---

**Book Section:**
Anderson, P. orcid.org/0000-0002-9321-853X (2023) The Spanish Civil War, Francoism and Historical Memory. In: Dowling, A., (ed.) The Routledge Handbook of Spanish History. Routledge ISBN 9781032111896

---

# The Spanish Civil War, Francoism and Historical Memory

Peter Anderson, School of History, University of Leeds

**Introduction**

The Valley of the Fallen sits sixty kilometres to the north and west Madrid in the Sierra de Guadarrama near San Lorenzo de El Escorial. The site covers over thirteen square kilometres and includes an abbey, a basilica and the remains of around 34,000 dead from the Spanish Civil War. It is crowned by a Cross of 150 metres clearly visible from the air to passengers flying over the Spanish capital. The Valley of the Fallen has attracted considerable media attention in recent years, most notably after the Socialist Party-led coalition government oversaw the exhumation of the remains General Franco from the glorious surroundings of the basilica and their transfer to a more modest family tomb in October 2019. The site, however, is both much more complex and interesting than simply providing the resting ground from one of Europe's most important twentieth-century dictators. The Valley of the Fallen also stands out because it has become the site for the four main contested forms of memory of the Spanish Civil War that have marked Spanish society and politics since the Civil War of 1936–1939 and which continue to trouble Spaniards in the present day.

The monks who run the abbey ~~in~~ the Valley describe, at the time of writing, the site as a 'monument to reconciliation'. On ~~the~~ 1 April 1940, however, Franco commemorated the first anniversary of the end of Civil War with a decree establishing the memorial complex which had nothing to do with reconciliation and everything to do with victory against a 'Godless' enemy. The decree states that the site will 'perpetuate the memory of those who fell in our

glorious Crusade' and that it will honour those whose 'legacy will be a better Spain'.[1] For many groups on the left, however, the Valley appears as neither a site of victory or reconciliation; instead it symbolises the glorification of fascism. Newspapers such as the moderate *La Vanguardia* have pointed to the 'fascist' symbols in the Valley such as representations of imperial eagles, while the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARHM) has denounced the central place in the Basilica of the Valley of the Fallen where the remains José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the leader of the Spanish fascist movement the Falange, rest.[2] Alongside this anti-fascist discourse on the centre and left of Spanish politics, we can also detect the presence of human-rights values in shaping the way the Civil War should be remembered. In its criticisms of the glorification of José Antonio at the site, the ARHM argues that Franco's prominent commemoration obscures the burial in the Valley of Franco's opponents whose remains from the 1950s were transferred, without permission from their families, to rest in the Valley (often with poor records kept and bones mixed together). Many of these were the remains of executed political opponents whose final ignominy was to rest in a monument dedicated to the victory of their opponents and to be denied a dignified burial and a commemoration that honoured the memory of those cut down, in the view of the ARHM and its supporters, by a criminal dictator.

Since the Civil War, groups on the right have gravitated around the discourses of Crusade and reconciliation. We need to exercise some care in the meaning given to reconciliation here: it did not mean facing up to past responsibilities in order that the different sides could forgive one another, as the term might be properly understood. Rather the emphasis fell on what Georgina Blakeley has identified as conciliation: simply working with one another in

[1] Boltín Oficial del Estado, 02/04/1940, p. 2240.

[2] https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/junior-report/20201127/49738548993/que-es-el-valle-de-los-caidos.html. https://memoriahistorica.org.es/denuncian-a-patrimonio-nacional-y-la-comunidad-benedictina-por-enaltecer-la-dictadura-en-el-valle-de-los-caidos/.

order to create a future without acknowledging the past.[3] For the right sometimes the discourses of Crusade and reconciliation overlap and at other times it proves politically expedient to highlight one or other of the discourses. For their part, groups on the left have wavered between anti-fascism, talk of reconciliation, meaning conciliation, and the protection of human rights to achieve reconciliation properly understood. Once again these discourses can overlap or be individually accentuated according to the political and emotional environment of the time. Crucially, memory of the Civil War helps provide legitimacy and meaning to groups across the political spectrum and for this reason the issue is likely to continue to play a significant role in Spanish politics for some time to come.

**Crusade Memory**

General Franco won power through a military revolt, by overthrowing the elected government and overturning the constitution of the Second Republic. Crucially, however, his supporters proved able to furnish him with a set of ideas to help 'justify' his seizure of power. Aniceto de Castro Alberrán stands out as one of those who helped Franco. De Castro had gained attention as a professor at the University of Salamanca who moved in far-right circles. In 1934, he published his book *The Right to Rebel* that drew on ideas of a just war and in which he argued the Republican government exercised tyrannical power and all legal methods to overturn it had failed. He also held that the writings of St Thomas of Aquinas showed that when religion, justice and peace were all at risk, armed resistance offered the ethical response. These arguments grew even stronger for Francoists at the start of the Civil War when anti-clerical violence claimed nearly 7,000 lives. For figures such as de Castro and for others, such as Cardinal Gomá—the archbishop of Toledo, these atrocities demonstrated that the Civil War was nothing other than a war in defence of religion and the faith. [4] Franco

[3] Georgina Blakeley, 'Digging up Spain's Past: consequence of truth and reconciliation', *Democratization*, 12, 1 (2005), pp. 44-59.

