Epilogue: Duplicity Rewarded
(1945–1953)

In the five difficult years that lay ahead, Franco would succeed in covering the traces that would have implicated him too deeply in the Axis cause. The policy of guile and duplicity that he had followed over the previous five years was hardly a noble one, but it allowed him afterwards to point to the ways he had helped the Allies. If, on the other hand, it had been the Axis that won the war, then no doubt a book would have quickly appeared under the title *Franco and the Allied Stigma*, based on substance so light that Franco would have had no difficulty in dismissing it.

The Atlantic Charter of 14 August 1941, in its Article 3, had affirmed the right of every people to choose the form of government it desires, and the Yalta Agreement, of 12 February 1945, had promised assistance to the peoples of the former Axis satellites in order that they might solve their problems through free elections. On the occasion of the conference in San Francisco (25 April–26 June 1945) which established the United Nations, a delegation of Spanish Republicans attending the conference as observers attempted to introduce measures whereby the jurisdiction of the War Crimes Tribunal established by the Allies could be extended to cover crimes committed by Spanish Nationalist forces during the Civil War. Their attempts were futile, for not even the crimes that the Axis forces committed in Spain, notably the destruction of Guernica, were included in the charges presented at the Nuremberg Tribunal. On the other hand, the conference did adopt, on 19 June 1945, and by acclamation, a Mexican resolution which barred any state whose regime had been installed with the help of the armed forces of countries at war with the United Nations from membership in that body so long as that regime remained in power. Only Spain matched such a description. The resolution adopted in San Francisco was ratified
by the Three Powers in their final communiqué after the meeting in Potsdam (17 July–2 August 1945). This time the Spanish government was mentioned by name.

At Potsdam, Clement Attlee, who had won the British general elections on 7 July 1945, and had become prime minister on 27 July, replaced Churchill in mid-conference. He proceeded to follow a policy towards Spain much more conciliatory than might have been expected, in the light of his pro-Republican activities during the Civil War. Churchill, for his part, had evolved somewhat in the other direction. On 24 May 1944, in the House of Commons, Churchill had expressed his acknowledgement to Franco for not having taken advantage of the situation in 1940–2 when Allied fortunes were lowest. But when Franco, on 18 October, attempted a friendly gesture towards Churchill, by proposing in a letter a common front against Bolshevism, the prime minister answered him in hostile terms, reaffirming his loyalty to the Anglo-Soviet alliance which he considered a buttress of the new world organisation.1 Official British documents released in March 1975 show that Stalin tried to get British and US support in Potsdam in a bid to overthrow Franco, and that the move against Franco was cautiously welcomed by Truman,2 resisted by Churchill, and finally rejected by Attlee and his foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin. Churchill, according to the minutes, said he detested the Franco regime, but he saw difficulty in the proposal that the newly formed United Nations break off all relations with it. Truman said he would be happy to recognise a government other than Franco’s but it would be for Spain to settle that. A draft declaration singling out Spain for special rebuke was eventually drawn up but scrapped when Bevin objected to it, even though Bevin, too, was to cry out in the Commons, on 5 December 1945: ‘We detest this regime.’3

To offset such remarks, Franco’s press reminded the Spanish people of their good fortune. In the same month as Victory in Europe Day (VE Day), the Falange press announced: ‘The events which have come to pass in the world only confirm the clear-sightedness of the National Movement ... Spain has prepared herself for this moment and she can therefore view events with serenity.’4 Less serene was the Spanish government’s reaction a few weeks later to an incident in France. A train was passing through Chambéry in June 1945 when it was attacked by a crowd. Some 150 people were injured in the melee. According to the prevailing rumour, the train was transporting to Spain the last veterans of the Blue Division who had volunteered for the Blue Legion. It was also said that all kinds of precautions had been taken by the French