
Book Section:
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Iniquitous Famine: Marginalised Mothers and Children

"We don't eat under this regime and while food rots in warehouses the only ones who can eat are those with big salaries or with a huge range of political contacts".[1]

Complaint voiced in a barber's shop, Fuente Obejuna, 1950

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Historians have tended to label post-war shortages that killed perhaps 200,000 people through disease and starvation as producing hunger rather than famine. The term hunger obscures from view both the policies that made the crisis and their unequal effects.[2] These effects are crucial and the iniquitous distribution of food stands as startling testimony to the politically made famine in Spain. Crucially autarky and price controls restricted production, prevented imports and encouraged hoarding. It is also the case that the better off and those with strong ties to the regime frequently flourished. By contrast, the poor and those who suffered the political repression all too often succumbed to hunger and disease. The regime also oversaw a chaotic national food market in which some regions boasted plenty while others counted on very little. The regime's failure to better distribute food was compounded by the shortcomings of its often-praised welfare system.

This chapter studies the iniquitous effects of the famine as a means of challenging the

[1] Archivo Histórico Provincial de Córdoba (AHPC), Audiencia Provincial de Córdoba (APC) - Fuente Obejuna, Caja 5504, Sumario 153.

[2] On the shortcomings of economic self-sufficiency see , C. Barciela, M. I. López, J. Melgarejo and J. A. Miranda, *La España de Franco (1939–1975). Economía* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2001), 23–8; A. Carreras and X. Tafunell, *Historia económica de la España contemporánea* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003). Hunger even features in book titles. An example in María Isabel del Cura and Rafael Huertas, *Alimentación y enfermedad en tiempos de hambre. España, 1937-1947*, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cinetíficas, 2007).

dominant idea in the literature that Spain suffered from hunger rather than famine and that the 'hunger' resulted primarily from poor harvests and isolation in the Second World War.[3] Instead it looks at how policies and political repression affected the marginalised groups who suffered the famine. Too often the historiography has looked at policy, Francoist welfare services, calorific intake and the development of health services rather than the effect on those who suffered.[4] One powerful way of studying these effects is to look at poverty-stricken mothers and children whose close relatives suffered during the Francoist repression. They proved among the most vulnerable groups and by examining their experience we can peel away Francoist propaganda, overcome the neglect in the existing historiography and give a place in the historical record for the voices and experiences of neglected groups. We can also see beyond the effects of the famine on health and look at how it created the conditions in which families were split apart and children taken into care. It is also important to trace these effects from the Civil War. The historiography tends to view hunger as a post-war phenomenon and to view the Franco zone in the Civil War as well fed. [5] This occludes the way in which victims of the Francoist repression during the conflict suffered hunger and lost children. We also need to appreciate that the hunger suffered in government-held territory debilitated ordinary people and made them more susceptible to shortage and disease after the Francoists took control.

Given that the Franco regime endeavoured to present itself in the best light and whitewashed the famine by highlighting the developmental success of the 1960s, it is hard to research the

[3] For an example of this pro-Francoist view see Ricardo de la Cierva, *Historia del franquismo. Orígenes y configuración (1939–1945)* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1975).
[4] On policy failure see Carlos Barciela, (ed.), *Autarquía y mercado negro. El fracaso económico del primer franquismo* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003). A fine study of Francoist welfare in Ángela Cenarro, *La sonrisa de Falange: Auxilio Social en la Guerra Civil y en la posguerra* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006). On health services and calorific intake see del Cura and Huertas, *Alimentación y enfermedad*).
[5] On Francoist successes see Michael Seidman, *The Victorious Counterrevolution: the Nationalist Effort in the Spanish Civil War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

suffering of socially marginalised groups. Doing so requires carefully gathering information from archives and memoirs and a considerable amount of research. This chapter does this by drawing on diplomatic papers in London, the archives of the Quakers in London, the records of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York state, medical reports, as well as documents from child-welfare organisations in Barcelona, Córdoba, Madrid and Pamplona. It also draws on civil court records from the Pozoblanco region in southern Spain in addition to contemporary press accounts in Spanish and English and memoirs.

HUNGER IN THE FRANCO ZONE IN THE CIVIL WAR

Despite the historiography which has praised Francoist food production and distribution in the Civil War, hunger existed in Francoist territory during the conflict.[6] The long-silenced Francoist repression proved the principal cause of the suffering. Serious research into the killings only began many years after the general's regime collapsed. We now know that the rebels and insurgents killed at least 130,000 people behind the lines during and after the Spanish Civil War. The killing began with the army rebellion that began the conflict. The insurgents swiftly took large parts of northern and western Spain and mass killings rapidly commenced. In the La Rioja province 2,000 were killed following the July revolt.[7] In Pamplona province, 2,822 men and thirty-five women were shot. A further 305 died from abuse or malnutrition in prison during the war.[8]

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[6] Seidman, *The Victorious Counterrevolution*.

[7] Antonio Hernández García, *La represión en La Rioja durante la Guerra Civi*l (Logroño: Almazán, 1984), 11-26. Other examples and studies include María Jesús Souto Blanco, *La represión franquista en la provincia de Lugo (1936-1940)*, (Coruña: Edicios de Castro, 1998). Gregorio Herrero and Antonio Hernández, *La represión en Soria durante la Guerra Civil Tomo I*, (Soria: Ingrabel, 1982). Julián Casanova, Ángela Cenarro, Julita Cifuentes, María Pilar Maluenda y María Pilar Salomón, *El pasado oculto. Fascimo y violencia en Aragón (1936-1939)*, (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España Editores, 1992).

