may be a new feeling of insecurity, of being afraid of losing what we consider as “ours”. And it is easy enough to say that it is the immigrants' fault. After all we thought of ourselves as a rich part of the world, things were going well, progress, etc. And now there is this feeling of insecurity.

Werner Perger

You are doing studies on the emerging European identity. Is xenophobia and being afraid of the future part of this emerging European identity?

Laura Balbo

I am afraid it is. There are polls and statistics, whatever statistics and averages may mean. There are a number of common European projects on this issue and yes, racism is not only more widespread, it is more legitimate. People define themselves as racist. Many of those who are the “political elites” share such a language and more widely (in Teun van Dijk's and Ruth Wodak's terms) the *racist discourse*. Of course it has to do with fascism. I think, though, that the racism which has come back in Europe must also be seen in new terms.

Werner Perger

I think we shall not forget the question about the churches and the interaction with what experience now in these countries. But first I would like you to answer the one question about what is taught about the past. And also you might refer to the fact that in Spain in the last four years there has been a law about the past and thinking about the past.

Fernando Vallespín Oña

Yes, but it didn't have much impact. It was part of a “politics of symbolism”.

What are people taught? It depends in which autonomous community you are, what you are taught about what Spain is or your whole region is. We have seventeen different school systems within the country. We have seventeen autonomous communities. If you live in the Basque Country you probably have a discourse on Spanish history which goes like this: We are Basques, we are the oldest people in Europe – which is true-, we were not Romanized, that makes us unique within the Iberian peninsula, we have our own language, we have our own race, and we were invaded by Spain – which is not true. If you go to a Catalan school what they probably would say is this: We had our freedoms which were shut down after the Spanish war of succession in 1701, we lost our freedom, and we are slowly trying to have them back. So is Spanish history also from the perspective of regional politics in Andalusia. They try to give a lot of strength to the Arabic past which was glorious in a way, but it matters to them more than it matters to someone in Madrid. Regional educational policies are a problem not just because it dissolves the idea of the state, the nation, but also because it interacts with other discourses. I remember the Spanish Ambassador to Andorra who told me a story. He had met a friend in Andorra, where they have both systems, the French and the Spanish educational system. His parents sent him in the morning to the Spanish school, and in the evening to the French. He said that those battles that we had won in the morning we lost in the evening. That is the way that history is being taught. It depends very much on the perspective. This government tries to overcome that by creating civic education as a compulsory study at school. This was also very contentious, particular with the church. The church thought that the main morality of those studies was against real morals. For instance, kids are taught that gays aren't bad, values of a plural society. The church reacted very aggressively against that.

There were two things which were attacked very much on part of the right which is civic education and the Law of the Memory. In this latter case, the point was that we somehow had already decided to forget, so let's not try to bring it back.

Werner Perger

One could say it is none of the business of the church. But they made it their business with what argument.

Fernando Vallespín Oña

With the argument that Francoism was national Catholicism. It was a way of recalling the role of the church during the civil war and after the civil war.

But people don't care that much, because Spain is a curious place in terms of religion. In our institute we make a lot of polls on religion. The results are that 77% of the Spaniards think of themselves as Catholics, but only 67% believe in god. Interesting, right? Only 25% do really practice their religion. So Catholicism is more a sociological fact than a feeling. We are catholic but not religious, and this is not a paradox. The Eurobarometer posed a question, what is the importance of god in your life? We were far below the average degree of religiosity in Europe. We were only beaten as less religious by the Czechs, the Danish, then Latvia, and we had the same percentage as Sweden. And the church in losing ground constantly. But the church in Spain has lots of interests, particularly within the educational system. Once we have given the capacity for every region, every Autonomous Community, to decide their own educational system, it depends on who governs that region that the church has more or less influence within the schooling system. In Madrid the church has a lot of power, but it is not the same thing in Catalonia or in the South, which has always been a socialist region.

Spanish society has changed so much during the last 40 years that someone who has been in Spain 40 years ago would not recognize it now. 64% are in favor of gay marriage. In France it is 49%. Maybe for other reasons. It is not because of tolerance. It is because gays decided to come out and then all the families realized they have a gay person in the family. And, considering the value of the family in Spain, they needed to be "legalized". But it is a way of normalizing a certain society and making it appear more pragmatic. In that sense we made a big revolution in terms of values.

Werner Perger

But then, of course, by definition the churches cannot be as pragmatic. They are an ideological or theological institution.

Fernando Vallespín Oña

Well, but if you give them money as this government has done?

Werner Perger

Well, that is pragmatic. They take the money from the state.

Fernando Vallespín Oña

I wanted to go back to the King. The monarchy is one of our marvelous things and has a lot to do with memory. Juan Carlos was appointed by Franco to be his successor. So that does not give him a lot of legitimacy. The constitution was approved and then we decided not to care too much about it. First, he did a very marvelous job during the transition. We decided pragmatically that if we start again thinking that we should be a republic or a monarchy or whatever, we would spend too much time, and it is in the end an absurd discussion. And he is a very inexpensive monarch. It doesn't cost a lot. Though the main issue is, that the monarch doesn't have any political power whatsoever, he just represents the country. And for a country that is so complex as ours to have a family representing the whole can be functional. But you are right. There is a certain taboo that was broken up during these last four years. When the United Left made demonstrations, they went with the flag of the republic. The leader of the United Left always ended his meetings saying, *salud y republica*. In Spain you are not a monarchist or a non-monarchist, you are called *Juancarlista* in the sense that we are in favor of Juan Carlos. Let's see what happens afterwards. The fact is that we don't see them in ordinary politics.

