



# **“Historical Memory”,**

a Threat to Peace  
in Europe

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# **“Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe**

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1. Manipulated Memory or the Poison of Lies Hermann Tertsch del Valle Lersundi .....	5
2. History as a Political Weapon Francisco José Contreras .....	10
3. “Historical Memory” and the Rupture of the Spanish Democracy Stanley G. Payne .....	16
4. Historical Memory or the Ministry of Truth? Fernando Sánchez Dragó .....	28
5. “Usable Pasts”, “Incomplete Memories” and Political Practices Pedro Carlos González Cuevas .....	34
6. Was the Left-Wing Persecution of Catholics Equivalent to Genocide? Ángel David Martín Rubio .....	48
7. The Murdered Smile Alfonso Ussía .....	64
8. Memory of Destruction <i>versus</i> the Destruction of Memory Jesús Laínz .....	70
9. How Spain Avoided Entering the Second World War Luis E. Togores .....	80
10. Was the Postwar Repression Relentless on the Vanquished? Miguel Platón .....	96
11. Trial and Death of Lluís Companys: a Myth Javier Barrycoa .....	108
12. Did the Valley of the Fallen Serve as a Concentration Camp? Alberto Bárcena .....	116

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

### 13. About Reconciliation and Memory

José Manuel Otero Novas ..... 130

### 14. Was the Opposition to Francoism Democratic?

Jesús Palacios ..... 140

### 15. Did the Francoists Demand Amnesty?

Pedro Fernández Barbadillo..... 150

# Manipulated Memory or the Poison of Lies

**Hermann Tertsch del Valle Lersundi**

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**T**he Spanish Civil War deeply shocked the world for its cruelty, heroism, and the immense tragedy of the Spanish people torn by ideologies, fatal drifts, interests, and the omnipresence of hatred. Moreover, it was a prelude to the huge worldwide showdown that followed. After the Second World War, in Spain, the dictatorship of the one who won the war, general Francisco Franco, remained against so many forecasts. Furthermore, after the first years of harshness, hunger, and repression, the general knew how to restore the foundations, open up to the world, find allies, and enter the path of economic development, quite the opposite to Communist dictatorships from Eastern Europe. When Franco died, the authoritarian regime that he embodied self-dissolved in the process of democratization, which included a sizeable national reconciliation pact between winners and losers of the war and the generations that did not experience the fatality of the war. With

the arrival of the last refugees and the holding of free elections, the last wounds of that war, now distant, were closed.

It was the so-called Spanish Transition, a process that brought great interest and admiration worldwide. The democratic reform, made under King Juan Carlos I, the heir designated by Franco, who transferred all of his powers to the Parliament of the democratic system approved by Western democracies, was cherished by everybody. As much as the Consti-

tution's weaknesses are apparent, and the mistakes that have made possible the task of those who had to come decades after to undertake the blowing up of the national reconciliation and reopen an ideological war among the Spanish people. The day Spain started its political Transition, it received unanimous recognition and was emulated as a peaceful transformation formula towards democracy in Latin America and the entire world, as the Hispanist Stanley G. Payne underlines later in the book.

After the dictator died in 1975, and the passing of the Constitution in 1978, Spain kept —already in democracy and since 1986 integrated the European Union— a development that had not been interrupted since the hard times of the postwar; the economic stabilization, and the opening to the world from the regime before. This process led Spain to finish the millennium as a country in progress. Although still at modest levels, at least four generations as-



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## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

sumed as a reality that children would live better than their parents. As they also assumed that this progress supported a basic coexistence agreement, born of the terrible pain the war caused in the past and the increasingly long positive experience of peace and harmony.

That Spain full of hope at the end of the Millennium, arrived from the Francoism, a tired and skeptical regime, although it went to the imperfect democracy—supported by the majority of the Spanish people in various referendums and elections—, it kept adding over the years reasons to love it, despite all the difficulties. Except for the constant harassment of the terrorist leftist and separatist gang ETA from the Basque Country, who kept its war against the State constantly murdering innocents. All the forces embraced the Transition, the reconciliation, and the democratic system, being the PCE communists the first on the list.



**Thirty years after Franco's death, Francoism was more present than ever, unlike in the last three decades**

They had drifted so far already in time the worst nightmares of the fratricidal killings that, as the Spaniards that had lived them as if they were their own, started to disappear; no one dared to talk about such a complicated past in political debates of the time. The forgiveness between old enemies that still was necessary to express during the Transition was already a closed chapter. Spain was not an anomaly in Europe anymore.

### The rupture with the past

However, the entry into the new Millennium soon brought catastrophic events. A lot was broken, jumped into pieces, with those bombs from an attack on the trains arriving at the station of Atocha in Madrid in which 192 people died, and more than two thousand were seriously injured. That terrific event on March 11th of 2004 not only changed the result of the general elections scheduled four days later. It also put in office he who proved to be the maximum representative of forces determined to end the path—started in 1976 with the Transition— of coexistence that came with the national reconciliation. Those bombs ended with the will to understand the past from the present harmony and the shared commitment to truth; to go on to use History again as a throwing weapon to evoke political passions or justify impositions with beads from the past.

“Historical Memory” is the imposition of a falsified, ideological, and Manichean version of Spain's History of the twentieth century that wants to delegitimize and criminalize all political options other than the left. It is a fundamental part of the operation settled to move on to another regime change to end with the pluralist Constitution. It is about creating a new regime with fundamental socialist laws that they consider surpassed and finished the Spanish Nation's continuity, to found small nations in various regions and thus prevent any return to power of a non-socialist-communist majority that could reconstitute the national institutions.

Since then, two decades have not yet passed, and it is clear that the political practices of revenge have already blown up that path of reconciliation. A generation fed by an official discourse, radically confronted against that formula which demanded generosity and understanding with the enemy, has already grown up. This way of concord and understanding terminated and broke entirely by the new attitude of the left under the radical-socialist José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. After that, on the left began to gain ground forces determined to take up the thesis that the ETA terrorists had defended pretty much alone. With not many supporters, the Spanish democracy was just a continuation

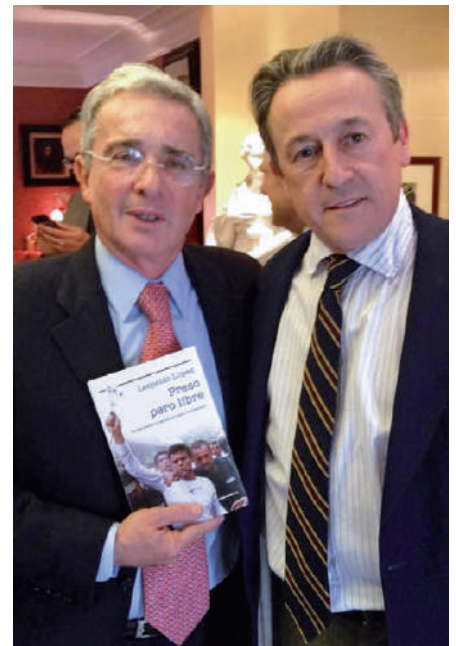
of Franco's regime. That the Transition had been conditioned upon fear of the military and that the final break with Francoism is still pending. That in reality, they understand as a final break with the continuation of the past the end of the monarchy—for them the symbol of Francoism's legacy to democracy—and the instauration of a new regime—or several—within a “progressive” or “socialist” legal framework. Revenge and memory are the engines of this change.

From the first moment, it was clear that Zapatero came into power to carry out an act of political, ideological, and cultural revenge for The Popular Front forces' military defeat. This needed to happen through the accusation and criminalization of those who had led Spain since the war until the Transition, and also, by a radical hostility to everything defended or supported by Franco's regime, among which we find Catholicism, the traditional family, and on top of everything, the nation, Spain.

Thus ended in Spain the historical period of general acceptance of national reconciliation as a joint achievement of which to be proud, moving on to a new start of a chapter utterly different from the Governments of revenge, of the vigilantes, who request all the historical rights for the Republic forces, a regime presented as an impeccable democ-

racy. Furthermore, they do it without noticing the constant abuses and crimes that, since 1931 destroyed democracy, and the Republic, leaving the State at the mercy of communist, socialist, and anarchy factions who turn the system unfeasible to the judgment of many forces in Spanish society.

The rise to power of this new generation of leftist leaders—that, for matters of age, they have not made the Transition—brought the will to review the Transition overall. And so began historical revisionism that soon became apologetic propaganda of the Front Popular. The first law of “Historical Memory” was the first step in the legal framework for the left's historical revenge. All of a sudden, thirty years later after Franco's death, Francoism was more present than ever; unlike in the last three decades. Newspapers, magazines, books, news, special shows, movies, documentaries... Nothing seemed to be enough to spread among the Spanish people how good communists and socialists were and how bad those who fought against them were categorized without distinction as fascists. Suddenly it started to be considered, not even frowned upon. However, under threat of public condemnation and civil death—today a criminal case—speak in favourable terms of anything that happened, produced, or built during thirty-five years of Franco-



Hermann Tertsch, with the former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe.

Author's property

ism. Manichaeism regarding Spanish History has reached such a stupid extent that it is nonsensical.

### **The plan is a regime change.**

Some of the cultural left has always done it, but since 2004 is the State the one that promotes with mechanisms of hatred a systematic distortion of the events, to criminalize certain ideologies contrary to the left, accusing them of being direct heirs of the “Fascism”—like they describe all who fought against the Popular Front led by Stalin during the war—. Thus, the resources and feelings that were believed buried for the long coexistence in peace have been reactivated and are once again omnipresent. It is still early to find out, how the long way we

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe



Tertsch MEP denounces the Spanish abnormality in Europe: one of the national government parties celebrates the birth of one of the greatest genocides in history, the Bolshevik Lenin.

have come, with increased self-esteem and security, could break down something that had slowly grown, with patience and hard work altogether; since the first years of the postwar has been torn apart in the Spanish society. Some will say its frailness has been proven. The truth is that behind this rupture of the will to live in harmony, there are political forces with a clear purpose to create a new reality that will reaffirm a project to accomplish a regime change. After two devastating decades for Spain, in which a seven-year parenthesis of a government leaned towards the center did nothing to stop the dy-

namics of confrontation —renewed later with more extraordinary viciousness—. At the beginning of the Millennium, that great project of regime change was started by the left forces and the separatism.

More than two decades of discord and setbacks have poisoned the society. Mistrust, acrimony, and bad faith have settled in everyday life as we had never known most of them alive today. Thunder rumble calling for purifying destruction, for revenge and revenge.

All the historical reality of Spain is crossed out of a regrettable evolution that turned into fatality and that, for the good of all and the sake of progress, we must dismantle. Nobody has been told this at school, not on TV, books, movies, schools, universities, neither in the meetings of political parties. On the contrary, no other message has been heard with such force or with such obsessive identity until turn any other alternative into a fascist, criminal, and detestable way of thinking, establishing only one valid reality. The Spanish Nation is identified with the dictatorship of Franco. All the centuries before of the long, rich, and magnificent History of Spain are systematically described negatively to generate disaffection and assume and support as valid a “Black Legend” that was entirely

made up and spread as propaganda of the enemies of the imperial and Catholic Spain. To achieve such a crime, the truth has been violated, massively and obscenely, and they have hidden some of the brightest pages of the History of Humanity. It has been done without scruples, without any shame, and above all, without any resistance that would oppose it. Because of the cowardice —they called it prudence— recommended not to get involved in Spain's defense. To not to be crossed out as Francoist or fascist, which amounts to civil death.

The biggest engine spreading the “historical memory” as a general falsification of the past reality is fear. There is no memory. There is propaganda for political purposes. There is coercion as there has not been in Spain precisely since the Transition that ended the dictatorship. Nowadays, going against the official versions of the left is pricey. The ruling left is now forcing the imposition of lies such as the official version of our History. At the same time, it has openly already started to go after historical truths even by judicial means.

Those are precisely the signs that part of the society in Spain, tired of apparent lies, is starting to lose fear and speak the truth, which accelerates and intensifies the left offensive and the sepa-



ratist forces against the historical truth and the national reconciliation, in favor of a permanent radicalization of that “historical memory.” A “historical memory” acquiring Orwellian’s overtones with the will to impose an official truth, repressing with penalties any historical interpretation that says different from that official truth. To be free in Spain, one must lose all fear of being crossed out as Francoist or fascist. It is already happening. That is why the counterfeiters from the left are restless and are asking for even more radical instruments to go after the truth and impose their lies.

Through the laws of “historical memory” and “democratic memory,” the Spanish left not only wants to impose a mandatory interpretation of History—with criminal and economic penalties for dissenters—but also to eradicate the freedom of speech, preaching, and teaching. Spain is again ahead in time in



**The attacks on March 11th led the Government to the highest representative of forces determined to end the national reconciliation**



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During his career as a journalist, Hermann Tertsch was a correspondent for El País in Central and Eastern Europe. In the photo, with the writer Günter Grass.

what could be a great tragedy. Suppose the massive historical falsification triumphs in Spain, and it delegitimizes any alternative to a socialist regime- communist. In that case, it is foreseeable that the rest of the left in Europe would join this strategy, spreading the social confrontation to the rest of the continent.

This book, published by the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and coordinated by Pedro Fernández Barbadillo, has the purpose of proposing a clean and legit look towards the History of Spain in the 20th century and reestablish truths that have already been practically banned in our homeland. A dozen renowned historians analyse the main mythical slogans of the “memorialist” movement, probably the most aggressive and virulent sector of the political turmoil

of the Spanish left (the spontaneous nature of violence against Catholics, “slave” prisoners, the harshness of the postwar repression, the link of the Spanish regime with the Third Reich, amnesty as a requirement of the Francoists, the pact of silence in the Transition, etc.). It dismantles them through data and facts. Moreover, they provide their testimonies, a former minister of the first democratic governments, a writer imprisoned in the fifties for his communist militancy, and another author, descendant from an intellectual murdered in the genocide of Catholics perpetrated by the left during the Civil War.

Standing for the historical truth is an essential part of the fight to defend our freedom in Europe, which is in open danger. If they steal our History, we will lose our future. ▼



## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

Making an official and mandatory version of History from Governments has consequences in foreign policies. Nations in Eastern Europe worry about the reinterpretation Moscow makes of the pact signed by the communist USSR and the National-Socialist Reich in 1939, which allowed the beginning of the Second World War.



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### Francisco José Contreras

Francisco José Contreras Peláez (Seville, 1964) is a Professor of Philosophy of the Law at the University of Seville. He has written eleven books, among them, *New Left and Christianity* (2011), *Liberalism, Catholicism and Natural Law* (2013), *The fragility of freedom* (2018) and *A Defense of Conservative Liberalism* (2019). And he has coordinated eight books

collectives, all of which stand out from *The Threads of Natural Law. Unraveling a Philosophical Tradition* (2013), *Talking to the Pope. 50 Spaniards reflect on the legacy of Benedict XVI* (2013) and *The sense of freedom: History and validity of the idea of natural law* (2014). Member of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation Values and Society and the Fundación

Disenso. He has received the Legaz Lacambra Award, the Diego de Covarrubias, the Hazte Oír Award, the Angel Olavarriá Award, and the Christianity and Liberty Award. In 2019 he was elected deputy for Seville of the Spanish Congress XIV legislature and currently belongs to the parliamentary group VOX.

## History as a Political Weapon

Francisco José Contreras

Until not so long ago, official commemorations in most European countries did not exceed four or five years. They referred to indisputable milestones of a shared national history: in Spain, every October 12 (discovery of America by Castilian ships in 1492) and on December 6 (approval of the 1978 Constitution). In the last decades, while the classical commemorations were weakened (in Spain, for example, the left considers that on October 12, there is “nothing to celebrate,” and both the Hispanic Day and the Constitution go unnoticed in the regions with nationalist governments), a “fragmentary” memorialist fever arose, of affirmation of subnational identities, among where we find: territorial identities (in Spain, the Catalan Day, the Basque *Aberri Eguna*, the Day of Andalusia, etc.), sexual matters (women’s day, gay pride day, etc.), or racial issues. While the classic national holidays were cohesive and celebrated the common History, the new commemorations are divisive in the extent to which they refer to subgroups; what’s more, they have a victimizing-vindictive connotation because the groups in question are considered historically aggrieved. From a unifying memorialism, we have moved to another based on division.

### Abstract

Professor Francisco José Contreras exposes the emergence in Europe from the official versions of History imposed by the politicians and by groups that claim to be representatives of minorities. The “laws of memory” create a climate of intolerance and intellectual repression. The harshest reaction against these laws has arisen among French historians and writers. However, official interpretations of historical events are not limited to damaging countries’ internal peace and academic research but can also poison European nations’ relations. On this point, Contreras cites the case of the new official version in Russia regarding the Pact between the USSR and the Third Reich in 1939, which some European countries see as a threat to their independence.

The “laws of memory” are inscribed in that same fragmenting tendency: it is, in this case, of ethnic or ideological groups intended to shield —using the coercive force of the State— their respective grievances against any denial or relativization.

### Politicians impose the official History

The first criminalized “denial” was the most unequivocal genocide: the Holocaust. In France, the “Gayssot law” (1990) typifies in its article 9 as a crime “the denial of the existence of crimes against humanity, as de-

While the classic national holidays were cohesive, the new commemorations are divisive



fined in the statute of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal.” In Germany, section 130 of the Penal Code penalizes Holocaust denial. In Belgium, the law of March 23 of 1995 punishes “the denial, minimization, justification or approval of the genocide committed during the Second World War by the German National Socialist regime.” In Switzerland, article 261 bis did the same as of 1994.

The most crucial argument in favor of anti-denial laws is that questioning crime inflicts additional moral damage on the victims or their descendants. However, some Holocaust deniers had already been sanctioned before the enactment of such laws: Maurice Bardèche, imprisoned in 1954, or Robert Faurisson, fined in 1983. In France, the press law of 1881 already prohibited “racial defamation” in its article 32, the “racial insult” in article 33, etc.

On the other hand, many prestigious historians have understood that the historical lies must be fought with evidence and refutations, not with legal prohibitions. Claude Liauzu, for example, stated: “It is dangerous to limit freedom of investigation; it is preferable to confront deniers through the combat of ideas”<sup>1</sup>. Jean-Pierre Azéma said in an

interview: “We do not claim that History belongs only to historians. But even worse, it does not belong to the parliamentarians. In a democratic regime, there is not an intangible historical truth”<sup>2</sup>. François Furet, Pierre Nora, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Michel Houellebecq and Michel Tournier also opposed the Gayssot Law.

Once the ban on the fixing of History by decree and in an atmosphere of “*identity politics*” that incites to the collective victimization to all of those that are not western heterosexual men, new ethnic groups demand the officialization of their grievances: Armenians (genocide of 1915, recognized by the French law of 2001), Ukrainians (Holodomor 1932-33), Gypsies, Africans... In Spain, the left prepares a “Democratic Memory Law” that will penalize the Apology to Francoism. And the infamous label of *denier* begins to be applied to anyone who questions new “progressive” dogmas such as the “salary gap”, “gender violence” (understood as assaults on women, “Because of the fact of being women”), the “climate change” or “transsexuality”.

In France, the next step was the “Taubira law” of 2001<sup>3</sup>, which establishes in its article 1 that slavery “practiced in the Americas, the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, and Europe against African, Amerindian, Malagasy and Indians” is a “crime against humanity”. In article 2, that “school programs and historical research and human sciences will give the slave trade [*traite négrière*], and slavery the important place they deserve”. The 5th ar-

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvel Observateur*, September 22nd, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> “Faut-il abroger les lois mémorielles?”, *L'Express*, February 2nd, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Loi tendant à la reconnaissance de la traite et de l'esclavage en tant que crime contre l'humanité*, May 21st, 2001.

ticle empowers “the associations dedicated to defending the memory of the slaves and the honor of their descendants” to interpose civil actions against “deniers”.

The Taubira law exhibits an anti-western bias in its historical delimitation of the phenomenon of slavery. Why limit it to that practiced by Europeans “against African, Amerindians, populations, etc”. and not include practiced by extra-western cultures among themselves (and, in a distinctive way, the “Intra-African trafficking” and “Arab trafficking”, so lethal for the population of the black continent, according to specific estimates, as the Atlantic one)? Why not include the captivity of tens of thousands of Europeans by Turkish and Barbary pirates between the 16th and 19th centuries?

The Taubira law journey shows that “memorial laws” create a climate of intolerance and intellectual bullying. Inspired by the pass of the law, the Committee for the Memory of Slavery filed in 2004 a lawsuit against the historian Max Rooster for statements made during an interview about his biography on Napoleon.

Asked about the Saint-Domingue expedition, in which the then First Consul sent French troops to Haiti to try to recover the colony stolen from France by the rebellion of Toussaint Louverture and reset slavery, Gallo had replied that “Napoleon embodied the revolutionary values despite all that”<sup>4</sup>. The lawsuit would be dismissed in 2006, but by then, Gallo already knew he had publicly retracted his heresy.



The next historian appearing before the court of the “political correctness” would be Olivier Grenouilleau, author of *Les traits négrières* (2004). As in the case of Gallo, what unleashed the storm was not the work itself. Still, later statements (it seems that memorialist associations are more inclined to read interviews than books). He claimed that the slave trade, undoubtedly immoral, was not genocide because what characterizes this is the will to exterminate a group of people. The historian explained that slavery is interested in keeping a group of people alive for labor exploitation purposes. Grenouille criticized that the eye was on the Atlantic trade only while maintaining silence on slavery in the Islamic world.

The *affaires* Gallo and Grenouille served as the catalyst for the manifesto “Freedom for History”<sup>5</sup>, signed in December of 2005 by nineteen historians, including Jean-Pierre Azéma, Elisabeth Badinter, Alain Decaux,

During a debate on public funds granted by the Spanish left-wing Government to the policies of “historical memory,” Francisco José Contreras showed in the tribune of Congress the crucifix of a priest related to his, who was hacked to death on the twenty-ninth of July of 1936. Pope Francis approved in 2020 the beatification of Rafael Contreras Leva as a martyr of the faith.

<sup>4</sup> France 3 TV, December 4th, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> “Liberté pour l’Histoire”, *Libération*, December 13th of 2005.



Jacques Julliard, Pierre Nora and Pierra Vidal-Naquet. “History is not a religion. The historian does not accept any dogma, does not respect any prohibition, knows no taboos. [...] History is not a slave to the present. The historian does not apply contemporary ideological schemes to the past, nor does he introduce today’s sensibilities into the events of another time. [...] In a free State, it is not up to Parliament or the judicial authority to define historical truth”. The signatories affirmed these principles are violated by the Gaysot law, the Armenian genocide, and the Taubira law.

### The Russian interpretation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

Of course, when politicians and legislators assume the role of historians, they do so from the perspective of current political interests (applying the Orwellian principle of “who controls the past, controls the present”), without any objectivity. In Russia, for example, historical revisionism has become an instrument at the service of the *Macht-politik* of Vladimir Putin. The eightieth anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was the campaign’s signal to reinterpret the period between 1939-1941 by the official Russian media<sup>6</sup>. Stalin was not at the fault of the alliance between the soviet USSR and the German National Socialist III Reich, but France, Great Britain, and Poland, who did not know to give the “little father of the towns” the affection he needed. Furthermore, they allege, the USSR was not the only country to sign non-aggression treaties with Hitler: Latvia and Estonia did as well (as Latvian Foreign Minister Edgar Rinkevics

**Jean-Pierre Azéma: "We do not pretend that History belongs only to historians. But even worse, it does not belong to the parliamentarians"**



pointed out. The Russian media omit the minor detail that the treaties do not include the German-Soviet, secret protocols of distribution of Eastern Europe).

With this move, Putin returns to the historical vision of the hard Soviet times. Regressing the “*Letter to the Polish nation*” that Putin himself had written in 2009<sup>7</sup>. He recognized that Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had been “reprehensible” (actually, it was the trigger for the Second World War, because it allowed Hitler to launch his offensive without fear of having the specter of war on two fronts from 1914-18). Even regarding the Gorbachev years’ historical *glasnost*: on Christmas Eve of 1989, the Soviet Parliament admitted the existence of the secret protocol in the Pact of 1939 (invasion of Poland and distribution of Eastern Europe in spheres of influence). It condemned him from 1.432 votes to 252.

The Baltic States and Poland’s concern about this renewed interest of the Russian Government in the History of the 20th century are not without foundation. For example, the official Soviet interpretation of the annexation of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia in 1940 was that those countries joined the

<sup>6</sup> Vid. Uma Bergmane, “How Putin is Rehabilitating the Nazi-Soviet Pact”, *Baltic Bulletin – Foreign Policy Research Institute*, July 28 of 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Putin, “List Putina do Polaków”, *Wyborcza.pl*, August 31 of 2009.

USSR, not under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, but “voluntarily”. The truth is that the USSR gave ultimatums to them in June of 1940, and they surrendered to their overwhelming military superiority (unlike Finland, which chose to fight in 1939-40 in the so-called “War of Winter” and collaborated with the German invasion starting the summer of 1941). The West always considered the annexation of the Baltic countries illegitimate; hence the quick recognition of its independence in 1991, even before the USSR’s official disintegration. If Putin now returns to the old Soviet theory of “voluntary incorporation”, it is the very sovereignty of those countries that is again being called into question.

### **The moral equivalence between Communism and Nazism**

The European Parliament resolution of September of 2019 establishing a moral equivalence between Nazism and Communism<sup>8</sup> is not alien to this historical-political dispute. MEPs from the ex-communist central Europe, of course, played a crucial role in promoting it. Remember the affinities between Fascism and communism (both anti-liberal; both single-party systems supported by political police [NKVD, Gestapo]; both incompatible with social pluralism and hostile to intermediate bodies such as the family or churches; both cultivators of a “warlike interpretation of history” [racial war in Nazism, class struggle in Marxism] that leads to criminalizing entire human collectives: is

when it comes to Nazism the crime was to belong to the wrong ethnic group, in Marxism it as belonging to the wrong social class) it means breaking the historical narrative that has provided so much revenue to the left for three-quarters of a century: the USSR as Hitler’s nemesis and communism as the antithesis of Fascism (and, if Fascism is absolute evil, then communism is absolute good). Remembering the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact also destroys the official narrative, as it shows that the two totalitarianisms were so close that they had no difficulty in dividing up half of Europe and collaborating for two years. A collaboration that, if it had been for Stalin, it would have continued much longer. It was only broken by Hitler’s betrayal, unable to defeat Great Britain, and determination to fulfill once and for all the Nazi design of acquiring a great *Lebensraum* in Slavic Europe. Stalin was very comfortable with his Hitler alliance that he refused to listen to intelligence reports warning him of the preparations for Operation Barbarossa; and that unforeseen, together with the weakening of the army by the purges of 1936-1937, explains in part the initial debacle of the Soviets in front of the *Wehrmacht*.

Looking at the politicians’ cynicism in their retrospective manipulation of the facts, those who care about the truth must resist any official fixation of History and, above all, the suppression of freedom of investigation and debate. ▼

<sup>8</sup> European Parliament resolution on September 19 of 2019 on the importance of European historical memory for the future of Europe (2019/2819 (RSP)).

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe



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Due to the manipulation of History, the left can claim a Second Republic that was never democratic. And with national and regional "memory" laws they can ban demonstrations, books and conferences that oppose its story.

### Stanley G. Payne

Stanley George Payne (Texas, 1934) is doctor in History from Columbia University, emeritus professor of History at the Hildale-Jaume Vicens Vives Chair at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (USA), member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and corresponding academic of the Royal Academy of Spanish History.

Due to the quality of his work and his ties to Spain, he has received honorary doctorates from CEU Cardenal Herrera University and Rey Juan Carlos University. Among his numerous bibliography, the following stand out: *Falange. History of Spanish fascism* (1965), *Fascism* (1982), *The Franco's regime* (1987), *Franco*

*and José Antonio. The strange case of Spanish fascism* (1997), *The collapse of the Republic* (2005), *Spain. A unique history* (2008), *40 fundamental questions about the civil war* (2006), *Revolutionary Europe* (2011), *The road to July 18th* (2016), *In defense of Spain* (2017). The latter received the Essay Award from Espasa.



## “Historical Memory” and the Rupture of Spanish Democracy

Stanley G. Payne

**T**he twentieth century’s “third wave of democratization” began in southern Europe in 1974-75, with the overthrow of dictatorships in Portugal and Greece, followed by the transition in Spain following the death of Franco. The change in Portugal followed a common pattern of military overthrow, but the circumstances and character of the democratic transition in Spain were historically unique. If the Spanish disaster of revolutionary civil war amid peacetime conditions during the 1930s had been unprecedented, so were the terms of the Spanish democratization. Prior to that time, all institutionalized modern European authoritarian regimes that had existed for as long as a decade or more lost power only as a result of foreign war. The Spanish Transition presented the first example of a democratization from the inside out, in which the laws and institutions of the authoritarian regime were used to carry out a complete transformation into democracy. At a press conference in 1974 (shortly before the death of Franco), the historian Ricardo de la Cierva, then the director general of popular culture, was asked by Spanish journalists if any such case had ever existed, and La Cierva confessed, rightly enough, that he was not aware of any.

### Abstract

Historian Stanley G. Payne, the most prestigious of the foreign Hispanists, a visitor to Spain since the late 1950s, praises the transition from Franco’s regime to democracy as one of the most brilliant moments in Spanish history. However, he regrets that the Left has turned the civil war into a political argument for the elections from the 1990’s; and condemns the laws of historical memory, which could censor his books, just as the Franco regime did. For this reason, he considers that opposing the laws of “historical memory” is “a moral duty”.

This created a new “Spanish model” of democratic transition, not the courageous but futile efforts of 1808-14 and 1820 (which had also been emulated elsewhere with a similar lack of success), but an eminently productive pattern that became in effect the new model for peaceful world democratic transition. It was followed, *mutatis mutandis*, in Latin America and in nearly all the Communist countries of Eastern Europe, as well as in parts of Asia and Africa, though—depending on the historical heritage and/or level of development of these

countries— some of these transitions failed to produce functioning democracies.

One requirement of the Spanish model was rejection of the politics of vengeance, which meant eschewing any political or judicial quest for “historical justice”. This was fully agreed by all the major political forces, with the leftist parties, for example, unanimous in their insistence on total amnesty for all, followed by a new democratic start that would begin with a clean slate. There was general awareness that the pursuit of historical justice in the initial period of the Second Republic of 1931 had become vindictive rather than truly just, and that of the Franco regime much more so. Leaders of the Transition appreciated that another such effort could hardly be made with impartiality, given the intertwined complexity of the recent Spanish past, and almost undoubtedly would do more harm than good.

With certain exceptions, this feature of the Spanish model was followed in other countries. Despite the extraordinary crimes and atrocities of the Communist regimes, little effort was made to indict or prosecute the personnel of the preceding authoritarian systems. The Czech Republic introduced a process of “lustration”, as it was termed, to deal with some of the major wrongdoings, but ultimately made little use of it. In Germany there was more of an effort to purge Communist personnel from the universities, but little else. In the new Baltic republics and in central Asia the successor regimes replaced personnel, more in the former than in the latter, but criminal indictments were few and far between. With few exceptions, energetic pursuit of “historical justice” was not generally a policy of the newly democratic and/or postcommunist regimes.

**Socialists participated in the slaughter of nearly 7,000 religious during the Spanish Civil War, the largest outbreak of anti-religious violence of the 20th century**



Another development that accompanied the Spanish Transition was great attention to recent history, featuring all manner of publications, media transmissions and research, with much new professional scholarly work and even more journalism. The amount of attention in Spain in fact exceeded that in certain other cases, perhaps because it had a larger public market than some, supporting a great volume and variety of publications and transmissions. This situation may be compared with that of Russia, where there was also an outpouring of historical work and commentary during the 1990s, only to be channeled and sometimes choked off altogether under Putin. Whereas the eventual censorship and suppression of history in Russia would come from the nationalist right, the proposed new Spanish censorship legislation in the twenty-first century, as we shall see, is promoted by the left. At the opposite extreme might be found an Asian successor state such as Mongolia, where there seems to have been little interest at all in investigating the recent past.

### **1993 election broke the agreement**

Spanish attitudes during the Transition were by no means a pure model of so-called “scientific objectivity” —impossible in historical study— but political leaders were generally united in agreement that histori-

cal arguments would not be employed for partisan purposes. There were many conflicting and antagonistic points of view, but the general understanding was that history would be left to the historians and not employed in current political competition. After two decades, however, this would begin to change more and more.

The consensus that rejected politicization of Spain's history of civil war and dictatorship was generally maintained, with the important exceptions of Catalonia and the Basque Country, until 1993. At that point the Socialists of Felipe González, who had governed uninterruptedly for eleven years, were in danger of losing national elections. In his campaign, González for the first time began to stress that a vote for the more conservative Partido Popular would be equivalent to returning to Francoism. This may have done the Socialists some good in winning those elections, but it did not help in 1996, when they lost, and even less in 2000, when the Partido Popular won an absolute majority in parliament. The latter's prime minister, José María Aznar, declared in 2002 that the use of the recent past for partisan purposes had at last been buried. He was wrong.

Once the genie was out of the bottle it became an increasingly common tactic of the left and also of the regional separatists. Democratic Spain had constructed a “State of the Autonomies” that arguably granted a greater degree of decentralization and regional self-government than anywhere else in Europe, but this liberty was quickly transformed into license in Catalonia and the Basque Country, where fantastic historical myths of micronationalism were zealously propagated in the autonomous educational

systems. These taught that the Civil War of 1936-39 had been a war of aggression of “Spain” against those two regions, burying the reality that in the Basque Country, especially, it had also clearly been a civil war of Basques against Basques.

### **The birth of “historical memory”**

Decisive in this change was the general trend in Western progressivism, particularly in its more radical forms, to employ versions of historical interpretation as a standard political weapon. This tactic is hardly endorsed by the field of professional study known to historians as “historical memory” or “collective memory.” During the middle and later decades of the past century historians developed a methodology concerning what became termed “collective memory” that investigated attitudes, concepts or opinions about the comparatively recent past. Such attitudes or opinions had been formed in various ways by activists, politicians, artists, writers and to some extent by society at large. Scholarly specialists have concluded that in most cases these are not true collective “memories” in the sense that most of those who hold them have participated in or experienced the events to which they refer, but rather are the product of political, social or cultural minorities that in various ways have propagated, diffused or imposed their views with greater or lesser success.



**Reducing the revolutionary cause of the Spanish Republicans from 1934 to 1939 to “democracy” is a mockery of historical reality**

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe



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In the 1993 election campaign, Felipe González broke the agreement among Spanish politicians not to use the past as a political weapon. Another socialist, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (left), adopted “historical memory” as part of his program and turned it into state policy. The Popular Party was unable to criticize this ideological movement; and Mariano Rajoy (right), having an absolute majority, all he did was withdrawing the subsidies to related associations.

The founding theorists and researchers in this field, Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, have readily recognized this while arguing that the study of “collective memory” is important as one of the human artifacts that constitute the broader historical record, influencing politics, society and culture, and as such forms part of the data to be examined by historical study. This does not reveal the facts of history itself in any reliable empirical manner but is simply one part of the ongoing new evidence that historians

should investigate to understand the further development of attitudes toward history.

The founding work was Halbwachs's *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, published in 1925, but collective memory only fully emerged as a significant field in the latter part of the century. This was one aspect of the broadening and diversification of historical study that took place from the 1970s on, but specialists have also noted the particular problems and abuses to which it may give rise. Thus Enrique Gavilán has drawn attention to what he calls “the impossibility of and need for historical memory”, pointing out that in his final work *La mémoire collective* (1950):

Halbwachs drew attention to the verbal excess implied by the expression historical memory. Collective memory is not historical but in fact anti-historical. To understand something in historical terms is to be aware of its complexity, to remain at sufficient distance to be able to see different perspectives, to grasp the ambiguities in the behavior of different actors, including their moral ambiguity. Conversely, collective memory simplifies, denies the passage of time, externalizes, essentializes. Collective memory characteristically pretends to express an eternal or essential truth about a collective process.

Moreover, Halbwachs maintained that collective memory functions in the opposite way from what may be supposed by common sense, for collective memory is not so much the result of the action of the past on the present, as we might tend to think, but of the present on the past. In other words, collective memory is less a discovery than a creation.

Therefore, if one accepts the ideas of Halbwachs, the expression *historical memory* should be used with care. Nor is the idea of the *recovery* of collective or historical memory defensible, since one should speak rather of the *construction* of memory.... The present plays a much greater role in configuring the memory of the past than is generally recognized.

Similarly, in an essay published in the journal *History and Theory*, Wulf Kansteiner speaks of the difference between those whom he calls the “makers of memory” and the “consumers of memory”, and of the “abundance of initiatives of failed collective memory on the one hand and of the few cases of the successful construction of collective memory on the other.” He concludes there is inadequate study of what he terms “the problem of reception” of collective memory, for “collective memory is not history” but rather “is as much a result of conscious manipulation and of unconscious absorption and is always mediated.” He points out that the Israeli scholars Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam have concluded that collective or historical memory consists of what these two specialists call “myths”.

This is not the same as the study of “oral history”, which became a subdiscipline of historical study in the late twentieth century. Gavilán stresses that in this particular field

“the work of historians does not presume the accuracy of memory. On the contrary, it is fully cognizant of the *inevitable* deficiencies of memory. Historians know that memory not merely deforms the understanding of what has occurred, but in fact does so inevitably. There can be no other possibility... The goal is not the past, but the present”.

Thus the term historical memory as employed by the Spanish left since the end of the twentieth century constitutes an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms, something that in strict logic cannot exist. Genuine memory is strictly individual and is subjective and very frequently fallacious. Even people of good faith are constantly remembering details quite at variance with what in fact happened. Memory can nei-

ther define nor fully explain past events but simply provides one version or interpretation of the past. History as investigated by scholars, on the other hand, is neither individual nor subjective, but requires the objective and professionally empirical study of documents and other data and artifacts. It is a supra-individual process of the society of scholars, who debate and contrast results that strive to be as impersonal and objective as possible.

### **New left, new myths and programs**

The democratic transition in Spain was widely celebrated at home and abroad, sometimes hailed as a turning point in the expansion of constitutional government in the world, endorsed by both left and right. By about 2000, however, the left found that it had lost much of the power gained during the 1980s, the Socialists having lost two elections in a row and the Communist Party having disintegrated. It became increasingly urgent to find new terms of argument, and the ground chosen, particularly on the extreme left, was to begin to question the basis of the constitutional structure itself. The former Communists had for years fully endorsed the democratic system, but more and more voices, including those of the most radical Socialists, began to charge that Spain's democratic system was merely modified “Francoism”, having been built on



**While the suppression of history in Russia comes from the nationalist right, the new Spanish censorship legislation is promoted by the left**

**In the Transition, political leaders were united in an agreement not to use historical arguments for partisan ends**



a compromise between left and right, and should be replaced by a so-called Second Transition to inaugurate a new system constructed and governed exclusively by the left. This proposed a return to the peculiar form of leftist exclusivism that in the 1930s had destroyed the Second Republic and brought on the Civil War. As in the earlier era, the Spanish extreme left demonstrated aversion to genuine democracy in so far as the latter consists of fair and democratic elections, responsible parliamentary government and a constitutional state, or what has been succinctly summarized as “fixed electoral rules and uncertain electoral outcomes”.

“Historical memory” played a major role in this offensive and was adopted as a key program when the Socialists returned to power under José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in 2004, following a major terrorist attack in Madrid. The memory program insisted that the democratization of Spain had been based on a “pact of silence” which refused to face the crimes of Francoism and had failed to recognize and honor victims of the latter.

“Pact of silence” is simply a propaganda slogan. No such thing ever existed. As indicated above, the very opposite characterized the Democratic Transition, which had been grounded in keen awareness of the failures and crimes of the past and a deter-

mination not to repeat them. Indeed, as Paloma Aguilar, the leading researcher on the role of collective memory in these years, has written, “Few processes of political change have drawn such inspiration from the memory of the past and from the lessons associated with it, as the Spanish case”. It is impossible to find another instance anywhere in which such awareness was greater. What was agreed upon was not “silence” but the understanding that historical conflicts would be consigned to the labors of the historians and journalists, and that politicians would not make use of them in their parties’ mutual competition, which would instead direct itself to present and future problems.

The reality was in fact the very opposite of “silence,” for during the Democratic Transition historians and journalists in all categories of media were active in the extreme, flooding the country with new studies and accounts of many aspects of the civil war and Franco years, which did not in any way disguise the most atrocious aspects. Moreover, after a number of years there began to appear detailed and objective scholarly studies, such as those of Josep María Solé Sabaté, Joan Villarroya, Vicent Gabarda Cebellán, Francisco Alía Miranda, Ángel David Martín Rubio and others, which for the first time placed the investigation of the repression by both sides on a precise scholarly footing. All this was the very opposite of any “forgetting”, and was much more careful and exact than the subsequent agitation about “historical memory”, which was completely allergic to serious research.