[4] Aniceto De Castro Albarran, *Guerra Santa. El sentido católico del movimiento nacional español*, (Burgos: Editorial Española, 1938), p. 24. Estado español Ministerio de Gobernación, *Dictamen de la comisión*

embraced these notions of the 'Crusade' as a defence of the faith and added a harsher note. Speaking in Burgos on July 18 1938, to mark the second anniversary of the start of the Civil War, Franco declared that after his victory the 'Reds' would continue to represent the 'recalcitrant enemies of the Fatherland' who like those who come from a plague zone would need to be 'quarantined' from the healthy elements within Spanish society.[5]

As well as providing a hate-filled sense of legitimacy, this way of remembering the Civil War also offered solace to the fallen from the Francoist side. Across Spain, Francoists killed behind government lines were exhumed from mass graves and given dignified reburials—while the opponents they murdered continued to rest in anonymous mass graves. The most prominent of the Francoist ceremonies occurred in November and December 1939, when the remains of the Falange leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera were exhumed in Alicante and then carried by pall bearers to San Lorenzo de El Escorial.[6] Mass services of remembrance were held along the route. As his remains passed down the Gran Vía in Madrid, a large crowd gathered with arms raised in the Fascist salute. The newspaper *ABC* proudly showed a photograph of the bouquet of flowers sent by Hitler, with Nazi insignia, for his fellow fascist's tomb.[7] The Falangist Rafael Sánchez Mazas expressed the meaning Francoists gave to their losses symbolised in the death of José Antonio Primmer de Rivera in his 'Oration to the Fallen' in which he argued that~~on~~ those on the right 'died for Spain' at the hands of hate-filled opponents: a blood sacrifice that would redeem Spain.[8] Across Spain, ordinary Francoists gained solace from this exclusive and criminalising memory. One way they did so

~~*sobre legitmidad de poderes actuantes en 18 de julio de 1936*, (No Place of Publication: Editora Nacional, 1939), pp. 9-90. The 'collective' letter from most Spanish bishops backing Franco is available at https://laicismo.org/data/docs/archivo_1430.pdf.~~

~~[5] Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, DNSD, Recuperación, Secretaria, C 22, Exp. 20, 'Discurso o Pronunciado por el Sr. Franco el Día 18 de julio de 1938'.~~

~~[6] *ABC*, 21/01/1939, 'La exhumación de los restos de José Antonio', p. 4. *ABC*, 17/11/1939, 'El Póximo traslado de los restos de José Antonio a El Escorial', p. 7.~~

~~[7] *ABC*, 01/12/1939, Madrid aspecto del segundo trozo de la Gran Vía, p. 5.~~

~~[8] Available at https://fnff.es/historia/515530235/oracion-a-los-caidos-de-sanchez-mazas.html~~

was by erecting crosses to the fallen throughout the country. The crosses bore the names of all those from the Francoist side who had died in the town or village, often in violence behind the lines, for 'God and for Spain'. José Antonio Primo de Rivera's name always came first. The comfort provided came with a good measure of loathing and no desire for reconciliation. In Marbella, one local man petitioned the council in August 1938 to be allowed to put up a cross in memory of a relative 'killed by the Marxist hordes'.[9] This form of commemoration also became linked to demands for punishment of the defeated enemy. In Torrecampo, in Córdoba province, one man told Francoist officials investigating government supporters that he believed that 'all those affiliated with left-wing parties were capable of having killed his father'.[10]

**Anti-Fascist Memory**

Franco's opponents found in anti-fascism the most comfortable ground on which to unite against a common enemy. We can locate the origins of this anti-fascist discourse, and the memory it shaped, in the pacifism that developed in the wake of the First World War. Teachers, and women educators in particular, took a leading role in this movement. A significant number of French teachers rebelled against the traditional curriculum that had instructed youngsters to loathe Germany and idolise the French army.[11] Child protection came to sit centre in these narratives with widespread backing for the 1924 Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child which viewed children as the first victims of war deserving of protection. Spanish teachers formed part of this movement and many progressive educators there backed the idea of using the classroom to abolish war. The Spanish Second Republic became firmly associated with these ideas: its founders

[9] Archivo Municipal de Marbella, 106, 25/08/1938.
[10] Archivo Histórico Nacional Madrid, Causa General, 1044, 1, Torrecampo, Declaraciones.
[11] Luis Miguel Lázaro Lorente, 'El espíritu de Ginebra y los educadores españoles de entreguerras', in José María Hernández Díaz, (ed.), *Influencia suizas en la educación española e iberoamericana* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2016), pp. 37-52, 39-40.

