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Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco?s Spain, 1939-1975

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In *Fear and Progress*, Antonio Cazorla Sánchez has produced a first-class survey of life in the years of the Franco regime (1939?75). His compelling narrative is supported by insightful analysis into the nature of the regime and a welcome abundance of source material including oral history interviews and government documents. This volume forms the first in a series of monographs dedicated to ?Ordinary Lives? and is soon to be followed by works examining Nazi Germany and Stalin?s Russia.

The rationale for the focus on ordinary lives in Spain, and one can assume that such reasoning will be extended to subsequent works in the series, is to demonstrate what happened to those people who ?make? history, and experience it, in very different ways to elites. Cazorla Sánchez sets out to highlight the ?prospects and aspirations of ordinary Spaniards? and ?what they were thinking and expecting from the future? (p.1).

Fear and Progress is, however, more than simply an attempt to tell the history of Spain from a fresh perspective. Cazorla Sánchez?s first vignette is of the poverty experienced by an ordinary family in Almeria. Both parents and their son-in-law are described as illiterate, whilst the children (seven of them) had received only a basic education. Of the eldest daughter?s four children, the fourth (you may already have guessed) is Cazorla Sánchez. This volume is, therefore, much more than a history of Spain; it is also a personal condemnation of the regime by the author whose own experiences of Francoism have shaped his thinking.

The author?s contempt for Franco?s regime is palpable. In part, this is why this analysis of the Franco regime is so compelling ? *Fear and Progress* is not an abstract work, but one that is riven with both personal and political feeling. For this reviewer, whose politics are left wing and whose analytical approach is Marxist, this is fine. For others there may be points in the text where the literary flourishes of condemnation may be too much. Either way, they are undoubtedly heart-felt.

Of a similarly controversial nature (depending on one?s preferences) is one of Cazorla Sánchez?s conclusions regarding the effect that the regime had on Spanish values. He argues that the ?hostile and repressive? institutions of the regime served to make Spaniards ?pessimistic in social and collective matters?. Moreover, he goes further to add that the result of Francoism was to make Spaniards ?individualistic? (p. 4). As an outsider, this reviewer feels unable to comment but it is obvious that this analysis will divide opinion between those who do feel equipped to engage with this judgement.

Cazorla Sánchez sets out his argument over five chapters: ?The Politics of Fear?, ?The Social Cost of the Dictatorship?, ?Migration?, ?A Changing Society?, and ?Roads to Citizenship?. The central thesis that is demonstrated is that contrary to much of the literature, particularly that which has attempted to rehabilitate Franco, Spain?s transition to an economically successful and modern nation happened in spite of, rather than because of, Francoism. Indeed all that Cazorla Sánchez is prepared to concede to the regime is its decision to abandon the self-destructive policy of autarky in the 1950s and the way in which its apparatus of repression prevented concerted industrial action and thus served to suppress wage levels. He therefore contrasts MacMillan?s ?you?ve never had it so good? with the notion that in Franco?s Spain once autarky had been abandoned ?capital ? never had it so good? (p. 15). Behind the terrible effects on the lives of ordinary Spaniards lies, of course, their story and it is this story that Cazorla Sánchez sets out to tell.

Chapter one deals with the establishment of a regime whose control was based on repression and fear. It did this, Cazorla Sánchez argues, by publicly praising the virtues of ?Franco?s peace? through events such as the public celebration of the anniversary of 18 July (the official starting date of the Civil War) or through monuments such as El Valle de los Caídos. He convincingly argues that the state also solidified its control over the population at large by co-opting interest groups (for example the Church, army, and landowners) and using these to aid the creation of oppression in the regime. Such repression was not targeted solely at former republicans, however; Cazorla Sánchez argues that this was the repression of elites against the poor, no matter which side the latter had given preference to during the Civil War. Cazorla Sánchez argues that as the regime became more entrenched, its repressive policies served to turn people away from political thought, this despite the regime?s claim to popular and active support. This lack of desire for political involvement of any variety goes a long way towards explaining the lack of success of the Falange as a fascist party.