[8] Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: inquisition and extermination in twentieth-century Spain* (London: Harper Press, 2012), 183. Altaffaylla Culture Taldea, *Navarra 1936: de la esperanza al terror* (Tafalla: Altaffaylla Culture Taldea, 1986).

The iniquitous effects of the political violence on relatives proved readily apparent to visiting Quaker relief workers. They noted in northern Spain in the autumn of 1937 that many hotels boasted full menus and cafes were busy. On the other hand, there were crowds of women and children with no income because their husbands and fathers had been killed or were imprisoned. These refugees were "ragged, driven out by hunger" and in many cases living on the street.[9] A Quaker relief worker had a similar experience in La Arboleda in the Burgos area in March 1938

> These families – some of them large – obviously below the poverty line, were universally minus the breadwinner. With the father dead, in prison, or missing, the children live by begging or by what little the mother or older children may earn. This is not the first town we have found in such circumstances, but La Arboleda is an extreme one. Our heartstrings torn, we promised to be back soon with at least some cod-liver oil.'[10]

These were no isolated incidents. We know too from the documentary record of the Provincial Council for the Protection of Children in Navarre Province that the families of executed or jailed left-wing activists suffered deeply in everyday life. In one case from village of Lerín a father was arrested on 24 July 1936 for being a member of a socialist meeting house. This left his wife looking after her four children aged between ten and four, while expecting her fifth child. By February 1937, the newly born daughter was suffering from malnutrition "because of the insufficient diet of the mother". Two of the older children had been given the right to eat in a Falangist feeding station but a skin condition prevented them from eating there.[11]

[9] Library of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain (LRSF), FSC/R/SP/2/ 4 'Mission to Nationalist Spain, June to October 1937'.
[10] LRSF, FSC/R/SP/2/ 6, Smith to Picket 31/03/1938.
[11] Archivo de la Administración de la Comunidad Foral, Junta de Protección de Menores de Navarra, (AACFJPMN) 215389, Exp. 271 de 1936.

Faced with this dire situation some mothers opted to place their children in care where they believed they would be better fed; a judgement supported by an eye witness who left testimony that children ate better in Francoist care homes than in feeding stations run by the regime's welfare service Auxilio Social (Social Help).[12] In Pamplona, a number of women chose to part with their children in order to save them from hunger, starvation and disease. In September 1936, one woman whose husband was considered "extremely dangerous" and who had been "detained as a result of the Patriotic Movement" declared that she "found it impossible to keep supporting her unfortunate children". Fearing for their wellbeing, she handed them over to a local Catholic charity home.[13]

The shortcomings of Francoist welfare in the Civil War stood out to international volunteers. In November 1937, Quaker relief workers visiting newly occupied Oviedo found hundreds of children without blankets. They also encountered children wanting for milk and cod-liver oil. Many also went without shoes and stockings.[14] Children from families like these frequently could only survive by eating at Francoist feeding stations and although they often made a difference they could also prove inadequate. We know a great deal about the hunger experienced by the children who ate at these stations from the memoir left by Manuel Pato Manzano. He was five years old at the start of the Civil War and lived with his family in Asturias in the north of Spain. During the conflict, his father was captured by the Francoists and sentenced to death; a sentence later commuted and reduced a number of times until he left jail when his son was twelve years old. His mother was left on the verge of destitution by the father's imprisonment. In his rural home, he remembered they had hardly any food. Just the odd potato, perhaps an occasional turnip, a few old apples and a handful of chestnuts or

[12] Manuel Pato Manzano, *Mater admirabilis. Vivencias de la Guerra Civil en Asturias* (Barcelona: Viena, 2003), p. 161.
[13] AACFJPMN, 215389, Exp. 269 de 1936; similar case Exp. 528 de 1936.
[14] LRSF, FSC/R/SP/2/ 6, Smith to America Service Committee 29/11/1937.

hazelnuts. These, he said, formed the daily diet and saved them from dying of hunger.[15]

The family soon moved to the city of Oviedo where his mother found work which paid just thirty pesetas a month for extremely long hours. It could take the whole of this salary to buy one tin of condensed milk. With her meagre earnings, his mother had to support herself, her son and to try and supplement her husband's paltry prison rations.[16] This poverty helps explain why the young boy went to eat in an Auxilio Social feeding station where "the majority of us had a father dead or in jail".[17] Here they ate a stew with a little piece of bread: day after day. Many of his fellow children fell ill with typhus and hunger. He noted that

> "Every day the road to the cemetery was crowded with relatives who had lost a loved one; the processions were large and the successive mourning formed an endless line of those going to their last destination of those who died as a result of epidemic, tisis and hunger"[18]

HUNGER IN GOVERNMENT TERRITORY IN THE CIVIL WAR

Although historians have tended to explain the post-war hunger as a result of the effects of the Second World War and international isolation, we need to recognise that the Civil War left much of the population in government-held territory, and especially in besieged Madrid, debilitated by hunger. In the years before the conflict, the capital had grown into a major world city with nearly 1,000,000 inhabitants in 1930.[19] Over the summer of 1936, General Franco's Foreign Legion forces rapidly advanced on this metropolis. The insurgents unleashed a full-scale assault in November 1936 had resulted in a stalemate by the end of the

[15] Pato Manzano, *Mater admirabilis*, 99.
[16] Ibid., p. 201.
[17] Ibid., p 124,
[18] Ibid., 147.
[19] Luis Enrique Otero Carvajal, 'La sociedad urbana y la irrupción de la modernidad en España, 1900-36', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 38, Núm Esp.: 255-283, 260.