incorporated the Geneva Declaration into the 1931 constitution; it also became associated with major child-centred education reform and championed internationalism.[12]

In France, the feminist Gabrielle Duchêne helped found the Women's World Committee against War and Fascism. The Committee often worked in tandem with communist parties which many felt backed peace.[13] In Spain, women such as the writer Carlota O'Neill, politicians like the Communist Dolores Ibárruri and the socialist and then communist Margarita Nelken associated with the movement.[14] Clara Campoamor offers an example of how this unifying anti-fascism could work. She had gained some fame as a prominent lawyer and had joined the Republican Radical Party. After the repression of a miners' revolt in Asturias in 1934, however, she played a prominent role in the struggle against fascism and in protecting the children of imprisoned or executed miners.

During the Civil War, many of these women became associated with Socorro Rojo Internacional (International Red Aid), an anti-fascist welfare organisation which brought women together from across the political spectrum, although communists played a leading role.[15] These groups presented fascism as the embodiment of the lust for war that had to be defeated if they were to achieve peace. Fascism also came to represent for them all the scourges of war: death, injury, hunger, illness, displacement, refugee crises and disability. The pages of the organisation's newspaper *Ayuda. Seminario de Solidaridad* brim with these values as we can see in the edition of 15 August 1936 which depicted the Spanish Republic

[12] A passionate exposition in Rodolfo Llopis, *La revolución en la escuela: dos años en la Dirección General de Primera Enseñanza* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1933).

[13] Emmanuelle Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace in Interwar France: Gabrielle Duchêne's Itinerary', *French History, 18*, 3 (2004), pp. 2941-314, pp. 302-303.

[14] On the origins in Spain see Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo, 'Género y antifascismo en España, de la II República a la Guerra Fría (1931-1950), *Anuario IEHS*, 28 (2013), pp. 227-247, p. 231.

[15] Laura Branciforte, *El Socorro Rojo Internacional en España (1923-1939). Relatos de la solidaridad antifascista* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2013).

and world democracies at war with both domestic and international fascist foes. If the fascists won, all fascist states would pit themselves against the democracies in a new world war. The edition also covered news of the fascist shooting of female left-wing activists, children injured by fascist bombardments and the class war being carried out by landlords in Andalusia who were massacring rural workers. We can detect the emergence of the anti-fascist memory these values shaped at the funeral of the ambulance driver Eduardo Ibiricu who had died helping others in a supreme act of selfless 'anti-fascist solidarity'.[16] Across government-held Spain funeral services became forums to create and express a comforting anti-fascist memory. This comes across especially clearly in the funerals of children such as Encarnación Luna killed, according to newspaper reports, by 'fascist' bombs in Fuensalida, near Toledo. Her corpse was transported to Madrid and here a white hearse carried her body to the cemetery as a crowd followed making the anti-fascist, clench-fisted salute.[17]

**Reconciliation**

In the 1950s, a group of malcontents from within the Franco regime began to work with important opposition leaders to achieve political reform, amnesty for political prisoners and reconciliation. Dionisio Ridruejo stood prime among the disgruntled within the regime. Ridruejo had earned fame as a Falangist, a poet, a regime propagandist and as a volunteer who travelled to the Soviet Union to fight with the Nazis against Stalin's forces. From the 1940s, however, a number of Falangists began to feel that Franco had turned his back on the quest for social justice and the protection of the peasantry. This tradition, they felt, was scotching their efforts to integrate those from the losing side in the Civil War into society and the nation. This helps explain why in 1951 Ridruejo became involved with a new publication named *Revista* which argued that the ideas of those who had backed the Republic should be

[16] *Ayuda*, 15/08/1936, 1, 13.
[17] *Mundo Gráfico*, 30/09/1936 'Las víctimas inocentes. La niña de Fuensalida muerta por un avión faccioso', p. 16.

appreciated rather than scorned and celebrated intellectuals who had backed the Republic, such as the poet Miguel Hernández. Ridruejo increasingly began to co-operate with opponents of the regime such as the socialist Enrique Tierno Galván and the conservative monarchist José María Gil Robles.[18]

In 1963, Ridruejo published his memoir in which he turned his back on the Francoist Crusade memory of the Civil War. He lambasted the dictator's horrific repression which we now know to have killed at least 130,000 people behind the lines. He denounced in particular the state-led targeting of political opponents which he said took away the very groups the Falange could have recruited. It also meant that all opposition groups which could have built a healthy society lay destroyed even years later in the 1950s and early 1960s.[19] Others, like Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez, chimed in with these criticisms.

Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez had served as minister of education for the Franco regime in the early 1950s, although he began to drift towards Christian Democracy. His growing discontent allowed him to collaborate with figures such as Ridruejo, socialists like Enrique Tierno Galván and the communist Ramón Tamames.[20] By the mid~~late~~ 1950s, the Communist Party had also accepted that it could not overthrow the Franco regime through guerrilla warfare. The death of Stalin also allowed for a more measured policy. The party further calculated that particularly among the new generation the Civil War no longer represented such a social chasm and children from both sides could unite for social justice and indeed commonly married one another. These factors led to a declaration in June 1956 the party's 'National

[18] On Ridruejo see Pedro García Cueto, 'Dionisio Ridruejo, falangista y demócrata', *El Ciervo*, 61, 736 (2016), pp. 32-35.

[19] Dionisio Ridruejo, *Escrito en España* (Madrid: G. del Toro, [1963]1976) , pp. 116-121. Similar sentiments in Pedro Laín Entraldo, *Descargo de conciencia (1930-1960)* (Madrid: Galaxia Gutenbergo, 2003).

[20] See for example 'Carta al Presidente del Gobierno', *Cuadernos para el Diálogo*, 76 (enero de 1970), pp. 20-21.

Reconciliation' policy designed to allow the communists to work with the diverse but growing union and student movements. The declaration specifically called for an end to the divisions on the Civil War 'opened by General Franco'.[21]

This climate helps explain the growing demands to overcome the divisions created by the Crusade interpretation of the Civil War. Joaquín Ruíz-Giménez, and others such as Juan Luis Cebrián—who would go to establish the newspaper *El País*— founded *Cuadernos para el Diálogo* in 1963. Like the communists, the editors of *Cuadernos* laboured to form a broad coalition that left behind the rancour of the past. An article published in May 1966 laid out the ground: 'the rise of a new generation both facilitates and makes it a duty to stop looking towards the past with hatred and to look towards the future with love and hope'. The author justified this choice on the grounds of Christianity, humanity and political prudence. The tactic would also allow political foes inside and outside the country to re-join national life.[22]

The hardliners around Franco had no time for such sentiments and both consistently censored *Cuadernos* and fined its staff. The gulf between them became profoundly apparent in June 1962 when a group of dissidents from both within Spain and in exile met in Munich under the auspices of the General Spanish Council of the European Movement. The meeting brought together the disgruntled from across the political spectrum, including the former enemies the socialist Rodolfo Llopis and José María Robles, and, according to one of the organisers, the academic and diplomat Salvador de Madariaga, brought an end to the Civil War on 6 June 1962. The meeting horrified Franco whose press declared the meeting, in one

[21] Carme Molinero, 'La política de reconciliación nacional. Su contenido durante el franquismo, su lectura en la Transición', *Ayer*, 66 (2007), pp. 201-225, p. 207.

[22] 'Más allá del perdón', *Cuadernos para el Diálogo*, 32, mayo (1966), pp. 1-2. Cited in Javier Muñoz Siro, 'Entre la memoria y la reconciliación. El recuerdo de la República y la guerra en la generación de 1968', *Historia del Presente*, pp. 83-100.

*ABC* headline, as a 'filthy, treacherous and unwholesome alliance,' which took place as if Spaniards 'had no memory [of the Civil War and the actions of the left]'.[23] Despite the rejection of 'amnesia', in fact Franco's ministers in the 1960s were trying to fashion the regime's legitimacy less out of victory in the war and more from the prosperity that Francoist victory, or peace as it was now presented, had purportedly delivered. 1964 provided the opportunity to celebrate '25 years of Peace'. Part of the celebrations included an exhibition in Madrid that claimed life expectancy had risen from 50 in the Republic to 72 and while 300 Spaniards died from cold and hunger in 1935, not a single one passed away from those causes in 1963.[24] The statistic ignored the fact that at least 200,000 people died of malnutrition, disease and starvation after the Civil War.[25] The regime increasingly preached that it had broken the pattern of Spanish history of war and instability and only its existence could prevent a return to madness.[26]

The Francoist old guard, however, never relinquished the Crusade memory of the Civil War. In his last will and testament, Franco declared 'I believe I had no enemies other than the enemies of Spain…Do not forget that the enemies of Spain and of Christian civilisation are on the alert'.[27] By contrast, for a younger generation of politicians and leaders, the idea of reconciliation, in the sense of conciliation, provided a means to come to terms with a civil society increasingly beholden to protests and strikes. Many disputes about pay and conditions were also rapidly becoming politicised in response to police repression. Economic integration into the European Community also looked far off as long as Spain appeared as a remnant of

[23] *ABC*, 10/06/1962, 'El contubernio de la traición', p. 1.
[24] *The Guardian*, 2/6/06/1964, 'Spain out of Isolation', p. 12.
[25] Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco and Peter Anderson, (eds.), *Franco's Famine. Malnutrition, Disease and Starvation in Post-Civil War Spain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).
[26] José Reig Cruañes, 'La construcción de la memoria dominante durante la dictadura', *Pasajes*, 31, Invierno (2009-2010), pp. 36-49, pp. 41-44
[27] Cited in Paul Preston, *Franco: a biography* (London: Harper Collins Kindle Edition, No Date, Location 17560).



