How Franco stayed on

STANLEY G. PAYNE

Julián Casanova and Carlos Gil Andrés

TWENTIETH-CENTURY SPAIN
A history
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King Juan Carlos condemning the attempted coup, February 23, 1981

Forty years ago, Spain was viewed as an exotic land, "exceptional" not so much because of its earlier Civil War as because it was the only large country in Western Europe with a single-party dictatorship that had somehow survived the Second World War. In addition, it was the home of a Catholic culture that, with strong support from the political regime, had carried out a neo-traditionalist revival absolutely without precedent in the Western world, even though that waned rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century. With the rapid democratization that followed Franco's death in 1975, Spain became a "normal" country and ceased to attract international attention, with the exception of large numbers of tourists, who were much more interested in its climate than in its history or culture.

Twentieth-Century Spain, which first appeared in Spanish five years ago, aims to be both comprehensive and accessible. The senior author, Julián Casanova, is a well-known historian who made a name for himself early in his career with a series of books on Spanish anarchism, a topic on which he became the world's leading authority, before going on to produce more general works. Carlos Gil Andrés is a younger scholar who also writes on social and political history. They have produced a well-structured volume that uses its space efficiently and provides broad coverage of the major topics, focusing, as a broad history must, on the political framework, but also discussing the rapid changes that took place in society and economic structure.

Any treatment of twentieth-century Spain is likely to have a four-part framework, divided between the first decades of mostly parliamentary monarchy, the republic and Civil War of the 1930s, the long Franco dictatorship that followed, and the era of democratic and parliamentary monarchy that occupied the final quarter-century. The book has a clear point of view, which is that of the moderate Left, but is respectful of facts and crammed with a great deal of generally reliable information.

The early twentieth century under the monarchy, extending to 1931, is treated fairly, in contrast to several decades ago, when it was fashionable to exaggerate the purported failures of that era. The authors instead portray the years before 1931 as a time of comparatively steady if modest progress in almost every sphere, with the exception of the political inversion wrought by the very mild dictatorship of 1923–30. Unlike in Greece, where parliamentary monarchy was restored after interludes of authoritarian rule, the regime of General Miguel Primo de Rivera lasted long enough to effect a complete break with the old parliamentary system that could not be bridged. Transition to a genuinely democratic system might have gone more smoothly under traditional institutions than under the new republican regime suddenly installed in 1931, but that is an argument stemming more, perhaps, from the dramatic failure of the latter than from the viability of further reform under the monarchy's constitutional framework. None of the parliamentary regimes of agrarian Southern and Eastern Europe survived the turmoil of the 1920s and 30s.

The interwar period was the time of the most severe political conflict known to modern Europe, with the Spanish Republic holding the dubious distinction of being the most fragmented and conflict-ridden of all European regimes of that era. The authors devote more than fifty pages to it, taking their readers through this turmoil at a measured pace that allows for considerable nuance. Despite the extent of a cleavage without parallel elsewhere, they are confident that somehow it could all eventually have been sorted out had not part of the military launched a counter-revolutionary insurrection in July 1936. This is doubtful. The remarkable thing is that such a reaction had not occurred earlier. The Spanish are more patient than they are sometimes given credit for.

The extent of arbitrary government and arrests, distortion and suppression of free elections, radical strikes, economic destruction, property confiscation, violation of religious freedom and seizure of church property, limitations of speech and assembly, and political violence have never had any precedent or equal in a West European country. The authors follow the trend of leftist interpretation and make light of this to some extent, ignoring certain aspects altogether. To suggest that no concerted rebellion against this state of things should have occurred is not very realistic. I am particularly sceptical about this argument, since various of my American ancestors took part in the fierce civil strife in 1775 and 1861 in response to much less provocation.