month. The capital remained under siege, with the only road out leading to Valencia, until the war concluded in late March 1939.[20]

The siege severely compounded the supply problems besetting the government side. From the start of the conflict, the Francoists controlled some of the best pasture lands in Spain. This meant that meat and milk soon fell into short supply in the Republic. Co-ordination between government agencies and supply problems also meant that fruit, vegetables and rice became scarce.[21] Besieged Madrid suffered particularly badly and as early as September 1936, eggs, potatoes and sugar stood in short supply.[22] As the siege tightened, the number of lorries bringing fish from Valencia plummeted from the seventy or eighty that had arrived a day before the war to just one a day. By February 1937, the government had introduced rationing with each person entitled to one-hundred grams of lentils, one-hundred grams of chickpeas, seventy-five grams of green beans, one-hundred and fifty grams of rice and half a kilo of fruit and vegetables a week.[23] The ration supplied only 830 calories a day and over the course of the conflict some people lost thirty kilos in weight.[24] We possess graphic testimony of what all this meant to the people at the sharp end of the shortages. In the Civil War, Quaker relief workers published a letter received from a Madrid citizen

> "For nine months we have fed on nothing but rice; sometimes without even salt or oil to cook it with (we cook with oil) just simply boiled rice. We have stood as much as eight or nine hours in line to buy a cabbage – at exorbitant prices – and sometimes at

[20] Luis Diez, *La batalla del Jarama* (Madrid: Obreron, 2005), 13. José Manuel Martínez Bande, *La lucha en torno a Madrid* (Madrid: San Martín, 1990), 159-245. Gabriel Cardona, *Historia militar de una guerra civil: estrategias y tácticas de la guerra de España* (Madrid: Flor del Viento, 2006), 131-140. John F. Coverdale, 'The Battle of Guadalajara', *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, 1 (1974): 53-75.
[21] Josep L. Barona and Enrique Perdiguero-Gil, 'Health and the War. Changing Schemes and Health Conditions during the Spanish Civil War', *Dynamis*, 28 (2008), 103-126, 121-122. María Valls Gómez, 'El abstecimiento en la retaguardia republicano. El caso de Granada, 1936-1939', *Revista del CEHGR*, 25 (2013): 217-236.
[22] Carmen Gutiérrez Rueda and Laura Gutiérrez Rueda, *El hambre en el Madrid de la Guerra Civil 1936-1939* (Madrid: La Librería, 2014), 30.
[23] Gutiérrez Rueda and Gutiérrez Rueda, *El hambre*, 40-46.
[24] Ibid., 40-46, 65.

> the end of the long wait in which we took turns so as not to exhaust ourselves, there were no cabbages left, and we returned home empty handed. Some women have stood up all night in order to get bread, and then to receive an amount always insufficient.'[25]

People's health began to suffer. We know this from the studies undertaken by Dr. Francisco Grande Covián, a physiologist at the Institute of Medical Research in Madrid, which revealed that citizens were suffering from a range of illnesses including pellagra: caused by a poor diet and with symptoms such as dermatitis, diarrhoea and mental disturbance. Tuberculosis and beriberi were also reported.[26] The problems grew particularly serious over the winter of 1937-1938 as the shortages of meat and dairy products began to bite even harder. Vitamin deficiencies also became serious. Citizens in poorer neighbourhoods such as Puente de Vallecas suffered much more gravely from vitamin B shortages than others from better-off areas such as Chamberí. As a result, the poor began to suffer from muscle spasms and cramps.[27]

As children require a good diet to ensure growth and development, they proved especially vulnerable. In early 1938, a Quaker relief worker estimated that around 100,000 children in Spain were suffering from malnutrition, a further 200,000 were ailing with malnourishment and about 100,000 were in a state of starvation or pre-starvation. Children were also afflicted by a lack of soap and up to eighty-percent were suffering from skin diseases.[28] By the end of the war, the situation had grown even more dire. The International Commission for the Assistance Child Refugees in Spain noted in early March 1939 that the death rate among

[25] *Spain. The Work of the Society of Friends and Save the Children International Union* (London: Friends' Service Council, No Date, No Page Numbers).
[26] *To My Neighbour* (London: Friends' Service Council, No Date).
[27] Jesús M. Culebras, 'Trastornos neurológicos relacionados con la malnutrición en la Guerra Civil Española (1936-1939), *Nutrición Hospitalaria* 29, 4 (2014). Ainhoa Campos Posada, 'Madrid "la ciudad espectro". La utilización del hambre como arma de guerra y postguerra por el franquismo', en *Los 'años del hambre'. Historia y memoria de la posguerra franquista*, ed. Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2019), 77-96.
[28] LRSFB FSC/R/SP/2/ 3 'Memorandum regarding the Proposed Relief Work of the International Commission in Republican Spain'.

children in Madrid had reached twelve times the normal figure. It added babies were being born at half the normal weight. *The Times* quoted the Commission's report to state that

> "The civil population in Madrid, including the children, are receiving probably not more than 800 calories a day. This means the loss of about 1lb in weight a day, and could not be endured for more than two or three months without resulting in death."[29]