Formatted: Font: Italic

the very fascism that the EEC had developed to counter.[28] The way politicians within the regime endeavoured to move forward can be seen in the writing of Manuel Fraga: a politician, minister, ambassador and academic who passed from within the Franco regime to found the Alianza Popular: today's Popular Party—Spain's most successful conservative party. Fraga denounced Spain's history of civil wars, revolutions and military revolts. In this vein, he roundly criticised the Second Republic which 'was incapable of maintaining public order from the very beginning' and allowed people 'to take justice into their own hands' and therefore led to the 'great tragedy of 1936'. Following the war, Franco's great achievement had been to 're-establish peace and order after the tremendous bloodletting of the Civil War' and avoiding the efforts of all those who had wanted to re-start the Civil War. In short, Francoism brought 'order and economic progress'.[29]

Fraga's words help show that while many of the younger members of the right-wing bloc desired reconciliation, they remained captive to aspects of the Francoist memory of the Civil War and particularly to the notion that the Republic's leaders allowed violence behind the lines to flourish. Many ordinary Spaniards shared this suspicion. During the latter stages of the regime, public opinion polls showed that a significant number of Spanish citizens ranked 'peace' as much more important than 'democracy'.[30] Meanwhile, groups on the left became increasingly receptive to the idea of reconciliation and amnesty. In any case, the right remained too popular and powerful for the left to break radically with the old regime. In November 1975, opinion polls showed that fifty-three per cent of Spaniards experienced Franco's death as a painful loss.[31] Not only this, but after Franco passed away important

[28] The seminal study in Paloma Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia: the role of the Spanish Civil War in the transition to democracy* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2002).
[29] Manuel Fraga, *ABC*, 'El País Histórico', 17/09/1976, p. 3.
[30] Cruañes, 'La construcción de la memoria', p. 41.
[31] Rafael López` Pintor, 'El estado de la opinión pública española y la transición a la democracia', *Reis*, 13, 81, pp. 7-47, p. 40.

supporters continued to hold powerful posts within the government, the army and the courts. Groups on the centre and left, in the meantime, had split between the Communists who supported the Junta Democrática de España and the Socialists and Christian Democrats who backed the Platafroma de Convergence Democrática. Meanwhile, the electoral law awarded proportionally more seats to rural and conservative areas. All of this meant that in the general election held on 15 June 1977 no one bloc gained the dominant hold that would be needed to hold former regime officials account for their actions. The Unión Centro Democrático secured just over 34.52 per cent of the vote, the Socialists 24.44 pec cent, Alianza Popular 8.05 per cent and the Communist Party 6.3 per cent.[32]

The results came in the context of economic crisis alongside rising attacks from the Basque terrorist group ETA and help explain why politicians on the left decided to look forward towards a new democratic regime rather than rake over the divisive past. This required a great sacrifice on behalf of left-wing activists who often hailed from families that had suffered deeply at the hands of Francoist officials. As the newspaper *El País* declared on 14 October 1977 'Democratic Spain must from now on look to the future, forget the events and responsibilities of the Civil War and distance itself from forty years of dictatorship. We should only look towards the past to reflect on the causes of the catastrophe and to see how we can avoid its repetition'.[33] The editorial came directly after the passing of the 'Amnesty Law', which aside from freeing left-wing prisoners also granted amnesty to those who had carried out the Francoist repression: forestalling any chance, even at the time of writing, of transitional justice.

[32] https://app.congreso.es/consti/elecciones/generales/resultados.jsp?fecha=15/06/1977.
[33] *El País*, 14/10/1977, 'Amnistía al fin'.

These sentiments meant that Francoist versions of the past, and particularly violence behind the lines, went unchallenged while anti-fascist memories of the Civil War and its repression found little public space. There were certainly some attempts to remove a number of the more exclusive Francoist memorials imbued with the Crusade memory. Left-wing councils which came to power after the first municipal elections in 1979 in particular began to remove some street names that resounded with Francoist memory. In Salamanca what had been the Plaza Onésimo Redondo, a leading Falangist, became the Plaza de la Libertad and in Valencia statues to the Falange leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera and to Franco were removed. There was also a growing interest in Civil War history and a focus on those who went into exile. Moreover, the government awarded compensation to some groups such as the pensions given to disabled veterans and the imprisoned from the Republican side in the Civil War.[34] There was also a tremendous increase in the number of books published dealing with many aspects of the Civil War, with the notable exception of the repression.[35]

