

FRANCO, JUAN CARLOS E IL MINISTRO AMERICANO

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Nella primavera del 1971, il ministro dei Trasporti statunitense John Volpe — noto politico cattolico, già governatore del Massachusetts — partì per l'Europa, su richiesta del presidente Richard Nixon. Il viaggio si svolse dal 23 maggio al 5 giugno e fu organizzato in modo da permettere al ministro di toccare tre Paesi: la Spagna, la Jugoslavia e la Francia. Sebbene gli intenti della visita fossero soprattutto tecnici, non mancarono interessanti contatti di natura politica con esponenti di rilievo dei governi dei Paesi visitati. Nel caso specifico della Spagna, Volpe ricevette un'accoglienza molto calorosa sulla scia degli scambi bilaterali diplomatici e personali che avevano assunto rilievo particolare a partire dal *tour* europeo di Nixon, nel settembre 1970, quando il presidente aveva toccato in nove giorni, oltre alla Spagna e alla Jugoslavia, anche l'Italia e l'Irlanda¹.

La politica statunitense, a cavallo tra gli anni Sessanta e Settanta, era attenta come sempre all'importanza strategica della Spagna e, in considerazione dell'età avanzata di Franco e del suo stato di salute, molto interessata a contribuire nei limiti del possibile a una transizione ordinata verso la situazione che si sarebbe creata nel Paese alla morte del Caudillo. Basti ricordare, a tale proposito, la missione a Madrid del generale Vernon Walters, vicecapo della Cia, nel febbraio 1971. In quell'occasione, Franco aveva assicurato all'americano che il passaggio dei poteri a Juan Carlos si sarebbe svolto senza incidenti, grazie anche agli impegni precisi assunti dall'esercito. Appena prima, nell'ultima settimana di gen-

1. Per un contributo recente sul tema, si veda B.N. Liedtke, *Spain and the United States, 1945-1975*, in S. Balfour, P. Preston (eds.), *Spain and the Great Powers in the Twentieth Century*, London-New York, Routledge, 1999, pp. 229-244 (in particolare, pp. 241-242); anche W. Bundy, *A Tangled Web. The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1998, p. 195 (e in generale l'ampia bibliografia citata, pp. 607-620).

naio, Juan Carlos e la principessa Sofia avevano compiuto una visita ufficiale a Washington. Alcune interviste rilasciate alla stampa avevano orientato in modo positivo l'opinione pubblica statunitense nei confronti della coppia e indotto i *policy-makers* dell'Amministrazione a guardare con favore alla figura del successore designato di Franco².

Il viaggio di Volpe dimostrò che il settore dei trasporti forniva ottimi strumenti per la cooperazione internazionale, e dunque per l'esercizio di influenza indiretta sui Paesi europei, e offrì utili elementi di rassicurazione a Nixon (doc. 2-3) e a Henry Kissinger, allora National Security Advisor del presidente (doc. 1), sulla personalità e sulle capacità di Juan Carlos (doc. 5), oltre che sugli orientamenti in politica internazionale di Franco (doc. 4) e del ministro degli Esteri Gregorio López Bravo. Si riporta qui la trascrizione dei documenti meno tecnici presentati da Volpe al ritorno negli Stati Uniti. Gli originali sono consultabili presso i National Archives di College Park nel fondo *Nixon Presidential Materials Staff*, che raccoglie le carte dell'Amministrazione Nixon³.

Documento 1: Memorandum for the President, Henry A. Kissinger to Richard M. Nixon, Washington, The White House, July 23, 1971, *confidential*, Secretary Volpe's Report on His European Trip.