POST-WAR FAMINE AND DISEASE IN FRANCO'S PRISONS

The Francoists finally won the war at the end of March 1939 and speedily occupied Madrid and brought its debilitated population under their control. Triumphal claims that copious quantities of food were being supplied to the hungry accompanied the Francoist occupation of Madrid. The Granada-based newspaper *Patria* ran a characteristic story on 4 April 1939 boasting that the city of León had sent its fifth expedition of lorries to Madrid (which the Francoists had captured at the end of March). This consignment brimmed with 12,500 kilos of beans, 15,000 kilos of sugar and 20,000 kilos of flour.[30] The Francoists also bragged in the press about the feeding stations they had installed across Spain where citizens could find "great quantities of bread, flour, beans" as well as "condensed milk, tinned fish" and that "mothers and children" in particular were feasting on the rich delights supplied by the regime.[31]

The Francoist propaganda hid the brutal reality of famine in its own territory. While it is true that hunger in Francoist territory during the Civil War proved far less serious than in the government zone, this should not blind us to some of the severe shortages that afflicted the population. In particular, we need to take into account the political repression, social

[29] *The Times*, 14/03/1939, "Food Dearth in Spain. Suffering Among Madrid Children".
[30] *Patria*, 4/4/1939 'León envía víveres a Madrid'
[31] *Patria*, 2/04/1939 'Auxilio Social prosigue su magnífica labor en nuestra provincia. En todos los pueblos liberados funcionan comedores'.

inequality, misguided economic policy and geographical variation that allowed some to prosper while others suffered. If not, we risk falling into a Francoist propaganda trap. One of the central themes of this propaganda was that the welfare organisation Auxilio Social helped alleviate poverty in newly occupied parts of Spain. While Auxilio Social certainly alleviated hunger, its resources proved inadequate to meet the scale of need. The organisation also played a distinctly partisan role and remained closely tied to the regime and became referred to as the 'smile of the Falange" (the fascist-leaning movement in Francoist Spain). We gain an insight into this propaganda in a publication from Zaragoza in 1937. Here the Francoist press boasted that in the provincial capital Auxilio Social had opened a food station at 28 Palafox Street with "abundant and healthy food" to feed 700 people. It also bragged that in September 1937 1,372 people had received meals in this one feeding station. Children were receiving two meals a day.[32]

Political prisoners form the most obvious group for whom such claims ring hollow and jailed particularly mothers and young children imprisoned with them. General Franco's final victory in the Civil war in late March 1939 brought thousands of women and their children into prisons where many suffered malnutrition, disease and perished in squalid conditions. A long tradition existed in Spain in which women prisoners lived alongside their children in jails. In 1874, rules were developed for jails in Madrid which created special prison sections for pregnant or nursing mothers. In 1928, the rules restricted the age of children in prison to four years old or, in exceptional cases, seven. This rule remained in place until 1940 when the Franco regime placed the limit at three years old. After this age children would pass into the hands of the Council for the Protection of Infants.[33]

[32] *Renacer*, diciembre 1937, 17.
[33] María Dolores Serrano Tárraga, 'La consideración del género en la ejecución de las penas privativas de libertad', *Estudios Penales y Criminológicas*, (2010): 481-544, 499-504.

By 21 April 1939, the Francoists had already placed 3,500 female prisoners in the Madrid women's prison in the Ventas neighbourhood: three times its official capacity. All were political prisoners and often they were rounded up with their young children, and even those over the age of four. We possess copious testimony of the horrors the mass jailing of children, and especially very young children, produced. The Communist activist Trinidad Gallego found herself crammed with thirteen other prisoners in a cell built for two prisoners.[34] Another imprisoned Communist activist, Juana Doña, testified that there were over 1,000 mothers with their children in the Ventas jail some of whom had two or three children with them.[35]

Prisoners in Franco's jails endured especially low rations. In Barcelona's terribly overcrowded women's prison inmates ate only small bits of potato with some cabbage, turnips, carrot and lentils cooked in a little water day after day.[36] In 1940, in the jail at Alcalá de Henares the inmates drank weak coffee for breakfast, and ate rice with pumpkin or cabbage for the main and only meal of the day. Each prisoner accompanied this with fifty grams of bread.[37] One cause of the hunger comes from the infamous hawking on the back market by prison authorities of products such as sugar and olive oil designated for prisoners.[38] The terrible deficiencies did not escape the comment of the prison doctor in Zaragoza who noted that prisoners' diets were short of vitamin and protein. He pointed out

[34] Francisco Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas. La prisión de Ventas: de la República al franquismo, 1931-1941*, (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), 115, 60, 138.
[35] Juana Doña, *Desde la noche y la niebla. Mujeres en las cárceles franquistas*, (Madrid: Horas y Horas, [1978] 2012),164.
[36] Consuelo García, *Las cárceles de Soledad Real. Una vida* (Madrid: Alfeguara, 1982), 103.
[37] Domingo Rodríguez Teijeiro, 'Morir de hambre en las cárceles de Franco (1939-1945), *Historia Contemporánea*, 51(2015): 641-66, 648.
[38] María González Gorosarri-Eduardo Barinaga, *No lloréis, lo que tenéis que hacer es no olvidarnos. La cárcel de Saturrarán y la represión franquista contra las mujeres, a partir de testimonios de supervivientes* (Donosta: Titarttalo, 2010), 148.

the obvious consequence that over the long term they became weak and easy victims to disease.[39] Unsurprisingly, deaths ensued and in the post-war period 144 prisoners died from starvation in sixteen months in three prisons in Almendralejo in Badajoz province.[40]

As well as hunger, prisoners endured poor sanitary conditions. Former prisoners have left testimony of jails where there was only one toilet for 500 prisoners[41]. We also have accounts of the mother's gallery in the Ventas prison with its suffocating and bitter smell of urine and excrement so overpowering that it made people nauseous.[42] In Zaragoza, prison one woman left vivid testimony of the horror