Decisive in this process was not the study of history, increasingly ignored by the Spanish left, but the transformation of the



latter's ideology. During the course of the Transition the major leftist parties had moved toward the democratic center; as the Communists abandoned Marxism-Leninism for Eurocommunism and the Socialists fully embraced social democracy for the first time in their history. Without such a transformation the destructive polarization of the 1930s would have been repeated, making the democratization of the Spanish system impossible. A second transformation was underway by the beginning of the new century, as part of the left started to abandon historic social democracy in favor of politically correct radical Progressivism, which stressed a return to polarization and the demonization of opponents, highlighting what was projected as their evil history. This is an increasingly common phenomenon in the Western world, and in the Spanish case has been encouraged by a sense that earlier doctrines had lost persuasiveness. The new ideology categorically rejects the past and traditional values in a manner not seen either in social democracy or even revolutionary Marxism-Leninism (which, for example, generally respected classical culture). The new ideology emphasizes cultural revolution, not the old socioeconomic revolution. History is a major target, held to be little more than a record of victims and victimizers, its major function being the opportunity to unmask oppressors, separating earlier generations into victims to be affirmed and victimizers to be stigmatized. In the process, this accomplishes the vital task of dealing with existential questions of human guilt, projecting guilt upon selected scapegoats, nearly all of whom are dead white males that can nonetheless somehow be identified as ongoing political opponents. Thus the dead play a crucial role, headed in Spain by Fran-

cisco Franco, gone for nearly half a century but liturgically resurrected and reburied. The classification of victims and victimizers assumes vital cultic significance, as victims fill the roles held by heroes in traditional life, achieving a kind of salvific status.

Twenty-first century Spanish Socialist governments have introduced unprecedented national legislation in an attempt to define and control aspects of discussion of recent history. The first proposal met stiff criticism from a number of the leading professional scholars associated with the Socialist Party itself, and was somewhat moderated in the first Law of Historical Memory (as it is commonly called) passed by the Zapatero government in 2007. This replaced the term “historical memory” with “democratic memory”, in the process applying the latter term in an obviously fraudulent manner. Strictly speaking, “democratic memory” would have to refer to the Transition itself, since there was never any full democracy in Spain before 1977, with the partial exception of the centrist governments of 1933-34, against which the Socialists rose in violent insurrection. That was obviously not the intention. The 2007 law was, however, modified to declare that “it is not the task of the legislator to implant a specific collective memory”, though it then contradicts itself by directing future governments to implement “public policies di-



**The “collective memory” simplifies, denies the passage of time, is externalized and essentializes**



rected toward knowledge of our history and the development of democratic memory,” so that “within the space of a year after this law takes effect, the government will establish an institutional framework to stimulate public policies for the conservation and development of democratic memory”. The announced goals were to rectify injustices of the Civil War and the Franco era, ambitions to be applied strictly unilaterally, since they would ignore imputed crimes of the left and only deal with imputed crimes of the right.

During the next four years public funding supported a lengthy series of specifically approved projects of historical discussion political agitation and the search for the remains of victims of political repression, of which several hundred were eventually unearthed, far from the “thousands” in “mass graves” that were sought. The most useful byproduct was creation of a Documentary Center for Historical Memory and General Archive of the Civil War, but the funding for special projects came to an end with the fall of the Zapatero government at the end of 2011.

During the long years which the Socialists passed in opposition to the center-right government of Mariano Rajoy, the emphasis on historical memory as a political tactic and weapon only intensified. A few

days before the close of 2017, the Socialist minority presented for parliamentary discussion new legislation that was much more ambitious than its predecessor in 2007, proposing a Soviet-style criminalization of certain historical declarations and activities, stipulating formation of a Truth Commission to recommend punishment for those violating its norms and in “1984”-style measure prescribing various penalties. These involved imprisonment for from one to four years, varying fines up to 150,000 euros and, for the teaching professions, exclusion from employment for a period of time. At first this draconian measure languished for lack of support.

After four national elections in four years, the opportunity to move further came with formation of a minority Socialist government under Pedro Sánchez in 2018. Unable to pass an annual budget and with its margin of maneuver on most issues extremely limited, this new ministry eventually sought to forge ahead with historical memory. Its first step was symbolic but weighty in its implications, gaining parliamentary approval for the removal of the remains of Franco from its resting place in the monument to the dead in the Civil War, the Valley of the Fallen, near Madrid, arguing that the latter had become a monument to the late dictator.

Seven years before, the Zapatero government had appointed a national commission of experts, who concluded that reburial elsewhere was advisable, but only after democratic consensus had been achieved between the state, religious authorities and the Franco family. It also recommended that the latter have authority to choose the new site. These stipulations



**The term “historical memory” as employed by the Spanish left constitutes an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms, something that in strict logic cannot exist**



In a conference held in Madrid in 2018, Professor Stanley Payne affirmed about the sectarianism of "historical memory": "In my youth I was an author banned by Francoism and now I could be banned by the law of 'historical memory' and the left".

were ignored by the Sánchez government, which alleged “extreme urgency” (after 44 years!), while conservative and centrist deputies abstained. An appeal to Spain’s supreme court was denied by the latter, which also ignored the earlier national commission and denied the request by Franco’s grandchildren that, if the remains were to be moved, they be reburied, logically, in the family crypt in the Almudena, Madrid’s cathedral. Such a directive by a high court denying the right to bury a family member in the family crypt may be unprecedented in the history of Western constitutional government, raising questions about civil rights and freedom of religion.

Moreover, the *Basílica Pontificia de Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caídos*, where Franco lay, is a basilica of the Roman Catholic Church, its premises protected by Spanish law. The government had to proceed with some care, since its Socialist predecessors had participated in the mass slaughter of nearly 7,000 clergy during the Spanish Civil War, the greatest single outburst of antireligious violence in the twentieth century, Communist regimes included. A complaisant Pope Francis, however, gave the Spanish government permission to alter the Basilica, and Franco’s remains were quickly disinterred and reburied on the grounds of his former official residence, now a national historical site.

Memory can neither define nor fully explain past events but simply provides one version or interpretation of the past



Four months later in January 2020, the Socialists submitted new proposed memory legislation succinctly titled “Law of Historical and Democratic Memory”. This was more elaborate than the previous proposal and modified the several punishments decreed. Discussion of this second draft has been postponed *sine die* by the health crisis of 2020 yet remains pending. It would establish a national “Council of Memory” as an organ of state, composed of public officials from various levels and jurisdictions, as well as professional “experts” and representatives of non-governmental organizations. According to a rather confused and repetitive exposition, it would have four tasks: 1) Supervise a “four-year plan” of excavations and review annual reports of such projects; 2) Oversee carrying out the new legislation; 3) Prepare reports and recommendations for further policies of historical memory; and 4) Evaluate and supervise annually the administration and fulfillment of the programs involved, which it will assist and expedite. Exactly what this might mean in practice no one knows.

The proposal stresses the need for an elaborate state policy on “historical memory” regarding Spain’s mid-twentieth century without explaining why this should be the case, since it has nothing to do with the problems of the twenty-first century. It prescribes procedures for coordination of various levels of government for an elaborate

search for remains of “the disappeared,” with the creation of a “National DNA Bank” to help identify the latter. There would be developed an elaborate national system of “memory plaques” all over the country to identify numerous sites putatively associated with “democratic memory”. The government is further directed to develop a national educational program to expedite this policy, and to carry out elaborate procedures to identify, recognize and honor alleged victims.

The law specifies a catalog of actions defined as infractions that require punishment, involving anything that may interfere with the policies involved, and particularly with symbols, meetings, statements or declarations that may seem to approve of the Franco regime or the winning side in the civil war of 1936-39. It provides for an elaborate schedule of fines ranging from 200 to 100,000 euros, closing for a period of six months to two years any entity found to be involved in violations, and confiscations of the means or goods involved in such activities. That such procedures violate the Spanish constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression, is irrelevant to the current government, for whom “democratic memory” has nothing to do with democratic constitutionalism.

This ghoulish and Orwellian legislation proposes to confiscate the reburied remains of Franco so as to rebury them yet again in a second site, to which all public access is to be denied. The Valley of the Fallen, with its remarkable Basilica and enormous cross, is further declared to be unilaterally secularized and nationalized, according to final terms yet to be decided. Finally, any “association” or “foundation” that “directly or indi-

rectly incites hatred or violence” toward the violent revolutionaries of 1934-1939 or the opponents of the Franco regime is declared illegal, though the existence of any such entity is nowhere demonstrated.

The complexity of the issues involved in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 is almost universally recognized by professional historians. To reduce the revolutionary cause of Spanish Republicans from 1934 to 1939 to “democracy” or an object of “democratic memory” is a mockery of historical reality, as is the suppression of the slightest reference to the 55,000 victims of their political executions. The democratic constitution of 1931 was systematically denied by the revolutionaries throughout, and the present Spanish democracy is not based on their murderous

regime, but on earlier Spanish principles and on the norms of contemporary democratic Europe. The implication of the Memory Law would be equivalent to claiming that the counterrevolutionary supporters of General Denikin in the Russian civil war of 1917-21 were somehow opposing “democracy”, whereas in fact they were combatting the founders of twentieth-century totalitarianism. At the present time there is concern among some that the democratic order is currently being infringed by several states within the European Union. The new legislation by the Sánchez government in Spain would be a greater infringement than anything imputed to any other member. It should be decisively defeated, and exposed for the historical fraud and trampling of the Spanish constitution that it is. ▼



## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

Salvador Dalí (right) and Federico García Lorca, together in Cadaqués (Gerona), a few months before the outbreak of the Civil War. García Lorca was assassinated in rebellious Granada, while Dalí became a famous painter who befriended Franco, one of whose granddaughters he portrayed.



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## Fernando Sánchez Dragó

Fernando Sánchez Dragó (Madrid, 1936) writer; professor; and journalist. National Prize of Literature on two occasions (1979 and 2000). Other awards: Ondas (1988), Planeta (1992), Nacional de la Federación del Gremio Profesional de Editores (2000), Espiritualidad Martínez Roca (2002), and Fernando Lara (2006). He published more than fifty books.

University professor in Pescara, Tokyo, Dakar, Fez, Amman, Nairobi, Tsukuba, and Kyoto. As a correspondent, he has covered wars, earthquakes, attacks, and infinite chronicles of travels through Asia, Africa, and America. He directed the Colegio de España in Paris and just published the second volume of his memories. Keeps going.



## Historical Memory or the Ministry of Truth?

Fernando Sánchez Dragó

They started calling it like this: "Historical Memory". Soon they will call it —there have already been some other suggestions in that regard— Ministry of Truth. We are not back in 1984, but Orwell's shadow is long. And that of Aldous Huxley and his happy world too. And that of so many others. Utopias that become dystopias.

Ah! Allow me to introduce myself. I will do it around some general considerations. This one is a difficult article. I am addressing people who know nothing about me and do not know if I am to be trusted, people of other nationalities, although all Europeans, who will not know much about the Civil War fought in Spain from July 18th of 1936 to April 1st of 1939. It is natural that this is so. I come as a witness, and I do not know very well whether to charge, discharge, or both.

Civil wars leave behind wounds that take a long time to heal. Unlike those that are not, matters of borders, economics, religious beliefs, diplomacy or geopolitics, and the desire for territorial power are not aired. Those who die are not anonymous soldiers —strangers, they usually call them— at the service of a flag, but people who are close

### Abstract

The author is the posthumous son of a murdered in the civil war by the national side. In the 1950s, he was a member of the Spanish Communist Party and was imprisoned by Franco's Regime; later, he lived several years in exile. Victim of the Francoist's Regime, Fernando Sánchez Dragó, exposes in this essay his opposition to 'historical memory' and 'democratic memory'. He also reveals that he has not received any help from the 'historical memory' associations to search for his father's body.

and provided with names and surnames: fathers, mothers, grandparents, siblings, relatives, friends, neighbors, coworkers, or simply people we see around every day. No family in my country does not keep a funeral memory, neither historical nor democratic, but strictly personal, one or more of its members deceased, assassinated, exiled, or discriminated, by its abuses, by its excesses, and by its tail lashes.

In Spain, when Franco, who was raised to power after the outcome of the war died, in November of 1975, my compatriots and I made a remarkable and successful effort to resolve the traces, wounds, re-

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

sentments, the spirits of revenge, and feelings of individual and collective guilt. It was not easy, but it was done. It was called Transition. With the Transition, and by its hand, democracy came, the Constitution, the Rule of Law... Winners and losers, the descendants of one and the other, made a slate clean and retired without acquittance the Regime that many, but not all, considered a dictatorship. They applied the formula—Peace, Mercy, Forgiveness— of Mr. Manuel Azaña, the last President of the Second Republic. Inaugurated a period of goodwill and public and personal freedoms that even today, somehow or other and staggering for multiple reasons of political and secessionist interests that are not relevant here, remains relatively unscathed.

In March of 2004—or was it in April?—that spirit that of Transition and reconciliation, which was, apparently, more fragile than we all thought, showed its first cracks. Today, three decades later, they have multiplied and widened and could topple the building. It was then when a lunatic—the self-proclaimed socialist Rodríguez Zapatero— came to the presidency of the Government, who soon took up the hoe to reopen the mass graves (or not) of those killed in the war, turning them into trenches. The Law of “Historical Memory”, as harmful as it is useless, cheered by some and reviled by others, once again unleashed the hostilities between the two Spains that today as yesterday, continues to freeze the hearts of the little Spaniards who come to the world. He was a famous poet and of undisputed and indisputable moral authority who resorted to that metaphor— and who no longer have the slightest idea of the horror that preceded the military uprising of July 18th, but also popular uprising, and

Since 1975, the Spanish people made a remarkable effort to resolve the wounds, resentments, revenge moods, and revenge



because of which Spain fell in a very cold abyss. So we walk. The law mentioned above was born in the dubious heat of a semantic confusion that, due to its obviousness, even the most illiterate or disinterested observers can perceive. Now, abounding in error and ideological coercion, the memory to which the law above refers is, in addition to “Historical”, “Democratic” (sic). This *addendum*, blatantly opportunistic and totalitarian, is a very recent occurrence of the current Government: that one, chaired by Pedro Sánchez, of which a party with a Bolshevik and Chavista pedigree, now a Madurist, is part of, that wishes to fragment the country, immobilize its inhabitants with the straitjacket of a single thought and lower the basic principle of the current Constitution.

Let's be done! We were few, we say in Spain, and the grandmother gave birth. Memory is memory, period. It can be sad or happy, dark or bright, exact or uncertain, fleeting or lasting. However, it is always individual, personal, subjective, and, therefore, legitimate in its diversity and not subject in any case to interests of a political, parasitic, and doctrinal nature. The only historical memory that can and should exist is that of historians who handle data, only data, demonstrate their veracity, and interpret them with objectivity, honesty, and equanimity. Never, as is now claimed, that of the Official State Gazette nor, even less, that of the Penal Code.



Fotos del autor

Fernando Sánchez Dragó's father was assassinated by some Falangists in 1936. His son was educated in the most traditional school in the "bourgeois" Madrid; when he was in college, he was a member of the Communist Party of Spain; and currently supports the right-wing VOX party. It has been a pendular, agitated, and sincere life, like so many others that "historical memory" cannot admit.



Another writer, Juan Eslava Galán, who is also, like me, a historian, says in the preface to my penultimate book (*España Guadaña. Arderéis Como en el 36*, 2019), which deals precisely with the *flatus vocis* and spurious concept that I analyze here, as follows:

*One of this book's purposes is the refutation of the "zapateril" <sup>1</sup>occurrence of historical memory. It happens to that memory as it does to older people: it remembers what happened a long time ago but forgets the recent. He remembers the unfortunate days when some Spaniards killed others out of that Cainite hatred so dearly ours. However, he ignores his children's reconciliation when the two sides, left and right, embraced and agreed to the Transition.*

In Spain's war, which is often said to be the last romantic war in history, not rivers have flowed, but seas of ink. The bibliography referring to it has a barrage of epigraphs. Almost half a century ago—I don't know

how—they already exceeded two thousand. Not only very disparate opinions are poured into them, but also openly contradictory data. Discuss them as much as the historians want and whether they agree, but do not assume the repressive role of being judge and party, magistrate and prosecutor, in such a cornered and tricky issue.

Although I announced it, I have not yet introduced myself... I am a well-known writer and journalist, although also very controversial. I am eighty-four years old and have more than fifty books and seven thousand journalism pieces in my history. I have received numerous national and international awards, and I have been a professor of the Spanish language, literature, and history at thirteen universities in seven countries. I am not saying this, ladies and gentlemen of the European Union, to show off

<sup>1</sup> Translator note: "zapateril occurrence" is how the author implies that the event of historical memory comes from José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, a former Spanish presidente (2004-2011) who represented the Socialist Party in Spain.

or looking for admiration, but because I want to give and thus endorse my voluntary testimony in the process opened by the Spanish Government and its minions on the alleged crimes of the Franco regime. I believe I have the authority to do so. My papers are in order. In September of 1936, my father was shot without trial in Burgos; my paternal uncle was sentenced to death at the end of the war and spent several years in prison. I found my bones in it; I was arrested on many occasions, I suffered five processes, I spent a total of seventeen months in jail and almost eight in house arrest, I spent six years in exile... Is that enough? Is my testimony admitted? Am I recognized as a victim of Francoism? Do I have the right to speak? I remind you that, unlike many of the people called to testify by the Spanish Government's propaganda organs, my testimony is not hearsay. I am an eyewitness of the alleged crimes that are being tried and the time in which they took place. Those who are now less than fifty years old cannot say the same, no matter how much their opinion is sought about that time and those events. I assure you that my words are not the result of any ideology because I lack it or the desire to prosper. On the contrary: they can be expensive. I write this out of appreciation for the truth. Things were not like many; without having lived them, they count and judge them. Nobody tortured me. All Spaniards

were victims of a war whose stupid cruelty is divided equally between the two parties involved in it. And as for the postwar period, the Franco years were indeed full of shadows for some, especially initially; it was also full of lights for others. In Franco's Spain, I knew only those who, from radical positions—mine, for example—and looking for a fight, faced regime persecution. Believe me, if I tell you that there were few of us. My memories are of a civilized, enlightened, and habitable country—enough of the lies. We do not reopen trenches. Let us not give life to a Republic that was infamy in so many things, nor to an authoritarian regime that breathed its last breath forty-five years ago. Let's leave a memory to dry in the field of free personal memory, neither historical nor democratic, of those who have it. Get over the matter. Habeas corpus? Well, here is mine, ladies, and gentlemen.

#### Addendum: Second Class Dead

I compress and rewrite another testimonial. On July 17th of 1936, the news reached Madrid that the Melilla garrison had risen. Fernando Sánchez Monreal, a very young journalist but already the Febus agency director, did not think twice. He left the house with his clothes on, heading south, and left Elena Dragó, his wife, pregnant, without imagining that he would never see her again. On September 14th, after a spectacular event, he was captured and shot near Burgos by self-styled members of the Falange founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera. May God forgive you. Elena, a year later, began the search for her husband across a country on fire. She did it accompanied by the son they both had fathered and who, as time passed, would devote strenuous efforts to the struggle to find the remains of her father. I learned about this story, a solid

**My memories are of a civilized, enlightened, and habitable country. No more lies. We should not open trenches**



and solvent work colleague when I met Dragó. These are his words, transcribed in one of my columns:

*"I, Emma Nogueira, also a young journalist who only knows about the war, what books have taught me, I embarked a few months ago on the uncertain task of completing the investigation that he had undertaken. In those, we were walking when the Caine Spain blocked our way. I have checked. For many months I persecuted various members of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory. Calls, messages, meetings, requests... All in vain: After hearing over and over that the Government does not give subsidies, that the Association, as mentioned above, an expert in posturing, does what it can and that many are looking for their own, I managed to get Fernando a DNA test, but hope was short-lived. After collecting the only son of the deceased's saliva, I never heard from such a fallacious Association again. Well, I lied. I compulsively called the architect of the test who avoided me, I finally found him, and I was frozen. When I heard the argument, he adduced to justify the unjustifiable: "Sánchez Dragó is an uncomfortable person for the Association due to his political positions, and that stops any initiative that involves him". At the moment, I am not going to reveal the name of the person who said it, but I have a recording that contains*

**They shot my father; my uncle spent several years in jail; I found my bones in it myself. Is my testimony approved? Am I recognized as a victim of Francoism? Do I have the right to speak?**



*his words. Historical memory? Close wounds? Do justice? Sarcasm is bragging about it when you wield the grip of political power to dig trenches. They still have time to rectify and prevent the son of that young journalist full of life, full of future, and myself, from denouncing those responsible for such an abject crime of discrimination in the corresponding judicial headquarters".*

In this one, for example, I add. Work, ladies and gentlemen, in conscience, and do everything possible. So that the iniquitous Law of "Democratic Memory" imposed by the communist social Government of Sánchez Castejón and Pablo Iglesias is repealed before its impact and the totalitarianism that it will bring with it are irreversible. ▼





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In all the school books on the Second Republic subject, this soldier appears who waved a tricolor flag. His name was Pedro Mohino Díaz. In July of 1936, he joined the rebellion against the Popular Front government in Alcalá de Henares, was taken prisoner and shot in reprisals. On which side do they put the "memory policies"? Those two acts of Captain Mohino are an example of the story's complexity, a story that the "memorialists" reduce to a simplistic confrontation between good guys and bad guys.

## Pedro Carlos González Cuevas

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Currently, he is a tenured professor of History of Political Ideas and History of Spanish Political Thought at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) (National University of Distance Education). Of his bibliography they emphasize: *Acción Española. Teología política y nacionalismo autoritario en*

*España 1913-1936* (Spanish Action. Political theology and authoritarian nationalism in Spain 1913-1936) (1998), *Historia de las derechas españolas. De la Ilustración a nuestros días* (History of Spanish rights. From Enlightenment to Our days) (2000), *Maeztu, biografía de un nacionalista español* (Maeztu, biography of a Spanish nationalist) (2003), *El pensamiento*

*político de la derecha española en el siglo XX* (The political thought of the Spanish right in the 20th century) (2005), *La razón conservadora. Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, una biografía político-intelectual* (The conservative reason. Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, a political-intellectual biography) (2015).

## “Usable Pasts”, “Incomplete Memories” and Political Practices

Pedro Carlos González Cuevas

### About History and Politics

The world is neutral outside of a man because outside of him, there is no reflective consciousness in action. On the contrary, in human societies, nothing is neutral; the only man contains meaning, and he is only a man to the extent that he does so. Therefore, in the struggle for ideas, language is used as a political weapon; rites and symbols also play a crucial role. Of particular relevance to the political cause, it turns out to have myths, with venerable icons embodied infamous people, period institutions, that the historical narrative tends to frame well above the actual story. In that sense, it is necessary to take into account the political character of historical knowledge. In his prison notebooks, the communist thinker Antonio Gramsci raised the relationship between the past and the historical present. In his view, “the present includes all the past.” In that sense, the critique of the present not only means its “discontinuity” and “revocability”; It also means the need to include in the critique of the present that of the past. Without this dimension, the present critique is partial and, therefore, also inadequate, out of date. If it is true that history is the present, it is also true that the present is history. Gramsci also pointed out,

### Abstract

Professor González Cuevas explains the birth of “memory policies” in Twentieth's century societies, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The author underlines its condition as a political element, opposite to that of the true story. Next, he describes the Spanish case. After the death of the Spanish head of state, Francisco Franco, there was an agreement not to resort to the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent regime as political arguments. However, as soon as the socialist party feared losing the Government in the 90's it broke. The Spanish Lefts (socialists, communists, and others) have for years promoted the 'memory movement', which divides Spaniards, lies about their past, and threatens their freedoms with the laws of “historical memory” and “democratic memory”.

precisely, that if the present is “criticism of the past, it is also (therefore) its own overcoming”<sup>1</sup>.

According to the German thinker, Gramscian perception can be added to Walter Benjamin's meditations on the so-called “judgments of History”, which are never absolutely definitive or immutable. From this perspective, the future can reopen supposedly “closed” historical files, “rehabilitate”

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Pasado presente* (Present Past). Buenos Aires, 1974, pp. 17 ff.

characters and slandered political tendencies, update expired hopes and aspirations, rediscovering forgotten combats or judged “utopian”, “anachronistic” and “against the grain of progress”. In this case, the opening of the future is closely associated<sup>2</sup>. Benjaminian approaches are fully valid in the intellectual spheres of the radical left<sup>3</sup>.

In this sense, the interpretation of the past constitutes a direct intervention in the present; knowledge of the past becomes a privileged instrument to interrogate the present and to understand what is new about it; in the narration of the past, programs of a political, social and symbolic nature are present. For this reason, in the historiographic field, the hegemonic articulation of what Allan Megill calls a “master narrative” is a synthesizing account of the trajectory of a society or a nation. There are many master narratives: “democratization”, “secularization”, or “economic growth”<sup>4</sup>. Whoever manages to articulate his master narrative in the historiographic field wins the cultural battle.

On the other hand, it is necessary to consider the changes in what the French historian François Hartog calls regimes of historicity: the findings of past, present, and future that have characterized Western historical thought in recent centuries... The current historicity regime is characterized by presentism, facing the past, Antiquity’s characteristic, and the future, characteristic of Modernity. For this reason, “memory” occu-

**Whoever manages to articulate his master narrative in the historiographic field wins the cultural battle**



pies a privileged place in the new way of perceiving historical time, which is a consequence of technological and social transformations, and, above all, of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Thus, it seeks to make “memory” of everything; it is no longer conceived as the need to retain the past to penetrate the future, but instead offers the present in itself. From there, “memory” becomes an instrument of presentism and allows it to be placed at the center of intellectual and political debates thanks to its closeness to contemporary scholars<sup>5</sup>.

It must be added, the contribution of the school of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, which has known how to theorize the repoliticization of the ideological perspective of the left, through a new interpretation of Carl Schmitt and other authors. Society is permeated with contingency, and all order is hegemonic in nature. The political domain implies the renunciation of the search for a consensus without exclusion and the hope of a perfectly reconciled and harmonious society. Something that leads to a clear distinction between what is political and what is politics. The political has to be understood as an ontological dimension of antagonism, and by

<sup>2</sup> See Michael Löwy, *Walter Benjamin: aviso de incendio* (Walter Benjamin: fire warning). Mexico, 2012, pp. 183 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> See Giacomo Marramao, *Sobre el síndrome populista. La deslegitimación como estrategia*. (On the populist syndrome. Delegitimization as a strategy.) Barcelona, 2020, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Allan Megill, “Grand Narrative and the Discipline of History,” in Frank Ankersmitt and Hans Keller (ed.), *A New Philosophy of History*. Chicago, 1995, pp. 132 ff.

<sup>5</sup> François Hartog, *Regímenes de historicidad. Presente y experiencia del tiempo*. (Regimes of historicity. Present and experience of time). Mexico, 2007. Chicago, 1995, pp. 132 sqq.

politics, the practices and institutions called upon to design the organization of human coexistence<sup>6</sup>. Starting from the assumptions of "agonistic pluralism", the right/left distinction continues to be essential since it implies "the recognition of the social division and the legitimization of the conflict"<sup>7</sup>.

A political trend also emerged that Jean Bricmont has called the "moral left", which, looking at the failures of real socialism and the crisis of social democracy, abandons the traditional projects of social transformation; focusing its interest on the vindication of minorities -homosexuals, LGBTI, emigrants- and in anti-fascist historical memory<sup>8</sup>.

The "historical" or "social" or "democratic" memory becomes a political weapon of the left against the right. The way two angry leftist political scientists have interpreted it, such as Paloma Aguilar and Leigh A. Payne, refers to the "contentious coexistence" in Spanish society due to the "historical memory" of those defeated in the Civil War<sup>9</sup>. Thus, in the left's political and cultural spheres, what Elizabeth Jelin has called the "fight for the past" began, that is, the construction of "social memory". It is still significant in this book that his arguments focus on the victims of

## The "historical memory" is selective by nature since it is based on a partisan selection of events



Nazism and the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone. The issue of the countries of real socialism and Stalinism is conspicuous by its absence<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, we are here, as we will later see in Spain, in what Tzvetan Todorov denounces as "the risks of an incomplete memory"<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, it is that the "historical memory" or "social" or "democratic" aims to found an identity or guarantee the survival or claims of specific social and political groups. It is about a compelling and often painful way of relating to the past, always vindictive, which implies a cult of memory and obsessive commemoration of certain events. When it is founded, as is often the case, it encourages and legitimizes those who feel they are victims in memory of tragic experiences. The "historical memory" is selective by nature since its base is a partisan selection of events<sup>12</sup>. For this reason, the reference of a leftist historian like Ricard Vinyes to the "usable pasts"<sup>13</sup> is very significant. Alternatively, that of Josep Fontana

<sup>6</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistique. Penser politiquement le monde (Agonistic. Think politically about the world)*, Paris, 2013, pp. 15-16.

<sup>7</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *En torno a lo político (Around the political)*, México, 2007, pp. 127-128.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Bricmont, *La République des censeurs (The Republic of censors)*, Paris, 2014, pp. 37.

<sup>9</sup> Paloma Aguilar Fernández and Leigh A. Payne, *El resurgir del pasado en España. Fosas de víctimas y confesiones de verdugos (The resurgence of the past in Spain. Graves of victims and confessions of executioners)*, Madrid, 2017, pp. 33 sqq.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Jelin, *La lucha por el pasado. Cómo construimos la memoria social (The Struggle for the Past. How we build social memory)*, Buenos Aires, 2018, pp. 61-82, 85-145.

<sup>11</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, "Argentina: les risques d'une mémoire incomplète", in *Lire et vivre ("Argentina: the risks of an incomplete memory")*, in *Reading and living*, Paris, 2018, pp. 139-145.

<sup>12</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Los abusos de la memoria (Abuses of memory)*, Barcelona, 2000, pp. 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> Ricard Vinyes, "La memoria como política pública" (*Memory as public policy*), en *Políticas públicas de memoria (Public memory policies)*, Barcelona, 2007, pp. 24 ss.

to the “remembered presents”<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, it is that, deep down, “historical memory” and history represent two antagonistic forms of relationship with the past. The “historical memory” is sustained in the commemoration, while the historical search does it through the research work. The first is, by definition, sheltered from doubts and revisions; the second admits, as a matter of principle, the possibility of revision, insofar as it seeks to establish the facts and place them in context to avoid anachronisms. The “memory” demands adherence; history, distance<sup>15</sup>.

Even before General Franco’s death, the historiographic field was colonized by Marxism and the left in Spain. The simplifying work of the historian Manuel Tuñón de Lara and his acolytes, who held university chairs and influential media, marked the content of historiographic production during the Transition to the party regime until the 1980s, and in some cases, it continues. Spokespeople for a mechanistic and deterministic Marxism, their leit-motif was the vindication of those defeated in the Civil War, the labor movement, the Second Republic, and the intellectuals of the left<sup>16</sup>. Given its low intellectual density, this Marxism was progressively abandoned by historians. However, Tuñón de Lara provided them with a master narrative, in which the left represented “democracy”, “modernization,”

and economic progress against a right identified with reaction and fascism. The myth of the Second Republic had been created as a normative framework and as a future project politician.

### Invention and vindication of “historical memory”

The process of Transition to the party regime was carried out by resorting to a policy of pacts. The reformist political elites of the Franco regime sought the progressive integration of the left into the new political system that was emerging. As in the Restoration case, the fundamental dogma was the monarchical institution as an instrument of continuity. The response of the real left, the PSOE, and the PCE consisted in taking advantage of the advantages offered to it of legality and promises of social and political influence. The process ended with a kind of agreed political break, although social continuity was evident. Among the unwritten pacts of this process was the renunciation of the use of the memory of the Second Republic, the Civil War, and the Franco regime in political contests. Its foundation was the discourse of “national reconciliation.” The Transition produced, in this sense, whole triumphalist historiography, content that is now questioned, above all, as we shall see, by the left<sup>17</sup>. Not all the left were satisfied with this tactic. The communist writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán fa-

<sup>14</sup> Josep Fontana, “Memoria y recuerdos” (*Memory and memories*), en op. cit., pp. 108.

<sup>15</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Memoria del mal, tentación del bien* (*Memory of evil, temptation of good*), Barcelona, 2002, pp. 156 ss.

<sup>16</sup> Pedro Carlos González Cuevas, “Los Guardianes de la Historia, presencia, persistencia y retorno” (*The Guardians of History, presence, persistence, and return*), in *Bajo el dios Augusto. El oficio de historiador ante los guardianes parciales de la historia* (*Under the god Augustus. The office of historian before the partial guardians of history*), Madrid, 2017, pp. 148 s. “Manuel Tuñón de Lara: marxismo, historiografía y redes de influencia universitaria” (“Manuel Tuñón de Lara: Marxism, historiography and university influence networks”), in *Aportes. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, nº 99, 2019, pp. 7-53.

<sup>17</sup> Look Gonzalo Pasamar, *La Transición española a la democracia ayer y hoy. Memoria cultural, historiografía y política*. (*The Spanish Transition to Democracy yesterday and today. Cultural memory, historiography and politics*.) Madrid, 2019.





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The establishment of democracy in Spain has failed to set up public rituals or typical festivities. Leftists and separatists reject any event and symbol that unites the Spanish, such as the National Holiday of October 12 (photo) and now the Constitution.

vored a “Generalized democratic re-education” and for “giving back to the people their true memory” against fascism<sup>18</sup>.

The mistake of the right was to believe that the consensus around the non-use of the Civil War and the Franco regime in the political contest would be eternal. Furthermore, in politics, nothing is; it all depends on the contexts and the political and social balances. As long as the right, led by Manuel Fraga, lacked the possibility of coming to power, in front of Felipe González, the consensus, “worse than better”, was maintained, I say “worse than better”, because Fraga represented, for a large

sector of the population, the image of late Francoism. At the same time, González was the image of youthful Modernity. At all times, the victory of the left was certain. When José María Aznar led the new right and endangered the large Socialist majority, the left tactics changed. It was not Jose Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, but Felipe González resorted to “historical memory” when it came to present the Popular Party evilly. It was no longer as an aggressive and bloodthirsty Doberman but as heir to Generals Miguel Primo de Rivera and Francisco Franco<sup>19</sup>. As Santos Juliá pointed out, “from the slogan of reconciliation to the denunciation of silence”<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> “El fascismo agazapado” (*Crouching Fascism*), *Mundo Obrero*, 22-28-IX-1977.

<sup>19</sup> Santos Juliá Díaz, *Elogio de la historia en tiempos de memoria* (*Praise of History in times of Memory*). Madrid, 2011, pp. 147.

<sup>20</sup> Santos Juliá Díaz, “Recordar el pasado para construir el futuro” (*Remember the past to build the future*), in *Pensar el futuro* (*Think about the future*). Santander, 2002, pp. 79 ss.

"Historical memory" and history represent two antagonistic forms of relationship with the past. The "memory" demands adherence; history, distance



With the help of the socialist left and the radical left, little by little, memorial movements developed in civil society. Associations such as Ex-Combatants and Ex-Prisoners and Reprisals, the International Brigades, Volunteers for Freedom, the Recovery of Historical Memory, or the Memory Forum came to light, demanding the exhumation of corpses, the repeal of the Amnesty Law, the nullity/illegitimacy of the sentences handed down during the Franco regime, and, above all, the elimination of the symbolic universe of the previous regime: Valle de Los Caídos, Arco de la Victoria, street names, titles noblemen, monuments to Calvo Sotelo, etc.<sup>21</sup>. The political scientists Paloma Aguilar and Leigh A. Payne believed that this movement's social subject was the "grandchildren of the Civil War": "They reject the guilt imposed on the republicans for instigating the war. They stand up to the defeatist story about the republican regime"<sup>22</sup>. As Escudero Alday points out, the memorial movements' fundamental objective is "the construction of citizenship" through the historical vindication of the value of the Second Republic and the memory of those who defended it, "a political instrument

for the future." It is that, in the current context, "the Republic can become what really must be looked at and from which to learn to advance in the construction of that real democracy demanded by broad sectors"<sup>23</sup>.

During José María Aznar's presidency (1996-2004), the memorial movements began an offensive not only focused on history but also developed in all cultural spheres, literature, cinema, and theater. The shelves of department stores and bookstores were crammed with history books, or rather pseudohistory. The national side and the Franco regime were denounced as the authors of a rigorously planned genocide. All this tinged with a partisan spirit and sentimentality that is hardly bearable. *Maquis: el puño que golpeó al franquismo*, (*Maquis: the fist that hit the Franco regime*), by José Sánchez Cervelló; *Trece rosas rojas* (*Thirteen Red Roses*), by Carlos Fonseca; *Los años del terror* (*The years of terror*), by Mirta Núñez Balart; *Las fosas del silencio. ¿Hubo un Holocausto español?* (*The graves of silence. Was there a Spanish Holocaust?*), by Montse Armengou y Ricard Belisa, etc. This offensive culminated in Paul Preston's book, *El Holocausto español* (*The Spanish Holocaust*), not so much for its historiographic quality, in my opinion, null, but for its media impact<sup>24</sup>. In these texts, the national and Franco regimes were losing their concrete profiles to become a kind of moral cat-

<sup>21</sup> Emilio Silva, "Movimiento memorialista" (Memorial movement), in *Diccionario de Memoria Histórica* (Dictionary of Historical Memory). Madrid, 2011, pp. 69 ss. The assassination of deputy José Calvo Sotelo, on July 13, 1936, by a group of socialist police and gunmen gave the military conspirators unity and popular support. War broke out the following day, the 18th.

<sup>22</sup> Paloma Aguilar and Leigh A. Payne, *El resurgir del pasado en España. Fosas y confesiones de verdugos* (The resurgence of the past in Spain. Graves of victims and confessions of executioners). Madrid, 2017, pp. 55 ss.

<sup>23</sup> Rafael Escudero Alday, "Conceptos contra el olvido: una guía para no perder la memoria" ("Concepts against forgetting: a guide not to lose memory"), in *Diccionario de memoria histórica...* (Dictionary of Historical Memory), pp. 8 ss.

<sup>24</sup> Pedro Carlos González Cuevas, "Paul Preston: el ocaso de un hispanista" ("Paul Preston: the decline of a Hispanic"), in *El Catoblepas* n° 12, 2011.

egory, that is, Radical Evil. Thus was born a new fashion in the Spanish historiographic field: Francoism's denunciation as a totalitarian and genocidal political system. "*Reductio ad Hitlerum*", as Leo Strauss would say<sup>25</sup>. Its heirs, the rights.

### Towards the institutionalization of "incomplete memory"

This process's culmination took place under the aegis of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, whose ideology was a confusing amalgam of uncritical progressivism, democratic fundamentalism, political voluntarism, and historical ignorance. It was the Spanish representation of the "moral left." As stated in an interview, Rodríguez Zapatero felt "very, very leftist"<sup>26</sup>. For this reason, he displayed, from the first moment, a persistent revisionist desire not only regarding the development of the Transition but also the historical period that begins with the advent of the Second Republic, the outbreak of the Civil War, and the Franco regime. In the end, his entire period in the Government (2004-2011) was a historical process to the Spanish right, as well as an uncritical reaffirmation of the historical trajectory of PSOE. Significantly, a ceremony took place on October 24, 2009, at the headquarters of the PSOE, in which the militant ID card was returned to Juan Negrín, Julio Álvarez del Vayo —man of Largo Caballero, an admirer of Mao and founder of the terrorist group Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriótico (Antifascist and Patriotic Revolu-

The right believed that the consensus around the non-use of the Civil War and the Franco regime in the political contest would be eternal



tionary Front)—, Ramón González Peña—one of the leaders of the October revolution in 1934—and Ángel Galarza Gago—who threatened Calvo Sotelo with death in the Cortes of 1936 and was Minister of the Interior when the massacres of Paracuellos de Jarama and Torrejón de Ardoz—<sup>27</sup>.

On December 26, 2007, the Law that extends rights and establishes measures for those who suffered persecution or violence during the Civil War and the Dictatorship, better known with the Law of "Historical Memory", where the democrats were identified with the left, including the members of the International Brigades, and the Franco period was defined as a "painful period of our history"<sup>28</sup>. At that time, the institutionalization of vague memory became a reality, a narrative that decontextualized the concrete historical process, silenced critical events of the past, and marginalized social sectors that felt threatened by revolutionary social processes<sup>29</sup>.

Leftist historians, such as Ricard Vinyes, demanded a "State memory" and a "public policy of memory"<sup>30</sup>. This demand did not re-

<sup>25</sup> Leo Strauss, *Derecho Natural e Historia (Natural Law and History)*. Buenos Aires, 2014, p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> Suso de Toro, *Madera de Zapatero ("Be made for Shoemaker")*. Barcelona, 2012, pp. 213, 180-181.

<sup>27</sup> *El País*, October 25, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> *Boletín oficial del Estado (Official State Journal)* n° 910, 27-XII-2007, pp. 53410-54415.

<sup>29</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, "Argentina: les risques d'une mémoire incomplète", in *Lire et vivre ("Argentina: the risks of an incomplete memory")*, in *Reading and living*, Paris, 2018, pp. 139-145.