Secretary John Volpe's report (Tab A) on the trip he recently undertook to Europe at your request provides firm evidence that the transportation field can be a useful instrument for expanding international cooperation. Spain and Yugoslavia welcomed Volpe's visits, eagerly exchanging views on our experience and expressing hopes for US assistance. In Spain the Secretary was

2. P. Preston, *Franco. A Biography*, London, HarperCollins, 1993, pp. 752-55 (e le fonti citate); A. Viñas, *Breaking the Shackles from the Past: Spanish Foreign Policy from Franco to Felipe González*, in *Spain and the Great Powers*, cit., pp. 245-67 (in particolare pp. 245-47). Per un orientamento generale, oltre all'abbondante bibliografia citata dagli Autori ricordati, cfr. anche i contributi meno recenti, ma sempre ricchi di spunti, offerti da A. Viñas e Altri, *Política comercial exterior en España (1931-1975)*, Madrid, Servicios de Estudios Económicos, 1979; A. Marquina Barrio, *España en la política de seguridad occidental (1939-1986)*, Madrid, EME, 1986, 3 voll.; J. Tusell, A. Soto (a cura di), *Historia de la transición, 1975-1986*, Madrid, (editore??)1986; M. Espadas Burgos, *Franquismo y política exterior*, Madrid, Rialp, 1988; G.F. Niehus, *Aussenpolitik im Wandel. Die Aussenpolitik Spaniens von der Diktatur Francos zur parlamentarischen Demokratie*, Frankfurt am Main, Vervuert, 1989, 2 voll.

3. National Archives, *Nixon Presidential Materials Staff*, White House Special Files: White House Central Files, Subject Files - Confidential Files, box 33, [CF] FO8, International Travel, 1971 [1971-74]. (Declassified: Authority EO12958; By JW, NARA; 10/21/1999.) Si coglie qui l'occasione per esprimere un ringraziamento caloroso a Bill Joyner, archivista presso i National Archives di College Park ed esperto del «Nixon Project», che nell'ottobre 1999 ha agevolato con grande cortesia e disponibilità l'avvio di un progetto di ricerca sulle relazioni tra la politica estera dell'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Europa, diretto dall'autore di queste righe presso l'Università di Urbino.

impressed by Prince Juan Carlos' knowledge and interest in transportation matters, as well as by his friendliness toward the US. Our work on a tracked air cushion vehicle, an Atlantic aeronautical communications satellite and US transportation investment decision-making are topics which the Spanish will want to pursue with us in a forthcoming US visit by Minister of Public Works de la Mora [... 7 lines on Yugoslavia]. Also discussing general international questions, Secretary Volpe had a cordial meeting with General Franco and reviewed the Middle East with Spanish Foreign Minister López Bravo and Yugoslav Prime Minister Ribic, both of whom urged the US to press for an agreement on the Suez Canal. [... 2 lines on Yugoslavia and 9 lines on France]. Respectfully, Henry A. Kissinger.

Documento 2: Letter, John A. Volpe to Richard M. Nixon, Washington, Department of Transportation, June 30, 1971.

Dear Mr. President: I had intended to deliver this report to you in person and to discuss it briefly with you. Since time is passing, however, and the information becomes less valuable, I thought I would send it to you immediately. Warm personal regards. Respectfully, John A. Volpe. (Attachment)

Documento 3: Memorandum for the President, John A. Volpe to Richard M. Nixon, Washington, Department of Transportation, s.d.

I wanted to report to you as soon as possible on my recent trip to Europe, which I found to be most fruitful and productive not only in the field of transportation activities but also in terms of improving our relations with the countries I visited. I was in Europe from May 23 to June 5 and during that time I visited Spain, Yugoslavia, and France.

In Spain I visited with Prince Juan Carlos in response to the invitation he extended to me during his visit to the White House on January 27. I met with Generalissimo Franco for an overall discussion largely focusing on International Affairs. I also met with Foreign Minister López Bravo, and, of course, with both the Minister of Public Works and the Aviation Ministry.

[... 2 paragraphs on Yugoslavia and France]

A summary of my experiences and observations in each country follows. John Volpe.

SPAIN:

One of the highlights of my visit to Spain was a conversation with Generalissimo Franco. I met for just over a half-hour with Generalissimo Franco and was accompanied by Ambassador Hill and Public Works Minister, Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora. I found the Generalissimo to be alert, apparently in relatively good health for a man of his age, and very anxious to talk about not only Spanish-American relations but also about problems of the rest of the world, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. He spoke in Spanish and Minister de la Mora translated.