> "They gave us a bath tub full of water a week. We had to use this for drinking, washing ourselves and the children, washing clothes…this water had to make do for forty-five mothers with their forty-five children".[43]

Disease soon began to take hold at the Ventas and prison and other women's prisons across Spain. At the well studied Ventas Prison, fifty-eight women died between 1939 and 1941: fourteen of them under thirty years old.[44] Children perished in even larger numbers and former prisoners have testified that as many as six or seven died a day from diseases such as meningitis and bronchitis.[45] Dysentery, scabies and lice were also rampant.[46] So too were measles, whopping cough and typhus.[47] Other witnesses claim that in Torrero Prison

[39] Iván Heredia Urzázi, 'Terror, miseria y violencia. Mujeres en la Cárcel de Torreo (Zaragoza, 1936-1939), in Ángeles Egido León (ed.), *Cárceles de mujeres. La prisión femenina en la posguerra* (Madrid: Sanz y Torres, 2017), 149-183, 169.
[40] Rodríguez, 'Morir de hambre', 649-652.
[41] Tomasa Cuevas, *Presas. Mujeres en la cárceles franquistas* (Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2005[Kindle Edition]), 581-590.
[42] Mercedes Núñez, *Cárcel de Ventas* (Paris: Ebro, 1967), 37.
[43] Cited in Iván Heredia Urzázi, 'Terror, miseria y violencia. Mujeres en la Cárcel de Torreo (Zaragoza, 1936-1939), in Ángeles Egido León (ed.), *Cárceles de mujeres. La prisión femenina en la posguerra* (Madrid: Sanz y Torres, 2017), 149-183, 162.
[44] Hernández, *Mujeres encarceladas*, 151. See also di Febo, *Resistencia*, 35.
[45] Hernández, *Mujeres encarceladas*, 160-161.
[46] Doña, *Desde la noche*, 164.
[47] Tomasa Cuevas, *Mujeres de la resistencia* (Barcelona: Sirocco, 1986), 184.

(Zaragoza) of fifty-five children, forty-two perished in one week.[48] A prisoner working as a midwife in Ventas prison claimed that nearly all the children she helped into the world died.[49] The former prisoner Ana Morales has also testified that of twenty-five children she knew in the Ventas prison, ten succumbed to death.[50] Tuberculosis also took hold and accounted for thirty-six percent of all deaths in the prison at Puerto de Santa María in Cádiz province in 1940.[51] The consequences on the prisoners separated from their children by death and indignity were as terrible as might be imagined. One woman imprisoned in the Ventas jail testified

> "I had a girl like a sun. She'd just been born when they arrested me. She died here last year. There was a terrible epidemic and, without water, hygiene or any care, the children died like flies. Six or seven a day and sometimes more…while we waited for the burial, and as we didn't know what to do with them, their little corpses piled up in the toilet…the mothers had to stand on guard to prevent the rats getting at them".[52]

POSTWAR FAMINE, DISEASE AND CHILD REMOVAL IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Beyond the prison wall and in everyday life women and children also suffered acutely. This occurred despite the fact that Francoist occupation frequently ushered in a bounty of food for the hungry population. After the conquest of Barcelona in January 1939, observers were quick to recognise that the Francoists distributed food supplies with some generosity. Milk and bread in particular were noted to be on sale.[53] Nevertheless, the ability of the

[48] Cuevas, *Mujeres de la resistencia*, p. 65. On the prison see Iván Heredia Urzázi, 'Terror, miseria y violencia. Mujeres en la Cárcel de Torreo (Zaragoza, 1936-1939), in Ángeles Egido León (ed.), *Cárceles de mujeres. La prisión femenina en la posguerra* (Madrid: Sanz y Torres, 2017), 149-183.
[49] Cuevas, *Mujeres de la resistencia*, 185.
[50] González and Barnaga, *No lloréis*, 145.
[51] Domingo Rodríguez Teijeiro, 'Morir de hambre en las cárceles de Franco (1939-1945), *Historia Contemporánea*, 51, 641-66, 648.
649-652.
[52] Núñez, *Cárcel de Ventas*, 18. Similar case in Giuliana di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento de mujeres en Españ 1936-1976* (Sin Lugar de Publicación: Icaria, 1979), 37.
[53] LRSF, FSC/R/SP/2/ 2, Alfred Jacob to FSC 10 Feb. 1939.

Francoists to maintain supply in the long-run remains in doubt. In May 1939, relief experts noted that "food supplies often remain in the ports for many months".[54] Those distributing food also had to compete with the military for the trains and lorries they needed. Moreover, the war had led to a decline in agricultural products to distribute. In May 1939, a Quaker relief worker noted these factors were leading to starvation:

> 'We visited a town yesterday within an hour and a half drive of Murcia where the need is especially great and where the responsible people of the place told that people actually died from lack of food, under present conditions.'[55]

Beyond issues of supply, Quaker relief workers noted the problem came from the lack of purchasing power of many ordinary Spaniards. High levels of unemployment rendered people particularly vulnerable.[56] These problems largely flowed from the regime's own policies. The Francoist authorities decreed that salaries should return to the levels they held just before the conflict, although prices remained the same. Purchasing power immediately plummeted by between twenty-five and thirty percent.[57] Through the 1940s, the government continued to dictate salaries and in 1951 earnings had only grown by 2.7% since 1939. This meant that in towns such as Sabadell wages at the end of the 1940s were marooned at 65% of their 1936 purchasing power.[58]

The regime also set prices and in May 1939 introduced rationing. As official prices did not take into account transport costs, producers frequently resorted to the flourishing black