At the local level some relatives of the murdered began to exhume graves and give their loved ones a decent burial. This happened in 1979 in Murcia where the remains of 377 people were reburied. Here families had for some time come together at the cemetery every 1 November to remember their executed loved ones and in the transition petitioned the local authorities to be allowed to give their relatives a dignified burial. While the discourse of a dignified burial undoubtedly captured an essential truth for the families, it also distanced the relatives from the anti-fascist discourse and placed their actions firmly within the parameters of reconciliation (conciliation) without seeking to bring anybody to account. The monument

[34] Josefina Cuesta, 'Recuerdo, silencio y amnistía en la transición y en la democracia española (1975-2006), Stud. Hist. Historia cont., 25 (2007), pp. 125-165. Jesús de Andrés, 'Las estatuas de Franco, lea memoria del franquismo y la transición política española', *Historia y Política*, 12, pp. 161-186.

[35] For an attack on historians, and cultural studies academics, who claim the transition was characterised by silence see Santos Juliá, 'Cosas de la transición que se cuentan', *Ayer*, 79 3 (2010), pp. 297-319.

the relatives constructed included the inscription 'let the sacrifice of your lives become a seed of peace that brings neighbours together'.[36] Exhumations like these also enjoyed no proper support from the state or civil society and generally came to an end in 1981 after a failed, but alarming, coup attempt.[37] Other voices were stifled by the shaping of memory by narratives of reconciliation. When the memoir of the left-wing writer Carlota O'Neill, which dealt with the execution of her husband in the Civil War, her imprisonment and the removal of her children by the Francoist state, was published in Spain in 1979 it disappeared almost without trace. Not until the early 2000s did her work find a public ready to read her anti-fascist account.[38]

**Human Rights**

The growth in the support for human rights from the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s, helps explain the increasing willingness of some Spaniards to challenge the silence produced by the stress on reconciliation. At the time of Franco's death, human rights culture and ideas of transitional justice were less entrenched than today. Accordingly, the European Community made no efforts to impose entry conditions on Spain that would require efforts to bring supporters of the dictatorship to book. This offers a sharp contrast with the conditions later set for Serbia. Changing international standards also come across in the use of transitional justice in Chile, Argentina and Guatemala in the 1990s alongside the creation of truth and reconciliation committees in twenty-five countries from 1990–2010. Spain became heavily involved in international human rights culture and in 2005 the country's constitutional court ruled that universal jurisdiction prevailed over national laws.[39]

[36] Juan E. Serrano Moreno, 'La exhumación de 1979 en Murcia. Acción Colectiva de familiares de fusilados republicanos durante la transición'. *Ayer*, 103, 3 (2016), pp. 147–177, p. 175.

[37] Paloma Aguilar, 'Memoria y transición en España. Exhumaciones de fusilados republicanos y homenajes en su honor', *Historia y política*, 39, (2018), pp. 291–325, p. 307.

[38] Catherine O'Leary, 'Bearing Witness: Carlota O'Neill's *Una mujer en la Guerra de España*', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies: Hispanic Studies and Researches on Spain, Portugal and Latin America*, 89, 7–8, (2012), pp. 155–168, p. 160.

[39] Nadia Hajji, 'Post-Transitional Justice in Spain: passing the historic memory law', *Columbia University Journal of Politics & Society*, 25, 1 (2014), pp. 83–100.

Seen in this context, it is no co-incidence that when in the year 2000 Emilio Silva exhumed the remains of his grandfather and set up the path-breaking Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory he published a newspaper article with the headline 'My Grandfather was also a Disappeared' in a clear reference to events in Argentina where a long struggle for justice for the disappeared had taken place.[40] The commemoration Silva organised for his grandfather around the exhumation fused the desire for dignity and for family honour with a wider and more overtly anti-fascist discourse. His grandfather's recovered remains were placed next to those of his widow. The ceremony was accompanied by a series of events entitled 'Democracy's Debt to the Republic and the Guerrilla [the anti-fascist resistance movement]'. Silva made clear the purpose of these events: 'A common cause united us all. To recover memory and to give all of those who fought for liberty and democracy the place they deserve in history'.[41]

The Association, however, suffered from tense relations with another group which arose to exhume and rebury those murdered by the Francoists. The Foro Por la Memoria appealed to groups to the left of the Socialist Party and adopted an overtly antifascist line of memory that went directly against notions of reconciliation. This is clear in the Foro's website which defines the goal of the organisation 'to recover the historical memory of the antifascists who fought on behalf of the Republic and to end once and for all the impunity for Francoist crimes and criminals'.[42] The tension between the organisations came over whether individuals should be remembered simply as family members or as representatives of social and political organisations. While the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory leaned towards

[40] Emilio Silva, 'Mi Abuelo También Fue un Desaparecido' *La Crónica de León*, 8/10/2000.
[41] Emilio Silva, 'Mi Abuelo También Fue un Desaparecido', *La Crónica de León*, 8/10/2000.
[42] https://www.foroporlamemoria.info/que-es-la-federacion-foros-por-la-memoria/

the former, the Foro Por la Memoria supported the latter against what it lambasted as 'A-political' commemorations.[43]

