Dear Carleton Alumni,

Spain’s persistently democratic polity is a puzzle. Spanish democracy has prospered under conditions that would have split asunder any other country in another region of the world. It has dealt with the ever-present threat of Basque and Islamic terrorism and the challenge of keeping itself united as a plurinational, semi-federal country. Both the many complex legacies of the Civil War and the careful and somewhat fortuitous transition to democracy in the 1977-78 period, produced many compromises across political ideologies and national identities. Yet far from being a fragile democracy and a fragmented society, Spain is one of the most vibrant countries in Europe today.

Understanding this historical and political puzzle requires a close study, a personal journey through the regions of Spain. From the center where the concept of Spanish identity is strong, to the far-flung corners of the Basque Country where Euskera is heard more often than Castillian Spanish; from the administrative and industrial core of Madrid to the glories of the industrial past in Asturias and the Basque Country and the architectural marvels of newly redesigned urban spaces in Zaragoza and Bilbao, Spain is a mosaic democracy.

It is my distinct pleasure to join the alumni trip to Spain and to collaborate with a noted historian of the country, David Ringrose ’60. David’s expertise in 18th and 19th century Spain coupled with my interests and research experience in contemporary Spanish politics and economic development will offer the fullest range possible for appreciating the sights, sounds, and tastes of the Spanish regions we will visit. A stimulating experience for the senses and the intellect!

Al Montero
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