[54] LRSF, FSC/R/SP/2/ 4, 'Report of Mission of the Director to Spain (April 13-May 5, 1939), 4.
[55] LRSF, FSC/R/SP/3/1, Easterling to Thomson, 18/05/1939 (Murcia to London). For food shortages in Barcelona just after its occupation see Friends Service Council, Minutes of Spain Committee, FSC/R/SP/M1 3-9-36 to 11-7-40 Minute 9 Feb. 1939.
[56]LRSF, FSC/R/SP/2/ 2, 'Report on Visit to Vich, Manlleu, Tobello, Bibas, Ripolli, Campdevanci (25th October 1939) By Alfred Jacob to Friends Service Council
[57] Carme Molinero y Pere Ysàs, 'El malestar popular por las condiciones de vida. ¿Un problema político para red régimen franquista?', *Ayer*, 52, 2003, 255-380, 257.
[58] Molinero y Ysás, 'El Malestar', 258.

market.[59] The regime further embarked on a policy of economic self-sufficiency which led to restrictions on imports, shortages of foreign exchange and limited the purchase of foreign foodstuffs to the Italian and German markets.[60] Dr. John Janney of the Rockefeller Foundation, on a fact-finding tour of Spain in October and November 1940, found that regime policies also shaped the shortages. In Zaragoza he noted that the quality of milk was poor "because the prices has been pegged at below production cost and the difference is made up with water".[61] He also had it "on best authority" that the olive oil crop in 1940 "is being exported for foreign credit" leaving locals with huge shortages.[62]

All of this left those relying on official rations and supplies in great danger and research shows that in the badly affected province of Almería in 1943 people had to obtain between sixty-five percent and seventy-three percent of their calories on the black market.[63] This did not necessarily save them as products bought on the black market were often adulterated: lentils, a staple of the time, could be mixed with grit and infested with weevils. The shortages were so great that people resorted to eating food formerly reserved for animals such as carob and acorns. To combat the cold, people also resorted to the black market where coal came soaked in water so that it weighed more and also mixed it with stones.[64]

The black market operated to the advantage of the well off and those who enjoyed close connections to the Franco regime. This meant that figures such as the mayor of the Carmona

[59] Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, 'Morir de hambre. Autarquía, escasez, enfermedad en la España del primer franquismo', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 5, (2006): 241-258, 245.
[60] Francisco Alía Miranda, 'La España que vio el embajador Pétain: hambre y descontento social en 1939', *Historia Social*, 82, (2015): 73-91, 83.
[61] 'Notes of Food Situation in Spain made in October 1940 by Dr. J. H. Janney Rockefeller Foundation-Lisbon', Rockefeller Foundation, 1.1 700, Box 11, Folder 66, folio 6.
[62] Janney, "Notes of Food Situation", folio 8.
[63] Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, *Hambre de Siglos. Mundo rural y apoyos sociales del franquismo en Andalucía oriental (1936-1951)* (Granada: Comares, 2007). 308.
[64] Carlos Barciela, *Recuerdos del Madrid de la posguerra*, (Alicante: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante, 2013), 180-182.

in Seville province, or the Civil Governor of Gerona between 1939 and 1942, became implicated in black market activity.[65] The army also largely enjoyed impunity and barracks could become a centre for black-market profiteering, as they did in Carabanchel. Here soldiers enjoyed abundant and cheap food and also sold on foodstuffs to restaurants. Soldiers even slaughtered animals on the base and hawked the meat on the black market.[66] Meanwhile, poor and impoverished political opponents suffered serious persecution. Eighty percent of those prosecuted in Almería for black market offences held no property, most were involved in small transactions of less than fifteen kilograms and the vast majority hailed from the underclass or working class of street sellers, day labourers or were widows.[67]

While the better off prospered, the everyday poor who were impoverished even further by the war could lose custody of their children if they were caught trying to survive by trading on the black market. We can appreciate this in a petition sent by a woman from Doña Mencía in Córdoba province to her provincial governor in November 1943

> "Last year I was prosecuted in the Prices Court (Fiscalía de Tasas) for carrying a small amount of sugar and received a fine of 1,000 pesetas and because I cannot pay the fine and as I have no resources I now have to serve a one-hundred day prison sentence. I am not asking for clemency and ask only that my poor son be taken into care where he can be given the care and food that he needs…I would like to add that I no longer trade on the black market and I did it just once to be able to earn something to be able to feed my children."[68]

In these circumstances, it should cause no surprise that hunger or starvation became the lot of many Spaniards, and especially women and children, in the worst-affected areas. As U.S. health experts noted, food in Spain was produced and sold regionally and the country

[65] Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, 'La corrupción en el franquismo. El fenómeno del "gran estraperlo", *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16, (2018): 620-645, 634-636.
[66] Barciela, *Recuerdos*, 80-181.
[67] Miguel Gómez Oliver y Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, 'El estraperlo: forma de resistencia y arma de represión en el primer franquismo', E*studios de Historia Contemporánea*, 23, (2005): 179-199, 186.
[68] AHPC, Series Asuntos Sociales. Caja Una. Junta Para la Protección de Menores, Expediente 188, 30/11/1943.

suffered from a poor overland transport system.[69] This helps explain why Dr. Janney of the Rockefeller Foundation found in a trip in the autumn of 1940 that some of the best food-producing areas of Spain such as Pamplona, San Sebastián and to an extent Zaragoza were well provisioned. He also encountered terrible suffering below a line stretching from Badajoz through Madrid and passing between Barcelona and Lerida to the French frontier.[70] This shows that the inequities of food distribution spoke not just to social marginalisation and political repression, but also to the poor distribution and co-ordination carried out by the regime. Accordingly, in Pamplona Janney saw "several truckloads of potatoes" and "plenty of bread", while he also observed that in Málaga the authorities were struggling with one-quarter of the normal wheat supply needed to provide bread for the population.[71]