There were five possible outcomes of the breakdown of Spanish democracy in Spain in 1936. First, the Republican government might have abruptly changed its policies and alliances to gain control of the situation, though it gave no sign of doing that. Second, the revolutionaries might have seized control, carrying out the kind of sweeping and violent revolution they imposed in most of the Republican zone during the Civil War. Third, the Left might have gone through an internal conflict of its own, as happened on two brief occasions during the Civil War that ensued. Fourth, total breakdown and chaos might have occurred. Fifth, the Right might have rebelled and imposed its own alternative.

The fifth option seriously faltered at first, owing, as the authors clearly explain, to the divisions within the military, which was almost as divided internally as was Spanish society as a whole. Manuel Azaña, the Republican President, briefly attempted to bring about the first option, a Republican rescue, but did so far too late when it no longer had any chance of success. He then turned to the second – violent revolution. That briefly strengthened opposition to the insurrection, but ended any possibility of going back to the democratic regime, and guaranteed that there would be a longer conflict, though its ultimate length depended to a large extent on foreign intervention.

The Civil War of 1936–9 was one of the signal events of the century. A correspondent who covered it described the war as "something like an axe murder in a basement", because of the extraordinary number of political executions – well over 100,000 were carried out, almost as many as the total number of Spanish military deaths. Since the Axis powers and the Soviet Union soon intervened on opposing sides, it was styled by many as a struggle between Fascism and Communism, though the Republican propaganda machine preferred to frame

the war as a struggle between Fascism and democracy. In fact, it was a national variant of the revolutionary/counter-revolutionary civil wars of early twentieth-century Europe, which stretched from 1917 to 1949, and almost always featured mass atrocities.

Casanova and Gil Andrés take the side of the Left, still attempting to portray the revolutionary regime as a "democracy", and attribute Franco's ultimate victory to the weight of foreign intervention. Certainly, Franco could not have won without outside assistance, just as the Left could not have continued the struggle so long without extensive foreign support. Even massive foreign intervention does not guarantee results, however, as demonstrated by the American experience in Vietnam and elsewhere. The Spanish war was waged primarily by Spaniards, who bore the major responsibility for the outcome.

The authors are not extreme partisans by Spanish standards. Most of their judgements are measured, they often cite the latest research, and they regularly present other arguments with which they disagree. Given the tendency towards extreme sectarianism in Spain, their approach is commendable. Their book devotes just enough space to the Civil War to explain its major complexities, without privileging these three crucial years at the expense of the remainder of the century.

The Franco regime resulting from the conflict was not planned by anyone, not even by Franco, before or in the opening days of the conflict. Rather, it was a sudden solution to the new problems that emerged, another product of the radicalization undergone by both sides. Franco quickly took advantage of offers of support to manoeuvre himself into the position of commander-in-chief of the Nationalist army and, in the process, turned that into a complete personal dictatorship, later making it clear that he did not recognize term limits. Had they not been engaged in a desperate conflict, the other Nationalist commanders might have baulked at such a stance.

The dictatorship lasted until Franco died of old age in 1975, making it the longest of the four historical segments covered in this book. Both Spanish society and the regime itself changed greatly during the period – a point Casanova and Andrés skirt over rather briskly. Though they cling to the myth of the Republic, they effectively explode the other key myth of that era – that Franco was really neutral during the Second World War. In fact, he was a friend of Hitler, though he was realistic enough to realize that Spain lacked the strength to enter the conflict. Equally important, from his point of view, was the fact that Hitler refused to guarantee Spain a giant chunk of the French empire in West and North-west Africa.

Despite his enduring belief that authoritarian nation states remained the long-range future of Europe, Franco accepted the need to adjust the Spanish system, at least cosmetically, to survive in the post-war era of European social democracy. This he did with great success, eventually abandoning his statist policy of economic autarky, enabling the economy to boom during the great European growth era of the 1960s. He sought to avoid being a Latin American-style military dictator with a mission to build a new political system, but the system he presided over underwent constant modification, losing much of its original quasi-fascist and imperialist ideology. A cold, complacent and comparatively nerveless man, Franco nonetheless died in a state of considerable personal anguish over the likelihood that the Spanish government was about to undergo fundamental change.