<sup>30</sup> Ricard Vinyes, *El Estado y la memoria. Gobierno y ciudadanos frente a los traumas de la historia (The State and memory. Government and citizens facing the traumas of history)*. Barcelona, 2009.

main a mere theory but crystallized in the so-called Democratic Memorial, established in Catalonia. Reference was no longer made to “historical memory” but to a “democratic memory” identified with the left. For Jordi Guixé and Montserrat Iñiesta, it was “a pedagogical instrument for the future to provide society with an instrument that disseminates the ethical values of our society”. “A future for the past”<sup>31</sup>. Ricard Vinyes defined this institution as a platform for disseminating “the usable past”, whose objective was to end “the model of impunity and its consequences in the construction of the founding story of our democracy successive governments have maintained since 1977”. It is that the Franco regime and its consequences were unforgivable. For this reason, the mission of the Democratic Memorial was “to turn the memory of anti-Francoism into one of our usable pasts”<sup>32</sup>. For Vinyes, the “democratic models” to follow were those embodied in the figures of communist militants such as Clara Zetkin, Dolores Ibárruri, or Carlo Feltrinelli<sup>33</sup>.

According to a dissident historian of Catalan nationalism, Jordi Canal, the so-called Democratic Memorial, tried to impose “a unique and Manichean vision of Catalonia’s history in the 20th century”<sup>34</sup>.

While the Franco regime was demonized and, therefore, the whole of the rights, the communists refused to make self-criticism of

### The Spanish left has articulated a sectarian vulgate, which wants to impose on society as a whole and divides the Spanish people



their historical trajectory. Thus, at the closing of its XVIII Congress in October 2009, its general secretary, José Luis Centella, expressed his unwavering will to defend the identity of Spanish communism: “The Communist Party vindicates its heroic past, and we do not have to be ashamed, nor ask forgiveness for anything, but we must fight so that our memory is not taken away”<sup>35</sup>.

In fact, the left apologies have not been lacking, not for Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, but Stalin. The publishing house El Viejo Topo published in 2011 the book of the communist philosopher Domenico Losurdo, *Stalin. History and criticism of a black legend*, in whose pages he interpreted the communist regime as a “dictatorship of development”. He denied the existence of the “holocaust” in Ukraine, and he trivialized the meaning of the Gulag, attributing to it a “productivist and pedagogical stimulus”<sup>36</sup>.

On May 27, 2011, a Commission of Experts for the Future of the Valley of the Fallen was created, with the task of preparing a re-

<sup>31</sup> Jordi Guixé and Montserrat Iñiesta, “Introducción” (Introduction), in *Políticas públicas de memoria* (Public memory policies), Barcelona, 2007, pp. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Ricard Vinyes, “La memoria como política pública” (Memory as a public policy), in *op.cit.*, pp. 34-37.

<sup>33</sup> Ricard Vinyes, *Asalto a la memoria. Impunidades y reconciliación. Símbolos y éticas* (Assault on memory. Impunities and reconciliation. Symbols and ethics), Barcelona, 2011, pp. 77 ss.

<sup>34</sup> Jordi Canal, *Cataluña* (Catalonia), Madrid, 2015, p. 283.

<sup>35</sup> *El País*, 29-X-2009.

<sup>36</sup> Domenico Losurdo, *Stalin. Historia y crítica de una leyenda negra* (Stalin. History and criticism of a black legend), Barcelona, 2011.

port on possible actions concerning the monument, following the provisions of the "Historical Memory" Law. Its conclusions were as expected, "resignification" of the monument and transfer of the remains of Francisco Franco<sup>37</sup>.

Likewise, the historiographic left subjected the Transition process to relentless historical criticism. Among others, Josep Fontana did not hesitate to classify him as a "farce" and a "legend", criticizing PSOE and PCE's actions for abandoning their projects of social transformation and joining the monarchical and capitalist regime<sup>38</sup>. In February 2014, a manifesto by leftist intellectuals was published in favor of establishing the Third Republic. The signatories wished, among other things, to put an end to the "anomaly" that the Head of State was a "King imposed by the dictator", never subject to a citizen referendum. Considered as "the main price that was paid in the process of Transition from dictatorship to democracy and to articulate the reform agreed under pressure exerted by the Army arising from the coup d'état of 1936 against the Second Republic, the economic powers and the influence of the USA".

The Monarchy was presented as an "obsolete institution"; and the Republic as "an urgent need for democratic regeneration"<sup>39</sup>. For his part, Ángel Viñas pointed out that the Transition had not been an exemplary poli-

tical process because it silenced the Franco regime's victims. In this regard, the irascible historian relativized the role of the monarch throughout those years. Juan Carlos I did nothing but "pay off the historical debt with Spanish society and fulfill his duty." "What is more," he will say, "he was driven to do so by the lack of alternatives"<sup>40</sup>.

In this process, the group of historians organized around the figures of Ángel Viñas and Paul Preston, heir to the ideas of Tuñón de Lara, has been fundamental. This historiographical sector mythologizes the emblematic figures of the socialist presidents of the Socialist Government Largo Caballero (1936-1937) and Negrín (1937-1939). Identify the Second Republic, even during the Civil War, with democracy. Of course, it completely disqualifies the national side and the figure of Franco. In the work of Viñas, a very old-fashioned historian whose methodology is reminiscent of that advocated a century ago by the positivists Langlois and Seignobos, a deeply Manichean and simplistic view of events is offered.<sup>41</sup> The side led by Franco ap-

**The "historical memory" has generated, as the writer Javier Cercas denounces, an industry and tries to keep alive the problem of the past**



<sup>37</sup> Ministerio de la Presidencia. *Informe de la Comisión de Expertos para el Futuro del Valle de los Caídos* (Ministry of the Presidency. Report of the Committee of Experts for the Future of the Valley of the Fallen), 29-XI-2011.

<sup>38</sup> Josep Fontana, "La leyenda de la transición española" ("The legend of the Spanish Transition"), in *La construcció de la identitat. Reflexions sobre el passat i sobre el present* (The construction of identity. Reflections on the past and on the present). Barcelona, 2005, pp. 121-142.

<sup>39</sup> *Público*, 18-II-2014.

<sup>40</sup> "Exaltación monárquica e historia" ("Monarchical exaltation and history"), *El Confidencial*, 19-VI-2014.

<sup>41</sup> Look Pedro Carlos González Cuevas, "El último (por ahora) Guardián de la Historia: Ángel Viñas" ("The last (for now) Guardian of History: Ángel Viñas"), en *Razón Española* N° 202, marzo-abril 2017, pp. 132-172.



## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

appears as a compendium of the grotesque and how disgusting. The Second Republic was a democratic and reformist political regime; the rights conspired against him to defend their material interests. The October Revolution of 1934 was irrelevant. Franco won the Civil War thanks to Hitler and Mussolini's help; the regime arising from the Civil War was inspired by national socialism; Franco was a vulgar murderer, a lousy military man, and a corrupt man. From this interpretation of history, the need for a re-education of the Spanish people similar to that experienced by the German after World War II is deduced<sup>42</sup>.

In any case, “historical memory” generated, as the writer Javier Cercas denounces, an entire industry: “Revenues, marketing, market and competitive: it was the transformation of historical memory in the memory industry”. Something with which the left sought not to solve “the problem” of the past, but to keep it alive for a long time and, in the meantime, to be able to use it against the right<sup>43</sup>.

### Silences, whispers and exhumations

Against this offensive, the right, represented by the Popular Party, kept a significant silence. Under José María Aznar's leadership, what I have called “the return of the conservative-liberal tradition”<sup>44</sup> took place within the Spanish right. As it would later be seen, this intellectual construction crystallized into an inoperative, contradictory, and mellifluous anthology of historiographic nonsense. Something



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The use of a distorted history to establish Left hegemony politics is not limited to Spain. Winston Churchill's statue in front of the British Parliament had to be protected from attacks by groups of young hooligans posing as anti-fascists and anti-racists. Having fought and defeated Adolf Hitler does not absolve other “guilt” in the extreme left's eyes, except Josif Stalin, an ally of the Third Reich for almost two years.

improvised and without substance, Aznar endorsed Francis Fukuyama's thesis on the supposed “end of History”<sup>45</sup>. In this discourse, the

<sup>42</sup> Look Ángel Viñas, *La soledad de la República (The loneliness of the republic)*. Barcelona, 2006. *El escudo de la República (The Shield of the Republic)*. Barcelona, 2007. *Las armas y el oro (Weapons and Gold)*. Barcelona, 2013. *El primer asesinato de Franco (First Franco's Assassination)*. Barcelona, 2017. *La otra cara del Caudillo (The other face of the Caudillo)*. Barcelona, 2015. *La conspiración del general Franco (General Franco's conspiracy)*. Barcelona, 2011. *¿Quién quiso la guerra civil? (Who wanted the Civil War?)*. Madrid, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Javier Cercas, *El impostor (The impostor)*, Barcelona, 2014, pp. 305-306.

<sup>44</sup> Pedro Carlos González Cuevas, “El retorno de la tradición liberal-conservadora” (*The return of the liberal-conservative tradition*), in *Ayer* n° 22, 1996, pp. 71-87.

<sup>45</sup> José María Aznar, *Libertad y solidaridad (Freedom and Solidarity)*, Barcelona, 1991, pp. 15.

Franco regime appears as a kind of parenthesis, a historical anomaly, after which liberal modernization would continue its march. It was a "long period of exception"<sup>46</sup>. However, the most tortuous example of this strategy was Aznar's attempt to capture the figure of the Republican Manuel Azaña, in whose ideology he believed he saw a desire for "national integration and democratic integration"<sup>47</sup>. Mariano Rajoy, future President, also mentioned Azaña's "patriotism"<sup>48</sup>. Such an attempt, clearly unsuccessful, was interpreted by representatives of the cultural left, such as Jorge Semprún, minister in various governments of Felipe González, as evidence that "the moral law" had been monopolized by the defeated in the Civil War<sup>49</sup>. In the same sense, the socialist Fernando Morán expressed himself, affirming that his demand for Azaña represented a "catharsis" for the Spanish right-wing<sup>50</sup>. The FAES, the ideas laboratory of the Popular Party, did not enter fully into the issue of "historical memory."

Within this doctrinal and historiographic emptiness, the Popular Party returned to power, with an absolute majority, after the November 2011 elections. Focused on solving the deep economic crisis that began in 2008, Rajoy did not dismiss the Law of "Historical Memory", as promised. It was limited to paralyzing its financing. His work in that sense was nil. Neither Rajoy nor the PP knew how to interpret the new social and political situation, with the emergence of the Neo-communism

### Sánchez exhumed the body of General Franco, who had been buried for almost forty-four years, shortly before a general election



of Podemos and the secessionist offensive of Catalan nationalism. As a man from FAES, Miguel Ángel Quintanilla, wrote, his "paradoxical liberalism" was incapable of interpreting "the return of Marx and all kinds of sectarianism, nationalism, radicalism, and populism"<sup>51</sup>, which occurred in the rest of Europe.

Meanwhile, PSOE, under the leadership of Pedro Sánchez, did not rest. In December of 2017, he presented a Proposal of Law for the Reform of the Historical Memory Law of accused repressive and authoritarian profiles in Congress. The proposal included all the demands of the memorial movements in their most radical profiles. He accused the Franco regime of crimes against humanity and war, even of "cleaning of genetic inspiration." He advocated the creation of a "Commission of Truth", a "Technical Commission for Historical Memory", a "National DNA Bank" and a "National Census of Victims". The eradication of "any vestige" of Francoism in monuments, plaques, insignia, street names, etc. The Valley of the Fallen had to undergo a resignification. Franco's remains exhumed from his grave. The sanctioning regime was very harsh: fines, outlawing of foundations,

<sup>46</sup> José María Aznar, España. *La segunda transición* (The second Transition). Madrid, 1994, p. 28.

<sup>47</sup> José María Aznar, *La España en la que yo creo* (The Spain in which I believe). Madrid, 1995, p. 158.

<sup>48</sup> "Mi visión de la España constitucional" (My vision of the Constitutional Spain), *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Político* (Notebooks of Political Thinking) n° 1, octubre 2003, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Jorge Semprún, *Federico Sánchez se despide de ustedes* (Federico Sánchez says goodbye). Barcelona, 1996, p. 233.

<sup>50</sup> Fernando Morán, *Manuel Azaña*. Barcelona, 2003, p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> "El ser y el proceder del PP" (The being and behaviour of PP), in *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Político* (Notebooks of Political Thinking), FAES Foundation, n° 49, enero-marzo 2016, pp. 38-39.

Several left-wing historians demand that a "state memory" and a "public policy of memory" be established



imprisonment, censorship of books, expulsion from chairs in universities, etc.<sup>52</sup>

The Proposition of Law elicited the response of a large number of politicians, historians, and intellectuals, both on the right and the left: the historians Stanley G. Payne, Serafín Fanjul, Octavio Ruiz Manjón, and Carlos Moya, the philosopher Fernando Savater, former Ambassador Francisco Vázquez, former Minister Alberto Ruiz Gallardón, former President of the Community of Madrid Joaquín Leguina, etc. The signatories reached 19,000. The *Manifiesto for History and Freedom* rejected the creation of the “Commission of Truth”, and the Proposition was accused of advocating “a Soviet-type law”, which sought “to annul the freedom of thought of the Spaniards”<sup>53</sup>.

However, PP’s passivity continued, which caused the dissent of a conservative party sector, which gave rise to VOX. They were the outraged on the right who did not shy away from the cultural struggle against separatist nationalism, radical feminism, and the historical memory of the left<sup>54</sup>. After a period of insignificance, the new party acquired no-

toriety due to the separatist challenge in Catalonia and the fall of Rajoy due to the motion of censure promoted by the Socialists in June 2018; what could be seen in his success in the Andalusian elections of December 2018. And then in the national elections of April 2019, in which he won 24 seats.

The fall of Rajoy supposed, among other things, the immediate resumption of the public memory policies of the left. One of the earliest promises of Pedro Sánchez was the exhumation of the remains of Mortals of Francisco Franco from his grave in the Valley of the Fallen<sup>55</sup>. Moreover, for almost a couple of years, there was a long struggle between the Government and the Franco family. In the parliamentary debates on the subject, the PP opted for abstention. Failing to achieve stable majorities, Sánchez called elections in April; and later in November. At the end, endorsed by the Supreme Court, Sánchez managed to consummate the exhumation that took place shortly before the elections, on October 24, 2019. The President did not fulfill his promise to organize an intimate ceremony. He did the opposite. Sánchez wanted to turn it into a media show for the elections. VOX was the only political party to oppose it, calling it “outrageous”. In his opinion, it was an attempt to “delegitimize the Transition, overthrow Felipe VI and demolish the Cross of the Valley of the Fallen”<sup>56</sup>. All the Spanish and foreign media, and in particular public television, were summoned. “It is the first vic-

<sup>52</sup> PSOE, *Proposal of Law for the Reform of Law 52/2007, of December 26, which recognizes and extends rights and establishes measures in favor of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and the dictatorship*. Madrid, 14-XII-2017.

<sup>53</sup> ABC, 18-III-2018.

<sup>54</sup> Look Pedro Carlos González Cuevas, VOX. *Entre el liberalismo conservador y la derecha identitaria* (VOX. Between conservative liberalism and the identity right). San Sebastián, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> *El País*, 17-VI-2018.

<sup>56</sup> ABC, 24-X-2019.

tory of the defeated," said Dolores Delgado, the Minister of Justice, who had to attend the ceremony as a representative of the State. From the UN, Sánchez stated that it was a "victory for democracy"<sup>57</sup>. And so did the leftist political scientist, Paloma Aguilar<sup>58</sup>; and, of course, the sectarian Viñas<sup>59</sup>. For both, it was not an end but a beginning. A former Franco minister, Fernando Suárez, interpreted the meaning of that decision as to the end of an entire historical period marked by the principle of national reconciliation<sup>60</sup>.

The fight for the past continues. The Government of PSOE and Podemos does not rest. In January 2020, a new Proposal for a Democratic Memory Law was worked out, in the same sense as the previous ones: search for disappeared persons, National DNA Bank, National Victims Census, "Memory Council", economic sanctions, and outlawing of the associations or foundations that defend the Franco regime, redefinition of the Valley of the Fallen, etc<sup>61</sup>. In September, the Government approved the project, the objective of which was, according to Vice President Carmen Calvo, the "organization of the past"<sup>62</sup>.

A significant reaction occurred in Madrid when VOX, in a plenary session of the City Council, proposed Francisco Largo Caballero and Indalecio Prieto's withdrawal from the

**In Europe, we witness "the return of Marx and all kinds of sectarianism, nationalism, radicalism, and populism"**



capital's street map under the application of the Historical Memory Law.

Surprisingly, the councilors of PP and Ciudadanos supported the initiative. What produced the rejection of the left and the historical group Viñas / Preston and its acolytes, who published a "Technical Report" in which the October 1934 revolution, the figure of the socialist leaders, and the democratic character of the Republic were defended and ruled by the Popular Front during the Civil War<sup>63</sup>.

Such is the situation in which we find ourselves. The Spanish left has articulated a sectarian vulgate, which it wants to impose on society as a whole. Furthermore, what is worse, that divides the Spanish. It also shows a dramatic absence of scientific habitus, authentic researchers, and a perception of reality that does not allow us to look beyond a crass political pragmatism. Fighting it is not only a political-cultural imperative but an ethical one. ▼

<sup>57</sup> *El País*, 25-X-2019.

<sup>58</sup> "¿El principio del fin de un cúmulo de anomalías?" ("The beginning of the end of a cluster of anomalies?"), *El País*, 24-X-2019.

<sup>59</sup> "Franco y el 24-O" (Franco and the 24-O), *El País*, 24-X-2019.

<sup>60</sup> "La exhumación de Franco" (The exhumation of Franco), in *Razón Española* N° 218, noviembre-diciembre 2019, p. 279.

<sup>61</sup> *Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales (Official Journal of the Cortes Generales)*, 31-I-2020.

<sup>62</sup> *El País*, 15-IX-2020.

<sup>63</sup> "Sobre Largo Caballero, Prieto y VOX" (On Largo Caballero, Prieto and VOX), *Conversaciones sobre Historia (Conversations about History)* N° 6, octubre 2020.





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Destruction of a church in the outskirts of Madrid on July 25, 1936. Its arsonists celebrate it with a raised fist.

## Ángel David Martín Rubio

Ángel David Martín Rubio (Castuera, 1969) has a degree in Geography and History from the University of Extremadura. A degree in Church History from the Gregorian University of Rome and Canon Law from the Pontifical University of Salamanca. Since 2010, he has a doctorate from the Faculty of Humanities and Communication Sciences from the San Pablo CEU University. He was ordained priest in Cáceres in 1997.

He is currently a judicial vicar, dean of the Cathedral Chapter of the Diocese of Coria-Cáceres, a professor at the San Pedro de Alcántara Theological Institute, and at the Virgen de Guadalupe Higher Institute of Religious Sciences. As a researcher, he dedicated himself to violence and repression in Spain between the 30s and 40s. He is the author of *La persecución religiosa en Extremadura durante la Guerra Civil* (Religious persecution in

*Extremadura during the Civil War*) (1996), *Paz, Piedad, Perdón y Verdad* (Peace, Mercy, Forgiveness, and Truth) (1997), *Los mitos de la represión en la guerra civil* (The Repression myths of the Civil War) (2005) and *La cruz, el perdón y la gloria: persecución religiosa en España durante la II República y la Guerra Civil* (The Cross, forgiveness, and glory: religious persecution during the Second Republic and the Civil War) (2007).



## Was the Left-Wing Persecution of Catholics Equivalent to Genocide?

Ángel David Martín Rubio

The religious persecution that had begun in Spain, after the establishment of the Second Republic on April 14, 1931, reached its most violent and generalized manifestations in the area called, improperly, “republican” or, better, “popular front” and “red” during the Civil War. It began as a result of the Uprising initiated by the Army and seconded by many Spaniards, and which from the first moments called itself an Uprising or National Movement. During three years, and especially in the first ten months, the cult’s external manifestations were prevented. Thousands of ecclesiastical buildings were desecrated with fires, looting —causing enormous and irreparable damage to the artistic heritage— and violent deaths were caused to bishops, priests, seminarians, men and women religious in a number close to seven thousand. Plus, tens of thousands of laypeople were killed, among other reasons for their beliefs and religious practice.

What happened in Spain is situated in an international context marked by the continuity of secularism in some liberal states subjected both in Europe and in America to a deep crisis. Due to religious persecution in Mexico, due to the difficul-

### Abstract

The “historical memory” ignores the persecution suffered by Spanish Catholics in the 1930s, which due to its magnitude and cruelty can be classified as genocide. The Lefts were responsible for the murder of 7,000 religious (bishops, priests, nuns, and seminarians) and between 60,000 and 70,000 laypeople, many of whom died out of hatred for their Catholic faith. The priest and doctor Ángel David Martín Rubio exposes a selection from many sources that confirm this massacre, including the torture and rape of many victims. Instead of honoring them, the Historical Memory Law encourages the removal of monuments in honor of these people.

ties in Church-State relations in the face of new forms of State emerged in Italy and Germany. Above all, the bloody persecution began in Russia from the October Revolution of 1917 and Stalinism, which would have its continuity in the brilliant expansion of communism after the Second World War both in Europe and Asia. In early pronouncements, what happened in Russia, Mexico, and Spain was related, attributing the persecution against the Church to hatred fostered by “some subversive sects of all religious and social orders”<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (March 19, 1937).

Historical research allows us to affirm that this persecution was fundamentally anti-religious. It was fed by two sources with their roots in the 19th century: sectarian secularism linked to liberalism and atheism advocated by Marxist socialism, especially once the Communist Party led the Russian Revolution. The rest of the approaches that place religious persecution in its political, sociological, or economic context can help its greater historical understanding, as long as we do not fall into the Marxist assumption of reducing ideas, systems, and beliefs to a mere superstructure that evolves at the same pace marked by the actual structure of society, which would be the means and labor relations.

Spain, where the Communist Party was almost non-existent at the beginning of the 1930s, learned how other political forces were seduced by the Bolshevik experience to end up subjected to the Soviet orbit, transforming a civil war, which had begun as an internal conflict, into a first full-scale armed confrontation against communism. Let us make some clarifications about this process and its relationship with religious persecution.

**1.** Some historians flatly deny that as of February 1936 and on the part of the Popular Front, there was the intention of passing to the proletariat's dictatorship, that is, implanting a Marxist regime. It is an opinion

**The left murdered nearly 7,000 religious people of both sexes, along with dozens of thousands of lay people killed by their religious beliefs**



and nothing more, since the documents, speeches, and articles in the leftist press prove otherwise<sup>2</sup>. In July of 1936, Spain was in a revolutionary process similar to the Soviet one, albeit with the peculiarity that its main engine was not the Communist Party<sup>3</sup> but the PSOE, willing to go as far as possible like it could not in 1917 or 1934. They were making now a combined use of direct action and legal channels. At the time, the Communists used the Socialist Party to carry out their aims, just as they did before in the USSR with the Mensheviks and would continue to do in Spain during the war.

**2.** Now, the Republic and Spain's very political evolution at war was going to cause the marginalization of the republicans and the direct persecution of the anarchists, leading to the decisive role of the Soviet-inspired Marxist organizations. First, because of the seduction that happened in Russia since 1917 caused by the fanatical followers of the socialist Largo Caballero, nicknamed by his co-religionists as the *Spanish Lenin*, and then because the Soviet intervention in

<sup>2</sup> Discussions about the authenticity of the documents referring to the plans for establishing the proletariat's dictatorship have little significance, two of which were published by the newspaper *Claridad* (May 30, 1936) denouncing their falsity. Evidence of revolutionary preparations and purposes is abundantly found in speeches, publications, subversive activities, and a paramilitary organization based on the militias that had already formed during the spring of 1936.

<sup>3</sup> This was not because the Soviet Union lacked interest in including Spain in its orbit but because, as it had been verified at the VII Congress of the Comintern, communism was not in a position to triumph by itself. Neither can the Uprising be spoken of due to a kind of fascist maneuver similar to that which the Soviet Union was leading (Cf. Ángel Viñas, *La Alemania nazi y el 18 de Julio*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1977, 239 ff.).



the war will end causing a total dependence on the area called republican. Hence, the episcopal and pontifical magisterium characterizes what happened in Spain as persecution caused by communism. Such is the case of Pius XI's Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) and many pronouncements from the Spanish episcopate.

It is sometimes claimed that it is a mistake to reduce communism to various revolutionary forces and, even more, in Spain, where the communist factor before the war had little numerical significance. The truth is that the PCE, with Soviet sponsorship and the support of a large part of the Socialist Party (PSOE), with the President Juan Negrín (May 1937 - March 1939) at the head, was seizing control of the famous front rear.

On the other hand, the revolutionary forces —although they had many differences and the confrontations between their various factions caused hundreds of deaths<sup>4</sup>— agreed in their atheism and in a socio-political objective that can be generically described as “communist”. Libertarian or anarchist communism, on the one hand, and on the other, statist communism that includes Marxist socialism and communism proper. All this does not prevent that, until 1936, the vehicle of the Soviet ideal and the main pro-Soviet force came from PSOE.

That Republic in which the President of the Government, Largo Caballero (September 1936 - May 1937), was seen with arrests to specify to Stalin that “whatever fate the future reserves for the parliamen-

The Popular Front's connection with Moscow was so deep that the twentieth anniversary of the USSR's proclamation was celebrated in Madrid in 1937. Among the commemoration events, one of the main streets of the capital was named Avenida de la URSS. The Puerta de Alcalá was decorated in this way, with portraits of various Soviet leaders such as Stalin.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Manuel Aguilera Povedano, *Compañeros y camaradas (Las luchas entre antifascistas en la Guerra Civil española)* (Companions and Comrades (The struggles between anti fascists in the Spanish Civil War)), Madrid: Actas, 2012.

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe



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The destruction of the convent of the Salesas in Barcelona included the macabre display of the corpses of the nuns buried there. For these acts, Spanish Catholics and most of the world considered the Civil War as a crusade in defense of the faith.

tary institution. It does not have enthusiastic neither among us, or among the Republicans, enthusiastic defenders”<sup>5</sup>, gave way to an increasing dependence on the Soviet Union, whose preponderance is manifested in all aspects: general politics, press, terror organization, the Popular Army—subject to the Political Commissariat and monitored by the Soviet military mission—and the Treasury public, which sends to the USSR a large part of the gold reserves of the Bank of Spain and the private property preyed upon by revolutionaries or by state intervention.

**3.** An objective analysis reveals that the beginning of the persecution of Catholics dates back to the spring of 1931 when a coalition came to power that coincided in considering religion as an obstacle to progress and an instrument of the overthrown regime.

The forces that led the first steps of the Republic (socialists, anarchists, communists,

left-wing republicans and some regionalists) differed from each other in almost everything: in the form of the State, on the economic organization, in consideration towards social groups, in the role of religion, culture, and teaching... There was only one point of coincidence: the determined will to build a society devoid of any religious foundation artificially.

It will not be so much the war as the definitive disappearance of the rule of law between February and July 1936 that allowed this secularism to reach a virulence that had not been possible before. The articles of the Constitution of 1931 and the measures taken subsequently showed that it was intended to develop a legal framework denying the political, social, and cultural existence of a large sector of Spanish society and consecrating this exclusion on the legal plane. The next step would be the invasion of the sphere of intimacy and even of life. The burning of convents, the legislative religious persecution, and the massive elimination of

<sup>5</sup> Letter of January 6, 1937, cit. by Ricardo de la Cierva, *Historia actualizada de la Segunda República y la Guerra de España 1931-1939*, (Updated History of the Second Republic and the War of Spain 1931-1939), Madrid: Fénix, 2003, 647-651.



ecclesiastics and laity in the October Revolution of 1934 and, above all, from July 1936, would be successive steps in the same logical sequence in which the two acted. Forms of secularism to which we have alluded: the elitist of the liberal parties (with the legislation) and the populist of the revolutionary parties (with direct action).

### Numbers of the religious persecution in Spain

In their *Carta Colectiva* (Collective Letter), the Spanish bishops characterized the Spanish revolution by its cruelty, inhumanity, destructive capacity of civilization and law, anti-Spanish, and, above all, for its anti-Christianity. The numbers of religious and priests assassinated in the famous front zone endorsed this last statement and were fixed with relative accuracy not long after the war ended. In a series of articles published in 1939 and 1940 by Father Constantino Bayle, there were 3,875 priests murdered and 139 disappeared (making a total of 4,014 victims of the secular clergy) and about 2,500 religious<sup>6</sup>. In the book *La Dominación Roja en España* (The Red Domination in Spain), based on the investigation promoted by the Ministry of Justice, the following information was given:

The total number of murders committed on Ministers of the Catholic religion or professed religious by the Popular Front, in

**The anti-religious persecution was fed by two sources with its roots in the 19th century: sectarianism linked to liberalism and atheism advocated by Marxist socialism**



what was once a red zone, amounts to seven thousand nine hundred thirty-seven, among Bishops (of whom 13 were murdered), priests (5.255) and religious (2.669). In Madrid, one hundred and fifty-eight (of which one hundred and eleven are nuns murdered in the capital) and Barcelona, a total of one thousand two hundred and fifteen victims. Also, for the sole reason of their religious character or priestly status; in Valencia, seven hundred and five; in Lérida, three hundred and sixty-six; in Tarragona, two hundred and fifty-nine, and the other provinces subjected to Marxist terror; these murders are also committed in very high numbers<sup>7</sup>.

On the occasion of the tribute that, at the initiative of the Archbishop of Valladolid, D. Antonio García y García, took place in that city on April 11 and 12, 1950, nominal relationships were drawn up that allowed placing the most approximate number of murders between 6,900 and 7,000<sup>8</sup>. In 1953, the Piarist Calasanz Bau had finalized a file in

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Constantino Bayle, "Estadísticas sangrientas. Las víctimas del clero secular" ("Bloody statistics. The victims of the secular clergy"), *Razón y Fe*, 121 (1940), 150-165.

<sup>7</sup> *La dominación roja en España* (Avance de la información instruida por el Ministerio Público) (The red domination in Spain (Advance of information instructed by the Public Ministry)), Madrid: Ministry of Justice (1943), p.155.

<sup>8</sup> They are kept in the National Shrine of the Great Promise of Valladolid and the names of the ecclesiastics they were later published in *Guía de la Iglesia en España* (Guide to the Church in Spain), General Office of Information and Statistics of the Church in Spain, Madrid: 1954, 207ss. The albums, with an introductory study, have been photographed in: Ricardo de la Cierva, 113, 178 *Caídos por Dios y por España* (Fallen for God and Spain) (Study on the fallen of the national zone, carried out by a team led by José Antonio Argos, from the albums of the Santuario de la Gran Promesa de Valladolid (Sanctuary of the Great Promise of Valladolid)), Madrid: Fénix, 2009.



which Valladolid and the *General Cause*'s nominal relations were compared with others from the dioceses and congregations. These are the final results: 4,065 secular priests, 2,338 men, and 270 religious assassinated. Based on this file, at the beginning of the sixties, Monsignor Antonio Montero spoke of 4,184 victims of the secular clergy (including twelve bishops, the apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Orihuela, and a hundred seminarians), 2,365 men and 283 religious; that is, a total of 6,832, a commonly accepted figure<sup>9</sup>.

- By diocese, the most proportionally punished was Barbastro (which lost 88% of its clergy), and in absolute figures, Madrid-Alcalá (334) followed closely by Valencia (327), Tortosa (316), and Barcelona (279).
- The male religious family that contributed the most victims were the Claretians (259), followed by the Franciscans (226) and the Piarists. (204). Among the religious, the Adorers and the Carmelites of Charity stand out, both congregations with 26 victims.
- In July, the casualties were 733, and only on July 25, the day of Santiago, patron saint of Spain, were 68 martyred in various places. From July 19 to July 31, 1936, at least 113 priests and religious were assassinated in the province of Madrid. On those exact dates, only in the city of Barcelona, there were more than 50 victims.
- In August 1936, the highest figure was reached with more than 1,650 mur-

### Religious persecution was a consequence of two forms of secularism: the elitist of the liberal parties (with the legislation) and the populist of the revolutionaries (with direct action)



dered: an average of 53 per day, including nine bishops.

- Although they did not have this data, when the Spanish bishops published their *Collective Letter* on July 1, 1937, the number of sacrifices already reached 5,839 (95% of the total with a known date).

It is much more difficult to give figures of laypeople killed as a consequence of religious persecution. Not because we do not have the essential data to place the number of fallen in the Republican rearguard between 60,000 and 70,000 people, but for a methodological reason: it is impossible to establish a clear line between religious persecution and repression of a socio-political nature.

What is usually defined as “repression” is something that occurred in both rearguards during the Civil War and that we have defined as “the set of coercive acts, emanating from the instance that exercises the power, over the non-addicted or neutral population. It has the ultimate purpose of avoiding and punishing political-social positions or actions supporting the implementation of a different order of things”<sup>10</sup>. But only in one of the areas,

<sup>9</sup> Antonio Montero Moreno, *Historia de la persecución religiosa en España (History of religious persecution in Spain), 1936-1939*, Madrid: BAC, 1998 (1st ed. 1961), 762. As a result of a lengthy investigation, we are finalizing a catalog of victims in which various documentary and bibliographic sources are available. In this way, we will have a list of bishops, priests, seminarians, men, and women religious who died violently in the context of religious persecution and the Civil War, carefully distinguishing their causes.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ángel David Martín Rubio, *Los mitos de la represión en la Guerra Civil (The myths of repression in the Civil War)*, Madrid: Sekotia, 2012, 55-64

the so-called “republican” with significant imprecision, were religious reasons found among the motivations for this persecution of dissidents. Neither is it necessary to match the concept of a theological martyr with another; much broader, a victim of religious persecution. There are no clear borders because there are none in real life between religious, political, and social.

The first thing that stands out in these figures is how high they are. Especially if one takes into account that at the beginning of the Civil War, 59% of the Spanish population remained in a government zone and 41% in a rebellious zone; the Popular front saw the territory being forcibly reduced and, the population under its control, due to the successive defeats suffered in the military field. Returning to the distribution of victims throughout Spain, the percentages among secular clergy, regular and religious, are not homogeneous, as shown in Table 1.

Assassinations of secular priests predominate in all regions, while the number of religious is exceptionally high in the Center, Aragon-Catalonia, and the North. In the first case, this is explained by the Paracuellos massacres (November 1936) and by the communities of friars of Madrid itself and various towns, especially Toledo and Ciudad Real, which were almost eliminated (Toledo capital, Alcázar de San Juan, Manzanares, Daimiel ...). In Aragon and Catalonia, it is necessary to refer to Barbastro, Barcelona, Lérida, and Cervera. Only in these four localities 53% of the religious people assassinated are concentrated in the whole region. In the north, Santander and Gijón were the

TABLE 1.  
Percentage of religious victims per zones in Spain

Group	Aragón/Catalonia	Center	Levante	North	South
Secular Clergy	60.67	50.06	65.11	57.87	76.44
Regular Clergy	36.91	44.38	27.46	41.84	22.73
Religious	2.23	5.57	7.43	0.3	0.82

worst-hit cities, while the rest of the victims were very scattered.

The places where the most religious people were shot were Madrid (with practically all of the cases that occurred in the downtown area) and Valencia. In this province, the events were truly tragic, as several groups of nuns were killed. In Northern and Southern provinces, the percentage of religious out of the total number of church victims does not reach 1%. To look for the impact of the persecution on the secular clergy, we can assess the losses not by area but by diocese, as shown in Table 2, regardless of those demarcations. The number of victims was meager.

The dioceses that lost a higher number of their priests, above or around 50%, were Barbastro, Lérida, Tortosa, Segorbe, Menorca, and Toledo. For all of Spain, the chronological distribution of Ecclesiastes' deaths can be seen in Table 3, drawn up from those cases in which we know the date.

The time at which the maximum number of victims of religious persecution is situated varies, depending on the area, between the various months of the summer and the fall of 1936. However, in most of the provinces, it was August that concen-

TABLE 2.  
Number of victims among the secular clergy by diocese

Group	Death Priests (Dioceses with more than 20 victims)	Clergy incardinated	Percentage
Andalucía and Extremadura	534	2836	18.83
Aragón	282	1384	20.38
Catalonia	1536	5144	29.86
Central Stripe	899	3211	28.00
Levante	575	2305	24.95
North	252	3760	6.70

trated the highest figures. As exceptions, in Murcia and Vascongadas, the month in which more ecclesiastical deaths took place was October; in the Balearic Islands and Madrid, November; in Cantabria, December; and in Vizcaya, January 1937. All these maximums must be put concerning many other repressive episodes on those dates

TABLE 3.  
Murder of ecclesiastics

Date	Victims	Percentage
<b>October-1934</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0.61</b>
jul-36	986	
aug-36	2216	
sep-36	1091	
oct-36	586	
nov-36	597	
dec-36	251	
<b>Total 1936</b>	<b>5727</b>	<b>94.74</b>
jan-37	68	
feb-37	24	
mar-37	35	
apr-37	24	
may-37	21	
Rest-1937	44	
<b>Total 1937</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>3.57</b>
<b>Total 1938</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>0.79</b>
<b>Total 1939</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0.28</b>

(the Paracuellos massacres, assaults on the *Alfonso Pérez* ship in Santander and the Bilbao prisons, etc.).

As of December 1936 and the first months of 1937, there is a progressive decrease in the number of victims; and from May of that same year, and until the end of the war, the numbers of ecclesiastical assassinated are already smaller, although this does not mean that the persecution ended but that it was oriented towards other forms. In any case, between June 1937 and March 1939, we have documented a hundred deaths caused many times among ecclesiastical forcibly mobilized and assassinated during their stay on the fronts or among prisoners executed by the retreating Popular Army. It is also worth referring to several priests taken prisoner in the offensives on Zaragoza (from August to September 1937) and Teruel (December 1937 to January 1938).

More into detail, interest checks the extent of secular violence in the first moments of the war. You will be surprised by its rapid expansion and its slow fade away. On the same July 19, 1936, there were deaths of ecclesiastics in Barcelona and Seville. On July 20, there are in the provinces of Barcelona, Córdoba, Jaén, Lérida, Madrid, and Tarragona; and in successive days they will be extended to the rest so that at the end of the month there had been murders of priests and religious in thirty provinces. Instead, we will have to wait until August for crimes of this nature to occur in the provinces of Almería, Burgos, Cádiz, Santander, Murcia, and Vizcaya.

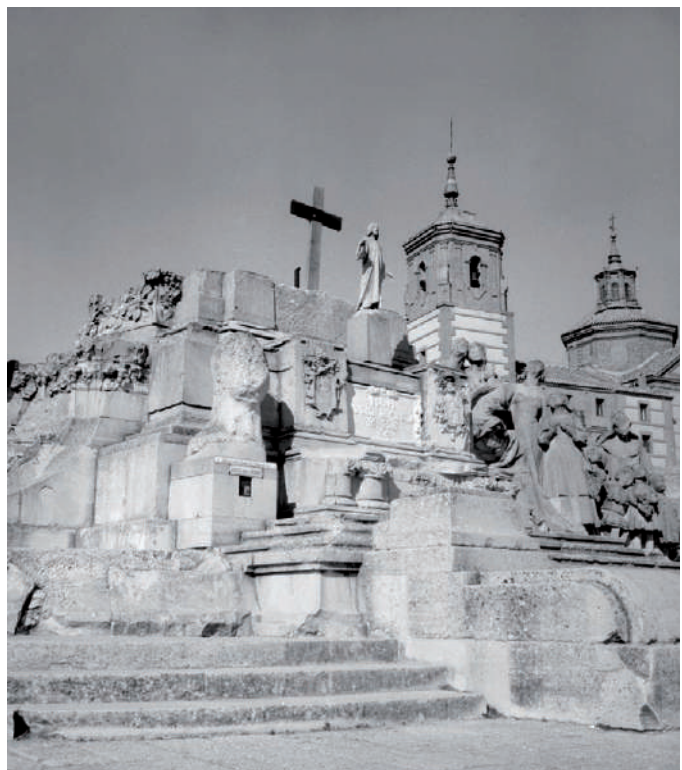
The decline in deaths was slow. In January 1937, there were still murders in a

## Was the Left-Wing Persecution of Catholics Equivalent to Genocide? ▼ Ángel David Martín Rubio

total of thirteen provinces; in February, in eight; and so on until at the end of 1938, there were practically only murders of Ecclesiastes in Catalonia and Madrid. Between January and March of the last year of the war, the scenarios were the provinces of Barcelona, Lérida, and Gerona (in January and February) and, already in March, the fronts of Badajoz, Castellón, Cuenca, and Madrid.

Finally, it should be specified —as content manifestation specifically anti-religious of this persecution— which, in many cases, was carried out with great cruelty and that the purpose of this ill-treatment when applied to priests and religious was, on many occasions, to extract blasphemies from them. Another piece of information that can be interpreted in mass executions is the same, without discrimination of sex, age, or condition of the victims and, of course, without the appearance of no political or social element that could explain them. Some of the most notable cases are the extermination of the Claretian theologian from Barbastro to whom we have already alluded, the seventy-four priests shot in the Lérida cemetery on the night of August 20-21, 1936, the ninety-one religious (Marists, “gabrielistas” and monks of Montserrat) shot in Barcelona or the fifteen brothers of San Juan de Dios immolated for not wanting to abandon his patients from the Calafell Maritime Hospital (Tarragona).