The Generalissimo expressed genuine understanding of the United States' position in Indo-China and expressed the hope that you would continue your program of Vietnamization and withdrawal in such a way that a Communist take-over could be prevented. He inquired into the matter of Chinese "ping-pong" diplomacy and expressed the reservation, without being critical, that we keep our eyes open in dealing with the Chinese Communists because of what he considered their potential for double-talk. He also expressed great interest in the Middle East situation, as described in the attached memorandum of conversation prepared by Ambassador Hill.

In my meeting of almost an hour with Prince Juan Carlos, I was accompanied by Ambassador Hill only. The Prince expressed again his deep gratitude for the wonderful courtesies shown him during his visit to the United States, especially by you. He manifested a genuine interest in and friendliness for America. We did not discuss foreign policy at all, but the Prince was tremendously interested and knowledgeable in transportation matters.

He expressed the view that although the United States probably has greater problems in the area of public transportation, Madrid, Barcelona, and other Spanish cities are likewise experiencing serious problems in traffic congestion, air pollution, etc., and he hoped that they could learn from the way America was dealing with these problems.

I discussed with him the public transportation legislation achieved by this Administration as well as the development of low emission turbine engines, and tracked air cushion vehicles, because of his great concern with the problem of air pollution in Madrid. I explained to him how new rapid transit cars were being developed in the United States by aero-space companies and how automated systems would be coming into increasing use, with the BART system in San Francisco serving as a kind of testing ground of America's acceptance of public transportation. I also related to him my experiences during National Transportation Week in personally examining all the modes of transportation. For example, I told him of my visit to the DOT testing facility at Pueblo, Colorado where we are experimenting with a TACV vehicle at speeds up to 150 miles per hour and have already started the design and construction of a prototype vehicle capable of speeds up to 300 miles per hour. The Prince was tremendously interested in this project because of his understanding of the need for a better transportation connection between Madrid and Paris, which is characterized over half the distance by very tortuous mountain terrain. The Prince wanted to know whether costly tunnel construction was the only possibility or whether TACV has the capacity to negotiate mountain curves and handle medium grades without major excavation. As I promised the Prince, my Department is sending him additional material providing information on the capacity of TACV.

The Prince expressed gratitude for the technical advice and assistance being given by the FAA to the Spanish civil air authorities and hoped for an even greater exchange in the area of public transportation.

To conclude, I found Prince Carlos to be a very serious and articulate young man – not at all a «playboy» type – with a genuine commitment to his people, his country and its place in the world. His approach to domestic problems seemed quite modern and sophisticated and he manifested sincere concern as to how the life of the Spanish people could be improved.

I was accompanied in my meeting with Foreign Minister Gregorio López Bravo by Ambassador Hill who excused himself after a few moments in order to allow for a more candid discussion between the Minister and myself. The Minister expressed great personal admiration for you and for the wonderful kindness you showed him during his visit to the States.

On Vietnam, he seemed more inclined than Generalissimo Franco to see the United States get out sooner, although with honor.

He was extremely interested in the Middle East situation and I asked him for his opinion regarding the prospects of President Sadat of Egypt and the general situation there. He felt that there was definitely a hopeful climate for settlement and that Sadat was staking his reputation and career on successful negotiations and a peaceful settlement. He felt that all this would fail if the United States did not press Israel to settle as rapidly as possible and that an agreement on the Suez Canal must be reached within the next three months. Otherwise he felt the chances for peace would be lost and Sadat might be overthrown. He expressed the view that reopening the Canal was the first step but that the United States, in addition to pressuring Israel to be more flexible generally, might utilize its influence in the Common Market possibly to offer Israel preferential trade arrangements such as those enjoyed by Spain.