The authors provide an effective, concise account of the era of democratization that followed. They provide much pertinent detail within a small space, which brings the book to a successful – and hopeful – conclusion. When recounting the notorious military action of February 23, 1981, in which a Civil Guard detachment occupied the parliamentary chamber in full view of television cameras, Casanova and Gil Andrés hold to the traditional interpretation that it constituted an abortive military coup, though a more nuanced understanding is now beginning to find favour in Spain, particularly after the sudden abdication of King Juan Carlos last year.

Spain began the twentieth century in a state of under-development both politically and economically, only to undergo massive convulsion and violence followed by a long dictatorship. Its story nonetheless had an encouraging ending, with a notionally "model democratization" which, as the authors say, inaugurated the century's "third wave" of democratization in Europe, Latin America and elsewhere. Though the ground has been covered more fully in English in Javier Tusell's *Spain: From dictatorship to democracy, 1939 to the present* (2007), Julián Casanova and Carlos Gil Andrés narrate their story well.

A time for cherries

ROBERT TOMBS

John Merriman

MASSACRE

The life and death of the Paris Commune of 1871
324pp. Yale University Press. £20 (US $29.99).
978 0 300 17452 6
US: Basic Books. $29.99. 978 0 465 02017 1

The Paris Commune, the popular insurrection that held power precariously and with an amiable lack of violence between March and May 1871, has an intriguing place in modern memory. The name has enough glamour even on this side of the Channel to have inspired a pop group and a cool café in Docklands. A French manufacturer has recently brought out a range of elegant (and appropriately inexpensive) watches inscribed "Paris Commune 1871". Les Amis de la Commune, a mutual aid society for ex-insurgents founded in the 1880s, still flourish, with a shop selling books and memorabilia in a once proletarian and now fashionably bohemian district of Paris. One can hardly imagine "Friends of the Chartists" or "Admirers of the March Days of 1848", let alone "Fellow Travellers of the Bolshevik Revolution", displaying such tireless loyalty. The Commune has also inspired generations of political theorists (first and foremost Karl Marx), polemicists, historians, biographers, novelists, filmmakers and artists, many of them passionately *engagé*, and covering the whole political spectrum from anarchism to fascism. A bibliography of works on the Commune published in 2006 listed more than 2,600 items; and since then several articles, monographs and theses from several countries have been added to the list. Yet in France, academic colleagues, schoolteachers and members of the public constantly lament that the Commune is almost forgotten, untaught in schools and unheard of by the young; and they deplore this because they feel, for reasons not always clear, that it is an event that ought to be widely known and commemorated.

What lies behind the paradox of this famous and yet unknown Commune is perhaps that it has become difficult to situate within the broad sweep of modern French history. Why is it important? What did it do? What, if anything, can it signify today? Marx, in his almost simultaneous *Civil War in France* (1871), gave the Commune two epoch-making meanings. First, as "the form at last discovered" for a truly democratic workers' government, the prototype for future revolution; and second as the martyrdom of the proletariat at the hands of the bourgeois state. These ideas provided the main themes for a century of writing. Engels based the formulation "dictatorship of the proletariat" on it. Lenin thought the Commune had failed through lack of decisive leadership and by being too averse to class war. That the Commune was so short-lived meant that all sorts of ideas of what it might have done had it survived bequeathed a beguiling mixture of nostalgia and hope, memorably summed up in a romantic song written by one of the Commune leaders and still universally known in France as "Le Temps des Cerises" – "cherry time".