Chapter two examines the regime?s incompetent approach to economics. Franco?s policy of autarky caused enormous hardship for the Spanish people and this chapter not only gives a detailed examination of the failure at policy level, but also the consequences on the ground. One British diplomat reported, for example, that in Andalucia many workers could not perform their jobs due to starvation (p. 60) whilst in Jaen during 1951 even the Falange recognised the fact that around 60,000 families spent most of the year simply aspiring to have enough food to stave off death (p. 61). Even those with work were subject to shocking conditions in the work place and excessively lengthy working weeks for little pay. Poverty and misery of course had a dramatic effect on ordinary Spaniards but, so too did the inadequate educational system of Franco?s Spain. Interestingly Cazorla Sánchez points out that things got worse before they got better ? the stabilisation plan

might well have brought an economic boom in the long-term, but at the end of the 1950s and in the short-term the repeal of state intervention and adoption of international capitalism caused a recession that still further affected ordinary lives.

Chapter three handles the massive migrations caused by the regime?s economic and repressive policies. This migration was of course both to urban areas in Spain and abroad, mainly to Europe and in particular to Germany. Migrations to the city might begin with one or two young men seeking work in urban areas, but should they be even modestly successful they would be followed by others from their village. One example that Cazorla Sánchez gives is that of the village of Matian which between 1963 and 1975 all but disappeared whilst the nearby town of Ibi, a manufacturing town, tripled its population from 6,000 to nearly 19,000 (p. 103). For those who went outside of Spain to work there was a comparatively greater amount of money to be earned but even this was taxed by the state and drawn upon by the banks when it was changed into pesetas ? nevertheless, this money played a vital role in keeping the Spanish economy buoyant. Wherever migrants ended up, and in particular if they moved within Spain, they were subject to appalling housing conditions. And yet, for all of these deprivations, people began to break down their identities and adopt new ones in the places to which they moved; for Cazorla Sánchez it is this process that heralded a break between the views of ordinary people and the regime.

Chapter four looks at the various socio-economic forces that altered the views of those living under the regime. Crucial amongst this was the changing role of the Church. Ironically because the regime had come to depend on the Catholic Church to such a great extent for ideological validation, backed-up by spiritual oppression, its shift away from support of the regime and in many cases of priests on the ground into opposition, posted a quandary. Despite the Church becoming a focal-point for dissidents the regime could do little to use repression, the Francoist?s usual response to challenges, against it due to the Church?s central position, at least in theory, in providing support to the regime. Similarly, the regime relied upon the introduction of capitalism into Spain to distract its poverty-stricken citizens but the introduction of consumer goods along with radio and television sets, washing machines, and refrigerators (and less impressively, but perhaps no less importantly, deodorant) all served to give people aspirations for the good life. Ironically, this good life could not be sustained by Spain?s economy and, as Cazorla Sánchez argues, with the onset of the 1974 global economic crisis these ?just tasted, sweet fruit[s]? were taken away (p. 155). Inevitably, perhaps, people would want them back. The economic changes over the 1960s had dramatic social consequences and, for Cazorla Sánchez, it was the move towards a more urban and tolerant outlook by many Spaniards that spelt trouble for a regime based on fear and hatred.

Finally, chapter five examines the various forces that acted on the end of the regime and how the debates about how the regime might continue or collapse after Franco?s death affected ordinary people. Cazorla Sánchez argues that for ordinary Spaniards the future was uncertain. Whilst many felt that the regime could not survive Franco, they were not entirely sure what would follow his death (p. 175). He argues, persuasively, that the regime faced difficulties because increasingly it focussed on the prestige of Franco whilst ignoring the wide-spread dissatisfaction with the regime. Thus whilst popular support for Franco might be genuinely discerned amongst the population, the same could not be said for the regime as a whole. ETA violence and industrial unrest stimulated the usual state repression but, Cazorla Sánchez argues, this was unable to force the kind of acceptance of the regime which it had hitherto. As the Governor of Gerona put it in 1975 ?phrases and concepts were appearing, many of which were considered extinct. We witness the first signs of distress in the labour world and in some student circles where hitherto there had been little political activity? (p. 212). The regime had, by 1975, undermined itself and without the figure of Franco to hold it together ordinary people were clear in expressing that they had had enough.