In the worst-affected areas, the least fortunate starved to death. In Garrucha in Almería province, in a not-untypical case, between March and September 1939 thirty-nine people died from starvation.[72] British diplomatic staff reported back to London on the dreadful scenes of starvation they witnessed and in 1941 the ambassador, and Quaker, Sir Samuel Hoare noted

> "the food situation grows daily worse and the very high proportion of deaths now occurring in hospitals in Seville is due to malnutrition: many cases of deaths through actual starvation are reported. There are well authenticated cases of persons dying in the streets from hunger."[73]

Confidential reports on public opinion sent by the Falange (Franco's fascist-leaning political movement) also offer considerable insight into the widespread nature of the hunger and the deep social inequity in its effects. In the southern mining town of Peñarroya in

[69] 'Proposal for a Nutrition Study in Spain' , 2. RFA, 1.1, 700 Box 11, Folder 66, Letter 77, Janney to Warren, Enclosure.
[70] Janney, 'Notes on Food Situation', 7-8.
[71] Janney, 'Notes on Food Situation', 3-6.
[72] Del Arco, *Hambre de siglos*, 312.
[73] The National Archives (TNA): PRO, FO, 371/ 26890, C 2182, Folio 72, Hoare to London, 8/02/1941.

January 1941, the Falange reported that

> "There are hundreds of children, men and old people, in great misery and begging for alms, and because there are so many of them there is no help for them, as the levels of unemployment and hunger are far greater than at any previous time.[74]

By April 1941, the Falange reported that sixty-six people had died from hunger in the first four months of the year. Miners were also collapsing from hunger and lack of energy at work. In February 1941 thirty-two people had died in the nearby town of Pueblonuevo, twenty-three in Peñarroya and seventeen in Belmez, five of whom had perished with beriberi. In March in nearby Belalcázar eight people were dying a day from hunger.[75]

For those who did not starve, malnourishment could lead to typhus and tuberculosis. In Palma de Mallorca the incidence of tuberculosis began to rise. In 1941, staff in the city's clinic cared for 10,454 patients; by 1943 the numbers had risen to 12,081; 24,201 in 1945 and 23,745 in 1949.[76] Children proved particularly vulnerable and forty percent of the city's children showed signs of the disease.[77] Tuberculosis especially afflicted the urban poor such as a shoeshine and his partner who earned a living selling coal and fruit that she stole. They lived in one of Barcelona's poorest areas with their four children and the woman's mother. They had sold all the clothes they had except the ones they wore and went barefoot. By 13 October 1941, the mother had died of tuberculosis and the children had gone into care for a year until relatives could take in the youngsters.[78]

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[74] Archivo General del Estado (AGA), Presidencia 51/20548, Folio 34, Parte Mensual de Enero de 1941.
[75] AGA, Presidencia 51/20548, Folios 47, 48, 54.
[76] David Ginard i Ferón, 'Las condiciones de vida durante el primer franquismo. El caso de las Islas Baleares', *Hispania, LXII*, 3 (2002): 1099-1128, 1124.
[77] Ibid.., 1124.
[78] Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya (ANC), Fons 334, JPMB, Ingreso 556, 02.00 Expedientes internos, M.T.

Marginalised groups afflicted by the disease often lost their jobs and struggled to care for their children who they could petition to go into care homes.[79] The suffering this caused comes across vividly in a letter sent from one mother in Barcelona to the Council for the Protection of Children

> "After having my husband at home ill with tuberculosis for a long time, last week he went to hospital, I have 5 children and, in truth and with great pain, I can't look after them, and all day they are in the street and I am ill. Two of my husband's brothers have already died young of tuberculosis. The children are well but it's a great danger, as everyone tells me, to live in such poverty, without having enough to eat, without air, without light, when I am ill and there are five more tenants in the house."[80]

Madrid suffered terrible food shortages too that created the circumstances for child removal. Medical research in 1941 in the Madrid working-class area of Puente de Vallecas found profound undernourishment. In a study of 106 families composed of 561people, doctors found that meat, eggs and cheese were practically unknown while milk was consumed only occasionally. They observed that the "bread was coarse" and while fruit "was out of the reach of these people".[81] The researchers also found that while in Boston (Massachusetts) the average nine-year-old girl weighed twenty-five kilos, in Madrid she weighed just fifteen kilos.[82] Dr. Janney of the Rockefeller foundation reported to British diplomats that this study also revealed that "adults have only one-third to one-quarter of the necessary amount of calories, and the children one-fifth".[83] This helps explain the onset of deficiency diseases they recorded in the form of skin lesions and aching muscles alongside

[79] An example in ANC, Fons 334, JPMB, Ingreso 556, 02.00 Expedientes Internos 2849, JFR.
[80] ANC, Fons JPMB, Inventari 334, Núm 113, Exp. 404 de 1945. Similar case in ANC, Fons 334, JPMB, Ingreso 5566, 02.00 Expedientes de Internos, 3057, AGS.
[81] William D. Robinson, John H. Janney and Francisco Grande (Covián), 'An Evaluation of the Nutritional Status of a Population Group in Madrid, Spain, During the Summer of 1941', *The Journal of Nutrition*, 24, 6 (1942), 557-584, 565.
[82] William D. Robinson, John H. Janney, Francisco Grande, 'Studies of the Physical Characteristics of Selected Children in Madrid, Spain, in 1941', *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 20, 12, (1942): 723-739.
[83] TNA, PRO, FO. 371/26891, C9527/3/41, Hoare to London, 194/08/1941, folio 48.