The buildings destined to the cult (churches, hermitages, and convents) were generally converted into prisons, townhouses, warehouses, garages, stables, etc., and they suffered damages of various degrees, although primarily repairable. Those temples' content was looted and burned



Cordon Press

In the Cerro de Los Ángeles, the geographic center of the Iberian Peninsula, a monument to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was erected in 1919. In the summer of 1936, as the rebels approached Madrid, the left-wing militia found time to desecrate and destroy it. First, they killed five Catholics who stayed behind to protect it; then they shot the statue; finally, they dynamited the entire monument. The head of Christ was dragged through the streets. In 1944, its reconstruction began.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Monsignor Antonio Montero spoke of 4,184 victims of the secular clergy, 2,365 men, and 283 religious; that is, 6,832, a commonly accepted figure



amid sacrilegious scenes, mockery, desecration, parodies of religious ceremonies, and performance of unspeakable events with images and even buried corpses. The Blessed Sacrament, which on many occasions had been able to be consumed with reverence, became a preferred target on others.

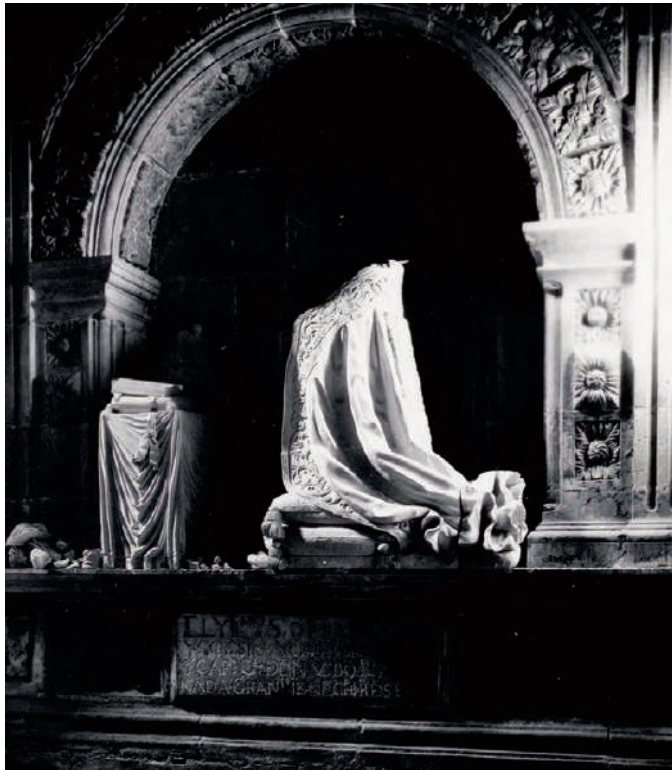
This vandalism outlaw of all that is sacred was not at all spontaneous. It was the government's object endorsement with a series of provisions by which all the centers run by religious institutions were seized and closed, even those that were not owned by them and were dedicated to charity. The measure caused such dramatic situations as the one that was experienced in the Hospital-Asilo de San José de Carabanchel Alto (Madrid) governed by the Brothers of San Juan de Dios. On September 1, 1936, assault guards and militias interrupted the religious people while serving food to the sick. They arrested twelve of them, who were immediately murdered in Boadilla del Monte (Madrid). The asylum was seized. In the first days of November, before advancing the national forces, the militias abandoned the

building, but before they decided to assassinate the seized epileptics. When they tried to hide in the shelters, the militiamen fired on them, killing thirteen of these patients, whose bodies were left lying on the sidewalks and walks of the establishment.

The loss ratio of religious works of great artistic value, and in most cases not even listed, is so high that it is enough to cite some of the most notorious cases<sup>11</sup>. The monument to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Cerro de Los Ángeles (Getafe) was blown up with dynamite on August 7, 1936, after the religious buildings that surrounded it were attacked. In Castellón de la Plana, in the first days of the same month, the archpriest church of Santa María, a National Monument, was attacked, burning at stake all the images, sacred objects, and archives. After some discussion, the City Council agreed to the demolition of the temple that was carried out. Significantly affected were some cathedrals such as San Isidro de Madrid, Jaén, Vich, and Cuenca. Moreover, in Toledo, they were seized, on September 4, 1936, of most of the Cathedral Treasury “fulfilling a verbal order given by His Excellency Mr. José Giral, president of the Council of Ministers” as stated in the minutes. Notable objects disappeared in this seizure, although Toledo's national troops' immediate occupation prevented the loss of other valuable jewels such as the famous Custody of Enrique de Arfe, which was already dismantled, as the paintings in the Cathedral.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. as examples: *La dominación roja* (The red domination), ob.cit., 191-198; Juan Francisco Rivera Recio, *La persecución religiosa en la Diócesis de Toledo* (The religious persecution in the Diocese of Toledo) (1936-1939), Toledo: 1995, 81-118; Juan Bassegoda Nonell, *La arquitectura profanada. La destrucción sistemática del patrimonio arquitectónico religioso catalán* (The desecrated architecture. The systematic destruction of the Catalan religious architectural heritage) (1936-1939), Barcelona: Mare Nostrum, 1989





Tomb of Archbishop Francisco de Otero y Casto, in the Santo Toribio de Liébana Monastery, destroyed by the militias.

### The response of the Church

From the first moment, the rebel soldiers' speeches recognized the religious character of this fight; Thus, General Francisco Franco from Radio Tetuán on July 25, 1936, declared that they were fighting for the "Homeland, Family and religion". The Spanish people gave a sense of crusade—even if the Church did not declare it as such—to war. Especially as the news arrived of what was happening in the famous front zone and that it was a continuation of what had already begun during the Republic: churches were burned, and the hundreds murdered priests and practicing Catholics.

Furthermore, for this reason, the ecclesiastical hierarchy began to demonstrate in

support of the rebels with documents, such as the *Carta pastoral de Los obispos de Vitoria y de Pamplona* (*Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Vitoria and Pamplona*) (August 6, 1936) and *Las Dos Ciudades* (*The Two Cities*) (September 30, 1936), written by the bishop of Salamanca, Pla y Deniel, leading to the *Collective Collective Letter* of the Spanish Episcopate. As of 1936, the Spanish Episcopate and the Pope ended up agreeing with those who had pointed out the error of absolutizing the doctrine of submission to constituted power by silencing the parallel legality of the rebellion in certain circumstances.

In this reality, they must be situated on pronouncements on the meaning of war, clear and unequivocal from the start until its end. Moreover, they acquire exceptional value because the Church could have limited itself to presenting itself as a victim of religious persecution and trying to neutralize this adaptation's effects as far as possible to the new situation. On the contrary, in the same speech, five hundred Spaniards spoke for the first time of "true martyrdoms in all the sacred and glorious meaning of the word"<sup>12</sup>. Pius XI sent his blessing" to all who had set themselves the difficult task of defending and restoring the rights of God and religion"; and, at the end of the war, Pope Pius XII conceived the primary meaning of national victory in the following terms:

"The healthy Spanish people, with the two characteristic notes of his noble spirit, which are generosity and frankness, he stood up determined in defense ideals of Christian faith and civilization, deeply rooted in the fertile soil of Spain. Helped by God, "who does not abandon those who wait in Him" (Iud 13, 17), knew how to resist the push of those who, deceived with what they believed to be a humanitarian ideal of the exal-

<sup>12</sup> Cit. by Antonio Montero Moreno, ob. cit., 741.

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

Vall d'Uxó  
Cross



More than three-quarters of a century after the end of the Civil War, socialists and communists are committed to erasing all memories of Catholics' persecution by their predecessors. Crosses have been dismantled in various locations, although the victors' symbols had been removed from them. Through subterfuge, the "historical memory" does not protect the victims of the Catholic genocide carried out in the war.

tation of the humble, not they fought except for the benefit of atheism"<sup>13</sup>.

Let us see in detail the position of the Church through a series of important documents.

### 1. The reports of Cardinal Gomá

The cardinal primate, Isidro Gomá, who had no previous news about the Uprising, was saved from the effects of religious persecution (although his diocese, Toledo, was one of the most affected) due to the coincidence of those dates with a stay in Tarazona (province of Zaragoza) that remained in the national zone. He moved to Pamplona, and there he became an informal informant for the Holy See about what was happening in Spain.

His first report to the Vatican was dispatched on August 13<sup>14</sup>. Starting from the thesis that Catholicism was a victim, he concluded that, had the Uprising not occurred, it would have been implanted in Spain a com-

munist dictatorship and extinguished the Church if the Popular Front triumphs. Gomá expressed three fundamental concerns:

- The position of Basque nationalism (PNV) contrary in practice to the Church's doctrine of not putting private interests before those of Catholicism.
- After the wave of persecution and dismantling started in 1931, of whose responsibility no one could declare innocent, the Church, even in the case of victory of the side that protected it, Church was going to find itself before a formidable difficult rebuilding task to carry out.
- Finally, it detected outside influences that he described as paganizers on the national side. He warned of the existence of a sector that advocated a kind of secularism of the State, a tendency that was judged inconvenient. "It remains to be seen the scope that will be given to this proposal".

<sup>13</sup> Radio message to the Spanish people (May 16, 1939), cit. by Antonio Montero Moreno, ob. cit., 744

<sup>14</sup> Reproduced in: María Luisa Rodríguez Aisa, *El cardenal Gomá y la guerra de España (Cardinal Gomá and the war in Spain)*, Madrid: CSIC, 1981, 371-378.



Callosa de Segura  
Cross

In his informal reports to the Holy See, Cardinal Gomá frequently insists on one criterion: to always judge Franco as a convinced Catholic and to estimate his position, at the head of State since October 1, 1936, as a guarantee that the Christian orientation of the State would prevail in the general policy lines. For instance:

"I affirm myself in the concepts already expressed to Your Eminence about the personal conditions of the Head of the Spanish State and the purposes that animate him concerning the things of the Church in Spain. The Generalissimo has deep-rooted religious feelings, complies like a good Christian with the precepts of the Holy Church, and manifests a determined commitment to restore religious life in the country, beginning with the reform of our legislation, so imbued with the secular spirit by the work of the last governments"<sup>15</sup>.

Good evidence of this attitude would be Franco's prudent intervention is particularly delicate matters, such as the collaboration of Basque nationalists with Mar-

xists, the political commitment of the priests in the provinces of Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya, and partisan intervention in the conflict of members of the Basque clergy in favor of the red cause, publicly praised by the communist leader nicknamed *La Pasionaria*. The primate and the head of State put an end to their intervention to the executions of some priests summarily sentenced by courts of war and put to arms on charges of separatist political activities<sup>16</sup>.

## 2. The Two Cities of Plá and Deniel

On September 30, the bishop of Salamanca, Enrique Plá y Deniel, published a pastoral letter entitled *The Two Cities*. Taking as a basis the Augustinian doctrine on the two cities (that of those who for love of God come to despise themselves, and the other who for love of themselves despise God), he concluded that that contest was, in fact, a crusade, since survival was being decided of the Church in Spain.

On the soil of Spain, they fight bloody today two conceptions of life, two feelings, two forces that are ready for a universal struggle in all the earth's peoples [...]

How to justify taking the side of the Church? The full explanation is given by the character of the current struggle that turns Spain into a spectacle for the whole world. It does take on the external form of a civil war; but it is a crusade in reality. It was an uprising, but not to disturb but to restore order [...]. It was no longer a civil war but a crusade for religion and the country and civilization. No one can cross out the Church anymore of disturbing order that not even precariously existed<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Cit. by María Luisa Rodríguez Aisa, ob. cit., 401

<sup>16</sup> Cf. "Cardinal Goma's action on the Basque question", in: María Luisa Rodríguez Aisa, ob. cit., 191-231.

<sup>17</sup> Full text in: Antonio Montero Moreno, ob. cit., 608-788.

In August 1936, the highest figure was reached, with more than 1,650 murdered in the Republican zone: an average of 53 per day, including nine bishops



### 3. The *Collective Letter of the Spanish episcopate*

On December 12, 1936, Gomá was received by the Pope. He immediately grasped the difficulties he would have to overcome because “In Rome, they predominate in this respect the conveniences of diplomacy on the demands of this expression of faith and religious enthusiasm that has accompanied the outbreak of war. Several sectors pressed: Múgica wielded the issue of the Basque priests; Vidal y Barraquer returned to his idea of a negotiation that would make it possible to achieve religious peace. The French clergy refused to see in Franco anything other than a dangerous Hitler ally..

The declaration of “crusade” by the Spanish bishops impacted in Catholic circles. It produced a deep division in France. This country had direct interests in what was happening in Spain: alongside religious issues were political considerations, right versus left, and Germanophilia. Consequently, the Catholics were divided, and Jacques Maritain, whose influence over the Vatican monsignors was very significant, stood at the head of a group of Catholic intellectuals bent on proving that the

principle was false and that the Republic was right. For Catholics, who experienced the cruelest of persecutions, it was an absolute scandal that they could stand alongside the executioners<sup>18</sup>.

The *Collective Letter* of the Spanish Episcopate of July 1, 1937, did not suppose innovations in trials already given previously. However, logically due to the signatories’ number and importance —two cardinals, six archbishops, thirty-five bishops (one of whom, the Teruel, would later give testimony of the signature with his blood when he was assassinated in 1939) and five capitular vicars—. Due to its notorious worldwide repercussion, it continues to constitute the essential document to define the Spanish ecclesiastical hierarchy position before the war.

In the *Letter*, he expressed himself before the public, mainly foreign, that the causes of the war had to be sought in a previous situation of continuous abuses of Spanish citizens in the economic and social order, which had put in severe danger the very existence of the public good, order, and peace. Moreover, it was stated that the Uprising had been originally a national movement in defense of all civilized society’s fundamental principles. Before the whole world, one of the sides was resoundingly supported for reasons of social, moral, and religious order: “today in Spain there is no more hope to regain justice and peace and the goods that derive from it than the triumph of the National Movement”<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Javier Tusell and Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, *El catolicismo mundial y la guerra de España* (World Catholicism and the war in Spain), Madrid: BAC, 1993, 96-124.

<sup>19</sup> *Collective Letter of the Spanish Episcopate of July 1, 1937*, in Isidro Gomá, *Por Dios y por España*, Barcelona: Rafael Casulleras, 1940, p.584. The absence of two signatures in the Collective Charter do not prevent the recognition of the moral unanimity of the Spanish episcopate by admitting religion as one of the keys to the war. Those bishops cited reasons of convenience for not signing, not a discrepancy with the content of the *Letter*.



### Conclusions

1. The religious factor was one of the substantial elements of the war in Spain. It was constantly pointed out in official public pronouncements, both by the Church and by the authorities of the national side. Nevertheless, he also appears as a great protagonist in the manifestations of republican authorities and political parties and groups of this side, in the sense of destroying or banishing Catholicism as one of the bases of Spanish identity.
2. The situation of the Church and Catholics, starting in 1931, but especially since 1936, was one of harassment and open persecution, a situation that some sectors justified as necessary for the renewal of Spain because they attributed to the Church are one of the leading causes of the ills of Spanish society. In some parties, it was almost a forced conviction due to their Marxist assumptions. Religion was an alienating element that had to be destroyed, as they tried to do in Russia and later in the nations conquered by Stalin's Red Army, such as Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Croatia, Slovakia, Hungary, or Bulgaria.
3. It cannot be surprising, therefore, that the Catholic Church, through its spokesper-

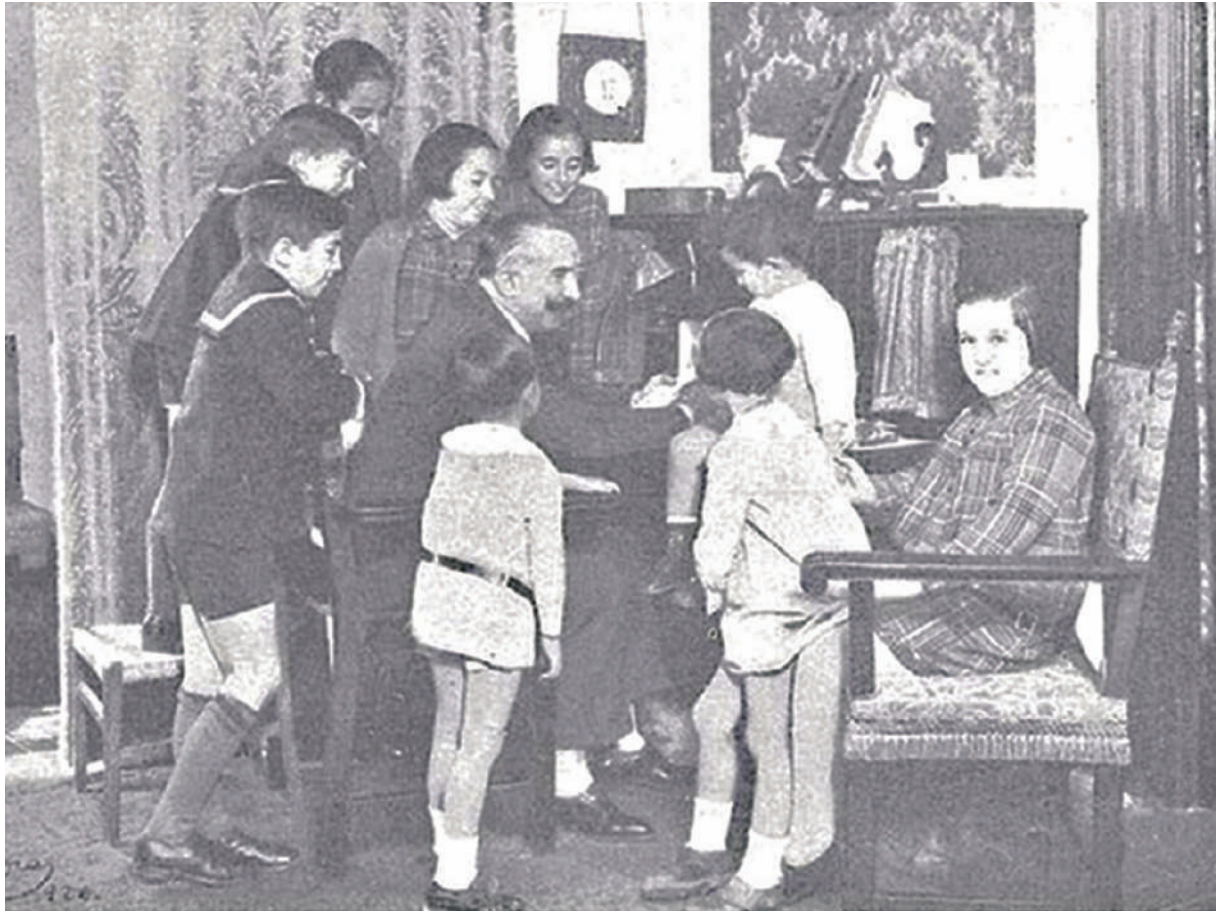
The number of lay people killed in the Republican rearguard ranges between 60,000 and 70,000 people. It is impossible to separate religious persecution and socio-political repression



sons, insisted that the critical elements of the conflict were not social, political, or economic changes, but that the survival or not of Christianity in Spain and, therefore, of all its manifestations of civilization and culture.

4. The answer to aggressive secularism never will be to promote the presumed autonomy of temporal realities or the Church-State's independence, not even its neutrality (if it could exist).
5. Religious persecution and religious character of the War in Spain are situated in a revolutionary and counterrevolutionary context that far exceeds the chronological moment in which it occurred, between the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and the spread of communism by military and violent means since 1945. ▼





Pedro Muñoz Seca, in a report for *Estampa* magazine, with his nine children.

## Alfonso Ussía

Alfonso Ussía Muñoz-Seca (Madrid, 1948) is one of the most popular Spanish writers. He has been one of the most widely read columnists in newspapers *ABC* and *La Razón*; also participated in political and humorous programs in COPE and Onda Cero

radio stations. In 1998 he began to publish the novels of the character that has made him famous: the Marquis of Sotoancho. He has the prominent national press awards as a columnist: the Mariano de Cavia Award and the González-Ruano Award.

Three groups were shot before their eyes while waiting for their turn. In one of them, a sailor with his two children, ages 14 and 13. His time has come. He lined up next to an Augustinian priest from El Escorial. The firing squad consisted of fourteen Republicans with rifles and three dealing with an effective machine gun. Mr. Pedro shouted: “Long live Christ the King!” and all fell dead or badly wounded. Mr. Pedro, dying, needed the coup de grace.

It was 10:30 a.m. on November 28, 1936. According to the order signed by San-

## The Murdered Smile

Alfonso Ussía

tiago Carrillo Solares, they had been “transferred” to Valencia. In a mass grave in Paracuellos de Jarama, a few kilometers from Madrid, they buried those executed bodies. Eighty-four years later, his bones remain together in the common grave.

Mr. Pedro Muñoz-Seca was born in 1879 in Puerto de Santa María, Cádiz. He deceived his biographers. Some of them date their date of birth in 1881. Mr. Pedro did not intend to take years off but to respond to his Andalusian humor. The year 1881 was the palindromic year of the 19th century, and the palindromic years, they say, bring luck. He had it in life, overflowing with work, successes, a few failures, and an extended family. He studied Law, Philosophy, and Letters in Seville and received a doctorate in both fields. His actual vocation was the Theater, and the Theater was Madrid. He got an internship at Mr. Antonio Maura’s law firm. He had met the woman who was the love of his life, Asunción Ariza Díez de Bulnes, from a well-known family from Puente Genil. He announced his intention to marry her to his parents, and the parents went to Puente Genil, Córdoba, to meet their future daughter-in-law. The father wrote to his son: “Asunción has extraordinary, intelligent, deeply religious...All very well. In my opinion,

### Abstract

The famous writer Alfonso Ussía narrates the kidnapping, imprisonment, and murder of his grandfather; the famous playwright Pedro Muñoz-Seca (1879-1936), author of the most performed Spanish play of the 20th century. As his death was caused by left-wing militia, Muñoz-Seca does not appear among the victims to whom the “Historical Memory” law is dedicated. His family has let him rest in the place where he fell.

with only one flaw. Next to you, she is pretty short “. Mr. Pedro replied:

You are not wrong. Asunción is so short that when she is by my side, it reaches my heart. I love that flaw the most because it cannot deny that it is a woman who goes where she should go.

Nine children. Joaquín, Asunción —my mother—, Mercedes, Rosario, Pedro, José María, Milagros, Alfonso, and Rocío. Two sisters, nuns, and two medical brothers. Mr. Francisco, who worked all his life in El Puerto, and Don José, a famous pediatrician in Madrid. Ever since he left El Puerto to seek glory and fortune in Madrid, he wrote his mother a postcard every day. It was installed on a floor of Salustiano Olózaga’s street in front of the National Library. Ten

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

days later, the concierge of the property died, and four days later, the doorman. An elderly marriage —the retirement was not effective in those times—, which formed a marriage copy. Moreover, they were buried together in La Almudena. The son, who inherited the goal from his parents, asked Mr. Pedro to write a versified epitaph for his parents' tomb, and Mr. Pedro came out of the cumbersome assignment with ease.

His goodness was so great,  
Such his industriousness  
And the virtue of the two,  
that they are for sure  
In Heaven, next to God.

He ignored the matter. In the mornings, he worked as a lawyer and in the afternoons, after the “Molinero” Gathering, used to write theater. The son of the porters returned to ask him for a new epitaph.

—“Didn't you like it?”  
—I liked and excited me a lot, Mr. Pedro, but it seems that not so much the Bishop says, and maybe he is right, that you are nobody to ensure that my parents are in Heaven, next to God.

The situation amused Mr. Pedro. So he wrote another epitaph:

The two were very close together,  
Each other in pos  
Where the one who dies always goes.  
Nevertheless... They are not with God  
because the Bishop does not want to.

Second bishop refusal. A third option, written without the possibility of success.

Floating their souls go  
Through the ether, weakly  
Without knowing what they will do  
Because unfortunately  
Not even God knows where they are.

There they are, a century later, the poor goalkeepers—no epitaph on his grave. Mr. Pedro becomes the most followed, applauded, and reviled author in Spanish theater. In December 1918, he premiered *La venganza de Don Mendo* (*Don Mendo's Vengeance*), written in verse, with exceptional mastery and overwhelming grace. Today, one hundred and two years later, it is the most represented theatrical piece in Spanish theater, far from the second, *Don Juan Tenorio* by José Zorrilla. Thousands of performances and different versions in Spain, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Chile ... all of Spanish-speaking America.

Mr. Pedro was a resounding Spaniard, a deep Christian —today when I write these lines in the advanced process of beatification by the Holy See—. Monarchist and friend of King Alfonso XIII and collaborator of ABC and *Blanco y Negro*, the publications from his dear friend Mr. Torcuato Luca de Tena and later his son Juan Ignacio. I highlight these four characteristics because they were the four accusations that the Socialist and Communist People's Court most importance gave. They offered him freedom and life in exchange for publicly expressing his rejection of God, the Unity of Spain, the Monarchy, and the ABC. “I prefer death”. The execution of the sentence took place two days later.

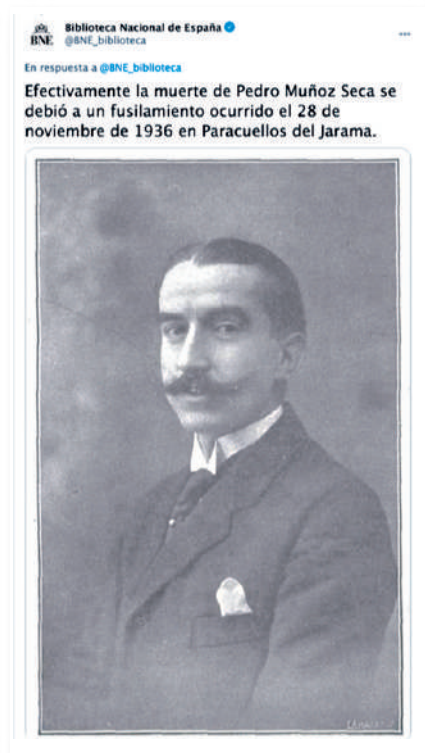
During his life, he wrote ninety-one comedies. One of them, *Las Cuatro Paredes*,



**Because of his sense of humor, Don Pedro became the most followed author, applauded and reviled by the Spanish theater**



The "historical memory" implies the erasure of the memory that is not politically correct and even facts. The National Library of Spain recalled on Twitter the eightieth anniversary of playwright Pedro Muñoz Seca's death without mentioning that the Popular Front assassinated him after a sham trial.



Before the protests by Twitter users, the National Library partially rectified and recognized that he was shot, but didn't mention who did it and didn't explain the cause of his death either.

was released four years after he was assassinated. Eighty-three in collaboration with Mr. Pedro Pérez Fernández, who died Muñoz- Seca did not premiere any comedy. And twenty-five more with different collaborators, Azorín and the great Enrique García Álvarez, lazier than a guard's jacket.

I confess with great eagerness.  
And deep feeling  
That I am the laziest  
That God has put in the world.

With *Los Extremeños se tocan*, he invented musical comedy without music. But above all his comedies, his great classic, *La Venganza de Don Mendo*. Benavente (Nobel Prize in Literature in 1922), Azorín, Pemán, and even the fearsome Valle Inclán, surrender to his work. "Take away", Valle Inclán wrote, "from Muñoz-Seca's theater his humor; strip him of caricature; take away his

He was arrested in Barcelona, along with his wife. Although he was not involved in the rebellion, he was put on trial in Madrid

satirical talent and ease for parody, and you will continue before a monumental playwright".

Mr. Pedro, in the years from 1931 to 1936, wrote, premiered, and was acclaimed and persecuted, a critical and scathing theater against the Republic. Azaña hates him. Enrique de Mesa, a poor poet and theater critic, lashes out at him in his criticisms. They ask him, "Have you read the latest Mesa review?". Furthermore, he responds: "No, I still do not care about the opinion of the furniture".



## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe



The body of Muñoz Seca rests in the Cemetery of the Martyrs of Paracuellos de Jarama. His wife, who was detained with him in Barcelona, escaped death because she was of Cuban nationality. According to the latest research, there is no actual inventory of the murdered buried there, but the figure is around 4,500 bodies. The cemetery is guarded by the Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Martyrs of Paracuellos, an association of the faithful that depends on the Bishopric of Alcalá de Henares, and has not received any budget allocation from those dedicated to "historical memory".

*La Tonta del Rizo* premiered in Barcelona on July 18, 1936. The news from Madrid is devastating. His family is safe. On July 20, he and his wife were arrested in the Plaza de Catalunya. Four political commissars take them to Madrid via Valencia. His wife is released at the station, and Mr. Pedro enters the San Antón Jail-Checa. There he becomes the good angel and friend of all his companions in torture. Organize Spiritual Exercises, gatherings and write minor works. He writes 34 postcards and seven letters to his wife. He asks, first of all, for warm clothes and medicine for his stomach ulcer. In one of them, he begs him to send him a mustache. Mr. Pedro's physical characteristic was that of his vast mustaches with raised tips, à

la D'Artagnan. "I have the mustaches so droopy they have gotten into my soup at the ranch". He regains his haughty mustache—peel lentils in the kitchen. Even the most brutal of his jailers, "Dynamite", shows him respect.

He contemplated with infinite sadness the exits of the trucks packed with companions of martyrdom on the way to death. "Don't be fooled", he tells Julián Cortés Cavanillas and Cayetano Luca de Tena. "These criminals have already killed everyone who has come out today".

On November 27, he sensed that he had only a few hours left after the farce of the famous trial. He locks himself up at dawn on November 28 with the Augustinian priest, also assassinated, Mr. Tomás Ruiz del Rey. He confesses. Moreover, on a small corner table in his cell, he writes his farewell letter to his wife with perfect spelling. He wants to encourage him, but in the end, he makes him see the irremediable. His wife would receive this letter after the Civil War from the hands of a Mexican diplomat.



**They offered him freedom if he declared his rejection of God, Spain, the Monarchy, and the ABC. He replied: "I prefer death".**



Mr. Pedro, who was in love with San Sebastián, wanted to buy a villa in Ondarreta called Txoko Maitea, which still exists and changed its name. He was a friend of the Barcáiztegui, who lived in Toki-Ona (The big Villa) and the Padillas who did it in Toki Eder (The beautiful Villa). Mr. Pedro dreamed of baptizing his house Toki el Timbre (Ring the bell)<sup>1</sup>. In 1940, it was not known how a handwritten envelope with the handwritten letter of the King in exile arrived at my grandparents' house in San Sebastián. The envelope reads: "Mrs. Asunción Ariza. Widow of Muñoz Seca. Toki the Bell. Ondarreta. Saint Sebastian. Spain". His funny dream came true.

His farewell letter says:

*Dearest Asunción:*

*I am still excellent; when you receive these lines, I will be outside of Madrid. I am resigned and happy—God above everything. I have a spare change. Here I leave the mid-season coat for you to send for it. With the money you sent me, I bought Bismuth. I leave here a few debts because I have spent up to nine pesetas a day, and you did not send me more than five coins from time to time. I am very calm, knowing that everyone is fine and that you will continue to be everyone's good angel. You have always been mine, and if God is willing that we never see each other again, my last thought will always be for you.*

*Do not forget about my mother. Make sure that Pepe, my brother, substitutes for me in the duties towards her, and you tell her when you see her that her memory has always been with me.*

*I have nothing to order from you for the children. I know that all of them, imitating me, will always do their duty and will be for you, as I have been for my parents, a model. It is the only thing I can brag about.*

*I am sorry to provide you with the displeasure of this separation, but if we all must suffer for the salvation of Spain, and this is the part that has corresponded to me, blessed are these sufferings.*

## His remains lie in a mass grave in Paracuellos de Jarama and other victims of the greatest slaughter of the war



*I am writing to you very quickly because the news took me a bit of surprise. Goodbye, my life. Many kisses to the children, affection for all, and for you, who have always been my happiness, all the affection of your Pedro.  
November 28.*

*P.S. As you will understand, I am very well prepared and clean of guilt.*

When he was called, Mr. Pedro came out smiling, calm, with immense sadness in his eyes. They pounced on him and took off a coat that was folded over his arm. They took away his wallet and watch. They tied their hands to the back with a string of twine. A militiaman, something more human, he removed the chain with the medal of the Virgin of Miracles, Patron Saint of El Puerto de Santa María, and with a quick movement put it in the right pocket of his jacket. To humiliate his figure, they cut off his mustaches.

He was fifty-seven years old. He did nothing but good in his life. God, Spain, the Crown, and ABC were his crimes.

He fell as a martyr and a mighty man.

He forgave those who were preparing to kill him.

Historical Memory. ▼

<sup>1</sup> In Spanish language, the Basque word "toki" sounds like "toque", in English, touch. The Spanish expression for "ring the bell" is "toque (toki) el timbre".

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

In Madrid, the uprising failed. Its center was La Montaña Barracks. Military forces loyal to the Popular Front government, UGT, and PSOE militia penetrated the interior and murdered more than 500 people, who had already surrendered. With "memory" laws, remembering this massacre can constitute a crime.



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### Jesús Laínz

Jesús Laínz (Santander, 1965) is a lawyer and writer. The Spanish public got to know him better after the publication in 2004 of *Adiós España*. A deep and exhaustive essay of more than 800 pages long that studies the myths and historical falsehoods on which the Basque and Catalan separatists were based on. In this line of research, he has published other titles: *La nación falsificada* (*The falsified nation*) (2006), *Desde Santurce a Bizancio. El poder nacionalizador de las*

*palabras* (*From Santurce to Byzantium. The nationalizing power of words*) (2011), *España contra Cataluña. Historia de un fraude* (*Spain against Catalonia. Story of a fraud*) (2014), and *Negocio y traición. La burguesía catalana de Felipe V a Felipe VI* (*Business and betrayal. The Catalan bourgeoisie from Felipe V to Felipe VI*) (2020). In 2019, he gave a conference in the European Parliament organized by the ECR group titled *Catalonia, region of Spain*.



**D**espite the supposed clean slate of the 1978 Constitution, since then, the Left has not rested in its campaign to demonize the national side of the Civil War in the interconnected realms of politics, press, television, and film. Little by little, a new history of good and evil has been built without causes, explanations, or nuances, and of growing presence, silenced response, and dogmatic implantation.

The Popular Party, unable to understand the importance of the culture war and fearful of being accused of radicalism has never opposed these measures that have gradually undermined the Transition and the Cons-

### Abstract

The author lists the main destructions and massacres carried out by the Left since the Second Republic's proclamation (1931) and until the end of the Civil War (1939). Burning of churches, libraries, and crops, torture, and massacres of thousands of unarmed civil prisoners in the custody of the Republican Government... These crimes were erased from the collective memory in the last forty years. Through the Law for Democratic Memory, the Left seeks to imprison and fine those who remember them.

titution's spirit. And it has even supported them: for example, the condemnatory declaration of the uprising of July 18 approved unanimously in the Congress of Deputies on November 20 of 2002, governing with absolute majority José María Aznar. However, the delegitimization of the Franco regime was accompanied neither with the parallel delegitimization of the socialist revolution of October 1934 —the essential antecedent of the war— nor by the Bolshevik drift of the republican regime, which drowned Spain in chaos after the fraudulent elections won by the Popular Front in February 1936.

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

The process sped up when José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero became president in March 2004. The most important measure was the “historical memory” law of December 2007, which broke the Constitution’s consensus. An attempt was made to annul the 1977 amnesty to prosecute the Francoist leaders, propaganda intensified, wounds were reopened, muted resentment was stoked, and the political environment became tense in an unimaginable way until then.

Today, with the social-communist coalition in Moncloa, its leaders have believed that the time has come to put the icing on the cake patiently cooked during forty years of false reconciliation on the part of a large sector of the Left. They call it the Second Transition. It consists of the absolute and eternal condemnation of the victorious side in 1939 and, consequently, the delegitimization of everything that emerged from it, the 1978 Constitution and the Monarchy included.

It is necessary to write -and impose above all on the new generations- a comic strip of good guys and bad guys in which everything that tries to undermine the Left’s prestige must be erased, making possible the establishment of the Left’s ideological hegemony. That is why the thousands of crimes, attacks, assaults, fires, destruction, and violence of all kinds committed by the leftists during the Republican years are for-

gotten and hidden, without it cannot be understood the outbreak of war. And, of course, the unheard-of crimes committed during the war years in the rear.

That is why, in these moments of growing leftist totalitarianism, it is necessary to remember with singular insistence precisely what is intended to be erased from the Spaniards’s memory.

### Attacks on Catholics since the Republic’s foundation

The first thing that The Second Republic destroyed was employment since one of the provisional Government’s first measures was to cancel all the public works begun by Primo de Rivera as well as the ambitious plans for reservoirs, roads (the National Circuit of Special Pavements, which included the first phase of 7,000 kilometers of modern roads), railways, ports, and national inns.

Just a month later, the first chapter of the destruction for which the Republic was to go down in history was going to be written: the material ones. On May 10, when a month had not yet passed since the new regime’s joyous birth, the fires and destruction of churches and convents began in Madrid. The spark was lit for the inauguration of the Círculo Monárquico on Calle Alcalá with the presence of Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena, director of ABC. As the Royal March sounded, the insults began, and it ended with blows and shots there and in front of the newspaper’s headquarters. The ex-monarchist Miguel Maura, Minister of the Interior, tried to deploy the Civil Guard, but was met with the opposition of President Alcalá-Zamora and Manuel Azaña, Minister of War. Given the Government’s inaction, the leftist masses began setting fire to reli-

**When the totalitarian Left grows,  
it is necessary to remember what it is  
intended to erase from the Spanish  
people's memory**





gious buildings. With golden letters, Azana's words went down in the annals: "All the convents in Spain are not worth the life of a republican. If the Civil Guard leaves, I will resign". In two days, a dozen religious buildings were burned between convents, churches, and schools; and among many other valuable objects, the 20,000 volumes in the library of the Catholic Institute of Arts and Industries and the 80,000 from the Professed House of the Jesuits.

The destructive fury spread to other cities, especially in Levante and Andalusia. The most affected city was Malaga, whose military governor, the freemason Juan García Gómez-Caminero, let the vandals do and immobilized the law enforcement officers. "The burning of churches has started. Tomorrow will continue", was the telegram he sent to Azaña. He would become major general and inspector general of the Army.

The final balance of May 1931 was a hundred destroyed religious buildings; several libraries and archives burned down; several desecrated cemeteries; hundreds of works of art -paintings, altarpieces, sculptures- burned, destroyed, or stolen. Numerous businesses were robbed; several monarchical leaders arrested. Several right-wing newspapers raided; *El Debate* and *ABC*, two of the best-selling newspapers in Spain, suspended by the Government; numerous wounded and a dozen dead.

The left-wing press celebrated it as a manifestation of the people's healthy resentment against the provocations of priests, monarchists, and other reactionaries, who began to lack political rights in the new regime. Here is the editorial of *El Socialista* from May 12:

### A month after the Republic was proclaimed, leftist revolts burned churches, libraries, and schools without the Government stopping them



*The reaction destroys itself (...) The anti-republican offensive, with an indisputable fascist tactic, began, however, quite crudely. The result of this offensive, which is a big nonsense, is reflected with maximum eloquence in the convents and churches that have burned (...) Whoever tries to harass, by going out into the streets well-armed, a Cabinet like the one who today it governs the destinies of Spain, it will act, rather than against the Government, against the People (...) The reaction has already seen that the people are willing not to tolerate it. Convents have burned. That is the response of popular demagoguery to rightist demagoguery. Nothing would have happened without the clumsy and suicidal provocation of newspapers and people so attached to the large estates and the reaction that they do not deserve the freedom they have been given up to now.*

Three years later, the second chapter would arrive at the socialist revolution of October 1934, leaving about two thousand dead in its wake. Although the destruction and crimes splashed all over Spain, Asturias concentrated most of them. As for the clergy, thirty-four priests, monks, and seminarians were assassinated, and fifty-eight religious buildings were burned. Of singular importance was the blowing up of the Holy Chamber of the Oviedo Cathedral. Extraordinary works of art, relics, and historical objects of many centuries-old were destroyed. They also dynamited the old University of Oviedo and burned its library, one of Spain's most important.

The worst was yet to come. After the Popular Front's fraudulent victory in the February 1936 elections, chaos broke out



**Solidaridad Obrera newspaper: “The bishops and cardinals must be shot. And ecclesiastical property must be expropriated”.**



throughout Spain. The newspapers of President Niceto Alcalá-Zamora are a source, although not exhaustive, insurmountably authorized to know its magnitude: general disorder; non-application of the law; impunity for offenders; support from the authorities to the revolutionaries; persecution of people classified as fascists; blacklisting officials; destruction of newspapers, party headquarters and other places considered right-wing; desecration and burning of churches and convents; farm occupations, factory, and mine seizures; theft and burning of crops; looting, derailments, bombings, shootings, beatings, lynchings, humiliations, mutilations, murders...