Romantic writing reached its apogee around the centenary in 1971, when a small number of brave French academics – one had to be brave in those days to defy the orthodoxy of the Parti Communiste Français – began to apply a scholarly microscope to the event, braving accusations of "bourgeois objectivity". A young lecturer at the Sorbonne, Jacques Rougerie, pronounced, amid fury in Party circles, that the Commune had been "dusk, not dawn": not the beginning of a new cycle of proletarian revolt, but the closing episode in the French revolutionary saga carried out by a traditional artisan class. Since then, historians from several countries have brought different perspectives to the Commune: as a watershed in women's emancipation; as a struggle over urbanization; as an anarchist rejection of bourgeois politics; as a rupture in cultural history; as an affirmation of democratic republicanism. These new beginnings and endings have made the picture more complex. Some see the Commune as part of transnational processes. Others make it specifically French, even Parisian: a consequence of a unique political crisis in the aftermath of national defeat, and/or the product of Haussmann's authoritarian remodelling of the city. Hence Rougerie's own cautious reformulation of his verdict – dusk, certainly; dawn, perhaps.

Given the amount of innovative work that has appeared, now is a good time for a new synthesis in English aimed at a general readership. John Merriman is a professor at Yale who has also put down roots in a French village. This is his first venture into Commune history, though he tells us in a preface that "as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated" by the event. Merriman does not adjudicate between the various scholarly debates, or put forward a new interpretation. Rather, he tells the dramatic story. Here he has several notable predecessors. The pioneer was Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray, a Communard journalist whose now classic history was translated by Eleanor Marx in 1886. More recently, there have been works by Frank Jellinek (published by the Left Book Club in 1938) and a comparable account by Stuart Edwards published for the centenary of 1971. Merriman's book supersedes these two as the standard modern narrative. He has read the large amount of scholarly writing produced over the past forty years (including, I should say, some by your reviewer, on which he comments generously even though he does not always agree with it). He has also gone back to the voluminous contemporary sources, especially memoirs, some published at the time, some in recent editions, some still in manuscript in archives and libraries. He weaves these accounts together to reflect the range of individual experiences of both supporters and opponents of the Commune, and also of those just trying to keep their heads down. Merriman takes us through the story in considerable detail; though readers without an extensive knowledge of Haussmann's Paris may regret the paucity of maps.

Much of the contemporary material is new to me, and even sources I was familiar with are used afresh to bring out unexpected facets. Merriman takes an interest not only in the leading figures, but also in people who were far from heroic. For example, the prosperous bourgeois Vignon family, whose son escaped from Paris by train to avoid conscription into the insurgent National Guard by borrowing false papers, bribing a railway official and hiding under the skirts of some working-class female passengers – this last an interesting detail as it reminds us that not all ordinary Parisians sympathized with their revolution. Or the upper-class "Gustave des E.", whose main activities during the revolution were epicurean lunches and dinners.

As its unambiguous title *Massacre* makes clear, Merriman's main focus is on violence – mostly that inflicted on the revolutionaries, but also that (vastly less) inflicted by them. This is the other element identified by Marx: the saga of martyrdom, always a central element of Commune history. As Marx hinted (some Commune participants made a similar point), without this tragic culmination the insurrection might have been remembered as an insignificant dead end, marked by ideological timidity, disunity, disorganization and widespread apathy. But at the end of May the French government and army inflicted a catastrophe on Paris: thousands died in street fighting among burning buildings, were summarily executed, or were dragged away in captivity. John Merriman's evocation of those terrifying days, using a collage of contemporary accounts, is the climax of the book. He does not make the difficult, perhaps impossible, attempt to distinguish between truth, fantasy, propaganda and urban myth; and the mixture powerfully conveys the terrifying chaos of "Bloody Week" as it appeared to frightened contemporaries on both sides of the barricades.

Witch guide

ANDREW PETTEGREE

Jan Machielsen

MARTIN DELRIO
Demonology and scholarship in the Counter-Reformation
441pp. Oxford University Press. £90 (US $150).
978 0 19 726580 2

Martin Delrio is mostly known to history as the author of the sixteenth century's most influential work on demonology. To have such a man – Jesuit, jurist, friend of Europe's leading intellectuals – defend the practice of witch-hunting was undoubtedly a coup, given the rising tide of scepticism at the witch craze engulfing much of Central Europe during these same years. Delrio's book the *Disquitiones magicae*, became a staple of the scholarly library, consulted and debated by friend and foe alike. The argument of Jan Machielsen's ambitious book is that there was much more to Delrio than this. Machielsen traces Delrio's intellectual journey from his birth into the Spanish colonial bureaucratic elite in the Low Countries, through his years of spiritual and intellectual growth to the masterwork of his last years.