Werner Perger

There is this anecdote which happens to be true. When Juan Carlos was met by a communist mayor, the mayor presented himself by saying, your majesty, I am a republican, and he answered, so am I.

The church in Italy reacted almost triumphantly to the result of the election. A spokesman of the Bishop's Conference or of the Vatican was quoted as saying, "The Italian vote shows how isolated Zapatero is in Spain." That shows that the right in Italy is apparently larger than just in politics.

Laura Balbo

It is such a different situation from Spain. Politicians operate so to establish good connections with the Vatican (also the left does). In politics you have to consider this strong power, this "pervasive" institution. This is a typical trait of Italy. It is true that Zapatero has become a symbol. The issue of gay rights in Italy is one step forward, then stop for years, then another little step, then go back. And the church has actively opposed considering Zapatero as a symbol or as a dangerous example. This has become a symbol of what a family should never be like. And now we are speaking about family all the time, politicians and the clergy, as though we had one kind of family. But everybody knows there are different ways of living together and performing what traditionally families used to be.

Werner Perger

But the traditional family is the family with one bread winner and the woman stays at home?

Laura Balbo

Not necessarily that. But of course different roles, and of course one man and one woman, and they should stay together all their life (even though there are increasing numbers of divorces, people who do not marry in church, and other similar trends). Increasing numbers do not define themselves as catholics, they do not practice religion, they just don't care. But this would be a long analysis of a complex situation.

Since you mentioned money. That is very important in Italy. When people try to figure out how much money goes to the church, this is an enormous amount of money. They don't have to pay taxes for an enormous number of properties. Of course, the buildings of the church, but also where the people connected with the church live, all their activities such as teaching and service provisions; but they also operate hotels, bed and breakfast facilities, etc. It all these are defined the property of the church, no taxes. These days we are giving our documents as to our income taxes. And if you don't indicate something else 8% for every 1.000 euros go to the catholic church automatically. On television we see continuously how generous and clever these clergymen and nuns are and why we should give them money because they do wonderful things all over the world. Which may be true, but we don't control what is done with that money. And it is really an enormous amount.

Just a joke. On a television show recently a young black man, a priest in Rome, was explaining to the interviewer that in growing numbers priests are now immigrants. It is the same, he said, as for other jobs the Italians don't want to do any longer. That was a very good way of putting a larger problem.

Question

I find very interesting that masculine culture, nationality for your country, that is very strong in Italy. And Berlusconi is master in it. While in Spain Zapatero is very strong for feminists. What can we learn? How is it possible to change from a masculine into a feminine culture?

Laura Balbo

Zapatero was taken as an example because he did something “revolutionary”, having that number of (competent) women in his government. This issue has now a relevant symbolic value. Spain likes to show that they are changing things. We are not getting there. All our subsequent prime ministers, Prodi first and now Berlusconi, promised to do the same but did not. There are four women ministers in the present government, not in relevant, “male” areas. The same in the past in Prodi’s governments.

Many years ago I remember Giulio Andreotti saying that in organizing his government team he had to take into account members from different regions, different components in his party, pressures and expectations. “I can’t take into account women also.” It is as simple as that.

Werner Perger

We all have seen Carmen Chacon in front of the military. Of course, everybody is enthusiastic about that. But how much of it is symbolism? And how much is a serious change, an attack against machismo?

Fernando Vallespín Oña

It is more symbolism than anything else. But symbols are quite important because they give an image of what is possible in a society. So if girls at school look at politicians and see just as many women as men, or in business, they’ll probably think that they can also achieve those posts and will fight for it.

Werner Perger

How many CEO’s are female in Spain?

Fernando Vallespín Oña

Not many. This is still a more masculine area, but still they are approaching. So the girls can think of themselves as potentially being there. In that sense it is a revolution. But the revolution started far earlier. There are two things that have changed most in Spain throughout these last years. One is immigration and the other the role of women. There are now more women than men with a university degree, sixty out of a hundred students are women. For the last twenty years we had more women judges than men judges. So women are enlarging their presence overall in the country. The result is an enormous increase in violence against women. Men who can’t accept that women are free. So we are still very far from an equality situation. But Zapatero has had the guts to try.

Werner Perger

I think that he did also introduce a law that asked for a certain female percentage in the top management of companies. I want to end with another anecdote from a meeting of Zapatero with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin. It was two delegations. They were sitting in the Bundeskanzleramt and getting acquainted. Then this issue came up of this law of equality and a certain percentage that has to be female in top positions in business. Merkel was interested in this and asked Zapatero, what happens if they don’t follow this law. There was a moment of silence, as I was told. He looked around and said nothing, and everybody laughed and this was it.

I am not really trying to rap the discussion up. But I have to remind you that our two speakers had some very close observations to contribute. One was the people, and this is Italy, are not at ease with the future and that explains what is happening, what has happened. And Fernando told us that there was a similar situation in the 1930’s, but then he had to contribute the remark that the future has collapsed unto the presence. That is a scaring observation. I am afraid it is also true. In Italy the past seems to be catching up with the present. But maybe the present itself is something else. The present is not what present used to be. Laura was referring to the changing European identity and new elements in the European identity. So we have to watch out for new trends and we must not forget the past and check the trends of the present with the past, and then we have to act.

Laura Balbo

We have to be hopeful for the future. But let us remember that at present Spain is the only country in the European Union where there is a leftist government, and as such, courageous and innovative on many issues.

Werner Perger

Hope is the last thing to die. Thank you very much.