The two interventions that Calvo Sotelo made in Parliament went down in the annals with letters of blood, never denied by the Popular Front Government. In the first (April 15) compiled the events that occurred from February 16, the victory of the Popular Front in the first round of the elections, until April 1: 58 assaults and destruction in political centers; 72 in public and private establishments; 33 in private homes; 36 in churches; total assaults and destruction, 199; 12 fires in political centers; 45 in public and private establishments; 15 in private homes; 106 in churches, 56 of them completely destroyed; 11 general strikes; 39 shootings; 65 assaults; 24 robberies; 345 injured; and 74 dead. His second intervention (May 6) compiled what happened from April 1 to May 4: 47 dead; 216 wounded; 38 strikes; 53 pumps; 52 fires, primarily churches; and 99 robberies, attacks, and as-

saults. In the words of her adversary, the Republican Clara Campoamor, “that act would cost him his life”.

There were still two months to go before his kidnapping and murder by a group of policemen and thugs from the circle of trust of the socialist leader Indalecio Prieto and the war outbreak. At that time, the few remaining barriers fell. Although the destruction was widespread, the primary victim was a Catholic Church in which leftist propaganda personified all the evils that plagued Spain for centuries. On August 18, 1936, a month after the uprising, the moderate Republican Left of Azaña proclaimed in its Political body that “almost all those monuments whose fall we deplore are dungeons where the soul and body of humanity have been consumed for centuries”. His socialist, communist and anarchist allies were not fussy. For instance, three days before, Solidaridad Obrera, a means of expression of the anarchist CNT, had published these paragraphs:

In Spain, religion has permanently been stained with the blood of the innocent (...). Priests have corrupted all homes. In the confessionals, they plot the most shameful tricks (...). But religious aberrations are not reduced to the most horrendous crimes and acts of perverted morality (...). The ecclesiastical bureaucracy is a nest of satraps. They have never defended the needy (...). Their goods are badly acquired. They have been stolen. They live off of pure blackmail. They snatch the little girls from the homes. They poison the youth. They have betrayed the nation (...). The Church must disappear forever. The temples will no longer serve to favor the filthiest pimps. They've finished the holy water basins (...). There are no Catholic hovels. The torches of the people have pulverized. In its place, a free spirit will be reborn that it will have nothing in common with the masochism that breeds in the naves of cathedrals. You have to tear the Church from the roots. Thus, we must



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The Guernica bombing (pictured) is known throughout the world. However, the Basque autonomous authorities postponed the bombing of Durango, carried out by the Italian aviation allied with the national side on March 31, 1937, and silenced the massacre of defenseless prisoners in Bilbao, committed by left-wing militia on January 4, 1937. In either of these last two events, more people died than in Guernica, which the Basque nationalists have turned into a "martyr city" to hide their pacts with the Italian fascist regime.

seize all the assets that, by justice, belong to the people. The religious Orders have to be dissolved. Bishops and cardinals are to be shot. And ecclesiastical goods have to be confiscated.

Nevertheless, it was not expropriation that the leftists did, but destruction and death: 6,832 religious assassinated in less than three years; 13 bishops, 4,184 priests, 2,365 friars, and 283 nuns, to which must be added many thousands more lay people who were murdered for being Catholics. In short, the largest massacre of Christians in history, superior to the Roman persecutions, the French and Russian Revolutions both in quantity and in ferocity, since many of them died after torture: beaten, dis-

membered, drowned, buried alive, burned, bullfighting, or thrown to the lions of the Retiro's Casa de Fieras.

### **Killings of defenseless civilians**

The massacres committed in the rear were the main factor in the progressive loss of support from western powers suspicious of a rebel side supported by Mussolini and Hitler. "*Blood, blood, blood!*" were the words that a disgusted Churchill blurted out in London to Republican Ambassador Pablo de Azcárate. In his research, *The Financing of the Spanish Civil War*, which won the 2013 National History Award, José Ángel Sánchez Asiaín, former president of Banco

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

Bilbao Vizcaya and member of the Royal Academy of History, explained that the spectacle of murders, fires, and looting in Madrid and the flight to the rebel zone of a large part of the Spanish financial and business class were decisive in the refusal of the foreign financial world to grant loans to the Republican Government, as President Alcalá-Zamora had already feared during the chaotic popular front months before the war:

Aware of this severe problem, upon learning of the massacre at the Madrid Model prison, perpetrated on August 22, 1936, two kilometers from the government headquarters, Indalecio Prieto exclaimed: “The brutality of what has just happened here means, nothing less, that with this we have already lost the war”. In that massacre, several dozen prisoners fell, along with some soldiers arrested for their participa-

tion in the rebellion, other innocent soldiers, and several right-wing and moderate Republican deputies. Some of them were in it as a protective measure suggested by the Republican authorities themselves. The most prominent was Melquíades Álvarez, former president of Congress, founder of the Republican Liberal Democratic Party, a Republican, and a Freemason.

Something similar happened on September 25 and October 2 in Bilbao's port aboard the prison ships *Cabo Quilates* and *Altuna Mendi*. Using the excuse of widespread anger at the bombings, leftist militia and sailors murdered more than a hundred prisoners, most of whom were thrown into the water. One of them was the former liberal deputy Gregorio Balparda, imprisoned for refusing to participate as a lawyer in rigged trials against the rebel soldiers. Three



Other famous air attacks are those suffered by Madrid (in the photo, Puerta del Sol) and Barcelona, but it is unknown that Republicans Aviation and Navy carried out the very first bombings of Spanish cities in the Civil War:

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months later, on January 4, about three hundred people were murdered in Bilbao's prisons, far more than the victims of the Guernica bombing. However, they did not have a Picasso to immortalize them. What most horrified the "peneuvista" Telesforo Monzón, Minister of the Interior of the autonomous Government, was not the murders, some of them after torture, but the possible external echo: "What will the English say about us!" In another prison ship, the *Alfonso Pérez*, anchored in Santander, 156 people were killed on December 27, 1936, also under the excuse of retaliation for a previous national bombing that had caused several dozen civilian casualties.

These killings, however, were small changes compared to what happened elsewhere. In Malaga, for example, from July 1936 to February 1937, 3,406 people were murdered, a detailed account composed by Antonio Nadal Sánchez, professor of Contemporary History at the University of Malaga (*La Guerra civil en Málaga*, 1993). Among those killed were military, police, and religious, most of whom, as in Santander and Bilbao, had not participated in the uprising. The repression of the victors in Malaga between 1937 and 1940 caused more than 2,500 deaths, many of them implicated in the previous massacres. While honoring the latter, the left parties oppose any homage to the former. In nearby Ronda, its famous gash, which appears in so many films, advertisements, and tourist brochures, was used by militia to knock off dozens of "enemies of the people".

In Barcelona, through the Clinical Hospital records, used as a morgue, the more than six thousand murdered between July 18 and September 9 are known. About

### In Malaga, the Left murdered 3,406 people between mid-July 1936 and early February 1937



Madrid, Clara Campoamor, a Republican deputy (1931-1933) who obtained the approval of the right parties to vote for women, witnessed the "horrifying mass executions" carried out in the Casa de Campo, La Pradera de San Isidro, and the nearby highways: "Every day the government found sixty, eighty or one hundred dead lying around the city". That is why the very republican Campoamor rushed to flee republican Spain, although today, the leftist propaganda spreads that she fled from Franco.

The largest collective massacre, worthy of others such as that of Katyn, occurred in Paracuellos de Jarama (Madrid), where, according to the lowest estimates, 2,500 people, fifty of them adolescents, were murdered in November 1936. And the Aravaca cemetery, where the bodies lie, most of them unidentified, of more than eight hundred people murdered there over several months. Among those shot in Paracuellos and Aravaca, the monarchical thinker Ramiro de Maeztu, the Falangist leader Ramiro Ledesma and the playwright Pedro Muñoz Seca stand out. One of the foremost perpetrators of these mass killings, the communist leader Santiago Carrillo, benefited from a general pardon granted by Franco in 1969 and participated as a deputy in elaborating the 1978 Constitution.

### Proud of their cruelty

Regarding buildings, twenty thousand churches and monasteries with all their



## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

artistic and historical content were razed: altarpieces, paintings, images, libraries, archives, etc. Those that were not destroyed ended up as markets, garages, barracks, shelters, powder magazines, stables, and pigsties. And the private possession of religious objects was prohibited. One example out of a thousand: the side of the Jàtiva Revolutionary Committee, constituted by the CNT and the UGT, of October 24, 1936:

*The Revolutionary Committee of this city orders all residents to deposit in the public square closest to their domicile all the religious objects, images, stamps, etc. They have in their possession, except those made of precious or current metals or any other usable material may have material value, which will also be discarded by handing them over to the Public Order Department of this Committee. A period of five days is granted for these operations, after which an investigation will be carried out in all homes and in which objects of the indicated ones are found, their inhabitants will be declared factious, and as such, they will execute them.*

Catalonia was singularly punished by anti-religious fury, as the president of the Generalitat, Lluís Companys, confessed with satisfaction, when asked by a French journalist about the possibility of reopening the temples to Catholic worship after the first fury after July 18 had passed: “Oh this problem is not even a matter” replied the schemer Companys, “because all the churches have been destroyed”.

The abbot of Montserrat, Antoni Maria Marcet, wrote some time later that “those three years were the most terrible and glorious in the history of Spain, during which a whole millenary civilization was in danger of sinking into the most unbridled of the barbarities”. Marcet spoke about events that he experienced live: the looting and burning of thousands of churches and convents, the murder of hundreds of people, the leftist newspapers proposing the destruction of the Abbey of Montserrat, etc. Witness of all this was the English socialist George Orwell, who arrived in Barcelona in December of 1936 to, according to him, “fight against fascism”:

Almost all the temples had been destroyed, and their images burned. Everywhere, crews of workers were systematically demolishing churches (...) The reality is that temples were looted everywhere as something very natural because it was perfectly understood that the Spanish clergy were part of the capitalist scam. During the six months spent in Spain, I only saw two unscathed churches.

One of those two whole churches was the Holy Family, which Orwell lamented for considering it: “one of the ugliest buildings I have seen in the whole world (...) I think the anarchists showed bad taste by not blowing it up when they had the opportunity to do so, instead of simply hanging a red-black banner between their spires”.

Worse luck ran the adjacent workshop of the Sagrada Família architect, Antoni Gaudí, set on fire by the mobs. At the same time, they desecrated the tomb of Josep Maria Bocabella, promoter and founder of the temple. Plans and models left by Gaudí for the continuation of the works disappeared in that fire. The tombs of other Catalan egregious such as Wifredo el



**Clara Campoamor: "Every day the government found sixty, eighty or one hundred dead lying around the city"**



Monument raised in Santander in 1941 to mourn people murdered in Cabo Mayor's cliffs in 1936 and 1937. In 2006, before the approval of the law of "Historical Memory", the Administration eliminated the symbolism that remembered those murdered, who do not have the right to be commemorated by their compatriots.



Velloso, the philosopher Jaime Balmes, Bishop Josep Morgades, restorer of the Ripoll monastery, and Bishop Torras i Bages, with whose skull they played football with, was also desecrated.

However, the destruction was not limited to the churches. Regarding the Aragonese country houses, "places of great nobility", Orwell wrote that "sometimes one felt a kind of hidden sympathy towards the former fascist owners when

seeing how the militia treated the confiscated buildings. At the Farm, every room that was not in use had been turned into a restroom, a horrible pile of shattered furniture and excrement".

### The memory of the facts is forbidden

The new regime restored most of the churches destroyed by the Republicans. Even in Spain's most remote corners, commemorative plaques with the legend "Destroyed by the Red Hordes. Rebuilt by National Spain", could be read. Over the past forty years, all of these plates have been removed; and with them, one of the bloodiest pages in Spain's history. The same fate has followed the crosses, plaques, and monuments that commemorate the tens of thousands murdered in repression that is sometimes sadistic and unjustified since it did not stop before helpless nuns, children, women, and the elderly.

Moreover, this is precisely what solemnly baptized, in its first phase, "Historical Memory", and in the new, "Democratic Memory": eliminate the memory of the victims and their killers. Now the Government PSOE-Unidas Podemos, with the backing of ERC and PNV, wants to punish those who dare to remember what should remain hidden: the killings carried out by the false defenders of democracy. As if Spain had been left behind the Iron Curtain, and today it continues to be a communist dictatorship. ▼

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe



General Dwight Eisenhower was the supreme commander of the Western Allies in Europe and responsible for Operation Overlord. The remnants of the German forces surrendered to him on May 7, 1945. As US president, he visited Spain in 1959. He was one of several anti-Nazi fighters who met General Francisco Franco, Head of the Spanish State, whom they appreciated his neutrality in World War II.

### Luis E. Togores


Luis Eugenio Togores (1959, Madrid) earned his Ph.D. in Contemporary History from the Complutense University of Madrid with a thesis on Spain's international relations in the Far East 19th century. He is currently Professor of Contemporary History at the San Pablo CEU University, of which he has also been vice-rector and dean. His main research interest resides in the Spanish 20th century and,

more specifically, in the periods of the Second Republic, the Civil War -to which the book *Historia de la Guerra Civil Española (History of the Spanish Civil War)* (2011) is dedicated- and the Franco regime. He is the author of a trilogy of biographies of three famous Spanish generals: *Millán Astray, legionario (Millán Astray, legionary)* (2003), *Muñoz Grandes, héroe de Marruecos, general de la División Azul (Muñoz*

*Grandes, hero of Morocco, general of the Blue Division)* (2007) and *Yague, el general falangista de Franco (Yagüe, Franco's Falangist general)* (2010). In his book *Franco frente a Hitler (Franco in front of Hitler)* (2020) describes the troubled relations between the heads of the State of Spain and Germany during World War II thanks to the new documentation he has recently located.

## How Spain Avoided Entering the Second World War

Luis E. Togores




From November 1933, the center right governed the Second Republic. In December, the anarchists staged an armed uprising with a balance of 75 dead and 101 wounded, among the insurgents, and 11 civil guards and three assault guards killed and 45 and 18 wounded, respectively. In October 1934, the Socialist Party began a violent Bolshevik-inspired revolution with particular virulence in Asturias with the CNT anarchists' support. Simultaneously Republican Catalana (ERC), led by Lluís Companys, took up arms in Barcelona and proclaimed Catalonia's independence. According to historian Julián Casanova, 1,100 people died during the fighting, among those who supported the insurrection, in addition to some 2,000 wounded, and there were about 300 deaths among the security forces and the Army. Thirty-four priests and religious were killed. Throughout Spain, more than thirty thousand revolutionaries were imprisoned, and thousands of workers lost their jobs.

In February 1936, parliamentary elections were held in which the Popular Front illegitimately came to power, as the then President of the Republic, Niceto Alcalá Zamora, already warned in his memoirs as the historians Álvarez Tardío and Roberto

### Abstract

World War II broke out five months after the end of the Spanish Civil War: General Franco ordered the Spanish neutrality, but Spain remained between the German Army to the North and Gibraltar, a British colony and naval base to the South when France surrendered. Between 1940 and 1943, various internal and external forces tried to involve the Spanish Government in the war, on one side or another. The author explains how Franco avoided these pressures and threats, which could have turned Spain into a battlefield. Despite what "historical memory" maintains, Franco was the main factor that prevented Spain from joining the Axis. In a show of his independence, Franco ordered diplomats in occupied Europe to save thousands of Jews persecuted by the National Socialists.



Villa have recently shown, thanks to the falsification of the records of many polling stations in various provinces.

Between February and July 1936, there was a revolutionary process "from above" aspired to achieve the violent revolution that failed in October 1934 and discussed in other works in this book. The violence took over the streets and fields of Spain between February and July 1936. Next, we give a list

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

of data of the effects produced in the excesses.

- Churches destroyed: 160
- Attack on churches: 251
- Killed by the attack: 269
- Wounded: 1,287
- Assaults: 215
- Hold Ups: 312
- Centers closed by order government: 7
- Right-wing center assaulted destroyed: 69
- Right-wing center assaulted: 312
- General strikes: 113
- Partial strikes: 228
- Newspapers destroyed: 10
- Assaults on newspapers: 33
- Bombs: 146 + 78 unexploded

A group of soldiers, supported by a part of society, planned a coup to bring the Republic back to its democratic channels. The coup was a failure. Thus began a civil war that was to last three years and in which both sides were radicalized as a result of the harshness that all civil conflict of nature implies that devastated Spain.

### **The USSR, the leading supplier of war material**

While the republican Government sought support abroad, finding it mainly in Stalin's Soviet Union and the French Popular Front, national Spain found help in Germany and Italy in the summer of 1936, before Franco was appointed head of State, and Generalissimo on October 1 of that year. A limited intervention of the authoritarian nations of Europe began in support of both sides. Communist volunteers, International Brigades, recruited by Stalin from among his supporters worldwide, came to fight in Spain to support the Popular Front. Hitler sent the Con-

**While the Republican Government sought support from Stalin's Soviet Union and the French Popular Front, national Spain found it in Germany and Italy**



dor Legion and Mussolini his "black shirts" in favor of the nationals.

The Spanish industry's capacity to manufacture weapons of all kinds, ammunition, etc., was minimal. A good part of the weapons that sustained the war came from outside the Peninsula, from the Soviet Union, French weapons and equipment, from the North Americans, Germany, Italy, etc. Those guns sustained and allowed to prolong the war in Spain. The tanks that arrived in Spain came from the following sources (see Table 1).

Of all the armored material used in the war, the one of Soviet origin used was immensely superior in quality to the one delivered to nationals from Germany and Italy. Without going into evaluating the BT-5 battle tank, an advanced next-generation tank in its time, the Russian T-26 was far superior in all concepts (weapons, armor...) to the Panzers of the Condor Legion, the almost ridiculous Italian tanks. The national advantage in combat lay not in the quality of the cars it had. However, it lay in the doctrine and its use on the battlefield, which gave them an unquestionable tactical and strategic superiority throughout the war.

Concerning the pieces of artillery that arrived at the Spanish battlefields from outside Spain, see Table 2.



TABLE 1.

**Origin of the tanks of each side**

<b>Soviet and Polish tanks for the Popular Front</b>		<b>German and Italian tanks for nationals</b>	
T-26B	281	Armored vehicle CV33/35 Italian	150
BT-5	50	Panzer I A German	96
Renault FT-17	64	Panzer I B	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>Soviet tanks</b>		<b>Italian tanks</b>	
BC	145	Lancia	8
BA-3/BA-6	40		
UNL-35	170		
FA-I	20		
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>

The purchase of combat aircraft (fighters, bombers...) was decisive in many of the war's battles (Table 3).

National Spain bought from Germany and Italy practically all of its weapons acquired abroad. Armament that was mainly sold on credit with Berlin and Rome entrusted Franco's victory and his supporters.

The Popular Front, counting on the enormous gold reserves of the Bank of Spain (among the five most significant in the world, accumulated in trade with the allies in the Great War), bought almost all its armament in cash from the Soviet Union, France, England, the United States, Poland, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, Estonia... The Soviet Union provided the best quality and most technologically cutting-edge weaponry of the entire war.

TABLE 2.

**Artillery pieces of all kinds bought by both sides**

<b>Seller Nation</b>		<b>Seller Nation</b>	
Germany	918	Different countries	1.483
Italy	1.540	USSR	1.169
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.458</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.652</b>

CUADRO 3.

**Planes Bought by both sides during the War**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Nationals</b>	<b>Front Populists</b>
Fighters	649	765
Bombardiers	360	127
Assault, reconnaissance and light bombardier	273	264
Seaplanes	60	2
Transportation, liaison and training	206	296
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.548</b>	<b>1.445</b>



The purchase of weapons contributed to prolonging the war and increasing the number of casualties in the fighting. However, it was not decisive in unbalancing the balance of victory in favor of one or the other side, similar to foreign troops' intervention (International Brigades, Condor Legion, Italian CTV, and Portuguese Viriatos, among the main ones). A Spanish historiography sector maintains that the nationals' victory was mainly due to the help of the so-called fascist powers. However, the truth is that the national side won the war mainly due to the following issues:

- The achievement of unity of command since the beginning of the war.
- Put military victory as the first objective instead of dedicating efforts to political and revolutionary nature questions. The Government and the Popular Front member parties always debated between making the revolution, winning the war, or winning the war and then making the revolution.
- For the national commanders' more outstanding professionalism in managing the war in logistical, tactical, and strategic aspects. The national political militias (Falangists and Carlists) were from the beginning under the Army's leadership.

The Popular Front always doubted the loyalty of its professional soldiers. In the People's Army of the Republic, they always had the majority of military issues the last the political leaders, the heads of militias of the different popular front parties, and even the political commissars (body established on October 15, 1936, in the People's Army), in the manner of what happened in the Red Army.

- Better management of the rear, which greatly facilitated the war effort. Rationing was established by the Franco Government after the end of the war, while the republican Government did so in March 1937. In the rear of the Popular Front, there was an open civil war between communists and socialists against anarchists and trotskysts who, on many occasions, they reached armed clashes.
- The creation of a single party, FET de las JONS, employing the unification decree of April 1937, ended up concentrating all the war's power and decisions in Franco's person, which made it easier to achieve the final victory.

It is necessary to specify that the national victory and the famous Popular Front defeat resulted from the war actions carried out by both sides, their commanders' decision, and their combatants' courage, but without foreign military aid being the determining factor. The rebel side won due to their military capabilities and the lack of these qualities in their enemies. Moscow, Paris, Berlin, or Rome intervened in the war with both sides, but their actions were not decisive in the war's final result. Defeat and victory were always in the hands of the Spanish combatants in their civil war.



**The purchase of weapons contributed to prolong the Spanish Civil War but was not decisive in unbalancing the balance of victory in favor of one side**

The victory of the Nationals on April 1, 1939 ended the war. National Spain, already led unquestionably by General Francisco Franco, was devastated, divided into winners and losers, and with a moral and economic debt with the governments of Lisbon, Rome, and Berlin, which did not assume that Franco became a "quisling government" of Hitler or that the new Spain born of national victory became a nation subjected to the will and designs of Nazi Germany.

### From neutrality in the Second World War to ambition

Exactly five months after World War II began. The national command had managed to leave Spain out of the conflict, the plan of the President of the Popular Front Government Juan Negrín (PSOE) and his communist supporters to prolong the war in Spain until it was part of the new European conflict that is already taking place on the near horizon. The Spanish Regime's first reaction was to declare "the strictest neutrality" in a decree signed by Franco (BOE, 4-9-1939).

The consistent approach between Berlin and Moscow, which materialized in the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1939, is not a negligible factor among the causes that helped prevent Spain from being dragged into war at the beginning of the winter of 1939.

The development of the Civil War was influenced by the inevitable fascism of the "campamental" regime born in July 1936. Fascism was one of the most modern and popular ideologies in the interwar period. The singular Spanish fascism, embodied by the Falangists, a very minority group before

### In September 1940, General Franco seemed ready to join the Axis, as Mussolini had done when declaring war on France and Great Britain



the war, became the most popular ideology and political aesthetic in the new national Spain.

Rome and, above all, Berlin had become a world reference for all authoritarian regimes that, after the triumph of Bolshevik communism in Russia and the "crash of 1929", saw a successful model of the organization of the State and society—a mixture of modern nationalism, respect for private property, and atypical militaristic state socialism—as well as the solution of many problems and the best future path for the nations of the world.

The outbreak of the Second World War, the fame and effectiveness of Hitler's new Germany was proven in its resounding victory over Poland with the help of the Soviet Union. That did not stop producing admiration in Franco's Spain and deep unease among the Regime Catholic and more conservative sectors, as they did not understand the unnatural alliance between Hitler and Stalin to subdue Catholic Poland. Despite everything, military, Falangists, rightists, and even monarchists supporters of the overthrown Alfonso XIII and his son, the Infante Juan de Bourbon, saw in the Third Reich the model to follow for the progress of Spain and the recovery of the past glories.

The Spanish minister Serrano Suñer arrived at Berlin as a confident Germanophile, but his feelings began to change in the Reich capital



Stalin's intervention in the war in Spain left a painful mark on the supporters of the Spanish Civil War's victors, as Soviet advisers had a decisive influence on the fate of the war and the repression of the Party's enemies: massacres of Paracuellos de Jarama, Aravaca, Pozo de Camuñas, Train of Death of Jaén, etc. The way of acting of the Cheká (Soviet political secret police) not only came to Spain to promote the murder of thousands of Spaniards opposed to the Popular Front, it also served —thanks to the support of the Spanish socialists— to persecute and assassinate the Trotskyists of the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) and anarchists of the CNT. In March 1939, Colonel Casado, the socialist Besteiro, and the anarchists staged a coup to remove Negrín from the Government and his Soviet advisers, and thus be able to put an end to a war that the Popular Front had already lost.

In May 1940, Winston Churchill considered the landing of German troops in the British Isles as inevitable. London arranged for women and children's evacuation to the countryside and the royal family to Canada's dominion. To observers outside the war, it seemed that Germany would succeed in implanting a Reich that would last a thousand years.

In those days, Operation Dynamo had been carried out, which allowed the evacua-

tion of nearly three hundred thousand British and French soldiers after the Dunkirk military disaster and with the Germans arriving in Paris. In this situation of absolute victory for the *Wehrmacht*, on June 16, General Vigón visited Hitler in the Belgian castle of Acoz, taking a letter from the Spanish Caudillo to the German Führer congratulating him on his victories. On June 27, 1940, the German divisions reached the Pyrenees.

In the summer of 1940, Franco and his brother-in-law and Minister of the Interior, Ramón Serrano Suñer, were deeply impressed by the *Wehrmacht's* overwhelming victories over the Polish, Danes, Norwegians, Belgians, Dutch, French, and the British Expeditionary Corps (BEF). In this scenario, for a few weeks in September, the Spanish Generalissimo seemed to be willing to join the Axis, as Mussolini had done when he declared war on France and England in June.

In mid-September 1940, Serrano Suñer traveled to Berlin to confer with the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Von Ribbentrop, and had an interview with Hitler. Throughout those days, Spain and Germany discussed possible conditions for the entry of Spain into the war. In the two secret reports sent by Serrano Suñer to his brother-in-law, and in the confidential orders he received from him, recently known, the existence of offers by the German side and the momentary positive assessment of Spain in favor of the war. Serrano's first report was dated in Berlin on September 18, 1940. After Serrano's first interview with Ribbentrop was over, he informed Franco of the Nazi dream of seizing the entire African continent. A new empire from the Norwegian fjords to the Cape, the future partition of the black continent, and the construction

of an “Atlantic wall” on the two continents can reject any possible aggression by the United States. He also reports on the Third Reich’s claim to obtain a naval base in the Canaries, a request that produced an angry response from Serrano to the German Foreign Minister. In these conversations, we did not find any allusion to the USSR. This theme was very present in all Spaniards given the brutal Soviet intervention in Spain’s recently ended war through the International Brigades, military advisers, weapons, police, and political commissars with their Chekás. About the interviews with the Führer, Serrano Suñer writes:

“Europe must say that there is a hemisphere that consists of Europe and Africa and that it is exclusively European, that is to say, of Germany, Italy, and Spain. He spoke of the future American danger, of the new imperialist ideas that are born in the U.S. and of the need to completely block their way concerning the African space of this hemisphere”.

“(…) We talked about the fact that only Germany—with a predominant position in Europe and Africa—, Spain and Italy would henceforth count. That small country would be allowed to live with a certain political but not military independence and that France, shattered and annulled in peace, would count for nothing”.

“We had already been talking for more than an hour and a half (and the Italian Minister of Colonies for one) when I told the Führer that in order not to tire him (he kindly said no) very quickly I wanted to express only our desire to rectify the border of the Pyrenees established today in points too favorable for France (as in the Bidasoa where even the mountains of (illegible) we have no natural border) and with a gesture of great joy he retained me saying almost literally these words: that one could never trust the friendship of France; and since the fifty times that he had reached out to this country, even at the cost of renouncing a land as German as Alsace-Lorraine, had been in vain, it was best to take precautions against an enemy France since he knew

that (illegible) that once the German occupation is closed, France will think about revenge. That is why he was delighted with the Spanish request convenient to the new European system (Today, by an envoy, he told me something about Rousillon for Spain). Hitler ended his conversation with a spontaneous and frankly cordial offer that as soon as these negotiations are a little more advanced, he will move to the southern French border to have a personal interview with you”.

“(…) That the Führer wishes that after you answer, a secret protocol be made with everything that we have talked about and with what is agreed as you indicate. (I think this is what would take Spain without immediate risk in its own right to the peace conference)”.

Immediately Franco gave the following guidelines to his brother-in-law:

“The (German) thesis is unacceptable in all its parts. (...) it is a vindication of our Homeland to return to Spanish rule, which as a Spaniard we recognize, if until today this recovery has stumbled on the wall of force, Spain cannot with dignity consecrate possession by another nation, even if it is so highly esteemed like Germany... Regarding the other notes of economic sense for future exchange, they must necessarily be mistranslated or the work of cold and selfish administrators devoid of all political importance, such as those that amid our war, in Salamanca, had a claim of the same order, which hurt us so much, which we rejected and which led to their disavowal by Germany”.



**The Ribbentrop protocol to ensure Spain's entry into the war was rejected in its entirety by a relaxed and calm Franco**

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

Franco specifies:

“It may happen that Italy feeling uncomfortable, intends to precipitate stages and we must not forget our difficult internal situation, in supplies, with a harvest lower than the latest calculations, which forces us to solve the problem of supply by Germany even with the help of Italy, and therefore it is convenient for us to be inside but do not rush; the Führer is already involved in this because in his letter it is deduced there will be a time of preparation (...). For your behaviour, I have to tell you that we will continue our work without interruption as time starts, the longer the intervention is delayed without damage to the situation as a whole, that, we have won. However, we must be already inside, that is, with recognized rights, to be ready in the shortest time to face any situation that forces us to act quickly, trigger or attack, always with the guarantee of supplies. Our convenience must be to continue preparing at full speed, to perfect collections and means of assuring the supply by our allies for the moment to act, and if the war is prolonged and immediate action is not required to complete what is lacking in favor of all”.

On the 26th, after his second interview with Hitler, Serrano informs Franco:

“It is unfortunate that the Germans, confident of their victory, lose their equanimity and balance. It is for our legitimate aspirations and a sure future. And that this passion for triumph dominates them is very clear that is why they have so little sensitivity to pick up our reasons. God, above all, makes sure that this does not reach too severe limits. (...) The fact is that these people's attitude is that they are challenging and ambitious, and it is necessary to act on it to get the most out of it. If not, it would surely be much worse (The triumph of England would not only be our end that is nothing against the Homeland, the worst thing is that it would fatally mean the end of the Homeland itself: the Basque Republic, the Catalan Republic, etc.)”.

Serrano must have arrived in Berlin as a confident Germanophile, but his feelings began to change in the Reich capital. The

perception of the Spanish authorities about Germany was going to alter at full speed. At the time of these negotiations, there was still a little over half a year before Hitler's expansionist dreams unleashed Operation Barbarossa. The German invasion of the Soviet Union began.

A month later, on October 23, 1940, Franco's only interview with Hitler took place in the small town French border of Hendaye. At this time, the Spanish were already clear that entering the war was a not desirable possibility, being Franco's primary concern to avoid a German invasion. Ribbentrop's protocol to guarantee Spaniards' entry into the war was rejected in its entirety by a relaxed and calm Franco. The Spanish counter-project was considered unacceptable and almost offensive by the Nazis. In the interview, Spain would have entered the war if the Führer had known how to play his cards and offered the Spaniards what they asked of him (to increase Spanish colonial possessions in Africa, along with a long list of military supplies —necessary for the recovery of Gibraltar—, industrial and agricultural), but that surely Germany did not want and could not concede. Something that Franco knew thanks to the information transmitted to him by Admiral Canaris, head of the Abwehr (German military intelligence



**Franco tried to satisfy both sides through concessions of all kinds and tolerating Spanish sovereignty violations by London, Berlin, Rome, or Washington**



service). Franco already doubted the interest that participation in the conflict could have for the Spanish. In Hendaye, Spain did not enter the war.

From this moment, Spain played a complicated game with London, Washington, and Berlin to prevent the war from ravaging the country again. Good words, concessions, half-truths, friendly declarations, together with the dispatch of the Blue Division, the daily entry of thousands of Spanish workers into Gibraltar, the more theoretical than accurate authorization for free Spanish producers to travel to work in the Third Reich, the forced tolerance during the construction of the military airport in the demilitarized neutral zone of Gibraltar formally Spanish land, the sale of strategic minerals—above all, wolfram—and other raw materials to Germany and, to a lesser extent, to the allies, as well as the inaction in the face of constant violations of Spanish territorial waters and airspace by both contenders (to which were added the numerous attacks on Spanish ships by both sides, although in more significant numbers by the allies) were the assets of Spanish diplomacy to avoid war:

Allies and Axis violated Spanish airspace, and territorial waters throughout the entire conflict and sank Spanish merchant and fishing ships and machine-gunned their crew. Their secret services acted in Spain without restraint and planned the invasion of the country on numerous occasions. Franco and his Government, with patience and stoicism, endured all this without being dragged into war by events. However, it is true that for Franco, for many members of their governments, and the majority of Spaniards, the Axis was more sympathetic than Stalin's



Franco received in Madrid several world leaders, such as US Presidents Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, King Baudouin of Belgium and the President of the French Republic Charles de Gaulle. He visited the Spanish ruler at his residence in El Pardo in 1970.

Russia or Churchill's Britain. However, in different ways, Franco tried to satisfy both sides through concessions of all kinds and, very significantly, by looking the other way when London, Berlin, Rome, or Washington shamelessly violated Spanish sovereignty. When things were going well for Germany,

**Evidence of the lack of harmony between Madrid and Berlin can be seen in the Jewish question. Spanish diplomats saved thousands of Jews.**



Franco did not lash out at British interests, and when the war turned in favor of the Allies, Spain did not forget German friendship during the Civil War. Franco and his governments always had their eyes fixed exclusively on what they understood as Spain's interest.

The *Oberkommando des Heeres* or OKH (High Command of the Army) planned several projects for the “entry” of German troops into Spain: Operation Felix, January 10, 1941; Operation Isabel, May 11, 1941; Operation Ilona; Operation Gisela (this one in September 1942), for the “defense” of Spain; Operation Nurnberg, which was more of a contingency plan, in June 1943. Neither of these plans was carried out.

The allies, for their part, planned several operations against Spain —such as Operation Bolero, Blackbone, Tonic X.Y., and X.Z. or Operation Adroit—, which involved penetration of troops in Spain, which was as much as forcing the entry of the Spanish in the war:

The German successes in the war made it very difficult not to feel admiration for the Third Reich. Franco made promises to a Germany that seemed determined to invade Spain when necessary for its war objectives, with the sole aim of preventing the

Spanish from being drawn into the conflict against their will. The last significant concession that national Spain made to the III Reich to avoid entry into the war was sending the Blue Division to the Russian front. It is still a contradiction that the sacrifice of the volunteers who went to fight, singing the *Gibraltar march*, dreaming of putting the Spanish flag on the Rock, actually served to help England preserve its colony by allowing Spain not to enter the war and that the German divisions did not cross the Peninsula.

**Spain distances itself from Germany**

Starting the winter of 1942-43, Spain, given Germany's increasingly evident military weakness, slowly moved away from the Third Reich. The fear of Hitler's armored divisions was disappearing. It was clear that the allies were going to win the war. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francisco Gómez-Jordana (who had replaced Serrano Suñer in September 1942), made an effort to make gestures of friendship towards the Anglo-Saxon powers.

Despite the visceral hatred that national Spain had for Stalin's Russia and its logical prevention with London and Washington's Governments, Franco needed help from the other side of the Atlantic through the *navicert* [neutrality safe-conducts] that Great Britain issued as a power that controlled the tremendous naval routes of communication almost worldwide. Spain, slowly but surely, was separating from Germany, even putting a diplomatic face on it, as evidenced by the tough negotiation of Germany's massive debt with Spain, which resulted in a significant purchase of weapons from the Third Reich through the secret Bär program.





This monument in Budapest commemorates the extermination of Jews by the pro-German Regime of Ferenc Szálasi. There the Spanish diplomat Ángel Sanz Briz saved thousands of Jews from death, under orders sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Madrid to Spanish consulates and embassies in occupied Europe.

The Spanish Army was struggling with weapons, vehicles, ammunition, parts for repair and maintenance, etc... Most of it obsolete or almost useless due to use. Germany was the only nation capable of providing this armament since getting them in the United States (the other possible seller) was impossible.

Looking at the purchase of the enormous quantity of weapons that Spain needed, Germany thought to pay off its

debts with Spain in a very beneficial way. Spain was aware that the European political scene had changed and that "they had the upper hand". The Germans found that the Spanish purchasing commission came with the explicit purpose of lowering the exorbitant prices that the Nazi negotiators aspired to charge. The III Reich did not want to sell military equipment, of which its armed forces were in great need, but if they wished not to stop their war industry, they had to pay in gold or deliver

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

the weapons that Spain requested to pay the enormous debt it had and that grew steadily.

The negotiation was very tough. The success of Spanish diplomacy was complete, much to the dismay of the Germans. The Spanish commission managed to acquire all the agreed material:

“(…) the negotiations, which lasted several months, had roughly reduced the price of the weapons that Germany was selling to a third of their initial price, the slightly more than 200 million marks paid by Spain being an enormous amount far from the nearly one billion that the Third Reich initially requested. Without a doubt, we can say that those of the Bär Program was the most successful international economic negotiations in the history of Spain”.

These events were soon joined by the withdrawal of the Blue Division from the Russian front. On November 17, 1943, the Spanish Volunteers Division's chief general, Esteban Infantes, was ordered to return his soldiers to Spain. The Blue Legion remained and was withdrawn shortly after.

Other measures of estrangement from the Reich were related to the sending of workforces to Germany. We proceeded to breach the agreements for Spanish producers' arrival to the Reich that the defenestrated Minister Gerardo Salvador Merino had signed. The arrangement of May 8, 1941, signed with Robert Ley, provided for the arrival of one hundred thousand free Spanish “producers” to work in German industry. Its economy was on the brink of chaos as most of its men were at the front, which led to almost seven million foreign workers joining the German world of work. The Third Reich's need for a workforce was dire. Franco drove Merino and the Falangists

away from negotiations for the departure of workers to Germany, which remained in the hands of the diplomat José María Doussinague, who was commissioned to prevent as far as possible, the arrival of Spanish workers to the Reich. Thus, the number of Spanish “producers” in Germany did not reach 10,000 (10% of what was agreed).

Nowadays, we have considerable evidence of Franco and his Government's progressive distancing from Germany, despite its clear that the heart of national Spain was with the Axis and not with the allies. One more evidence of Madrid and Berlin's lack of harmony can be seen in the Jewish question. The American Jewish historian Lawrence H. Feldman stated in September 1941:

“Franco suddenly turned in favor of the allies until the end of the war; when it was Hitler the one preparing for a war of extermination against the Jews, Franco's opinion changed dramatically. The death squads' activities in Russia in July 1941 made Hitler's intentions obvious, long before the full implementation of the genocide in 1942. So Franco tried to reopen relations with the allies and finally had success in September 1941”.

This happened shortly before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. And Feldman continues:



**Monarchists, Falangists, and “blue” military conspired with the German secret services to force Spain into the war**

“Franco received some low-key praise for his help in rescuing some Sephardic Jews in 1943 and 1944 (...), he made possible the emigration of more than 15,000 Jews earlier. Beginning in June, before the agreement with Germany to send Jews to Franco to embark abroad, and continuing after the Nazi abrogation of that agreement, that migration is what made Franco a true and unknown hero of the Holocaust. (...) With the successful attempt of Spain to rescue the protected Jews of Thessaloniki and Athens, with the activities of its diplomatic corps in rescuing individual Jews, with the participation in the protection of the Jews in Hungary and many years later (1967) with the evacuation of the Jews from Egypt, Spain told the world that it would do what it could to rescue the members of this race”.

Israel Singer, President of Congress World Jewry, in 2005, stated:

“Franco's Spain was an important refuge for Jews who risked coming, escaping from the France of freedom, brotherhood, and equality. I don't want to defend Franco, but in World War II, many Jews were saved in Spain, and to ignore that is to ignore history”.

### **Franco against all: Spaniards, allies, and Germans**

It is unquestionable that in the State that emerged from the Civil War, of an authoritarian and fascist character, the Catholic, monarchist, and traditional Franco figure rose above the other generals under his orders who had won in the recently ended civil war. A State in which its power was not total, but which was maintained thanks to a complex game of balances with its generals, Falangists families, Carlists, Juanist monarchists, and the old right-wing totalitarian airs, in such a way that Franco conserved in his hands the future of his country.

With the help of the ministers' Serrano Suñer and Gómez-Jordana, Franco managed to keep Spain out of the conflict, which

was not only an arduous foreign policy task. In Spain, there were many sectors in favor of entering the war: *Juanistas*, *Falangistas*, “blue” military and royalist military, during the first part of World War II, conspired with the various German secret services with the clear objective of forcing Spain into the war. For the “blue” military —Yagüe, Muñoz Grandes, Asensio Cabanillas...— and “authentic” Falangists, Spain had to enter the war because in the inevitable victory that was soon to take place at the hands of Hitler's soldiers, Spain had to fight to occupy the position in the new order that was to come and that, by history and sacrifices, corresponded to him. The supporters of the pretender Juan de Bourbon were willing to force Spain into the war, with all its consequences, and displacing Franco from power so that the son of Alfonso XIII could occupy the throne of Spain even if it were in exchange for war and of becoming a *quisling* [traitor] ruler. There were also some Army sectors that they saw, from a strictly military perspective, that war with Germany was the path that Spain had to walk in the face of what seemed to be a new and promising future.