two cases of edema.[84]

The problems endured through the decade. This is shown by research carried out in 1948 in the working-class Madrid neighbourhood of Cuatro Caminos between May and July 1948 on 84 families composed of 429 people.[85] Doctors found on average people consumed 1,100 calories a day. Families hardly ate potatoes, chickpeas or lentils (in normal times cheap Spanish staples). Milk was rarely consumed and eggs hardly at all, while meat remained a rarity. Instead, people relied on bread, green beans and rice. They also enjoyed access to lettuce and carrots.[86]

Hunger like this could lead to parents in Madrid to plead for their children to be taken into long-term care. One woman from the humble Lavapiés district did just this in 1944 when she asked Madrid's juvenile court to take in her second daughter and allow her to join her first daughter in a care home. The court investigated and took the girl into care after finding that

> "She is unemployed despite spending all day looking for work...she is so poverty stricken that most days she can't feed her daughter and has to turn to her friends to provide her with the odd piece of bread"[87]

The poor and politically repressed, however, were not simply victims. Instead children of political prisoners could sometimes use their agency and make efforts to save themselves. A thirteen-year-old girl's father was in prison and one day her mother left her alone when she

[84] Robinson, *et al*, "An Evaluation', 563-572.
[85] F. Vivanco, J. L. Rodríguez Miñón, A. Merchante, J. Palacios, J. Peraines, and J. M. Segovia, "Observaciones sobre el estado nutritivo y situación alimentaria de la población madrileña. I. Comunicación. Técnicas empleadas en estos estudios," *Revista clínica española* 33, no. 3 (1949): 166–172, 169.
[86] F. Grande Vivanco, J. M. Palacios, J. L. Rodríguez Miñón, J. M. Segovia, J. Perianes, and A. Merchante, "Observaciones sobre el estado nutritivo y situación alimentaria de la población madrileña. II. Comunicación. Resultados obtenidos del análisis de las dietas y de su comparación con las cantidades consideradas como aporte adecuado," *Revista clínica española* 33, no. 4 (1949): 245–257, 250-253.
[87] AGA (7) 14.2 51 15004 Exp. 1508 de 1939.

went to the villages surrounding Madrid to find food. Without anything to eat, the girl sold wool from a mattress in order to buy food. When the social workers visited the family they found they lived in a cave with just an old cloth to cover the entrance.[88] In other cases, children made sacrifices to try and help relatives. This happened in one family from Embajadores Street in the poor Lavapiés district of the capital. The father had worked as a policeman for twenty-four years but the Francoists imprisoned him for collaborating with the Republican government. In 1940, the twelve-year-old son left home with a sixteen-year-old friend because the family "didn't have any means of support". They hoped to find work somewhere outside Madrid and believed that if they left, the passes entitling them to eat at an Auxilio Social feeding station would transfer to their mothers and sisters. When an official investigated the case, it was found that the entire family was suffering from typhus.[89]

Sometimes relatives could save children: especially if they lived in areas less badly afflicted by the famine. One girl from Madrid whose mother and father were political prisoners was living in an overcrowded attic flat with relatives. The social worker who visited her noted she was wearing nothing more than four miserable rags. She was saved by a charity which provided a train ticket to Galicia (a largely agricultural region in northern Spain much less badly affected by the famine) where she managed to stay with her grandmother. The social worker commented that in Madrid she was being "eaten away because she did not have good food" but after spending some time in Galicia she began to look much better.[90]

Mothers also tried to save their children by placing them in Francoist care homes. One mother had fallen into destitution after her husband went to jail for serving in the Republican

[88] AGA (7) 14.2 51 14998 Exp. 1075 de 1939.
[89] AGA (7) 14.2 51 14981 Exp. 51 de 1937.
[90] AGA (7) 14.2 51 15007 Exp. 47 de 1940.

army. None of her relatives could help support her because they had fallen into poverty too. This left her to support two children: a young son and a baby daughter. On 19 November 1940, she declared to the authorities that she "had no resources at all" and asked for the boy to be taken into a care home "where he can be fed and educated". She kept the baby girl with her because she knew she could take her to an Auxilio Social feeding station.[91]

CONCLUSION

Franco's famine has often slipped from view behind notions of a well fed rebel zone during the Civil War, the strong performance of Francoist welfare services, notions of the 'hungry' 1940s and the emphasis on food production rather than the effects of hunger and starvation. These interpretations obscure the shortages experienced in the conflict by those who suffered the Francoist repression and the failures or unwillingness of the Francoists to distribute food to those who needed it most. Above all the interpretations neglect the reality of prison, execution, social marginalisation, as well as the iniquitous effects of autarky and the black market in producing hunger, disease, death and family destruction. The physical repression, the black market and food shortages all forced some of the most marginal and powerless groups such as women and children into the deadly embrace of hunger and disease. These women and children had often become debilitated by the severe shortages in the government zone during the Civil War. Nevertheless, they struggled as best they could to survive, but in many cases their families split apart and children went into state care. In many instances, parents faced little choice but to hand over some or all of their children into the care of the authorities. In such ways, parents lost their right to bring up their children according to their own beliefs and siblings became separated from one another.

[91] AGA (7) 14.2 51 15012 Exp. 314 de 1940.

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