Finally, I was able to spend considerable time discussing specific transportation problems with my counterparts in the Spanish Government. Because of the way transportation matters are organized in Spain, two senior Spanish officials were involved: the Minister of Public Works, Fernández de la Mora, and the Minister of Air, General Julio Salvador. Both are thoughtful and well informed men, and in my view the discussions were highly useful. De la Mora showed considerable concern about how rational transportation investment decisions can be made in a system of mixed public and private transport ownership. He was deeply interested also in methods of public transport financing (e.g., general revenues versus trust funds supported by user charges). I went at length with him into U.S. experience and policy in transport development, our current problems in the several modes, and our expectations for the future. I extended to the Minister an invitation to visit the United States and he graciously accepted. On the air side, I found General Salvador interest primarily in the modernization of Spanish air traffic control system (we are helping actively in Spanish planning for this), and in the development of an Atlantic aeronautical communications satellite (he is among the leaders in European aerospace circles and was in Washington last week, on behalf of the European Space Conference, to explore this satellite question. The meeting was highly successful and I am attaching a brief report [*not printed*]. The discussions will continue in Madrid on August 3.)

As a sidelight on the Spain visit, I was honored to participate with Ambassador Hill in commemorative ceremonies, sponsored by the U.S. Navy League, at the Admiral Farragut Monument on the island of Menorca, appropriately on Memorial Day in the United States.

Throughout my visit I found Ambassador Hill to be a tremendous asset to U.S.-Spanish relations. He is extremely competent and dedicated and highly regarded by Spanish and other Europeans.

[FRANCE: ...]

Documento 4: Memorandum of Conversation, confidential (drafted by Ambassador Hill). Participants: Ambassador Robert C. Hill; Generalissimo Francisco Franco, Spanish Chief of State; Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, Minister of Public Works; John A. Volpe, Secretary of Transportation. Date & Place: May 26, 1971 – Pardo Palace. [Distribution ...]

General Franco received Secretary Volpe for thirty-one minutes today. He greeted the Secretary with great courtesy and looked remarkably well and alert on this first occasion since I had seen him since his recent illness.

Secretary Volpe extended the best wishes of President Nixon and his family to the Chief of State and Mrs. Franco. The General was most grateful and offered reciprocal wishes. Public Works Minister Fernández de la Mora reminded General Franco that Secretary Volpe was the former Governor of Massachusetts, a leading Catholic layman, and a person held in high regard by all. Secretary Volpe expressed his gratitude and had an exchange of views with the Chief of State on problems in the field of transportation. He reviewed his meeting yesterday with the Minister of Public Works on these issues and told General Franco that he had invited Fernández de la Mora to the United States whenever General Franco thought it was appropriate for the Minister to come.

General Franco raised the issues of the Middle East and U.S. policy toward mainland China. Secretary Volpe answered the General's question telling him that as a member of the President's Cabinet he was able to draw on Cabinet meeting briefings regarding these matters. General Franco was particularly interested in whether the U.S. considers that conditions in the UAR have improved since the attempted coup and whether the Soviets would seek to knock off Sadat if he did not behave in ways they thought appropriate. Secretary Volpe responded to these questions by quoting Secretary Roger's briefing to the Cabinet on his return from his recent Middle Eastern trip.

In an unusually warm farewell, General Franco thanked Secretary Volpe for his visit and said «You have made another friend in Spain».

Documento 5: Memorandum of Conversation, limited official use (drafted by Ambassador Hill). Participants: Ambassador Robert C. Hill; Prince Juan Carlos; John A. Volpe, Secretary of Transportation. Date & Place: May 26, 1971 – Zarzuela Palace. [Distribution ...]

Prince Juan Carlos received Secretary Volpe for fifty-six minutes. The Prince was very articulate and full of information on transportation matters.

He showed a great interest in rapid transit problems in and between major cities. Secretary Volpe discussed with him such areas as Boston-New York, New York-Washington, Chicago-Milwaukee, Detroit, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

The Prince was interested in the use of helicopters for transportation. Secretary Volpe said he did not see a great increased use of helicopters for mass movement except for such special tasks as quick removal of automobile accidents. They talked about special lanes for bus travel and vertical take-off aircraft. The Secretary made the point that much work had yet to be done on the vertical take-off aircraft.

The Prince covered the transportation problems of Barcelona and Madrid, Spain's two largest cities. He thanked the Secretary for his timely visit and said the exchange of technicians in the transportation field was most useful for Spain.