Franco overcame the pressures of Berlin, the doubtful siren songs of Rome, and the forces of many, many, of his friends and partisan theorists who demanded his participation in the war. Spain did not enter the war, an unquestionable reality, despite the friendship and the logical gratitude of Franco and his supporters to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany for the critical role they had played in the defeat of the Army of the Republic in the arrival of the Generalissimo to power.

Spanish neutrality (despite the time when it declared “non-belligerent” between 1940





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In 1972, Franco received a promising American politician, Ronald Reagan, governor of California. Both stood out for their anti-communism.

and 1943) was an unquestionable reality. When the Allies planned Operation Torch, the illegal Gibraltar airport was packed with planes into its small runway where the launch of a single mortar shell would have destroyed all the aircraft piled up there; but nothing happened. The Line's Spanish workers from the town of La Línea continued to cross the border as workforce to help the allied war effort with their work. In contrast, the many Anglo-American pilots who landed or parachuted into Spanish territory were soon returned to their country of origin. The training of a fighter or bomber pilot

lasted months, being, without a doubt, one of the “most expensive” soldiers in the World War II.

Franco played Spain's cards with both sides. Every day we know more details of the great game that served to prevent Spain from participating in the Second World War. The new documentation found brings us closer to the truth. Spain did not enter the war, without a doubt, because of Franco's will and determined action to avoid participation in the conflict.

Currently, Law 52/2007, on Historical Memory, the so-called Procedure for Action against Disinformation—which liquidates freedom of the press through the introduction of new censorship—and the draft bill of Democratic Memory go directly against freedom of research, teaching, and dissemination knowledge, in the case that concerns us from the History of Spain. This legislation makes us fear for a near future in which historians would see our books forbidden, burned, as began to happen in Germany in March 1934, and in which we could be fined and imprisoned for not adjusting our academic discourses to the “Official History”.

Spain lost the war without fighting in it. London did not thank him for his services, even though he was able to keep Gibraltar and win the war, in a way thanks to Spain, as Churchill himself recognized:

“During the war, Franco had a selfish and cold policy; he thought only of Spain and the Spanish interests. He never remembered the gratitude he owed to Hitler and Mussolini, nor did he hold a grudge against England for the hostility of the leftists; Devious boss, he was only trying to save his bleeding people another war (...). Thus, with subtleties, tricks and flattery, she managed to overcome difficulties and keep Spain out of the war, which was inestimable and valuable to England, when she was completely alone”.

**Undoubtedly, Spain did not participate in the war by Franco's will and determined action to avoid entry into the conflict**



Are these new laws of the socialist Government of Pedro Sánchez also going to censor Churchill, his ministers, official U.K. documents, and British historians commenting on them?

The Regime survived against all odds, and Franco, after almost forty years of Government, gave way by his will to a constitutional monarchy in the person of King Juan Carlos I. The Generalissimo never forgave the suitor Juan de Bourbon for his excessive ambition for power and his selfishness. The documents speak for themselves. The twisting and skewed and mutilated presentation of history is intended to be imposed by creating a “Ministry of Truth” and the construction from the left of an ‘Official History’, with some of the historians grazing on the General State Budgets. But all they do—as British historian John Vincent has pointed out—is falsifying the past’s truth. ▼





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## Miguel Platón

Miguel Platón (Melilla, 1949) is a journalist and historian. He has held the positions of Director of Information at Agencia Efe (1997-2004), Director at Radio Televisión Madrid (2003-2008), Director at Onda Madrid (2009-2011) and Director at Multimedia for Telemadrid (2011-2017). Author of the following books: *Alfonso XIII, de Primo de Rivera a Franco* (Alfonso XIII, from Primo de Rivera to Franco) (1998), *Hablan los*

*Militares* (The military speak) (2001), *Segunda República: de la esperanza al fracaso* (Second Republic: from hope to failure) (2017) and *Así comenzó la Guerra Civil. Del 17 al 20 de julio de 1936* (Thus began the Civil War. From July 17 to 20, 1936) (2018). In 2021, part of his research on those sentenced to death in the Spanish postwar period will be published based on the sentences handed down by the military courts.

Spaniards fled across the French border interned in the Argelès-Sur-Mer camp. They hardly received any help from the Republican Government, although the highest political leaders were in charge of sending the fortunes and goods stolen during the war to individuals, the Church, and various museums such as the numismatic collection of the National Archaeological Museum abroad. Before the end of the year, most of these exiles returned to Spain.

## Was the Postwar Repression Relentless on the Vanquished?

Miguel Platón

**T**he political objective of the draft Law on “Democratic Memory”, which was presented by the social-communist Government of Pedro Sánchez, is similar to that of the current Law on “Historical Memory” promoted in 2007 by the Socialist Government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero: hide the responsibility of the Union and the socialist party - the UGT and the PSOE - in the failure of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-36), a period in which the leftists resorted to the use of violence, including an armed rebellion against the Government in October 1934, the manipulation of the results of the February 1936 parliamentary elections and the cover-up of the assassination of a right-wing opposition leader, Congressman José Calvo Sotelo (July 13, 1936), carried out by a socialist gunman. It also seeks to hide the crimes that directors and affiliates of both organizations carried out during the war: tens of thousands of murders, torture, rapes, and robberies; and, last but not least, the corruption of several of its most prominent leaders.

The legal initiative constitutes, above all, a betrayal of the combatants of that war. When it ended, in April 1939, both armies had around one and a half million young

### Abstract

The historian Miguel Platón is investigating all the death sentences handed down by the military courts of the Franco regime, so he knows in depth the extent of the postwar repression and the crimes of which the defendants were accused. In this essay, he presents the evolution of the prison population and the legislation in this regard, which confirms the absence of a genocide. Another of the lies that he refutes is the affirmation of more than one hundred thousand bodies abandoned in graves and ditches.

Spaniards, from eighteen to thirty-two years of age, the vast majority coming from forced mobilization, since the volunteers only represented ten percent of the total number of combatants. Tacitly, but firmly, these young people set a fundamental political goal that they maintained for the rest of their lives: never another civil war so that their children would not suffer the suffering they had endured. The objective would be achieved and, together with economic development, was the basis of the Spanish political miracle of the late 1970s: a broad social consensus that opened the doors to democracy, topped off by the 1978 Constitution. The breakdown of that consensus by the

leadership of the PSOE means promoting the return to a polarized society like the one existing in 1936, which led to the greatest tragedy in the history of Spain.

### **The Republic, a regime of permanent violence**

Political violence linked to the Civil Spanish War comprised three phases: before July 1936 (beginning of the war), during the conflict (from July 1936 to April 1939), and after the war. The three followed one another with varying intensity, but in practice without a solution of continuity.

The resort to violence was born at the same time as the republican project. The conspirators who in August 1930 united to overthrow King Alfonso XIII formed a Provisional Government which, in turn, appointed a Military Committee, with the express purpose of organizing an insurrection. Most of the economic resources of the conspirators were employed in the purchase of pistols. A double plot was projected in December: *coup d'état* by related military units and revolutionary general strike. The latter failed for lack of Union collaboration, but military commanders rose in Jaca (Huesca) and Madrid. The first side, published in Jaca by an Army captain, read like this: “Anyone who opposes verbally or in writing, who conspires or makes weapons against the nascent Republic, will be shot without cause”.

It was not a vain threat: shortly before the rebels had killed the accidental Civil Guard's head and two police officers. In the twenty-four hours that the uprising lasted, nine people were killed, including the military governor-general of Huesca. Forces loyal to the Government defeated them, as well as the rebels in Madrid. Both captains raised in arms in Jaca were sentenced to death and shot.

After the proclamation of the Republic in April 1931, there were violent episodes, carried out by various political and Union forces, repressed by the forces of public order and, in some instances, by the Army (the State of War was declared by successive governments more than a dozen times). There are no definitive statistics of the victims and the damages caused, primarily due to the press censorship in effect during most of the Republican period. However, the complete estimates estimate between 2,629 and 3,628 deaths, from April 1931 to July 1936.

Historian Eduardo González Calleja has added 196 deaths between April and December 1931, 190 in 1932, 311 in 1933, 1,457 in 1934, 47 in 1935, and 428 in 1936, until July 17. An exhaustive investigation carried out by Juan Blázquez Miguel estimates 288 for the same period in 1931, 276 in 1932, 536 in 1933, 1,879 in 1934, 142 in 1935, and 502 in 1936, until mid-July. This author also points out that during the republican period, the violence caused 12,520 injuries, 13,494 strikes were called, 735 religious buildings were burned, 780 assaults and desecration were carried out, and 3,866 attacks with explosives or of another nature.

Most of the violence originated in unions and left-wing parties: the General Union of



**Five years before the Nazi extermination camps started to function, the Catalan anarchists incinerated their victims in industrial furnaces**





Stalin's USSR sent the republican Government better war material than Germany and Italy to the national side, in exchange for gold from the Bank of Spain. He also sent NKVD advisers to hunt down and kill all manner of enemies, including members of the Popular Front not submissive to Moscow, such as the communist Andreu Nin. In the photos, T-26 tanks and a Tupolev SB, with Spanish crews.

Workers (socialist), the National Confederation of Workers (anarchist), the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, the Communist Party of Spain, the Republican Esquerra of Catalonia, and the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM). Starting in 1934, the Spanish Falange, a local version of Italian fascism, joined the attacks, which was very active in 1936.

Deadly clashes even occurred between elements of different leftist formations, with a total of sixty-one dead, especially by socialists and anarchists. Simultaneously, there was not a single death among right-wing forces, according to data from González Calleja.

The parties of the center, the right, and the Republican Left, which accounted for the vast majority of the popular vote, were oblivious to the violence. However, at times they did not fight it firmly enough. Above all, the left-wing Republicans —Republican Left and Republican Action— agreed in January 1936 on the Popular Front's candidacy with the forces that had taken up arms against

the center-right Government in October 1934: UGT, PSOE, PCE, and ERC. After their relative electoral victory in February, IR, UR and ERC came to power, although they were at the mercy of Socialists and Communists to have a parliamentary majority. The main socialist leader, Francisco Largo Caballero, repeatedly stated his objective of merging with the Communist Party, a project that began to materialize in April 1936, with the Youth of both formations. Largo was acclaimed by his own, since 1933, as the "Spanish Lenin".

### Differences between the two repressions

When the war began, the institutions and norms that made up the rule of law collapsed. The rebels imposed a state of war, and the Popular Front government handed over its weapons, and with them, total power, to the militia from unions and left-wing parties.

On both sides, the authorities who were not related were removed, from town

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe



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One of the lies of the "memorialists" is to present Spain as the second country in the world with the most disappeared, which, moreover, are abandoned in gutters. In reality, many of the exhumations of the bodies of those executed in the postwar repression are carried out in municipal cemeteries, like this one in Guadalajara, not in open fields or gutters. On the right, an excavation in Rubielos de Mora (Teruel) in 2009 in which soldiers of the People's Army of the Republic were discovered executed by their commanders in January 1938, during the Battle of Teruel. These bodies could not be identified.

councilors to the Supreme Court's magistrates. On the rebel side, many civilian positions were held by the military. In the Government, local powers and company directors were replaced by revolutionary committees made up of unions and left-wing parties. Officials were purged everywhere for no other reason than their political affinity. For the same reason, there were numerous dismissals in companies, both of managers and modest employees.

In both areas, the persecution of those considered adversaries was general, although they had not carried out any hostile action. That is how it happened from big cities to small towns. There were tens of thousands of murders, along with clandestine burials, arrests, prison sentences, forced

labor, seizures, looting, extortion, fines, robberies, and threats. In the republican zone, there were numerous cases of burned alive, tortured, raped women, and desecration of corpses. Five years before the Nazi death camps began to function, Catalan anarchists cremated their victims in industrial ovens. Other corpses were thrown into mighty rivers, chasms, or deep mining shafts. With exceptions, these crimes went unpunished, on both sides, by the express will of the respective authorities.

The victims of the repression in the republican zone were, for the most part, assassinated by the decision of the revolutionary committees. In the rebel zone, most of the victims were executed after being sentenced in councils of war, without suffi-

cient guarantees or legitimacy; the same thing happened in the other area with the so-called Popular's Courts and the High Treason and Espionage Court.

As for the victims, in what ended up being a "national zone", almost all those killed or executed belonged to revolutionary organizations that rejected democracy. This, of course, did not justify their death, but they were co-religionists of those who in the Republican zone carried out tens of thousands of murders. On the contrary, the vast majority of those killed or executed in the Popular Front area did not belong to any violent organization. They were religious, lay Catholics, and affiliates or sympathizers of the center's parties and the right.

The repression carried out after the war by the victors was exercised by the military jurisdiction. In general, those who were executed were perpetrators or directly responsible for blood acts. If they had not committed crimes of this nature, the death sentences were commuted, whether they were civil authorities, leaders of the Popular Army, political commissars, members of revolutionary committees, volunteers from the International Brigades, spies, deserters, or even guerrillas who had acted in the national zone, even if they had deadly encounters. The actions of war were not considered crimes of blood.

### Franco's pardons

The rule that regulated the cases in which a convicted person could benefit from the pardon was an order from the President's Presidency—that is, from General Franco

**The vast majority of those killed or executed in the area controlled by the Popular Front did not belong to any violent organization**



himself— dated January 25, 1940,<sup>1</sup>. The same rule ordered the establishment of Provincial Penalty Examination Commissions, which reviewed all the sentences handed down by the Councils of War from July 1936, always in favor of former officials' condemned person. In general and in various phases, the six-year sentences were reduced to one and thirty years to six. In 1944, 70,858 commutation files had been reviewed.

In April of 1940, the conditional release was granted to inmates over sixty years of age who had served a quarter of their sentence. The Law of June 28, 1940, Supplementary to the Statute of Passive Classes of the State<sup>2</sup>, granted a pension to "widowed wives, children, and mothers of civilian and military employees who, in compliance with sentences imposed by the Courts, are suffering or suffer the penalty of deprivation of liberty for more than one year". This rule protected the families of those condemned by Councils of War in the national zone, including those shot. Family members were entitled to a pension from the moment of conviction, which in some instances meant delays of several years. The widow of General Manuel Romerales Quintero, who in July 1936 was Commander General of the Eastern Circumscription of the Moroccan Protectorate, and who at the end of August

<sup>1</sup> Official State Gazette, January 26, 1940. <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1940/026/A00662-00665.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Official State Gazette, July 17, 1940. <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1940/199/A04964-04965.pdf>



Almost all those killed or executed in what ended up being a "national zone" belonged to revolutionary organizations, which rejected democracy



was sentenced to death and shot, received the pension and the arrears in 1941.

From the Ministry of the Army's ordinary operation, in the second half of 1939, all death penalty sentences were examined by the auditors of the Legal Corps in the Ministry's Counseling and Justice section. The sentences were studied one by one, together with additional information and petitions for clemency. The latter was not only carried out by the convicted person and his relatives. In many cases, authorities from various fields, especially mayors, local leaders of the Falange, and municipal judges, signed joint petitions for pardon, often backed by dozens or even hundreds of neighbors. It was also what many religious people did, from bishops to cloistered nuns, as well as victims who demanded Christian forgiveness, among them several widows. The women of the Primo de Rivera family, led by Pilar, national delegate of the Feminine Section of the Falange, certified in April 1940 before a notary the faultless conduct of Adolfo Crespo Orrios, who ran the Alicante prison when on November 20, 1936, his brother José Antonio, founder of the Spanish Falange, had been shot there. One of the signatories, Carmen Urquijo, was the widow of Fernando Primo de Rivera, José Antonio's brother, murdered in Madrid's Modelo prison in August 1936. The women's management was successful, and the man sentenced to death was pardoned.

The procedure used to last months, and the auditors recommended commutation of more than a third of the capital sentences through reasoned and signed reports. Thousands of sentences were disqualified due to insufficient evidence or because new information was available.

In 99.8% of the convictions, the auditors' proposals were accepted by the Head of State. Franco just intervened in a handful of cases, mostly in favor of the convicted person and the Popular Army commanders, both professional and Militias. His personal decision was also the pardon of the socialist deputy Francisco de Toro Cuevas, elected in 1936 by the province of Granada, who during the war had been political commissioner of the Madrid Intendancy Park, where the workers who were not related to the Popular Front were dismissed. The auditors even stopped execution orders if they had new information favorable to the convicted person. In all these cases, Franco rectified the "informed" that he had previously decided.

How many were executed after 1939? According to the internal statistics of the Legal Audit of the Ministry of the Army, until June 30, 1960, there were 24,949 condemned to death, of which 12,851 were commuted, representing about 12,000 executions. From this figure, it is necessary to subtract those convicted of common crimes and add several thousand executions in the spring and summer of 1939, before the ordinary operation of the Ministry of the Army. An approximate number of executed is, according to the author's estimate, around 14,000. They include those belonging to the "maquis", a rural guerrilla made up of former combatants of the Popular



Army, which in the second half of the 1940s carried out attacks in which a thousand people lost their lives.

Because of these numbers, it is untenable to pretend that in the postwar period, the regime of the victorious side of the civil war subjected the defeated to a punishment of cruelty similar, in Europe, to those carried out by the national-socialist German and Communists regimes.

Those commuting to the death penalty were sentenced to the following lower sentence: life imprisonment, which was equivalent to thirty years. In practice, they were imprisoned for three to seven years. The socialist Francisco de Toro, for example, had his death sentence commuted to thirty years in prison, then reduced to twenty years, and was released on probation in January 1944, less than five years after the end of the war. One of those who was imprisoned the longest was Cipriano Rivas Cherif, brother-in-law of President Manuel Azaña, sentenced to death in October 1940 and released in 1947.

The proportion of penalty death pardons increased significantly over time. In 1939 only a quarter of those convicted benefited from the pardon, but as of 1941, it was already the majority. Those sentenced to the death penalty could not benefit from the review of sentences, but this criterion was changed in their favor in September 1942.

### Death penalty pardons and sentence reductions

During the war, both sides had used the prisoners, both political and war, for various jobs: fortifications, agricultural tasks, mines,



Kubateka

The prominent political and military leaders of the Government of the Republic abandoned the combatants, even those most involved in the direction of the war and, also, in the repression of the rear: Indalecio Prieto was already out of Spain at the end of 1938. Manuel Azaña, head of state, Vicente Rojo, head of the Popular Army, and Santiago Carrillo (in the photo, at a rally in Tolosa in May 1936) refused to return to Spain in February 1939. Moreover, while beginning in Madrid, a civil war between the defenders of the Republic, Juan Negrín, President of the Government, and the last communist leaders, such as Dolores Ibárruri and Palmiro Togliatti, fled by plane.

repairs of damage caused by bombing, etc. The concentration camps had been created in December 1936 by a decree of the Minister of Justice of the Republican Government, the anarchist Juan García Oliver. In the postwar period, the Republican camps continued to function, such as Albatera in Alicante. Many prisoners were placed in labor battalions, militarized prison colonies, penal detachments, various workshops, and reconstruction tasks, in which they were called Devastated Regions.

In May 1937, a circular on “paid work of prisoners of war and prisoners for common crimes” had been approved. However, the

**During General Franco's regime, the historical minimum of prisoners was 10,622 in 1965, half that during the Second Republic**



most important rule was the Decree of Redemption of Penalties for Work of October 7, 1938, which allowed reducing the length of sentence for most prisoners and obtaining a salary for the benefit of their families<sup>3</sup>. The 1939 Law for the creation of the Militarized Penitentiary Colonies guaranteed that they had “decent clothing”, as well as medical and pharmaceutical assistance<sup>4</sup>. The following year, an order of December 30, 1940, declared the same benefits apply to working inmates. The legislation provided for free workers to cover accidents at work, family allowance, and legal rest.

At the end of 1939, there were 270,719 prisoners, a figure that multiplied the 34,526 existing in February 1936 by eight and the average number of prisoners before the October 1934 rebellion, which was about 20,000 more than thirteen.

Starting in 1940, a policy was initiated and is aimed at the progressive release of those convicted of crimes related to the war. In practice, the only sentences served were death sentences that had been ratified. In 1940, parole was granted to those sentenced to less than six years and one day. However, at the end of the year, there were still 233,373 prisoners in prisons.

The relaxation of the repression intensified in the following years, to a large extent because the most stringent procedures had already been solved. In 1941, those sentenced to sentences not exceeding twelve years benefited from parole, and as of December 31, the prisoners had been reduced to 159,392.

This last figure was reduced to 124,423 at the end of 1942 and 74,095 at the end of 1943. In this year, parole was granted to those sentenced to sentences of up to twenty years and one day by a decree of December 17 signed by Franco<sup>5</sup>, which reduced the prison population by more than a third: in April, there were still 114,958 prisoners, 22,481 for common crimes and 92,477 “inmates as a result of the revolution,” according to data from the General Directorate of Prisons.

On December 31, 1944, there were 54,072 prisoners. In 1945 a new decree of the Ministry of Justice dated October 9, also signed by the Generalissimo, ordered the “total pardon” of all those convicted of military rebellion and other crimes until April 1, 1939, provided there were no committed “acts repulsive to all honest conscience”<sup>6</sup>, reducing the number of prisoners to 43,812. In June of the same year, the prisoners were 51,300, 18,033 ordinary, and 33,267 politicians.

A report from the Legal Department of the Ministry of the Army, dated June 9, 1945, described the situation that existed: “All

<sup>3</sup> Official State Gazette, October 11, 1938. <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1938/103/A01742-01744.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Official State Gazette, September 17, 1939. <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1939/260/A05160-05162.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Official State Gazette, December 20, 1943. <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1943/354/A12062-12062.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Official State Gazette, October 20, 1945. <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1945/293/A02430-02431.pdf>

those sentenced to sentences of up to twenty years are free". "Of those sentenced to sentences between twenty years and one day and thirty years of imprisonment, those included in the benefits of the decree of December 17, 1943, are also free, that is, those who, due to their behavior in prison, advanced age, state of health or other circumstances have been credited to it".<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the available balance is that those sentenced to prison did not even serve half the sentence of deprivation of liberty. On average only a quarter and as time passed even less. This is shown by the study of individual cases.

For example, General Luis Castelló, who was Minister of War between July and August 1936, fled to France and was handed over to Spain by the German occupiers. In 1943 a court-martial sentenced him to death, a sentence commuted to life imprisonment (thirty years), but the time he spent in military prisons was three years and nine months. Antonio Lafuente Estefanía, who would become famous as the author of Western novels with Marcial's name, had been during the war councilor of Chamartín de la Rosa (Madrid) by the anarchist Union CNT, a position in which he protected persecuted rightists. He was also a volunteer soldier in the Popular Army. Tried by a court-martial in July 1941, the prosecutor requested the death penalty but was sentenced to twenty years and three months; later, the sentence was reduced to twelve. In November, when he had been in prison for two and a half years, he was granted an attenuated prison at his home.



After a new pardon decree of December 27, 1946, the prisoners were 36,370, similar to those in February 1936.

### Return of the exiles

By then, he had considered what the applicable rule should be for those who had gone into exile at the end of the war and wished to return to Spain. The Ministry of Justice promoted a decree dated February 4, 1947, "by which regulations are given to legalize the situation of Spanish exiles abroad and facilitate their return to Spain". Established that "the interested party will be informed if the facts do not constitute a crime, are crimes included in the pardon or are not included".

The Ministry of the Army, for its part, issued some "Instructions or norms to which the judicial authorities must adjust their actions concerning those who held professional military status and wish to return to Spain". "Only –the specified– if they have

Many Popular Front and Popular Army leaders returned to Spain after the harshest postwar years. Two of them were Lieutenant General Vicente Rojo and Colonel Segismundo Casado (in the photo). The latter participated in a coup against the social communist Government by Juan Negrín in March 1939.

<sup>7</sup> General Military Archive of Ávila (AGMAV). Box 21,454. Folder 1.

not had a very outstanding performance in the liberation war”.

The application of these instructions was as follows: once back to Spain, the exiled republican military man had to appear before the corresponding military Court, with the displacement in national territory paid by the Ministry. The Court would inform him of the possible responsibilities, “so that with knowledge of them, those who so wish, can return abroad again”.

During the fifties, very prominent leaders of the Popular Army of the Republic returned to Spain, including the one who had been General Chief of the Central General Staff between 1937 and 1939, Vicente Rojo. He had a Council of War that was nothing more than a bad joke, with a conviction that he was immediately pardoned. Another prominent commander who returned, albeit only temporarily, was the ex-communist Manuel Tagüeña, Chief of the XV Army Corps in the Battle of the Ebro, who visited his sick mother:

The return to Spain of the exiles became general during those same fifties. In an interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro* (June 13, 1958), Franco himself described the situation in these terms: “A small number of them have committed common-law crimes during the civil war. Finally, many turn to our consulates to request authorization to return to the homeland, tem-

porarily or permanently. In 99.9% of the cases, such authorization is granted. Spain is open to all its subjects, without any distinction, except for criminals”.

During thirty years after the Second World War, a general downward trend in repression was maintained, only altered in the second half of the 1940s by the actions of the “maquis” and from 1968 onwards by the terrorist group ETA smaller groups. The last person to be shot for acts committed during the Civil War was, in April 1963, the communist leader Julián Grimau, who had been the chief of police in Barcelona. During the Franco regime, the historical minimum of prisoners, for all concepts, was 10,622 in 1965, thanks to the successive application of two general pardons, one in 1964 for the 25 years of Peace (counted from the end of the war) and another in 1965 for the Compostela Holy Year.

On April 1, 1969, in the Penal Code application and thirty years after the end of the Civil War, all crimes committed during the conflict were declared prescribed. For that reason, when in 1976 Santiago Carrillo, general secretary of the Communist Party, returned to Spain and was arrested, no proceedings could be instituted for his responsibility in Paracuellos de Jarama’s massacre (Madrid), wherein November 1936 they murdered several thousand people.

The most extraordinary case linked to the post-war repression occurred when the grandson of a man sentenced to death married one of Franco’s grandchildren. The condemned person had been Colonel of Engineers Tomás Ardid Rey. He throughout the war served in the Popular Army, from which he became General Commander of



Those sentenced to jail by the repression courts did not even comply with a quarter of the deprivation penalty of freedom



Engineers of the Central Army and later Inspector General of Engineers. Sentenced to death in January 1940 for a Council of War made up of generals, Franco commuted the death sentence on February 12. The sentence was replaced by life imprisonment, equivalent to thirty years, but he obtained parole in 1943 after his sentence was reduced on May 18 of that year to twenty years and one day. On March 7, 1946, he was pardoned.

Almost thirty years later, on March 14, 1974, when Colonel Ardid Rey had already died, his grandson, the architect Rafael Ardid Villoslada, married Francisco Franco's second granddaughter, María de O —Mariola— Martínez-Bordiú Franco, whom he had met at the University.

The ceremony was held in the chapel of the El Pardo Palace, the Head of State's residence. Franco sponsored his granddaughter, while the groom had his mother, Pilar Villoslada, as his godmother. Among the attendees, the Princes of Spain, Juan Carlos, and Sofía, Carmen Polo de Franco, the Dukes of Cádiz (Alfonso de Borbón had married two years before) Franco's eldest granddaughter, Carmen) and the entire Government. On behalf of the groom, one

**In the 1950s, very prominent leaders of the Popular's Army of the Republic returned to Spain, including its supreme chief**



of those who signed as a witness was the President of the Government, Carlos Arias Navarro.

Almost half a century later, Rafael Ardid and Mariola have created a family and are still together. Her life has been governed by discretion, and it is the only marriage of Franco's seven grandchildren that has endured. On October 24, 2019, two of his children, great-grandchildren of Tomás Ardid Rey and the former Head of State, carried the coffin containing Francisco Franco's remains on their shoulders when they were exhumed from the Valley of the Fallen.

Much earlier, after the proclamation as King of Juan Carlos I, in November 1975, all the death sentences handed down by the courts were commuted, and the death penalty was abolished —except for military jurisdiction in time of war— by the Constitution of 1978, before the French Republic did. ▼

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

On October 6, 1934, Lluís Companys, President of the Catalan Generalitat, rose against the parliamentary government and proclaimed the Catalan State. The sedition was carried out one day after the beginning of the coup by the left (PSOE and UGT) against the same government. Although it lasted twenty-four hours, it caused forty-six deaths in Catalonia. Companys and their counselors were arrested and jailed (photo). At the subsequent trial, he was sentenced to thirty years in prison.



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### Javier Barrycoa

Javier Barrycoa Martínez (Barcelona, 1963) is a Philosophy Doctor. He was a sociology professor at the University of Barcelona for eighteen years and is currently a professor of Political Science at the Abat Oliva CEU University. He has carried out research works at the Universities of Berkeley and Harvard. He has written numerous books dedicated to

studying the history of Catalonia, including nationalism and politics. The most prominent are: *El trabajador inútil: reinventando el proletariado* (The useless worker: reinventing the proletariat) (1999), *Historias ocultas del nacionalismo catalán* (Hidden stories of Catalan nationalism) (2011), *Cataluña Hispánica* (Hispanic Catalonia) (2013), *Eso no estaba en mi libro de historia*

*del carlismo* (That was not in my book on the history of Carlism) (2019), and *Eso no estaba en mi libro de la revolución rusa* (That was not in my book of the Russian Revolution) (2020). *Los (des)controlados de Companys* (The (dis) controlled by Companys) (2017) is the most exhaustive study on the massacres committed in Catalonia during the Civil War.



## Trial and Death of Lluís Companys: a Myth

**Javier Barrycoa**

### Abstract

A Catalan historian explains the judgment of the President of the Catalan Generalitat, Lluís Companys. The court was made up of other Catalans and sentenced him to death for his responsibility in the violent death, including in torture centers, of more than 8,400 people during the Spanish Civil War.

In Spain, the so-called “historical memory” is an interpretation completely biased concerning the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Legislation has been drafted, such as the National Historical Memory Law (2007), which seeks to hide the atrocities committed by the contest's losing side. A tougher one is being prepared, called Democratic Memory Law. This type of initiative aims to create a story that does not correspond to reality and

mythologizes those responsible for many crimes. One of these myths, Lluís Companys, President of the Generalitat of Catalonia between February 1936 and February 1939, is being used by the Catalan independence movement, formed among other parties by ERC. This controversial character is proposed to us as an innocent victim assassinated by the winning side of the war. However, his admirers silence his responsibilities in the murder of more than



## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

8,400 Catalans in Catalonia during the Spanish conflict<sup>1</sup>.

### **Chekas, concentration camps, prison ships...**

Once the Civil War began in July 1936, there were proliferated interrogation centers, Chekas, or prison ships in the Companys' Catalonia. Only in Barcelona's city, 46 Chekas became epicenters of terror<sup>2</sup>. Many of them were controlled by anarchists, but all the left-wing Popular Front parties had their Chekas, where thousands of citizens were tortured and murdered. Over time, the Chekas came to depend mainly on the Military Intelligence Service (SIM), an actual instrument of Spanish politics Sovietization that assumed much of the anarchists' terror work. Throughout Catalonia, a Spanish region of a surface similar to that of Belgium, six labor or concentration camps were created. Many prisoners were also exterminated without any trial.

Companys was responsible for many killings for two reasons. The first is that he armed and allowed thousands of anarchists and leftists to form the so-called Control Patrols and later Anti-Fascist Militia Committees. These patrols traveled through Catalonia indiscriminately, murdering priests, politically significant citizens, or simply Catholics for their beliefs. Second, Companys succeeded in August 1936 for the Parliament of Catalonia to approve a decree that transferred all its powers to the Gen-

**In the Catalonia that Companys ruled, more than 8,400 people were killed. He signed dozens of death sentences**



eralitat's Government. From this transcendent and silenced fact, it is clear that it was a full-blown self-coup that liquidated parliamentarism in Catalonia and concentrated power in his person and, therefore, responsibility for the crimes committed under his mandate.

Companys fled from Barcelona in January 1939, before the national troops' entry, and went into exile in France. In 1940, he would be captured by the Germans, transferred to Spain, tried in Barcelona, and sentenced to be shot. It has led him to be considered a “martyr” by the independentists. This chapter wants to review the Companys' trial myth and why the independentists remain silent regarding those events. We cannot dwell on his capture by the Germans or in discussions about the treatment he received by the Gestapo and the complexities of extradition; for this, there is much scientific literature. The fact is that Companys, in August 1940, was repatriated as a prisoner to Spain. Here begins —or culminates— a strange catharsis that makes him abandon that state of almost perpetual melancholy that he endured in exile.

<sup>1</sup> The complete list of Catalans killed under the Companys' government can be found in Barraycoa, Javier: Los (dis) controlled de Companys, Libros Libres, Barcelona, 2017, pp. 325-385. Also in the link <https://somatemp.me/2016/07/19/listado-completo-de-los-mas-de-8-000-catalanes-asesinados-durante-el-mandato-de-companys-1936-39/>

<sup>2</sup> Alcalá, César: *Checas de Barcelona*, Belacqva, Barcelona, 2005.



Once the prisoner arrived at Madrid, the writer Valentín de Pedro described him as follows: "Those who saw him said that he was unknown, and that he was thinner and drier, and that his eyes, full of life, fever and fire, came out of the face". On the way from Madrid to Barcelona, he was —against his will— handcuffed, to which he sentenced: "It is fine. They also crucified Christ". The religious references began to appear in his once atheist vocabulary. Companys seemed already convinced of his primary role as martyrdom. During the transfer to Barcelona, he was accompanied by a prisoner Máximo Gracia Royo, to whom he confessed: "Believe me, I would rather be shot than sentenced to prison by these people".

Companys had a careful treatment, especially in the Castle of Montjuïc, as he would later admit. He was assigned the stay for the military priest, and he was not mistreated —confirms Josep Benet— neither in word nor indeed. As a biography of Companys is not a question or intention of these pages, we will only stay with a few points that reflect how the mythification of Companys began. The list of events and facts is not exhaustive, but it is significant.

### The Catalans that condemned Companys

The role of the Catalans who participated in the summary proceedings against Companys has rarely been emphasized. The investigating judge was General D. Ramón Puig de Ramón, from Tortosa. The prosecutor was another Catalan military man, from Tarragona to be exact, Enric de Querol. Among those called to testify were two famous Catalan surnames: Carlos Trías (uncle of the convergent mayor of Barcelona



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When the Popular Front took over the Government through electoral fraud and the President of the Republic's cowardice, one of his first acts was an amnesty for the coup plotters, including Companys. He returned to the Generalitat's presidency and served as such during the war until the national army troops conquered all of Catalonia. Not only did he sign dozens of death sentences in his handwriting, but he also allowed the operation of groups of murderers, internment camps, and torture centers.



In Barcelona alone, a city of one million inhabitants, there were 46 torture centers (Chekas) under Companys' mandate

## The judges who convicted him, the officer who sent the execution picket, and even the forensics were Catalans



decades later, Xavier Trías, between 2011 and 2015) and José Tàpies Mestres (his son was the famous painter Antoni Tàpies), among others. It was a Catalan soldier, raised on July 19, sentenced to death and whose sentence was commuted, who accepted Company's defense. It was about the artillery captain Ramón de Colubí, whose activities as a lawyer were exemplary, and Company's also recognize this in his latest writings. The famous Luys de Santamaría, an old shirt (veteran) Falangist and national advisor of the single Francoist party FET and de las JONS, based in Barcelona, refused to attend the trial. He had been through that experience himself and had been sentenced to death twice. His sentence had been commuted due to the intervention of anti-Franco intellectuals in his favor.

Two of Company's' sisters, Ramona and Neus, deserve a special apart, who remained with him in his last trance. His sisters were deeply Catholic. Although they loved his brother very much, they did not share his political ideas, nor did they ever accept his divorce and second marriage. That is why they had been very distant from their brother for years. Nevertheless, blood is blood, and love is love. They accompanied him in his last days until his execution. Thanks to Ramona and a personal diary in which she recorded the events, we can know how Company's spent those days: "He is so calm," he wrote on October 11, 1940,

"that I think there is nothing that may disturb your peace". Those mystical aspects that we have referred to are also collected. For example, he constantly alluded that he felt unworthy to die at almost sixty years of age for Catalonia.

At the end of the trial, Company's was allowed to speak. His tone was simple and without the intention of great rhetoric. It was surprising to hear him say things like (addressing the court): "You are not to blame for my death," He accused the pressure received from higher authorities of the situation. He said goodbye to the court with an "Ah, no hard feelings!" The fact is that his short speech impressed the audience. After the already more than expected announcement of the death sentence, everything hastened. The sisters, very believers, told him about God and his mercy and about preparing himself as a Catholic for death. There was a first initial resistance, but then he requested a Capuchin monk (they were already famous at that time as Catalan supporters).

There are certain doubts about who took care of him spiritually in the last moments. Josep Benet leans in favor of the Jesuit Isidre Grifol (who over time became a Catalan supporter and somewhat progressive). The fact is that after a long conversation with the priest, he asked for confession, went to Mass (as a child, he had been an altar boy), and received communion. Company's' latest writings are full of spiritual, and God references. This is one of the parts that must always be hidden for the myth to shine.

Her own sister, Ramona Company's, commented to the military in a mixture of

mystique and hope, still awaiting the sentence: "I think it is providential that they have tried him today, the vigil of Saint Teresa. I would ask you not to have to execute it tonight. I beg you to ask the great Doctor to enlighten you so that you do not sign anything irreparable". The prayers did not prevent it. Once Companys was executed, in Ramona's writings, there are constant references to him as a "saint" who died on the day of Saint Teresa of Jesus. It is still paradoxical that Franco himself shared this devotion to Santa Teresa, who, in fact, throughout the war carried the incorrupt arm of the saint of Avila, found among the loot stolen and abandoned by the left in Malaga.

### Resignation before his sentence

About the last moments, a story has penetrated the Catalan mythomaniacs about Companys taking off his shoes to be shot. This would mean that he would die stepping on the motherland, the Catalan land, his beloved homeland. This apocryphal fact has further mythologized the death of Companys and is recorded in numerous writings. The fact is that in public photos that are preserved from the character's aftermath (those of the executed Companys rest in a file of the Ministry of Defense, are classified and cannot be consulted), in one of them, he is seen walking guarded by two guards towards the moat of Santa Eulalia.



One of the cruelest detention centers (called Chekas about the Soviet political police, who sent advisors to the republican area) in Catalonia was Vallmajor, in Barcelona. Among its elements of torture, there were tiny cells where detainees were locked up, without rest, to extract confessions from them. In the color image, the reconstruction of a cell in an exhibition on Chekas at the Museu Nacional de d'Art de Catalunya.

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

Company's is shod, with the same white sneakers with which the Germans arrested him at La Baule. What is certain is that the President of the Generalitat died with his eyes not blindfolded and shouting “Per Catalunya!”.

The thing about “dying barefoot” is not anecdotal; it has inspired and excited me. Thousands of Catalan supporters and I find it related in hundreds of articles and references. However, someone not suspicious of anti-Catalanism “Josep Benet” denied that Company's died barefoot. In an interview with the newspaper *El País*, on June 19, 1998, he acknowledged that: “he died wearing the same shoes, white sneakers with which the German military police arrested him in La Baule”. Perhaps the origin of this gestural mythology is due to another less epic fact. By two indirect oral sources, who heard witnesses recounting the moment, it can be deduced that the thing was something like this: before being guarded by the guards towards the place of execution as the photograph mentioned above shows— he placidly smoked a cigarette. Many historians agree on this. When he was carried to the fateful place, a few meters before, Company's collapsed. His legs gave out, and he had to be dragged for the last few meters while he cried. This is where possibly one of the shoes could have fallen off, and one of the guards would have replaced it (we are simply launching a hypothesis since we only have these indirect testimonies). He rebuilt himself at the place where he was to be shot, rejected the blindfold, and shouted “Per Catalunya”. There is no doubt about this, although some say that he shouted “Visca Catalunya”. Nevertheless, he died wearing French footwear, much less took off some

“espardenyes” (Catalan espadrilles), as has been found written somewhere.

We have already mentioned Catalans' intervention in the trial against Company's, but, paradoxes of history, who led the execution picket was also another Catalan: Benjamín Benet Blanch, a native of Mont-Roig del Camp (that small town where history began of spiritism). This last character has recently come to light thanks to Jordi Finestres, Retreat d'un magnicidi, the last hours of the president Company's. Company's died immediately, and Benjamin Benet executed the coup de grace. Completing the act, he said: “I have finished Company's. That God has mercy on your soul and forgive mine”. Even the forensics were Catalans, both the military (Luis M<sup>a</sup> Callís Farriol) and the civilian (Pere Badal i Botanch).