The two organisations flourished at the start of the twenty-first century in large measure because a new generation of left-wing activists proved much more willing to campaign for the 'recovery of historical memory'. In part, this reflected a move in left-wing movements away from the politics of class, with its focus on the nature of a future society, and towards identity politics, a concern to include the excluded and a willingness to confront the legacies of the past.[44] The desire to confront the past also reflected the fact that the 'grandchildren generation' had not grown up with the same sense of fear that had marked their parents' lives both in terms of the danger of talking about the past under Franco and the later caution against rocking the political boat that characterised the transition.

These changes help explain the desire of the Socialist government that came into power in 2004 to enact a law on historical memory. A dose of political realism played a further role. Discussion of the Francoist past placed the spotlight on the Popular Party's own origins within the Franco regime. The Popular Party also formed a broad coalition between those more committed to ideas of reconciliation and those who quietly harboured the Crusade memory within them. The law could help expose these tensions. At the same time, the politics of memory allowed the Socialists to oil the wheels of co-operation with other political parties such as left wingers in Izquierda Unida and later Podemos/ Unidas Podemos and also with regional nationalists such as the Catalonia ERC or the Basque PNV—both much more open to criticising the 'Spanish' Franco regime.[45] In practice the pressure on the

[43] https://www.foroporlamemoria.info/que-es-la-federacion-foros-por-la-memoria/

[44] On such changes see Jay Winter, «The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the ‹Memory Boom› in Contemporary Historical Studies», in: Bulletin of the German Historical Institute 27 (2000) Fall, pp. 363 – 397.

[45] A general discussion in Carsten Humblebæk, 'Usos políticos del pasado reciente durante los años de

right did indeed bring into the open supporters of the Crusade Memory who had lain low while ideas of reconciliation had flourished.

The success of the writer Pío Moa shows this process at work. Moa had gained notoriety as a member of the Grupo de Resistencia Antifascists Primmer de Octubre (GRAPO): a left~~right~~-wing terrorist group said by some to receive right-wing backing to destabilise democracy and which carried out the killing of security officials and bombing campaigns between 1976–1982. Over time, Moa became increasingly vocal in his support for right-wing views and in particular he rejected mainstream historical interpretations within the university system, which from the 1990s had taken a growing interest in the Francoist violence behind the lines. Instead Moa defended many of the interpretations of the war first offered by the Franco regime.[7] Despite Moa's protestations that his views were being silenced, his book ~~book~~ 'Myths of the Spanish Civil War', and with the help of extensive media coverage, sold more than 300,000 copies. Following Francoist lines, he argued the Civil War came about because the nation came under attack from revolutionary forces and his book overlooked, or denied in the case of the infamous massacre at Badajoz, the rebel and Francoist repression.[46] Meanwhile rigours academic studies of the repression gathered only a relatively small readership. The enduring hold of Francoist interpretations is perhaps unsurprising among a population which before the early 2000s rarely came across vocal challenges to the Franco view. Even in the new democracy school teachers struggled to tackle the history of the Civil War and particularly avoided the difficult topic of violence behind the lines.[47]

Formatted: Font: Italic

~~gobierno del PP', *Historia del presente*, 3 (2004), pp. 157–168.~~

~~[46] A discussion in Javier Rodrigo, 'Los mitos de la derecha historiográfica. Sobre la memoria de la guerra civil y el revisionismo a la española', *Historia del Presente*, 3, (2004), pp. 185–195.~~

~~[47] On the complexities of teaching this contested and divisive history see Clare Magill, 'Approaches to Teaching the Civil War and Franco Dictatorship in Contemporary Spain', inDensie Bentovato, Karina V. Korostelina and Martna Schulze, (eds), *History Can Bite: History Education in Divided and Postwar Societies*, (Gottingen: V & R University Press, 2016) pp. 257–286.~~

As a result, the Popular Party has adopted either an ambivalent or hostile attitude towards efforts to 'recover historical memory'. In November 2002, the party appeared unwilling to fall into the trap of appearing pro-Francoist and supported a parliamentary resolution that both condemned the military uprising and called for the moral recognition of those who suffered the Francoist repression. One of the conditions that the party set for its support, however, was that there would be no more future memory initiatives.[48] The Popular Party also gained control of the final text in exchange for its support for the initiative. This is one important reason why much of the final text reflects the type of memory shaped by Fraga. It condemned Spain's history of civil wars, praised the 1978 constitution for providing stability and lauded the politicians of the transition period who 'buried the past' 'overcame division' and 'turned a new page'.[49]

As the demands for greater state role in recognising the maligned and excluded from the Civil War grew, however, the Popular Party began to adopt a more hostile attitude. In many cases, the Popular Party simply did not co-operate in 'memory initiatives'. One example comes in the efforts to create a map of common grave sites and help with exhumations. Some regions under left-wing control, such as Andalusia, saw some progress whereas in many other areas, and particularly those under the control of the Popular Party, witnessed very little or no action.[50] In some cases, such as in Poyales del Hoyo (Ávila province), Popular Party mayors even ordered that the remains of executed people be returned to the mass graves from which they had been exhumed. The Poyales decision led to street confrontations and the rapid

[48] *El País*, 'El PP condena el golpe de Franco y promete honrar a todas las víctimas de la Guerra Civil', 21/11/2002.