The first chapter is in many ways the most gripping. Delrio was born in Antwerp to Spanish parents in 1551. As a result, his character was forged in the turbulent events of the Dutch Revolt, events in which, as servants of the Spanish Crown, his family was much involved. His uncle Luís was a member of the notorious Council of Troubles, charged with pursuing those involved in the first outbreak of the rebellion (it handed down 10,000 death sentences); Martin's father became the Council's Treasurer. When events turned against the regime in 1576, his uncle was imprisoned and his father dismissed; the latter died a penniless exile in Lisbon.

These family catastrophes inevitably weighed heavily on the young Martin. In 1580, deprived of any hope of a public career in the service of Philip II, he departed for Spain and entered the Jesuit order. Here he flourished, laying the foundation for his later scholarly works. Delrio was not an easy subordinate; intended by his superiors for work back in the Low Countries, Delrio managed for several years to evade this vocation. Perhaps the memories of his family's humiliation were still too raw, but it certainly puts an interesting gloss on the famously disciplined Jesuit duty of obedience. It was only in 1594 that Delrio finally obtained the post he most coveted, as Professor of Biblical Exegesis at the Jesuit College in Louvain.

Along the way Delrio made important friends. He was subsequently credited with effecting the conversion to Catholicism of the great Flemish humanist Justus Lipsius. Delrio's integration into the European humanist elite is extensively treated in the middle part of this book; the reputation he built through publication and interventions in the controversies of the day would certainly play its part in the favourable reception for his magnum opus, the *Disquisitiones magicae*. The *Disquisitiones* was published in three substantial volumes between 1599 and 1600. Although well received on publication, the *Disquisitiones* is as remarkable for its longevity as for its contemporary resonance, comfortably outlasting its rivals. Whereas Jean Bodin's *Demonomanie* was not reprinted after 1616, and even the evergreen *Malleus maleficarum* flagged in the seventeenth century, Delrio's work was in demand as late as 1755. The work drew prestige from the intellectual authority of the Jesuit order as well as the evident learning of its author, skilled (as he acknowledged in the preface with no attempt at false modesty) in theology, philosophy and law.

For all its undoubted learning and enormous size, the *Disquisitiones* was a curiously impersonal text, a vast repository of historic instances. As such it fell comfortably into the sixteenth-century fashion for encyclopedic compendia. But perhaps also for this reason, the *Disquisitiones*, as Machielsen puts it, "struggled in the real world". Just as Erasmus was an expert on education who had never taught a class, Delrio was a demonologist who never met a witch. When consulted by the Duke of Bavaria on a case that had divided experts at his court, Delrio's judicious equivocation revealed a distinct lack of confidence in the merits of his own writing as a handbook of action. Compendia offer something for everyone: one could hold virtually any opinion on witchcraft and find some support in Delrio.

Machielsen has written a clever book, dense and demanding. The rhetorical tricks with which sixteenth-century scholars parried their opponents' thrusts are skilfully illuminated, though Machielsen is capable of his own graceful evasions. The never fully explained lacuna in sixteenth-century publication of the *Malleus maleficarum* is waved away with the lofty but perplexing remark: "When reception is approached as an act of translation, as an active rather than a passive process, this chronological difficulty dissipates". This is a pity, because Jan Machielsen is a notably insightful commentator on print-shop practice, as previous works have demonstrated. This is apparently the first biography of Delrio since the Jesuit hagiography of 1609. It is as comprehensive and compendious an account of Delrio's world as is ever likely to be undertaken.