### Neither his death nor the law can limit the investigations

This is the sketch, imperfect and incomplete for apparent reasons, but not erratic, of how Company's was judged politically by his fellow Catalanists rather than by the National Army. These lines were intended to describe how a man who had countless critics, conspirators, and people around him who hated him for being not very Catalan, accepted - after his execution - that for Catalanism's history, he will end up becoming a martyr and a particular reference point. The



**His death made him the official martyr of Catalanism, and, since then, his figure cannot be criticized**



famous Catalan historian Ferran Soldevila, in his *Dietaris de l'exili i el return*, points out October 6, 1940, agreeing with a comment by the painter Joaquim Sunyer: "If the confirmation [of Company's death] arrives it will be as Sunyer says: 'We can never speak bad of him again: they will have made him a martyr, a saint'". In *Vida y obras*, another Catalan, Pous i Pagés, collected a letter from Antoni M<sup>a</sup> Sbert. It reads: "The circumstances are such that they have made it a symbol. The man who would have —and who had and was— more disputed, has become a martyr" (p. 284).

All those who hated and rejected him had to assume the posthumous role of Companys: that of the Martyr President.

He persecuted Catholics, laity, and religious people, but requested a priest to prepare for his death



However, this halo, this going from hell to heaven, cannot veil or stop the historical investigations that try to show what was the actual responsibility of Companys in Catalonia during the first year of the Civil War in which thousands of murders were committed under his government. Dozens of death sentences were carried out with his signature. ▼



In the Basilica of the Valley of the Fallen lie the remains of more than 33,000 war corpses. View of the inn and the residence of the Benedictine monks.

## Alberto Bárcena

Alberto Bárcena (Madrid, 1955) has a degree in Law, is a doctor in History and, since 2001, professor at the San Pablo CEU University. He was the first university student to study the official files on the construction of the Valley of the Fallen and its purpose. His thesis is published under the title of *La redención de penas en el Valle de Los Caídos* (*The Redemption of Penalties in*

*the Valley of the Fallen*) (2012).

Another work of his on the same subject is *Los presos del Valle de Los Caídos* (*Prisoners of the Valley of the Fallen*) (2015). He has reported in Spain the massacres committed by the French revolutionaries with *La guerra de la Vendée: una cruzada en la revolución* (*The Vendée War: a crusade in revolution*) (2014).



Asociación de Defensa del Valle de los Caídos

## Did the Valley of the Fallen Serve as a Concentration Camp?

Alberto Bárcena

### Abstract

Among the lies established by progressive academic historiography to form the 'historical memory' stands out the National Monument to the Fallen or Valley of the Fallen. It is said that General Francisco Franco had it built as his mausoleum, like a pharaoh with a pyramid, when the truth is that King Juan Carlos I ordered Franco's body to be buried there. The place is also presented as a large concentration camp where twenty thousand slaves were assigned to serve their sentences under forced labor: Professor Alberto Bárcena refuted this 'new black legend' in his doctoral thesis: number of workers (800 maximum) in the works, low accident rate and advantages obtained by prisoners of war who requested their transfer: the redemption of sentences (6 days of the sentence per day worked), base salary equal to that of any worker, family coexistence, education for the children and benefits in housing and stores.

### Redemption of Penalties for Work

The main problem that the investigation on the Redemption of Sentences in the Valley of the Fallen offers is the politicization surrounding everything related to the monument. This politicization has been the cause that most of the published works on the subject offer a very negative view of the Franco regime penitentiary system, starting with the distortion that has become widespread in terms of the number of prisoners postwar prisons. According to some authors, the official figures that we have multiplied by two, five, or even twenty, creating

the vision of a Spain that has all turned into an "immense prison", presided over by a repressive system of such magnitude that it would justify the term coined by specific historiography of "Franco's penitentiary universe" to refer to the prisons of the Franco regime.

A series of myths have been created around the situation of the sentenced workers. The reasons for their permanence in the Valley and what this represented for them could be summarized as follows: considering the sentenced as “slaves” of Franco, with all that that word means of humiliation and exploitation of the person who is denied the most elementary rights. According to adverse historiography, the survivors left the place damaged, physically and morally, severely and irreversibly.

The most striking of these myths is that of the supposed figure of 20,000 convicted workers who worked in Cuelgamuros. Generally, the same texts that present the construction of the Valley of the Fallen (1940-1958) with these sinister overtones, they begin by condemning the very figure of the Redemption of Penalties for Work as an invention of the Franco regime to cover up, hypocritically, its intentions of exploitation of the inmates, if not as a great business of the State and the companies favored by him. The Church’s intervention in the practical development of the idea is usually interpreted as a simple attempt to indoctrinate the prison population. The Church has been presented as an “executioner” collaborating with the Regime in the supposed planned extermination plan that would have been carried out in the prisons to eliminate the “defeated enemy”.

The Redemption of Penalties for Labor represented a clear advantage for the post-war Spanish prison population. It was a crucial figure in the Spanish penitentiary system of the first Franco regime, which only brought advantages for the convicts who took advantage of it. None of the arguments against this thesis have been proven

**A series of myths have been created around the penalized workers that we could summarize in the most deeply rooted: consider them Franco's "slaves", with all that it means humiliation**



by those who hold them. The supposedly selfish, if not perverse, intentions that would have motivated its introduction have not even been demonstrated. The redemption system instead highlights the priority interest of the State to free as many prisoners as possible in order to proceed to normalization of social life after the collapse of the Civil War.

The creators of the system did not hide either; starting with Father Pérez del Pulgar, that it was a matter of alleviating the economic burden that such a prison population posed for the State, especially at a time of so many difficulties such as that: the prisoners could, through work, contribute to their maintenance.

Apart from these two interests —understandable and recognized— the State offered the prisoner a series of advantages that those who requested it could enjoy:

- 1) The fundamental advantage was the reduction of the sentence based on the days worked. Initially, the redemption of one day of sentence per day worked was established, to be extended to two, three, four, and up to six days per day worked, depending on the inmate’s attitude and performance. Recall that the complementary legislation established that both overtime and piecework



should be accounted for the redemption of conviction. Even the days in which the inmate could not carry out his work due to illness were counted.

The convict's cultural activities were also counted for the same purposes, including his training, controlled through examinations carried out in prison. Grief was redeemed for "reading in the gallery" or even for "listening carefully".

- 2) The inmates started to have an income, discounting the part destined for their maintenance, based on their family responsibilities: women without means of livelihood and minor children. The amount of their wages is usually presented as a paltry amount, but it was the same—or very similar—to that received by free workers. So much so that the Law itself established limits to the system to try to prevent the worker-inmate from receiving higher wages than those of the "local braceros", which hap-

pened in the Valley of the Fallen in some cases. As we have seen, income was established according to the professional category of the prisoner, as in the case of the free.

- 3) Besides, the convicts received other benefits thanks to the Local Boards' selfless work, institutions created to maintain contact with the families of the convicts in their respective localities. Significant was the work carried out throughout 1941 to place the children of the convicts in schools arranged for this purpose by said Boards. Parents contributed to the maintenance and education of their children,



**The Redemption of Penalties for Work was a crucial figure in the Spanish penitentiary system of the first Franco regime that only brought advantages for the convicts**

Archivo familia Cereceda



This was the environment that lived in Cuelgamuros. A group of imprisoned workers redeemed their sentences by working on the construction sites and off-duty, spending an afternoon picnic together in 1946. The "historical memory", however, describes the prisoners as slaves.

with a part of their work product, but the Central Board provided the difference for the Redemption of Penalties for Work (PCRP) —state body—, also receiving the benefits of the commissary. That year, 4,000 children (children of prisoners) were enrolled in school through this procedure. Another 7,000 were on the waiting list after families submitted applications to the Board of Trustees or Local Boards.

- 4) Some inmates also managed to access professional training within prisons in trades such as carpentry and electricity.

We studied the application of this legislation in the Valley of the Fallen and dismantled the lies of the alleged “historical memory” in this regard.

#### Were there 20,000 prisoners in the Valley?

The myth of the political prisoners is dismantled. It can be confirmed, with this study, that the figure between 515 and 800 of sentenced workers —published first by Juan Blanco (*Valle de Los Caídos: ni presos políticos ni Trabajos forzados* (Valley of the Fallen: neither political prisoners nor forced labor, 2009))— would be the highest reached, in a given moment, during the operating time of the Cuelgamuros Penal Detachments, and would be much closer to reality than those published —without documentation— by adverse historiography. We have not been able to verify that

these figures were exceeded, as we saw when examining the documentation relating to the year 1948, the only one for which we have found complete nominal lists of the Valley's criminal detachments.

According to what has been published, on the other hand, the newspaper *Redención* points out that up to 800 workers were sentenced there, and highlights this as a positive fact. It means that the Central Board for the Redemption of Penalties for Work did not want to hide or reduce the number of inmates working in Cuelgamuros, but quite the opposite.

In 1950, upon the arrival of the architect Diego Méndez to the works, according to his statement, there were only 46 convicts who were released shortly after. That this figure was much lower than the real one at that time, but even so, it is less absurd than those that have been sustained from adverse positions. The manipulated figures would have been multiplied by thirty, since not only has the number of 20,000 been maintained, now becoming a topic, but no distinction is made between free and convicted workers and, within this group, between prisoners political and ordinary. The workers as a whole are spoken of as if they had all been fighters in the Republican army. In any case, as stated by the Works Council of the National Monument to the Fallen (COMNC), it will be complicated to establish definitive figures due to the circumstances in which the works were carried out: their duration, the fact that they were carried out by contracts and the rotation of workers in them. On the other hand, many of them remained in Cuelgamuros, being already free, in some cases until after the completion of the monument.



At first, the redemption of one day of sentence per day worked was established, to be extended to two, three, four, and up to six





Asociación de Defensa del Valle de los Caídos

Cuelgamuros is located 50 kilometers from Madrid. In the Basilica of the Valley of the Fallen stands the most extensive cross in the world: 150 meters high and 23 meters long each arm. The ensemble's total weight is made up of the cross (hollow inside), the base and the statues of the four evangelists, and the four cardinal virtues are estimated at 201,720 tons. Left-wing groups have come to propose its demolition in the manner of Communists, Nazis, and Taliban.

It should be taken into account that whether the maximum number of convicts reached 800 or did not exceed 500 at the time of greater concentration, they would never have approached the imaginary figures that have been taken for sure by repeating them. Although the work lasted almost twenty years, the convicts only worked there between 1943 and 1950; In seven years, with the actual figures we have been able to document, it is impossible that they would even come close to the 20,000 figure.

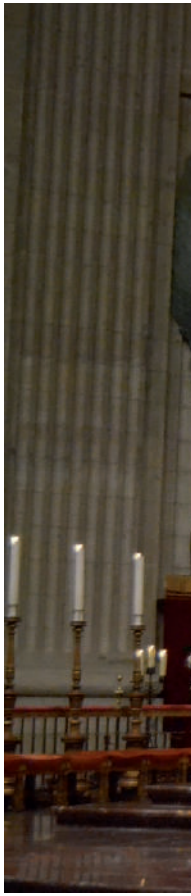
Our conclusion regarding the number of convicts who worked there, such as commented throughout this work, is that this issue cannot stigmatize the works. The main thing is not to get to know the exact number of workers-inmates who passed through there, but to know the circumstances in which their work was developed and their living conditions and those of their families. In other words, if the inmates of the Valley had suffered the savage exploitation that is intended there, it would not be necessary to raise the figure to several thou-



## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe



Fotos: Asociación de Defensa del Valle de los Caídos



sand to condemn the History of its construction radically. Only if a much smaller group —two hundred or twenty to give some figure— had gone through something similar to what has been described, it would be enough.

To conclude with this question, we can deny the figure of 20,000 convicted in Cuelgamuros, repeated in several publications without having been documented or by approximation. More bluntly, we can deny that they had been massacred there and used as rubble along with the bodies of other reprisals of the Regime brought there for the same purpose. Moreover, after completing the study of the most extensive documentary collection relating to the construction of

the Valley of the Fallen that appears in the Spanish archives and having verified the testimonies of the convicts who worked there, we can affirm that they were neither forced laborers or the National Monument to the Fallen that they raised can be called “sarcophagus of their compatriots”.

The fluctuations in the number of workers throughout the construction of the monument are evident and demonstrable. December 1943: 679 workers; May 1947: 1,029; November 1948: 1,278; August 1950: 592; September 1950: 728. These total figures include both free and penalized workers. It should also be noted that the proportion between the two groups was equally subject to large fluctuations, as well





The community of Benedictine monks prays daily for the souls of all those killed in the Spanish Civil War. The basilica interior, carved out of rock, is 262 meters long, the second-longest after St. Peter's in Rome.

as the fact that as of 1947, common prisoners began to arrive at work in the Valley; data that is often ignored or silenced. In any case, the figure of 3,000 workers employed in the works throughout the time of its construction cannot be ruled out, a figure provided by the Works Council (COMNC) when filling in the *New York Times* questionnaire correspondent.

It must be emphasized that the number of prison workers who passed through Cuelgamuros is not the essential data when it comes to identifying the Valley as a place of disgrace or in defense of the Regime that built the monument. Because of the documentation, we must consider that what is essential to assess its meaning is to know

why they arrived there and the conditions in which their life developed during the works, and the advantages they obtained.

**They were not slaves. They chose to go to the Valley.**

In contradiction to the falsehood that they worked as slaves, it must be established that the prisoners had to request their transfer to the Valley and avail themselves of the Penalty Redemption system, as verified by the testimonies of the inmates themselves. They should complete a request—with their data, cause of the sentence, and the prison where they were serving it—that they sent to the Ministry of Justice expressly requesting to avail themselves of the Penalty Redemption system offered to them in prisons.

**The figure of 20,000 workers has become a topic that multiplies reality by thirty, without distinguishing between free and convicted and between political and ordinary prisoners**



No one was taken there against their will. They were prisoners, but after availing themselves of the Penalty Redemption system, the rest of their sentences would continue to be served in the detachments they were assigned. There, of course, they went to work, as was explained to them when offering this possibility, recently introduced into the Spanish penal system, but in a completely different situation from those sentenced to forced labor in other regimes with which they have been compared.

The Central Board for the Redemption of Penalties processed thousands of applications, and the Valley of the Fallen was a destination especially requested by inmates. The expulsion was the threat that the Regidor (director) of the Valley used to establish measures of internal order, which in itself places these detachments at the opposite pole of the places with which they wanted to compare: the Nazi death camps and the Soviet Gulag.

Remember also many convicts who, once they were released, extended their stay there as long as possible. In 1950, when everyone was free, we found in the Valley in the company of their families many of the convicts whose names we have also come to know. They cannot be called slaves without offending themselves, those responsible for the works, and the truth. Not only because they arrived and stayed there of their own accord,

but because they received their wages, depending on their professional category and the jobs performed, from those requiring a university degree to those of lumberjack and bricklayer, passing for those of the auger, plumber, foreman, electrician, janitor, baker, clerk, stonemason and carpenter.

The three doctors who were at the head of the hospital-first aid kit were punished, and at least one of them —Dr. Lausín— came to receive a salary higher than that of other doctors assigned to the Patrimonio Nacional, as we have seen and documented. Don Gonzalo de Córdoba, teacher of the Valley school for about twenty years, and the practitioner, Luis Orejas, were sentenced. These last three, doctor, practitioner, and teacher, when the works were finished, also became officials at the service of the Works Council of the National Monument to the Fallen (COMNC), to continue their professional careers outside the Valley at the end of the works. Juan Solomando Muñoz was sentenced and was in charge of the commissary, whose career in the Valley —with mention of his heroic performance in Cuelgamuros— is also widely documented.

### **Reduction of sentences**

Depending on the behavior they observe, many were able to reduce up to six days of sentence for one of work. Thus, the sentences of thirty years in prison could be reduced to six. This is without counting the pardons or the benefits of conditional release, provided, increasingly with broader criteria, for the entire Spanish prison population. In the Valley, there were many cases of those sentenced to death whose sentence had been condoned by thirty years in prison, who in six or eight years were free,

as recognized by the one who was a prisoner-worker; Jesús Cantelar: "I had to do an instance and send it to the Ministry of Justice, to the Board of Trustees for the Redemption of Penalties and, if it were approved, they would send me to the requested detachment; if not, I could not get out of prison (...); by working six or eight years in the Valley, you knew that your freedom was assured".

The surveillance was so relaxed that it allowed, and reviewed, several escapes of incredible ease: walking through the mountains and in broad daylight without encountering the slightest obstacle.

### **Wages and social benefits**

As planned by the Penalty Redemption system's creators, the prisoners began to receive a monthly wage. It has been said that the wage they received was paltry, but it was the same base wage that free workers received. Therefore, the amount they received cannot be considered as insignificant, although at first all the social benefits that the new legislation of the Regime was introducing were not applied to them for free workers.

In the Valley of the Fallen, the convicts also enjoyed unthinkable living conditions inside a prison. We have highlighted the presence of the families with them and the mobility inside and outside the Cuelgamuros campus, in addition to the school that all school-age children who lived there attended free of charge. It was an obligation imposed on parents by the Works Council of the National Monument to the Fallen, which approached the companies so that they, in turn, communicate it to the families. Simultaneously, being obliged to facilitate

said Council the relationship of families with children between the ages of six and fourteen who depend on their contractors. Thus, they were able to complete high school and were examined at the San Isidro Institute in Madrid, with excellent results. Many of these children thus had access to university when such a thing was still far from being the norm for a majority of the European population.

### **Settlement of families**

Many prisoners took their families there, obtaining housing through the requests that their companies made to the *Ruler*, at a time when housing was a pressing problem for many families in Spain and the rest of Europe. Some even asked for residence changes, citing family reasons: number of children, illness of his wife, or seeking closeness with other relatives residing in other towns in the Valley. Furthermore, there were cases of requests to be placed closer to the school so that their children could access more quickly, especially in winter; or that they requested to be closer to their elderly mothers-in-law to attend to them. We underline what all these petitions show in terms of the prisoners' treatment in the Valley. They take for granted that the people to whom they were addressed had humanitarian feelings that encouraged them to listen to all the cases outlined and others like



**School-age children went to school free of charge. Companies were obliged to facilitate the relationship of families with children between the ages of six and fourteen**

them, and we have verified that they used to attend to their requests.

Some workers were able to help their families by taking care of the maintenance of nephews or elders of the family, who settled in their homes temporarily or permanently. The so-called slaves took into their homes children whose free families did not live in Cuelgamuros! Moreover, the Valley of the Fallen was compared with Gulags! The last convicts remained in the Valley until the end of the works, waiting for homes to be delivered to them in Madrid and for their placement in another organization to be arranged. The documentation analyzed shows, in short, to what extent the reviled Redemption of Sentences decisively improved the fate of the convicts who applied for it. This is especially obvious concerning workers who redeemed their sentences in the Valley.

### The number of deaths in the works

Another of the figures that have been distorted to the ridiculous is the number of deaths in accidents at work during the National Monument construction. The authors who have drawn the image of the Valley as something similar to a concentration camp usually assume that thousands of people succumbed due to the lack of security measures and the dangerousness and harshness of the work carried out. It is significant that, in this section, not even the

most biased ones venture figures, approximately: they leave that question up in the air, even though they estimate that “there must have been thousands”.

As a result of our investigation, we found the documentation relating to the first death in the Valley, Alberto Pérez Alonso, who died on January 5, 1948. The date is unquestionable because it has been repeatedly collected in the correspondence between the architect, Diego Méndez, and the Interior Minister; president of the COMNC, based on the request for the widow, Jerónima Díaz Organista, addressed to the architect so that he could be granted a home in Madrid where he could settle in when the monument was finished, where she continued working. During the first eight years of construction, therefore, not a single fatal accident occurred must be taken into account when making estimates on this issue. The accident rate in the Valley of the Fallen was far below what public opinion has been led to believe.

Apart from the first death, we have only been able to document two subsequent deaths: one of them falling from the truck in which a worker was traveling and that of a young man who fell from a scaffold. It could be that the figure of four deaths provided by the architect-director of the works, Diego Méndez, corresponds to those who died *in situ* in Cuelgamuros due to work accidents. While those of fourteen or eighteen who held respectively by the doctor and the practitioner of the Hospital del Valle were those of the deaths in hospitals in Madrid from such accidents. Nevertheless, it cannot be argued that many deaths were on construction sites due to accidents or poor living conditions.



**Starting in 1950, when everyone was free, we found many of the convicts in the Valley in the company of their families**



### Causes of the campaign against the Valley of the Fallen

Given the contradictions that are observed between the sources studied and the consolidated myths due to the adverse historiography, we can conclude that the true history of the construction of the National Monument to the Fallen has been deformed, according to the authors of the publications that deal with the matter, creating a black legend to which we have repeatedly referred. This deformation of reality has been done, and continues to be done, in different ways: from misrepresentation to concealment of data, if not with the creation of a series of myths. However, the most widely used is the biased interpretation of the facts. In recent years, a so-called supposed reality as opposed to the historical truth. It has been taken for granted, without providing the slightest proof in this regard, so the contrast between what has been transmitted to public opinion and primary sources is impressive. It has reached a point where it is challenging to establish this truth. In most of the bibliography, only personal versions can be found that depends, generally, on the author's ideology and that repeat increasingly consolidated familiar places without the less historical accuracy.

It is undeniable, therefore, that on the issue of the Valley—as in any other aspect related to the Franco regime—the accumulation of adverse publications as well as the treatment generally given in the media in recent years have caused severe misinformation in the majority of public opinion, fostered at different levels and decisively by the Government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. This is mainly through the “Law of Historical Memory” (LMH) of 2007 and the



Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (in the center in the photo) visited the abbey in 1989 and was impressed by the place's beauty. In the absence of official data, the Association for the Defense of the Valley of the Fallen estimates that, between 1990 and 2012, the place received twelve million visitors and Patrimonio Nacional (National Heritage), the public entity that manages it, received more than 44 million euros.

associations ‘as well titled’ to which it has subsidized. This has led to the absolute condemnation of Francoism and the Transition to Democracy itself as a supposedly perverse system that covers up the brutal exploitation of political prisoners.

In this way, it is intended that all those who came from the Franco regime were involved in the new system—from its creators and legislators to officials and security forces, through the religious who carried out any work in prisons or criminal detachments—are completely disqualified when not presented as actual criminals against humanity in a Manichaeism without nuances. Therefore, we can only join the proposal of the professor of Contemporary History of the CEU San Pablo University, Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza, when he manifests:

**The convicts enjoyed unthinkable living conditions within a regular prison, let alone a communist one: the families with them and mobility inside and outside the Cuelgamuros compound**



“It would not hurt for someone to write a doctoral thesis on the process that over the years has led to the reversal of the terms of 1939, promoting again from the public powers a vision of the Civil War as a conflict between good and bad, but with the roles changed”.

If such an initiative is carried out, it will represent a scientific work of great interest and a considerable contribution to the reconstruction of coexistence and social peace in Spain, seriously damaged in this denounced process of historical manipulation.

**Conclusions**

As a result of all the events exposed so far, it seems necessary to establish some conclusions on this work's specific topic.

During the last decade, everything related to the Valley of the Fallen, its meaning, Franco's intentions when building it, and the circumstances in which it was built has been the subject of an actual campaign by adverse historiography that it seeks to present as the complete symbol of a “criminal regime”. Said historiography is always of leftist ideology, as is proven, among other things, by the fact that it systematically establishes a parallelism between Francoism and the so-called “right-wing” dictatorial systems, without ever comparing it —with few exceptions— with communist totalitarianism: such as the dictatorships of Lenin, Stalin,

Mao Tse Tung, Pol Pot or Fidel Castro, so criminal and devastating —some of them— like Nazism itself.

Along with the same biased interpretation of History, they ignore the brutal and massive repression that took place —as is exhaustively documented— in the Republican rearguard against defenseless people, including the most remarkable religious persecution in contemporary History. The inmates of the Franco regime and, specifically, those who worked in Cuelgamuros, are presented either as victims of totalitarianism —condemned exclusively for their ideas or for having been mobilized in the republican army— or as victims of the war —triggered by an uprising unjustifiable— or as political prisoners who, therefore, strictly speaking, they should never have been imprisoned.

We have seen this syllogism's falsity, used as the main argument against the Franco regime penitentiary system and summarized by the historian and member of the Royal Academy of History, Luis Suárez. None of those inmates deserved to be for the defenders of the Republican side because they never did anything damning. The official academic version presents them, on the contrary, as a whole, as defenders of democracy and republican legitimacy, silencing the genocide carried out in its rear when it is not justified at all.

In conclusion, it is an intentional, distorting simplification of the Second Republic's History and the Civil War. It is imperative to disclose and rewrite the History of the thirties of the last century. Thus, everything in the development of the Law of “Historical Memory” —and in the more or less spon-

taneous or financed movements that arose from its promulgation— takes us back to those, in terms of the rejection and possible destruction or closure of the temples or monuments of Christian significance, such as the failed closure of the university chapels or the proposals for the blasting of the Via Crucis or monuments to the Sacred Heart itself.

Apart from its historical roots, the Anti-Christian campaign unleashed in Spain against the Church. The symbols of Christianity must be contextualized within the framework of a struggle that is being waged throughout the West between two conceptions of the World and Man: it is about what is already called “Western Civil War” which began, in its current dimensions, with the third millennium and described by Professor Francisco Javier Contreras, a current national deputy in the Cortes Generales, in this way (*New Left and Christianity*, 2011):

The inter-western clash of civilizations would oppose—as Robert P. George has pointed out—to the “conservatives” who still identify with the Judeo-Christian cultural and moral tradition (even if some of them do not share the faith) with the “progressives” who consider this old traditional fashion and adhere instead to the “*Weltanschauung*” (relativist, hedonist, liberationist, post-religious) characteristic of the “postmodern left” or “sixties left”. The battlefield between one side and the other is given, fundamentally, by the current controversies around 1) bioethics: abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, stem cells, etc. 2) sexual ethics and the family model: sexual permissiveness, express divorce, gay marriage, “surrogacy”, etc. 3) the place of religion in the public life.

In other words, what is currently being elucidated in the Valley of the Fallen is not only the future of this monumental complex but also that of the individual freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution, already battered and questioned. Moreover, sooner or later, the future of the Spanish Monarchy, and all that it represents. Ultimately, what is in question, is religious freedom itself. ▼





The PSOE participated in the drafting of the Constitution, asked for the "Yes" in the referendum, and celebrated the approval as a merit of the left against the right, as can be seen on the front page of its official newspaper. In contradiction to the truth, new generations of socialists have adhered to the idea that the Francoists imposed the Constitution.

## José Manuel Otero Novas

José Manuel Otero Novas (Vigo, 1940) has a Law degree with an Extraordinary Prize. He entered the body of State Lawyers by the opposition (1967) and has been a counselor in numerous companies. He belonged to the group "Tácito", formed by personalities of Christian Democratic orientation opposed to the Franco regime, and was prosecuted by the Public Order Court. In the Suárez

governments, he was the President (1977-1979) and Minister of Education (1979-1980). He was elected deputy in 1979 and elections. Apart from legal books, he has written *Nuestra democracia puede morir* (Our democracy can die) (1987), *Asalto al Estado. España debe subsistir* (Assault on the State. Spain must subsist) (2005), *El retorno de los Césares. Tendencias de un futuro próximo e inquietante*

(The return of the Caesars. Trends of a near and disturbing future) (2007) and *Mitos del pensamiento dominante. Paz, Democracia y razón* (Myths of a dominant thought. Peace, democracy and reason) (2011). In 2015, he published his memoirs, *Lo Que yo viví* (What I lived), from which we have extracted these pages with his permission and which he has expanded upon.



## About Reconciliation and Memory

**José Manuel Otero Novas**

**M**y mother, Teresa, was from Cabral, in the rural and industrial suburbs of Vigo, the most populated Galician city, and today part of its Town Hall. Perhaps because of the china and porcelain factory located there, Cabral was called “Little Russia” in the 30s of the 20th century. My mother’s family was far from being rich. Still, it was what in rural areas was called “landowner”. It had land and a shop that, due to its location at the foot of the main road, in front of the tram stop that went to Vigo and neighboring the Factory of pottery, was a meeting place and social gatherings, as well as a point of sale.

Regarding my maternal grandmother, who had five children, my mother being the oldest, I never knew her political views; and as my maternal grandfather, José Novas, of whom I will tell other things later, he had just returned from Argentina when he married and settled in Cabral; I know that he attended the founding meeting of the Galician Falange in Villagarcía de Arosa, in which José Antonio Primo de Rivera gave a speech, without ever returning to Falange events or venues; and I also know that in an election municipalities of the republican period agreed to be a proxy or controller in a polling station for the CEDA (the majority

### Abstract

José Manuel Otero Novas was a minister in the Government of Adolfo Suárez, the first elected in free elections after the death of General Franco. This article tells of the drafting of the Amnesty Law approved by the Cortes, for which he dealt with the leaders of other recently legalized parties, some of them returned from exile only some months prior. For the author, the broad desire for reconciliation of that time has been broken by the work of “historical memory”. For more than ten years, Spanish families have begun to remember their deads in the war.

party on the right) at the request of a friend of his who belonged to that party; But he did not join the CEDA and, despite the notoriety he obtained from the event I refer to later, neither José María Gil Robles, the national leader of the CEDA, nor other Galician CEDA leaders who I asked, knew my grandfather, nor did they know that he had joined or attended his meetings.

### An old story of war

Although Franco controlled all of Galicia since the beginning of hostilities, “the fugitives” were at the mountains, people from

the Republican side who, out of convictions or fear of reprisals, hid, to that common criminals or adventurers joined; conglomerates similar to those that would occur on the other side.

And the “fugitives”, who after the war became the ferment of the “maquis” or guerrillas, came down from time to time from their hiding places and sacked and killed (I suppose they said they “collected and executed”).

My grandfather José Novas sold food on credit throughout the war; among other people, to the mother of a “runaway” (maquis) who had no money due to lack of support for her son. Sales that he was writing down in his accounting book for the promise they made him pay him after the war.

When Franco took Barcelona in January 1939, the actions of the “fugitives” intensified, circulating threats of “execution” for those who were said to have expressed joy at the fall of Catalonia. Someone says that my grandfather is among them and the Civil Guard offers him —like others— to go to the barracks to sleep; but he declines the offer because he does not conceive that it could be the objective of those people, although as a precaution he makes my

mother and my sister go to Meira, the town on the north bank of the Ría de Vigo where he was born and was a family. And since nothing happened in several days, my mother and my sister returned to Cabral; I hadn't been born yet.

Thus, until the evening of January 27, 1939, two months and four days before the end of the War; a fugitive, José Luis Quintas, alias “El Quintas”, came down the mountains leading about five comrades armed with pistols and rifles. They entered my grandparents' store, stole the box with the money, put the whole family (except my grandmother and my mother, who were on the upper floor at that time) in front of a wall, and shot; they hurt some of my mother's brothers; another one who escaped, they run after him, possibly because they fear that he will notify the Civil Guard, and they shot him causing him to fall wounded into the gutter. They left my grandfather dead right there with thirteen bullets in his body, and they removed a large gold ring that he had on his finger. They left, my mother from a window shouted “murderers” at them, and they shot at her, but they missed.

My mother's family never really knew the motive of the murder. I could not believe that it was for political reasons, to the point that my grandfather's name was never incorporated into the lists of “Fallen for God and for Spain” that were on plaques on the outside wall of the Church or in the cemetery. He was buried in his family niche, with his name and the expression “Vilely murdered” below. They thought that more likely could have been triggered because of the envy of some people concrete, without rejecting that someone could have tried to



The authors of works of “historical memory” defend their own and expose all the negative that they think they find in the opposites

make the notebook disappear where my grandfather wrote down the debts of the families of the "runaways" to whom he provided subsistence, as historically sometimes happened with the Jews.

"El Quintas" was arrested in 1950, and people from my family were summoned to declare if they recognized him as the leader of that assailant group. One of my aunts, who personally suffered the assault and was also beaten by him, recognized him; but the family—meeting at my parents' house where I, a young man, listened to them—decided not to reopen the wound or be part of the process. He was tried in public session on October 28, 1950, for numerous crimes and, among them, about five robberies with deaths. Although my family did not even attend the hearing, the Vigo press reported on it. We learned that he was not found guilty, but that the Court considered the accusations proven, for which he was sentenced to death, immediately commuted to thirty years in prison, which he served in the Dueso prison in Santoña. Although on May 23, 1969, after nineteen years, he was released after the pardons that the Regime was promulgating were applied to him. He returned to live in Vigo with a brother, where he died on August 17, 1976.

This episode is very revealing of the change of cycle that the West experienced after the end of the Second World War; as well as Spain, where the same regime born of a cruel war commutes first the death penalty imposed by its courts and then pardons one half of the substitute prison; like "Quintas" himself, who, once released, they say that he was a discreet and friendly citizen (my family did not know that he became a neighbour again).

## The social base of the victors was overwhelming in favor of forgetting the Civil War



It also illustrates the profile of the family from which I come that, like many others that I remember from my childhood and youth, frequented the Church, listened to the repeated preaching in favor of forgetting and reconciliation, was "of order", lived adapted to the Regime (what was later called the sociological Francoism) and felt apolitical; my father used to say that it was not necessary to enter into politics, thus in the plural.

The social base of the victors overwhelming in favor of forgetting the Civil War.

Although we also knew other families who did not sympathize with the situation but did not exceed their adverse manifestations; we could not quantify them, nor know if they had fallen into moderation or skepticism or that they still maintained the postwar fears.

Better known were the positions of the political leaders of both fields. Of which I am going to speak.

## Reconciliation and its phases

Those of us who were actors in political life after Franco's death, whether in power or opposition, were aware of the Civil War. More than a few suffered it. Many of us do not bear it directly, but we do bear its consequences, and we received advice from our



In recent years, leftists have publicly raised monuments to their most prominent political figures, such as this statue in Madrid to Francisco Largo Caballero, president of the PSOE and general secretary of the UGT. Largo was involved in the October 1934 coup against a center-right parliamentary government; declared on numerous occasions that the socialists had to go to the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and to the "civil war" to establish socialism. His bodyguards attacked rightists and almost killed his rival in the party, Indalecio Prieto. In the fall of 2020, strangers threw red paint on the statue. Different "historical memories" clash.

parents who spoke to us about the need to avoid that horror. It was curious the moderation exhibited in the Transition by the leaders of the Nationalist Left and Right, veterans of the Civil War; the Tarradellas (ERC), the Ajuriaguerra (PNV), José Prat (PSOE), Carrillo (PCE); less moderate were the youths like myself. But we all wanted to avoid war and, naturally, if that feeling existed in us, it also occurred at the level of the people on the street. That was an essential factor in the success of our policy.

I have an updated card from Adolfo Suárez, President, with the following handwritten message: "Dear José Manuel: Give me your ... (illegible word) on this matter", and the draft of regulation on Amnesty accompanied me. I produced various notes on various facets of the project, acquired rights, sanctions against officials... And on July 30, 1976, the Government held a session of the Council of Ministers, under the presidency of His Majesty, in the Palace of the Plaza de María Pita in La Coruña, approving a Royal Decree-Amnesty Law for all crimes and misdemeanors of political intent and opinion, except those of blood or monetary contraband. It benefited recent political crimes because the previous ones in some years had already been the object of successive pardons, and the exclusion affected terrorism, especially ETA.

My note to the President on August 2 highlights the good press of the measure because, although the opposition groups demanded that the pardon also extended to blood crimes, the polls showed that public opinion was in agreement with the exclusion. Curiously, only in Galicia the views for and against the extension were balanced, and I said that it was probably be-



cause, in Galicia at the time, there were no experiences of bloody political crimes.

In any case, I added, the granting of a total amnesty required the preparation of the appropriate climate and conditional on the renunciation of terrorism by the beneficiaries. On March 11, 1977, given the Supreme Court's doctrine on particular and general pardons and the application or not of the 1870 Law, he pointed out that we could grant a general pardon directly using the prerogative of the grace of the Head of State. In March, the amnesty of July 1976 was extended. Subsequently, surveys were held on this matter throughout Spain that showed that there was a desire to extend it in the Basque Country also for crimes of blood, although conditional on the renunciation of terror; and this motivates two notes from me to the President on September 22, 1977, analyzing the results of the polls and proposing the amnesty methodology, which I suggested was presented by the UCD, not by the Government, and marking the possible arguments of the Government to adhere to the proposal of their party.

As we wanted the Constitution to prohibit amnesties in the future, in October 1977, we approved one by the Courts Law before the Magna Carta came into force, including everyone, as well terrorists, without requiring any resignation (affected 89 prisoners among the terrorist groups' FRAP, GRAPO, MPAIAC, and ETA). All political forces enthusiastically supported it, especially by the left, who believed that with this we were consecrating reconciliation and the "pact" of political non-use of the past, of nobody against nobody, to establish and ensure a future democracy in Peace. There was no military pressure for approval.

When I was Minister of Education in 1979, I went with the socialist mayor of Vigo, "o compañeiro Soto", to inaugurate schools that we had built, one of them in Carballal-Cabral, very close to the cemetery where my grandfather is buried. I told the mayor to excuse me for five minutes. I felt I had to go over and say a prayer at the grave. The "compañeiro" not only accepted my apologies but also insisted on accompanying me, and we both went. I appreciated his gesture, but I was not surprised. It was in full conformity with the climate of reconciliation that we had established.

It wasn't about forgetting anything; What we did not want was for neither of us to use the problems of the Civil War and the Franco regime politically because doing so would reopen all wounds and prevent building a democracy for all. We knew that the reckoning by one side or the other, would bring back the memory of the Civil War and make the establishment of democracy impossible. If we review now the Amnesty Law debates, we will see that its most vigorous supporters were the leftists. If later some legislative or judicial power, Spanish or foreign, had managed to annul our amnesty and reconciliation norms, it would easily have led us towards the resumption of the Civil War that we had managed to avoid.



**My family decided not to participate in the trial against my grandfather's murderer, a "runaway" (maquis) to the mountains not to reopen wounds**

On one side or the other, reckoning would bring back the war's memory and make democracy impossible



**Claiming the murderer...**

At the beginning of the 21st century, young people came to power; Rodríguez Zapatero's generation (secretary-general of the PSOE and president of the Government between 2004 and 2011). Neither they nor their parents fought the Civil War, which may seem as distant as the war in Cuba (1898) to me, in which a grandfather of mine was able to participate; and disregarding those reconciliation pacts of 1977-78, they approved the Law of Historical Memory, fanning the ashes of the Civil War fire. They were not aware that, when politically unearthing some dead, the opponents remember their own again, which is dangerous. It is to play with that which should not be played with. I believe that the consequences were awful. Infinity of people who had forgiven and perhaps forgotten their war grievances has returned to the feelings and verbalization of belligerence.

Memories that I had covered with the dust of oblivion have stirred me; I fear that for others, it has rekindled embers that seemed quenched under the ashes. I am writing down something that has affected my family.

The book *Héroes o forajidos* (*Heroes or Outlaws*)<sup>1</sup>, dedicated to those who were

anti-Franco guerrillas in the Region of Vigo during the Civil War whose author is born in 1960, far from the Civil War, and already in the prologue speaks out against a whole generation, left and right, who we decided to “turn the page” regarding the contest of 1936. He writes literally: “We are currently seeing how the new generations of Spaniards are returning to be interested in the subject of the Spanish Civil War. His studio is catching on. Curiously, this same theme has been the one that generations immediately before ours they wanted to bury in oblivion”.

Let us note the starting point of the work. Along with the analysis -good or bad- of history, there is a belligerent attitude against the political and civic position of forgetting the Civil War experiences, against the result of that spirit of reconciliation that we yearn for and come to live in previous decades. That is why it should not surprise us that in this work, as in general in all those who apply the new philosophy of “historical memory”, the political approaches are notoriously partial and partisan. The result is written by someone who has the same dark and linear vision of the rights of the 30s (the “evil” without any mixture of good, as the old catechisms on Hell said) that then proclaimed the left. I do not make an anti-left judgment because, in reverse, it happened more or less the same with each other.

Thus, in these works of “historical memory,” their authors defend their own and, at

<sup>1</sup> The author signs as Xoan Carlos Abad Gallego and the book was published in 2005 by the Institute of Vigo Studies, an entity dependent on a City council, then ruled by the PP; this matter is discussed on pages 48-50, 101, 316 and following and in the 535 and following; the preliminary statements, on pages 13-20; political trials from which it starts, throughout the entire book, but especially from p. twenty; the assault on the Falangist premises (from Vigo), February 7, 1936, at pp. 530-532.



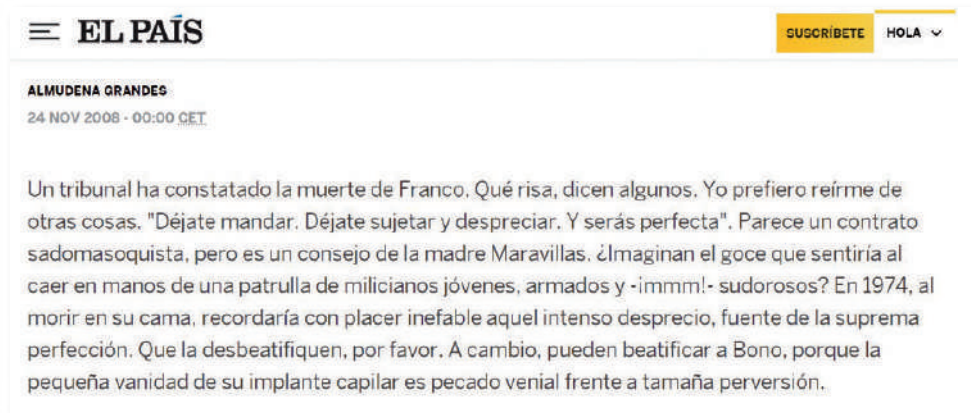
Author's property

In October of 1978, José Manuel Otero Novas, Minister of the Presidency (1977-1979), traveled to the Vatican as a member of the Spanish delegation at the funeral for Pope Juan Pablo I. To the left of the photo appears Ambassador Ángel Sanz Briz, who saved thousands of Jews from extermination in Budapest, in 1944; both speak with the mother of the president of the United States, Jimmy Carter.

least to support their own, expose all the negative that they think they find in the others.