Two things are not new about Cazorla Sánchez?s approach, though I will demonstrate that they have been used in fresh ways to shed new light upon the dictatorship. The first is the use of the concept of fear and of the role of the Church, army, Falange, and monarchy in the support of the regime. These were, of course, explored at length in Paul Preston?s *The Politics of Revenge*.(1) What Cazorla Sánchez does successfully achieve is giving the reader an insight into not how these politics were conceived or played out in Madrid, but rather how they affected everyday Spanish life. Taken together, therefore, these two works provide an

invaluable insight into Spanish life under the dictatorship.

The second approach that is not new is the use of oral history, which supports much of Cazorla Sánchez?s research. Most famously, certainly for English language scholars, this was an approach used in the works of Ronald Fraser and perhaps most notably in his *Blood of Spain* and *The Pueblo*.(1) But Cazorla Sánchez?s work is much more than an oral history even in its methodology. The use of Spanish archival sources to support the testimony provided in oral evidence is impressive and gives the analysis a tremendous depth. It is also the use of oral history testimony that allows for the persuasive analysis of the lives of ordinary Spaniards in the regime to come to the fore. And it is also this approach which has another, no doubt intended result ? the avoidance of the positing of a teleological economic development of the regime and its transition to democracy. As Cazorla Sánchez argues, ordinary Spaniards did not know when they were experiencing Franco?s dictatorship that it would necessarily end, they certainly did not know when he might die, and even when they might reasonably have expected that such an event was only just around the corner they could not have necessarily known what would happen to the regime. It is the portrayal of this aspect of every day life for those Spaniards who stopped to consider the regime, their place within it, and its future that made life such drudgery. And such drudgery, and at times hopelessness on the part of ordinary people, is presented in Cazorla Sánchez?s work with almost Orwellian mastery.

These two methodological devices, the politics of fear as a concept and the use of oral history, are refreshed by Carzola Sánchez and give the reader a new insight into the regime. Seemingly more old-hat at first glance is the combative way in which *Fear and Progress* sets out to disprove and dispel the claims of the right that Franco?s rule was benevolent and that, for all the regime?s ills, it heralded the birth of modern, economically developed Spain. To English language readers used to works that are sympathetic to the left (such as those of Paul Preston, Sebastian Balfour, and Gabriel Jackson) the case has already been made. But it should be remembered, and Cazorla Sánchez actively reminds us, that there are plenty of rightists, particularly in Spain, who do give a sympathetic view of the regime. Even if Cazorla Sánchez?s analysis of the regime does little more than confirm what those on the left already think about Franco?s regime it is important to sustain the case with new evidence (and *Fear and Progress* gives enormous succour to this) and to challenge those who cling uncritically to the Caudillo as a talisman.

Finally, and in the view of this reviewer most importantly, *Fear and Progress* stakes a more solid place in the contemporary literature on Franco?s Spain: it is a good solid history. Of late research methods into, and insights from, the Franco regime have drawn considerably from postmodern theory and from literature. Much of this work is consumed by a privileged consideration of theory that often relegates lived experience to a secondary position and sometimes considers it irrelevant. Of course literature is a useful source, not least of all because it is evocative but here, in *Fear and Progress*, the real-life stories of real-life people are presented and it is to these bread-and-butter issues that historians should be listening.

Notes

1. Paul Preston, *The Politics of Revenge* (London, 1995).Back to (1)
2. R. Fraser, *Blood of Spain* (London, 1979); R. Fraser, *The Pueblo* (London, 1973).Back to (2)

The author is happy to accept this review and does not wish to comment further.

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