

Fascism mars Spanish reform, says GTF

By JIM GERSBACH
Of the Emerald

Military uprisings — like the thwarted coup Feb. 23 — may be the price Spain has to pay in its transformation from the fascist rule of Generalissimo Francisco Franco.

So says Ignacio Martinez, a University Graduate Teaching Fellow in Spanish and a native of Spain's impoverished southern region of Andalusia, a stronghold of leftist political activity.

"We've had the ghost of a coup hanging over our heads since the death of Franco because after his death in 1975, we didn't have a violent break with fascism," Martinez says.

Fascists remain in the military and government, Martinez says.

"High officers in Spain are old people, mostly over 60. They won the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) with Franco. They don't want a change in regime."

Leaders of Monday's coup were army officers who had already spoken out against Spanish democracy, Martinez says. Jaime Millan del Bosch, the officer who sent troops into the streets of Valencia, was arrested

two years ago for calling Spain's reformist Minister of the Army a traitor.

Like the rebel officers involved in the coup attempt, Spain's other Francoists are trying to preserve their power and re-institute fascist ideals in Spain, Martinez says. Those ideals include belief in a strong central government, cultural adherence to Castile and the Castilian language and rejection of democracy, he says.

The king's former prime minister Suarez returned traditional rights and privileges to the Basques and Catalans Franco took away in the name of Spanish unity. That has threatened Franco's old supporters, who have had little backing in recent national elections.

Armed fascist movements such as the *Fuerza Nueva* patrol areas in Spanish cities, harassing and attacking leftists, Martinez says.

"They are very few in number, extremely young but very active," Martinez says. Most are 15 to 21-years-old and from upper-middle class families.

"There are very few groups seeking violent change on either the extreme left or right," Martinez adds.

"The majority of Spaniards are leftist oriented," Martinez says, and willing to try peaceful political change in Spain, including the country's sizable Socialist and Communist parties which Martinez says control most Spanish municipal governments.

Since Franco's death, the Catholic Church, a strong Franco supporter, has split with individual priests sympathizing with fascist, centrist or leftist factions.

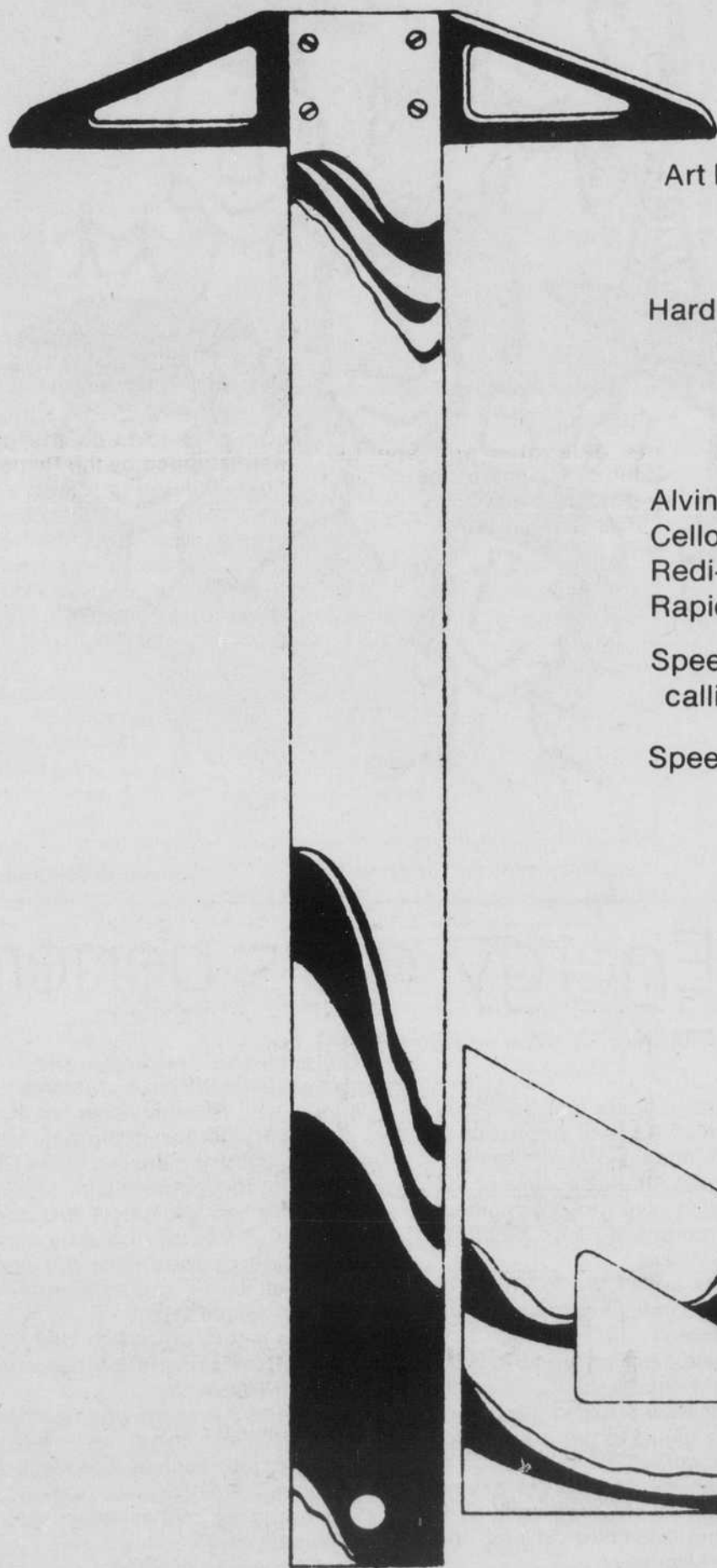
But the central government remains in the hands of the center right, protected by King Juan Carlos, whose personal intervention helped quell the recent coup attempt.

For that reason, while "almost nobody in Spain is a monarchist, we all respect the king's work," Martinez says.

Still, as the coup showed, Spain has a "very shaky democracy," Martinez says.

But he remains guardedly optimistic about Spain's future. "We have a very violent history, but this time I think we'll make it peacefully."

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