As it says in the book that I comment, to relate the end of the life of “Quintas”. The murderer of my grandfather; testimonies are offered contrary to those that some people contributed in 1950, on the occasion of his trial (“terrible, unscrupulous”). They presented him in his later years (1969-1976) as a discreet, kind, and good man who habitually practiced charity works with those interned in Nursing Homes. I do not know if in 1939, the “Quintas” were among the

idealists who believed justified the killing or if he was bloodthirsty without scruples or ideals. The fact is that in those years, and it seems that in the immediate following, he was an active member of gangs that practiced terrorism. Before the war, under the Republic, during the February 1936 election campaign, when no one was persecuting him, he was part of an armed group of eight militants who attacked Falange premises; he said that it was done “to startle a little the Falangists”, with a balance of two dead and several wounded by gunshots. But I will celebrate that the news that the book gives me of his final years is accurate, which, on



Since the arrival of "historical memory", discord has increased among the Spanish. One of the reasons is the different treatment received by the victims of one side and the other. Leftist writer Almudena Grandes, some of whose texts are used in university entrance language tests, wrote a mockery of nuns raped by militiamen that she did not regret. The public channel TVE, which for years has been dedicating reports and documentaries to the dead of the Republican side, presented some murdered nuns as "disappeared", did not mention their abduction at gunpoint, and silenced the ideological identity of the murderers.

the other hand, would confirm the thesis that I maintain in my book *The Return of the Caesars*. According to which, individuals who in the Dionysian phase of the 30s and 40s of the 20th century were violent, in many cases convinced of their actions' high morality, entered the 60s, influenced by the new Apollonian wave, serene, tolerant and democratic.

But in these "revisions", the pure defense or exaltation of their own, whether the analysis is correct or not, is followed by the

resource of dirtying the image of their opposites.

Specifically, the author of *Héroes o forajidos* (*Heroes or Outlaws*), already from his "Previous Words", tells us that he has concluded that the "runaways" were neither generally heroes nor outlaws, but a mix of both and "unhappy". For this reason, and perhaps due to the explainable propensity to fit the figure of the "Quintas" in that general scheme of the work, in a hybrid or intermediate zone between goodness and



evil, it ceases to take into consideration, without saying a word of why does he do so, the statements of the proven fact of the murder of my grandfather —and others— based on their convictions, as if they had not existed or been impossible, which seems very wrong to me. Although it can never be ruled out that the sentence has been formed with errors or false accusations, there was a file —started in 1939— which was being completed seven months after the arrest in 1950. There were accusers and defenders, evidence in both directions subjected to contradiction. The accused was heard, and those who gave the verdict were different from those who formulated the accusations. Thus, even without relying on those courts, it is impossible to dispense with the facts declared there as accurate without examining the value of the evidence by which the pronouncement was made.

### ...and stain their victims

On the other hand, to make the deaths of his victims “explainable”, precisely that of my grandfather, he uses data that are verbally “retold” to him now in the 21st century; and, although I do not doubt that someone has told the author, I must regret that whoever transmits news or evaluations do it based on “it is said” or “the rumor mill of the Parish”, “For something would be” —as recognized in the book—, without

### Many people who had forgiven and perhaps forgotten their grievances have returned to belligerence feelings and expression



specifying who are the “sources” from which the rumor comes, without assessing their impartiality and credibility, without accrediting —or stating— the reasons for knowing the facts by those who have related them at some time, without hearing the affected or his next..., that is, without reaching one-thousandth of the —easily insufficient— guarantees that were offered to the “Quintas” in 1950 to pass a sentence that is now despised.

Once my family had overcome it, the trauma was reopened. It's outrageous; we are pushed to relive the feelings that faced the two Spains.

I believe that what many of us have postulated during the previous regime is more accurate. In no small measure, we already achieved before Franco's death, the overcoming of the Civil War. Still, of course, with the Transition, it verbally did it. And that is what I propose for the years to come. ▼



In the 60s and 70s, when Spain was more prosperous, the Franco regime's repression was weaker than in the beginning. Far-left terrorist groups emerged, such as ETA, FRAP, GRAPO, and Ejército Popular Catalá. Although the anti-Franco opposition and the international press assured that they would disappear as soon as democracy was established in Spain, the truth is that they murdered much more in the years after Franco's death in 1975 because their enemy was not the dictatorship, but the Spanish nation, the free society and the market economy. Of those mentioned, the FRAP and the Ejército Popular Catalá were dissolved due to police work. Two front pages of the Catalan newspaper La Vanguardia give news of two attacks committed by ETA, the Basque nationalist extreme left gang, in 1976 and 1987.

## Jesús Palacios

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and *23-F, el Rey y su secreto* (23-F, the King and his secret) (2010). He is a co-author, along with Stanley G. Payne, of a biography of Franco's daughter, Carmen Franco, entitled *Franco, mi padre* (Franco, my father) (2008) and *Franco, una biografía personal y política* (Franco, a personal and political biography) (2014), already translated into English and Chinese.

## Was the Opposition to Francoism Democratic?

Jesús Palacios

Talking about the democratic opposition to Francoism is one of the great myths manufactured by leftist propaganda over time. This myth has had the backing of the media and political groups of the center-right to avoid being branded as franquist or anti-democratic. Over time, the “democratic opposition to Francoism” has been spoken of as if it were a single block. Whether it was the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), the supporters of the monarchical restoration in the figure of Juan de Bourbon extremist and violent groups from the left, nationalist-separatists such as the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), the Republican Party of Catalonia (ERC), Convergence and Union (CiU) and the terrorists from Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Revolutionary Antifascist and Patriot Front (FRAP) and the First October Antifascist Resistance Groups (GRAPO). Nevertheless, were there any political parties in exile or groups in the interior of Spain that were democrats during the Franco regime? Did they even exist in the first moments of the Transition? In its first years? Let us see.

### Abstract

The Franco regime was a dictatorship, with a single party and no multi-party elections. Jesús Palacios reviews the different parties and organizations that were part of the opposition to the regime to expose that they were not democratic either: the PCE obedient to Stalin and promoter of guerrillas, the racist PNV in favor of the expulsion of the “maketos” (citizens arrived from other regions of Spain), the pretender Juan de Bourbon, and then the different far-left terrorist gangs of the '60s and '70s. The only democratic opposition, he concludes, was the one that was born within the same regime.

### The PCE, from armed violence to Eurocommunism

During the forty years of Franco's regime (1939-1975), the only real opposition that Franco had was that of the Communist Party, as the Socialist Party had declared itself absent. The PCE, one of the great defeated in the Civil War (1936-1939), whose top leaders went into exile embracing Stalin as their supreme leader, defended the totalitarianism of the USSR and the dictatorship of the proletariat, of which the Communists were very proud. Santiago Carrillo, one of its leaders, accused his father of a

traitor and the “clique”, according to his language, of Trotskyists and socialists. The opposition’s strategy was armed and violent until the beginning of the fifties when the revolutionaries penetrated inside the structures of the Franco regime in the following two decades. Thus, in October 1944, with the practical defeat of the Axis in the Second World War, Carrillo led several thousand Marxist militiamen, perfectly armed, penetrating through various points of the Pyrenees. Its purpose was to provoke a “popular uprising in the interior”, to which no one joined; the crucial invasion that took place in the Arán Valley was rejected and put to flight.

The absolute victory of the Allies in May 1945 did not achieve the fall of Franco, mainly due to the internal cohesion of the different political families that supported Francoism (Falangists, traditionalists, and Christian Democrats). Also, due to the firm unity of the Armed Forces, on one hand, and, on the other hand, by the sharp opposition of Winston Churchill during the first part of the Potsdam Conference, to Stalin’s claims, to which President Harry Truman initially agreed. The international condemnation of the regime and the departure of ambassadors, a pure formalism with no real consequences, intensified armed guerrilla actions in the PCE with attacks and sabotage. Between 1943 and 1950, those called by the regime “bandits” or “maquis” carried out more than 8,000 terrorist acts, especially in northwestern and central Spain, to which the counterpart - mainly from the Civil Guard - caused more than 2,000 dead and more than 3,000 arrested, while in the Civil Guard there were almost 250 dead and about 350 wounded. The data was kept secret, and it was an absolute failure

### The opposition strategy of the PCE was armed until the beginning of the fifties and after penetrating the structures of the Franco regime



for the communists’ objectives since the regime maintained its firmness without being discredited among society.

Always obedient to the dictates of the Kremlin, the PCE’s tactics changed in the 1950s to infiltrate inside the structures of the regime, its union organization, and the National Movement, the single party. Dolores Ibárruri, *Pasionaria*, leader of the party at that time, gave instructions to the militants trying to “attract the workers to the Peace Front against the war without saying that we are from the Communist Party ..., from socialists, to Falangists, talking to them about José Antonio’s revolution”. This penetration tactic would have some success during the 1950s and 1960s in the Workers’ Brotherhood of Catholic Action (HOAC) and the Christian Worker Youth (JOC), Catholic organizations protected by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Francoist authorities could do little for their commitment to support and inviolability that they had granted to the Catholic Church after the signing of the Concordat in 1953, and that served as a channel for numerous strikes and labor disputes.

In the sixties, with Santiago Carrillo as general secretary, the Communist Party again changed its tactics, following Antonio Gramsci’s revolutionary methodology for implanting communism in Western capital-



ist societies by controlling cultural discourse and turned towards Eurocommunism. Following the models outlined by Enrico Berlinguer in Italy, and Georges Marchais, in France, and at a time when the United States was empowering social democracy throughout Western Europe. With the decline of the Franco regime and after the assassination of the Spanish President, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, in December 1973 (an attack perpetrated by ETA), the PCE joined the Democratic Board, created in July 1974. A group of political parties of various kinds was integrated, all of them characterized by their ideological anti democratism, even though in the captious political language they all presented themselves as democrats. Their objective was to achieve a regime change after the death of General Franco, based on the rupture, even violence, and not on the reform, for which they incited revolts and general strikes, without accomplishing anything.

At the same time, the then Prince of Spain, Juan Carlos de Borbón, appointed by Franco his successor to the Head of State as King in July 1969, established contact with Carrillo, through intermediaries, in August 1974 in Paris, testing the possibilities so that the communists were not hostile to the future monarchy. Moreover, a few weeks after being proclaimed King (11-22-1975), Juan Carlos sent his ambassador and administrator of his finances, Manuel Prado y Colón de Carvajal, to Romania to meet with the communist dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu, to broadcast to Carrillo the verbal message of the monarch in which he assured him that the new monarchy would not be that of the Fundamental Principles of Francoism, but a full liberal democracy and that the Communist Party would be legalized. This fact

was specified by the Government of Adolfo Suárez in the Easter of April 1977, in the so-called "Red Holy Saturday". In said pact the PCE accepted the Bourbon monarchy and the flag of Spain (then with the shield of the San Juan eagle). Without expressly renouncing to their totalitarian communist ideology, since the tactics of the moment imposed on the communists the "democratic" makeup -by not having been able to overthrow the regime by force-, a mask that in 2020 has been removed in the coalition government with the PSOE of Pedro Sánchez. Previously, in October 1977, they promoted the Amnesty Law to block any investigation into their criminal past.

#### **The PSOE is reborn thanks to the support of the United States and the Spanish regime**

The opposition to the Franco regime by the Socialist Party was non-existent, or, as the PCE correctly defined it, "forty years of vacation". His exile was golden for some of his leaders, who profited from the looting and theft of private and public goods transported on the yacht El Vita at the end of February 1939 to Mexico. The socialist leaders Indalecio Prieto and Juan Negrín got involved to see who got hold of that stolen treasure of jewels, precious metals, and objects of great value. In the Civil War, the defeat of the Popular Front motivated its pres-

#### **The PCE tried to achieve the rupture and prevent the reform after Franco's death, for which it did not hesitate to cause revolts and general strikes**



## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

ident, Manuel Azaña, to present his resignation as the Republic lacked any legitimacy. However, those responsible for the Socialist Party, which had been Sovietized during the Republic to the point of declaring themselves supporters of the violent revolution—being this one of the causes of the Civil War—. It created a ghostly Government of the Republic in exile that was recognized by

some nations, such as Mexico, despite not having any role.

PSOE, expecting the support of the western democracies, tactically abandoned its radicalization and the exaltation of violent revolution, moving away from the Communist Party without ceasing to declare itself republican and Marxist. With that new face, it devoted himself to bureaucratic activities, signing in October 1948 a pact with Prince Juan de Bourbon, a pretender to the crown of Spain in a hypothetical restoration of the monarchy. The agreement was carried out under the name of “National Grouping of Democratic Forces”, an empty entelechy of content that, however, was supported by France and England. That pact was born dead, like the one called by the propaganda of the Franco regime “The Munich Collusion” or “The treason collusion”. In Munich, it took place in June 1962, during the annual meeting of the Assembly of the European Movement, which was attended by representatives of foreign exile and groups from the interior. They agreed on the establishment of democratic



Luis Alberto García / AROVITE

According to the Victims of Terrorism Foundation, ETA, until the announcement of its ceasefire in 2011, killed 857 people, a number that other analysts consider low. Almost 400 of those murders are not solved by the Spanish courts. Just over forty of its victims, 5%, were assassinated during the Franco regime; the rest, in democracy.



Fidel Raso / AROVITE

institutions in Spain and non-admission to the European Economic Community of countries not considered democratic. Curiously, neither the PSOE nor the PNV—which also attended—were democratic parties.

At the beginning of the seventies, PSOE benefited from the funding that the United States Department of State offered to the European Social Democratic parties, withdrawing it from the Christian Democrats, as an effective measure to stop the advance of the communist parties. Like the Social Democracy (SPD) of the Federal Republic of Germany, through one of its foundations. However, the party leadership, in addition to being inoperative, was still ideologically anchored to the violent Republic of 1936 and the Civil War. For this reason, in two operations of the intelligence services of the regime, it was achieved that in the congresses of the Socialist Party 1972 and, very significantly, in 1974 in Suresnes, the general secretary of the party and part of its federations will fall to militants from the interior and Felipe González, a young Sevillian lawyer, will be appointed as the new general secretary.

In parallel to the Democratic Board of the PCE, PSOE created in June 1975 the Platform for Democratic Convergence, which was joined by small social-democratic groups and other violent extreme left groups with Maoist and Trotskyist tendencies, which would later be integrated into the PSOE. Even without being legalized, the socialists were already acting face uncovered without being disturbed by the police and with the support of the regime's intelligence. Thus, they celebrated a new congress in Madrid with all publicity in Decem-

**Prince Juan Carlos negotiated with Carrillo the legalization of the PCE in exchange for the acceptance by the communists of the national flag and the monarchy**



ber 1976 (the first after forty years). They were attended by relevant European socialist figures such as the Swedish Olof Palme and the German Willy Brandt. There, PSOE defined itself as Marxist and democratic - an oxymoron -, Republican and class. Whitening as a democratic party, it was held in an extraordinary congress in September 1979. The PSOE abandoned Marxism as an official ideology but continued to maintain Marxist theses as an instrument of political action.

The opposition of Don Juan and the small monarchical groups that supported him in what would ultimately be the establishment, not restoration, of the monarchy in Spain can be defined as salon and Versailles style. Based on the confusion, Prince Juan initially moved between fully supporting Franco during the Civil War and the first postwar years. He requested support for the National Socialist regime between 1941 and 1942, guaranteeing that with him as King, the Third Reich would have Spain on their side in the war, and as it was leaning on the side of the Allies, towards the British. The Institutional Bases of the Monarchy of 1946 were based on implementing a corporate regime, with the King as the legislative power. In his obsession to be crowned and publicly denouncing that Franco's power was illegitimate, he lacked the clarity to understand that the monarchy

in Spain either came from the hand of Franco or it would never come. The Caudillo was the Kingmaker, and Don Juan was his successor, despite his two manifestos and public statements, until June 1962, when Franco finally decided by his son, Prince Juan Carlos. Don Juan's last temptation was to support the Democratic Board of Santiago Carrillo and had a third manifesto prepared in November 1975 against his son, which he finally did not make public.

### **The birth of terrorist groups: ETA, FRAP, and GRAPO**

The exile of the Basque Nationalist Party was characterized by a dying languor abroad and the absolute inoperativeness and decadence in the interior. The conservative Basque bourgeoisie was in full integration and collaboration with the Franco regime. Based on the racist, antiliberal and exclusive theories of its founder, Sabino Arana (1865-1903), the fate of the PNV was linked from the mid-1950s to that of the terrorist organization ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna-Patria Vasca y Libertad), arising from a split in its youth branch. The founding ETA defined itself as Marxist and elitist. It modified Arana's biological racism from the purity of the Basque race to an ethno-cultural concept, nationalism, and language as fundamental pillars, being supporters of ethnic cleansing and declared themselves ultra-religious. In the mid-sixties, and with its founders outside the leadership, ETA

began to define itself as a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist, declaring itself in favor of terrorist actions.

The first acknowledged attack was committed in June 1968, assassinating a civil traffic guard. Since then, and until it unilaterally announced the end of terrorist actions in 2011, ETA has assassinated about a thousand Spaniards (although officially the figures that are given do not exceed 850), among police, civil guards, military, politicians, business people, workers, professionals and even former members of the terrorist gang. During the Franco regime, they murdered about forty people. The attack with the most significant repercussion was that of the President, Luis Carrero Blanco. At that time, the opposition to the Franco regime applauded and celebrated ETA's terrorism under the convenient belief that the terrorist organization was fighting against the dictatorship when the truth is that it was doing so against the meaning and concept of Spain as a nation. However, once in power, the Socialist Party launched a "State dirty war" in parallel with creating the GAL (Anti-Terrorist Liberation Groups), financed with secret reserved funds, which caused 27 murders, for which they were tried. Several officials from the Ministry of the Interior were convicted, but President Felipe González was not.

For several years, ETA's terrorist activities coincided with those of the Red Brigades in Italy and the Baader-Meinhof in Germany. Two communist urban guerrillas were similar to the Marxist revolutionary guerrillas operating in various nations of South America. The IRA in Ireland, which, with its different branches, advocated the total reunification of the Republic of Ireland,



**PSOE received funding from the US and the SPD, the German Social Democratic party. Franco's information services influenced the change in leadership.**





Cordon Press

Western European societies were not prepared for the emergence of terrorist organizations made up of deranged who wanted to carry the socialist revolution by shooting whomever did not agree. There was the same problem in Spain, Italy, France, Belgium... In the photo, the funeral for the policemen assassinated by the Red Brigades during the kidnapping of politician Aldo Moro in 1978.

given its nationalistic character above any others. Nevertheless, unlike these guerrilla phenomena, ETA maintained its terrorist activity over time until the organization considered that part of its objectives had been achieved, leaving terrorism in a dormant phase to take political action. During that time, the contemplative action of the PNV, which even viewed terrorism with complacency, was hypocritically defined by one of its most characteristic leaders who came to say: "some shake the tree and others gather the nuts"; that is, the PNV ben-

efited politically from the deaths caused by ETA terrorism.

At present, ETA continues without apologizing for the victims caused or having made any self-criticism. Furthermore, its political branch EH-Bildu is currently part of the alliance that led Pedro Sánchez to the Government's presidency in June 2018 and approved his General budget.

In 1973, the terrorist organization FRAP, an arm of the Marxist-Leninist Communist

Party (PCE-mI), which accused the Communist Party of being a traitor. With a radical and revolutionary Marxist ideology, it acted under the belief that they could be the channel for a popular rebellion that would end Franco's regime, attacking police officers and civil guards, assassinating several of them. Three of its members were shot - along with two others from ETA - at the end of September 1975 after being sentenced to death for murder. With the legalization of the PCE (m-I) in 1981, the FRAP was dissolved in 1992.

The GRAPO was created in the Galician city of Vigo in 1975 as the Communist Party of Spain-R (reconstituted). Its terrorist activity began in August of that year with the attack against two civil guards. They took their name from the attacks committed on October 1, 1975, in which four policemen were murdered. Throughout their criminal and terrorist activity, they murdered some eighty people, kidnapped influential personalities, and caused significant damage. Its bloodiest attack was perpetrated with an explosive device in May 1979 in a cafeteria in central Madrid, killing nine people and injuring more than 60. In the 1980s, its terrorist activity was more sporadic due to the arrest of many of its militants and leaders and the progressive loss of support. In 2004, the European Union declared the GRAPO a terrorist organization.



**PNV benefited politically from the deaths and attacks that caused ETA terrorism**

### **The people approve the reform and reconciliation**

If a dictatorship is not a school for democrats, it can be a lesson for democracy. For this reason, and as ironic as it was, the only democratic opposition to Franco arose during the developmental stage in the sixties and seventies from within the system, with the emergence from various liberal groups, Christian Democrats and moderate left, that encouraged the reform of the authoritarian regime towards liberal democracy. The attempt failed to constitutionalize the Franco regime along the lines of the Falange in 1956. It opened the option to other political currents and the arrival of the technocrats (personalities of conservative and liberal tendency, in its majority, without clear political affiliation, mainly linked to Opus Dei).

The Franco regime was a personal dictatorship characterized by its pragmatism and evolution over time, with very unlikely continuity after his physical disappearance. The regime could have survived its creator had it maintained the constitutional structure of the Fundamental Laws under the “juancarlista” monarchy. However, the Law for Political Reform, promoted by a Falangist sector and approved by Franco's Cortes at the end of 1976 and subsequently sanctioned in a referendum by the Spanish people, opted for its abolition after the general elections of June 1977 and the creation of a new system with the 1978 Constitution.

The transition from dictatorship to democracy in Spain was a unique model globally, which served as an example for the so-called third democratizing wave in many nations. This was possible because Spanish society had reconciled during the sixties

and seventies by sealing the wounds opened by the Civil War and the postwar period. The political parties that came from exile failed in their attempt to break, even violently, opting for what was called consensus and concord. All —right and left— reached an agreement over “never again another civil war,” and not to politically reproach themselves for its causes and consequences, leaving that question for the study of researchers, analysts, and historians. It was not a pact of oblivion but an agreement for coexistence. Hence, the strongest defenders of the amnesty law that were approved in 1977 were the left as a whole and, especially, the Communist Party.

That pact was maintained throughout thirty years until a new generation spurred on resentment and hatred. Under the presidency of the socialist José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, decided to break it to establish its political and nostalgic legitimacy of the most violent and revolutionary times of the Second Republic (1936). This materialized in

The party in which the ETA members are active as they are freed upon fulfilling their convictions is EH-Bildu, an ally of the socialist Government of Sánchez



the approval of the misnamed “Historical Memory” Law of December 2007, which, camouflaged under the mask of reparation and search for the Civil War and Francoism victims —only those of the leftist side—, reopened the civil war dialectical confrontation. In September 2020, the Government of Pedro Sánchez —a coalition of socialists and communists, supported by separatist parties and the political section of ETA— approved a new law under the name of “Democratic Memory”. It seeks the implantation of a new extreme left regime using history in a spurious way as a weapon for political revolution. ▼





The Amnesty Law was supported by the deputies and senators of the left-wing parties. Now there are left-wing parliamentarians who demand its repeal. In the first case, it was requested as an essential measure for reconciliation between the Spanish; in the second, it is claimed to "do justice."



## Pedro Fernández Barbadillo

Pedro Fernández Barbadillo (Bilbao, 1965) is a doctor in Public Law from the San Pablo CEU University and has a master's degree in Journalism from the Universidad Autónoma of Madrid and the newspaper *El País*. He is the author of *Bocabulario para hablar con nacionalistas baskos* ("Bokabulario"

*To Talk to Bask Nationalists*) (2004), a humorous book on Basque nationalism. His best-selling book is *Eternamente Franco* (*Eternally Franco*) (2018), with eight editions. He proposes to withdraw the former head of the Spanish State and his regime from the political debate of the 21st century and place them in history.

He has also written: *Eso no Estaba en mi Libro de Historia del Imperio español* (*That was not in my history book of the Spanish Empire*) (2020) and a history of the United States through its presidents, its Constitution and its electoral system, *Los césares del Imperio americano* (*The Caesars of the American Empire*) (2020).



## Did the Francoists Demand Amnesty?

Pedro Fernández Barbadillo

To justify their liberticidal laws and their plans to control historiographical debates, the “memorialists” need to present a ruthless Franco regime and a General Franco who was “worse than Hitler” (Paul Preston). It should offend the descendants of those who suffered the genocides committed by the German National Socialists. Along these lines, a recent book tries to list almost 300 Francoist “concentration camps”, an expression associated with the mass slaughter. In reality, they were places of the internment for the hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the Popular Army of the Unarmed Republic after its defeat. It was the same style of centers in Western Europe in 1945, where demobilized people were detained and affiliated. Many of those “concentration camps” lasted only a few months; they were even closed before the end of 1939.

The reality is that the Franco regime was very far from the death toll in Europe and Asia in the 1930s and 1940s (and in the USSR since the 1920s). While the Bolsheviks did not grant forgiveness even to their population, the State of July 18 began to apply grace and reintegration measures of soldiers captured before the end of the Civil War.

### Abstract

In the “memorialist” speech, the demand for the repeal of the 1977 Amnesty Law, approved by the same Parliament that drafted the 1978 Constitution, occupies a special place. To achieve this, it is hidden that this law was demanded by the left and the nationalists, even for terrorists, in order to present it as a norm that benefited the Francoists. The Spanish amnesty is not an exception in Europe and to demonstrate this here are some of those granted since 1945 in various European countries. The author concludes by noting that a hypothetical repeal of the Amnesty Law would allow victims of amnestied terrorists to seek justice.

### Abundant measures of grace

In other studies in this volume, Miguel Platón and Alberto Bárcena mention the Decree of Redemption of Penalties for Days Work, of October 7, 1938, and the Central Board Redemption of Penalties for Work. We can also look at the abundant recourse to pardon and even Amnesty by the regime. During his years of government, Franco granted twelve pardons, which can be added the waiver of all criminal responsibilities for events before April 1, 1939, and

## “Historical Memory”, a Threat to Peace in Europe

related to the “Crusade”, plus five amnesties. His successor, King Juan Carlos, granted a pardon and two amnesties before the Constitution was drafted.

As a consequence of these grace measures and the general reduction in crime in Western Europe in the mid-20th century, Franco’s last full year as head of state, the number of inmates in Spanish prisons was less than 15,000, when in the same 1974 in France there were little more than 27,000. A dictatorship headed by the military leader who was victorious in a Civil War had almost half than a democracy like the French, when the French population exceeded the Spanish by almost 50%<sup>1</sup>.

### Pardons

- **October 9, 1945:** Total political pardon for crimes of military rebellion committed until April 1, 1939 (except cases of cruelty, death, etc.).
- **July 17, 1947:** On the occasion of the ratification of the Succession Law.
- **December 9, 1949:** On the occasion of the Holy Year.
- **May 1, 1952:** By Congress Eucharistic of Barcelona.
- **July 26, 1954:** For the Marian Year and Jacobean Jubilee.
- **October 31, 1958:** Coronation Pope John XXIII.
- **October 11, 1961:** General Pardon on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the exaltation from Franco to the Head of State.

Unlike the USSR, which did not spare its population, the Franco regime began to reintegrate the defeated before the war was over



- **June 24, 1963:** Papal coronation of Paul VI.
- **April 1, 1964:** General Pardon for the 25th anniversary of peace.
- **July 22, 1968:** On the occasion of the Compostela Holy Year.
- **November 10, 1966:** Definitive extinction of political responsibilities.
- **March 31, 1969:** Waiver of all crimes before April 1 from 1939.
- **October 1, 1971:** On the 35th anniversary of Franco as Head of State.
- **November 26, 1975:** Proclamation of Juan Carlos as King. Except for penalties for crimes of terrorism and certain monetary crimes.

### Amnesties

- **September 13, 1936:** For the military rebellions.
- **November 27, 1938:** For financial crimes.
- **September 23, 1939:** For political crimes.
- **May 13, 1955:** For tax crimes.
- **July 21, 1959:** For tax crimes.
- **July 30, 1976:** For political crimes.
- **October 15, 1977:** For crimes with political intent, even with the result of death.

<sup>1</sup> Pedro Fernández Barbadillo, *Eternamente Franco, Homo Legens*, 7th ed., Madrid, 2020, pp. 297-299.

In the statement of reasons for the 1961 decree law underlines the offer to exiles<sup>2</sup>:

Not only do the measures of grace reach those who suffer seclusion, but also those who, having committed a crime, induced by error or by criminal propaganda, went into exile at decisive moments for our country and now yearn for the homeland, to which perhaps they have not returned due to the influx of false information that does not allow them to know the reality of national life and the legal order established in it. For this purpose, a new period of six months is granted for Spaniards who are abroad, return to Spain, and want to contribute to its growth, can avail themselves of the benefits of the Decree of October 9, 1945, and other provisions issued for this purpose. It shows the desire to incorporate into the Homeland those who left it, without being stained with crimes and offenses repugnant to all honest conscience.

According to article 1 of the 1969 decree-law, "all crimes committed before April 1, 1939" are declared waived. Also, this waiver "does not need to be judicially declared and, consequently, it will take effect concerning all kinds of crimes, whatever their perpetrators, their seriousness or its consequences, regardless of their qualification and alleged penalties"<sup>3</sup>.

The return of the few exiles still living abroad was thus expedited, although most of these had already settled outside of Spain.

According to the terms of the pardon signed by Franco, Santiago Carrillo, Dolores Ibárruri, and other communist leaders could have returned to Spain. However, they did

not, because they had pending criminal acts carried out under their orders after the end of the war, such as the invasion of the Aran Valley (autumn 1944), the guerrillas, urban terrorism, and the murder of disobedient comrades at their orders.

### A demand of the left in the Transition

After King Juan Carlos replaced Carlos Arias with Adolfo Suárez in the Government's presidency, in July 1976, democratization advanced. That same month, the new Government, protected by Franco's legislation and made up of ministers who had held all positions in the regime born of the Civil War, approved a royal decree of Amnesty for crimes of political intent, except those that had caused deaths or injuries to people<sup>4</sup>. On March 14 of 1977, the Government promulgated two decrees that extended the Amnesty and granted a general pardon<sup>5</sup>.

In the spring of 1977, all political parties were legalized, including the PCE, and elections to Cortes Generales were held, which the monarch converted into constituents in his opening message for the sessions. One of the objectives of the left and nationalist



**Franco granted between 1936 and 1971 twelve general pardons and five amnesties, including a waiver for all crimes committed in the war**

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/1961/10/12/pdfs/A14695-14695.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/1969/04/01/pdfs/A04704-04704.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1976-14963>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1977-6964> y <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOEA-1977-7066>

## In 1974, the number of inmates in Spanish prisons was less than 15,000, almost half of France



parties, which had less than half of the parliamentarians, was the granting of a greater amnesty than the previous year, and that included terrorists (ETA, GRAPO, FRAP), even though they had committed murders. The Cortes approved the Law on October 15, 1977<sup>6</sup>, a year before the Constitution. The communist deputy Marcelino Camacho defended Amnesty in a speech, first, as one of the demands of the PCE since 1956 and, later, as an essential element of national reconciliation: “How could we, who had been killing each other, reconcile, if we did not erase that past once and for all?”.

However, one of the negative consequences of Amnesty was the release of hundreds of terrorists who took advantage of their freedom to kill again; In the case of the Basque separatist band ETA, of its almost 1,300 amnestied members, more than half returned to violence<sup>7</sup>. Those killed by terrorist actions before this last Amnesty were close to one hundred; in subsequent years, they exceeded one thousand<sup>8</sup>. Thus, the terrorists demonstrated that their “armed struggle” was not due to their desire to overthrow the Franco dictatorship and establish a democracy.

The current “historical memory” account maintains that the Amnesty Law resulted from a pact for a more or less peaceful transition in which the opposition representatives renounced to obtain Justice, or even that it consisted of a demand from the Francoists to the Democrats. People who lived those years remember perfectly the demonstrations called by left-wing parties to ask for Amnesty. This was a demand from the opposition and, once achieved, they claimed it as a merit in the next elections.

One of the members of the anti-Franco opposition, who went through jail in the 1950s, replied to the memorialist movement thus:

The theory according to which the Amnesty would have been the legal formalization of a political pact of silence on the crimes of the Franco regime signed by the frightened and belittled opposition –before the heirs of the dictatorship–, it is not only moral turpitude for those defeated in the Civil War and the opponents who populated the dictatorship’s prisons; it also exposes the ignorance of the formers of the fable.<sup>9</sup>

The long list of legal norms approved by the different governments of post-Franco democracy until the Law of “Historical Memory” of 2007 shows no silence or forgetfulness about the defeat of the war and that they received reparation. In measures that were criticized, the compensation was extended to political parties and unions that suffered the confiscation of their assets during the war in the national zone and the Franco dictatorship.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/1977/BOE-A-1977-24937-consolidado.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Data given by Ana Velasco Vidal-Abarca, daughter of an ETA victim, in *El Mundo*, July 18, 2018. Accessible at <https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/07/18/5b4dd625ca47413f068b4575.html>

<sup>8</sup> Mikel Buesa, “Amnesties”, ABC, December 14, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Javier Pradera: “¿La amnistía contra la Constitución?” (“Amnesty against the Constitution?”), *El País*, May 5, 2010.





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The Government of Adolfo Suárez, appointed president by King Juan Carlos in July 1976, granted by decree an amnesty and a pardon before the elections to the Cortes of 1977. In the parliamentary debate in October, he voted in favor of the Law, which left unpunished for the murderers of another Prime Minister, Luis Carrero Blanco.

- **Decree 3357/1975, of December 5**, by which the administrative sanctions agreed per the Law of December 10 February 1939, on Political Responsibilities.
- **Royal Decree 840/1976, of March 18**, of pardon, by which the effects of the Political Responsibility Law of February 28, 1939, are officially reviewed and annulled.
- **Law 46/1977, of October 15**, on Amnesty.
- **Royal Decree 6/1978, of March 6**, which regulates professional military personnel who took part in the Civil War in the Army of the Republic. Amended by Law 10/1980, of March 14.
- **Law 5/1979, of September 18**, which recognizes pensions, medical assistance, and social assistance to widows, children, and relatives of Spaniards who died in the Civil War.
- **Law 35/1980, of June 26**, for recognizing the social rights of the Mutilated of the Popular Army of the Republic.
- **Law 37/1984, of October 22**, on recognizing rights and services rendered to those during the Civil War was part of the Armed Forces, Public Order Forces, and the Police Corps of the Republic. (Only from NCOs).
- **Law 4/1986, of January 8**, on the transfer of accumulated union assets. Amended by Royal Decree 13/2005, of October 28.
- **Law 4/1990, of June 29**, on General Budgets of the State for 1990, in its Eighteenth Additional Provision, established compensation in favor of those who suffered imprisonment in establishments penitentiaries for three or more years, as a consequence of the assumptions contemplated in the Law mentioned above 46/1977, and reached the age of

sixty-five on December 31 1990. In subsequent regulations, the Cortes Generales and the autonomous communities modified the terms and requirements set in favor of the beneficiaries, whose number also increased.

- **Law 43/1998, of December 15**, on Restitution or Compensation to Political Parties of Seized Assets and Rights in applying the regulations on political responsibilities for the period 1936-1939.
- **Law 3/2005, of March 18**, which recognizes an economic benefit to citizens of Spanish origin displaced abroad, during their minority of age, as a result of the Civil War, and that they developed most of their lives outside the national territory. That is to say, the so-called “children of war”.

#### Amnesties in Europe since 1945

Among the arguments given by the “memorialists”, the left and the nationalists to ask for the repeal of the Amnesty Law, a capital part of the Spanish democratic regime, the supposed exceptional characteristic is repeated. Far from being so, amnesties are often a legal measure that nations resort to after dire events and restore social peace. According to an investigation, since the end of World War II, 130 countries approved 506 amnesties between 1945 and January 2008<sup>10</sup>.

The democracies installed in Western Europe resorted to amnesties to cover the blood left by the Second World War and by conflicts linked to civil wars, decolonization, and terrorism.

Between 1946 and 1990, the French Republic proclaimed twelve amnesty laws in the years 1946, 1947, 1951, 1953 (two), 1966, 1968, 1974, 1981, 1988, 1989, and 1990, spanning from World War II to the Algerian Independence War, OAS terrorism and violence in New Caledonia. The Italian Republic granted three amnesties in 1946 (known as “Amnesty Togliatti”, after the communist minister who promulgated it as head of Justice), 1953, and 1966. The Austrian authorities granted two amnesties, in 1948 and 1957; and those of the German Federal Republic, another two, in 1949 and 1954.

In Greece, the Liberation Government granted an amnesty in 1945; the military junta two in 1973; and the Transitional Government, already overthrown, one in 1974. The Government Andreas Papandréu's socialist government granted in 1982 an amnesty for exiles from the 1940s Civil War; mostly defeated communists.

Even some of the communist European tyrannies used amnesties. In Poland, after the fraudulent elections of January 1947, Parliament, already with the hegemony of the Unified Workers' Party of Poland, passed an amnesty law in February of that year for anti-communist fighters. Unlike what happened in Spain and other Western nations, the dictatorship broke its promise and arrested many of the partisans who accepted the Amnesty. In 1986, the Polish Communist Government enacted an amnesty for political prisoners imprisoned during Martial Law (1981-1983). The Hungarian communists issued an amnesty in April 1963 that

<sup>10</sup> Louis Mallinder, “Global Comparison of Amnesty Laws, The International Institute of Higher Studies in Criminal Sciences”, 2009. Accessible at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228214698\\_Global\\_Comparison\\_of\\_Amnesty\\_Laws](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228214698_Global_Comparison_of_Amnesty_Laws)

resulted in the release of 3,480 “counter-revolutionaries” arrested during the Popular rebellion of 1956, although it left another 600 in jail.

The Portuguese dictatorial regime was overthrown in 1974. Two amnesties were granted by decree-law in 1976. Twenty years later, in March 1996, the Assembly approved an amnesty for members of the far-left terrorist group Fuerzas Populares Veinticinco de Abril (Popular Forces April 25) (FP-25), from which crimes with fatalities were excluded. On the other hand, in Italy, society and most of the parties have rejected the granting of an amnesty to the terrorists of the Red Brigades, requested by some of its members.

### **Risks of repealing the Spanish Amnesty Law**


This article would be several more pages long if we included the amnesties applied in other continents. The important thing is to emphasize its use to cancel periods of great division and suffering. Although they contain an undeniable aspect of injustice for the victims since they even deprive them of the

**Total Amnesty, even for terrorists, was demanded by the left and the nationalists. Many released terrorists then committed murder again.**



consolation of obtaining moral reparation, they are practiced worldwide. They aim to restore a national unity lost through wars or political conflicts.

As the left parties and the Spanish “memorialists” propose, if the Amnesty Law was repealed to end the “impunity” of the Franco regime and the violation of the principle of non-retroactivity of the criminal regulations was accepted, there would be two effects. First, Spain would depart from the other European nations in terms of reconciliation and acceptance of the past. Furthermore the way would be cleared for the victims of the dozens of murders and attacks committed by the amnestied terrorists to demand Justice. Therefore, one more trench would be opened among the Spaniards when politics must solve conflicts, not create them. ▼



Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Western progressivism has focused on cultural subversion and the anthropological revolution rather than the economic revolution. In this new era, the different versions of the historical interpretation constitute an added political weapon. This is how “historical memory” has arisen, which seeks to reinterpret the past to dominate the present and reduce the complexity of history to the dialectic of executioners versus victims.

In Spain, the “historical memory” presents the 20th century and the early years of the 21st as a struggle between fascism and anti-fascism. The left not only wants to impose a mandatory interpretation of history -with criminal and economic sanctions for dissidents- but also to eradicate freedom of speech, and teaching. If such a strategy succeeds in Spain, the rest of the European left will copy it and the social confrontation already provoked between the Spanish people will spread to the rest of the continent.

In this book, several historians analyze the main mythical slogans of the Spanish “memorialist” movement (the spontaneous nature of the violence against Catholics, the “slave” prisoners, the harshness of the post-war repression, the link between the Spanish regime and the III Reich, amnesty as a requirement of the Francoists, the pact of silence in the Transition, etc.) and dismantle them through data and facts. In addition, former minister of the first post-Franco democratic Government (1977-1979), a writer imprisoned in the 1950s for his communist militancy, and another author descended from an intellectual murdered in the genocide of Catholics perpetrated by the left during the Civil War (1936-1939) share their testimonies in the pages of this book.