[49] *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados*, 20/11/2020, Núm. 625, p. 20510.

[50] Informe del Grupo de Trabajo sobre las Desapariciones Forzadas o Involuntarias' , Naciones Unidas, Asamblea General, Consejo de Derechos Humanos, 2 de julio de 2014 (25).

surfacing of Crusade memory with the defacing of memorials to the executed defaced with Francoist graffiti.[51] The emboldened right also refused to engage with 'memory politics'. Mariano Rajoy, the Popular Party prime minister between 2011–2018, consistently boasted that his government had spent no money on historical memory projects and that Spain did not need to examine its past but rather focus on its future.[52]

The rise of the far right-wing party VOX has made it far harder for the Popular Party to ignore issues of historical memory. Former members the Popular Party such as Santiago Abascal helped found VOX in late 2013. It flourished by pushing identity politics such as Spanish nationalism, especially in the context of campaigns for the independence of Catalonia. It has ~~, the~~ defended~~ce of~~ hunting and traditional masculinity (it opposes state measures to combat domestic violence) and the so-called 'dictatorship of progressives' and 'feminazis'. This is why its rhetoric about the Civil War has changed the discourse on the right-wing in general. In January 2019, Abascal called for the repeal of the 2007 Law of Historical Memory and declared that 'we are the voice of those with relatives on the Nationalist [Francoist] side and who resist the condemnation of their family members. *We are those who do not want the names of streets to be changed as a result of political fanaticism'.* The challenge for the Popular Party is to respond to this pressure from the right without upsetting its centre voters committed to ideas of conciliation presented as reconciliation

Formatted: Font: Italic

**Conclusion**

Spain's memory battles bring two immediate consequences. The first is that the Civil War

[51] ~~*El País*, 07/08/2011, 'En Poyales del Hoyo no quieren memoria Histórica'.~~
[52] ~~*El País*, 05/10/2013, 'La promesa que Rajoy sí cumplió'.~~

continues to play a prominent role in Spanish politics as political groupings seek to define their identity against others or find common ground between them by invoking the different strands of collective memory of the Civil War. The second consequence is that the centre and left have made serious efforts to confront the Francoist past but they have only done so with limited measures and the Popular Party in particular has frequently stymied those endeavours. Even so, we can point to important developments. Between 2000–2019, around 740 mass grave sites were exhumed and the remains of 9,000 people given dignified burials. The 2007 'Law of Historical Memory' offered recognition to those who had suffered repression, declared the military trials that condemned tens of thousands to death and jail as illegitimate and improved pensions, legislated for the removal of Francoist symbols, led to the creation of an archive of victims of the Francoist repression and drove work on a map of mass graves. Local governments in left-wing hands have also taken measures in places such as Valencia, Andalusia and Catalonia and have funded a wide variety of 'memory projects' from exhumations, to 'memory walks' and exhibitions.[53]

As the dispute over the Valley of the Fallen shows, the different memories of the Civil War continue to co-exist and mark people's lives and feelings. The Association for the Defence of the Valley of the Fallen, which opposes exhumations, for instance, mixes the Crusade tropes of the Civil War as a 'history of persecution' in which Christians were 'killed for their faith' with the idea that the Valley is a site of reconciliation and should not be disturbed.[54] For members of the Group for the Exhumation of Republicans in the Valley of the Fallen, the idea of reconciliation is far from their minds and they continue to denounce the 'humiliation of being buried next to their killers'. This sentiment sits alongside a

[53] Pere Soler Paricio, 'La memoria histórica de la Guerra Civil, la dictadura franquista, la Transición, en España. Síntesis histórica e iniciativas legislativas recientes', *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine. De 1808 au temps présent*, 23, 2019.

[54] https://www.elvalledeloscaidos.es/portal/?p=5559

recognition that their relatives died for their anti-fascist politics and that they have the human right to give them a 'dignified' burial.[55] The case shows that the memory battles around the Spanish Civil War are likely to haunt Spanish politics and society for many years to come as the left shores up coalition and groups on the right seek electoral advantage by mobilising core voters around issues of memory and identity.

[55] https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/exhumaciones-pendientes-valle-caidos-devuelvan_1_1305560.html