

2013

## Review of Helen Graham, *The War and its Shadow: Spain's Civil War in Europe's Long Twentieth Century*

Enrique A. Sanabria  
Sanabria@fake.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs>

---

### Recommended Citation

Sanabria, Enrique A. (2013) "Review of Helen Graham, *The War and its Shadow: Spain's Civil War in Europe's Long Twentieth Century*," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 1 , Article 33.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs/vol38/iss1/33>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* by an authorized editor of Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. For more information, please contact [jesus@udel.edu](mailto:jesus@udel.edu).

**Helen Graham. *The War and its Shadow: Spain's Civil War in Europe's Long Twentieth Century*. Eastbourne, UK and Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2012. 250 pp.**

Although a couple generations of historians and social scientists after 1975 were generally sympathetic, if not effusive, in their treatments of Spain's successful transition to democracy, that very transition has recently become the target of tremendous scrutiny and criticism. Spain's protracted economic crisis, replete with chronically high unemployment and diminishing opportunities for social mobility, and the frequent influence peddling scandals that have recently hit the press have led to the argument that beneath the transition's celebrated non-violent moderation and compromise is a series of pacts between political and economic elites not unlike historical arrangements that have come accompanied by deep-seated corruption and at the expense of a true democracy. Helen Graham enters the fray with this collection of essays aimed at demonstrating that the post-dictatorship state has failed to recognize the horrors of the Franco dictatorship and actively works to kill the memory of Francoism's victims by avoiding or not adequately condemning the abuses of the Regime.

Those victims and their families were not only the targets of a form of distinctly twentieth-century, right-wing, ultra-nationalist hatred bent on some form of violent "cleansing" of the domestic population that has been otherized or demonized, first during World War I, but they are also victims in memory. Specifically, the memory of the many Republican and Revolutionary Left fallen, like that of the novelist Ramón Sender's wife Amparo Bayarón who was extrajudicially shot and thrown into a mass grave by the Francoists during the early months of the Spanish Civil War, was suppressed not just by the regime but also the post-dictatorship state. Franco, understandably, could do this because he and the Nationalists not only won the Civil War, but also its aftermath when the "Western powers increasingly preoccupied with cold war divisions [were] prepared to turn a blind eye to mass killing and repression inside Spain in return for Franco's repeated affirmation of crusading anti-communism" (71). But more directly the objects of Graham's indignation are those conservative/Francoist politicians and forces who snuffed out domestic dissent and convinced the Socialists after 1975 that the continued economic prosperity and political evolution of Spain had to be accompanied by the October 1977 Amnesty Law and the eschewing of a proper Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This effectively let the Francoists off the hook for their crimes. That Baltasar Garzón's recent efforts to bring state action to bear against the perpetrators of Francoist crimes was thwarted and that the United Nation's formal call to investigate human rights

abuses under the regime has gone unheeded adds to Graham's frustration with the long shadow of Civil War and Franco Regime violence and suppression.

Ever thoughtful and philosophical about modern Spanish historiography, Graham responds critically to the presentation within and outside Spain of the Civil War as the precursor to World War II because that serves to both romanticize and diminish the Republican cause. Instead she joins Paul Preston and builds upon his massive 2012 volume, *Spanish Holocaust*, to show that the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship's ruthless violence mirrored that of the twentieth-century's totalitarian regimes and the ethnic cleansing in the Kosovo War. On this comparative element of the book Graham falls short. For one, a truly worthwhile comparison of the Civil War with other twentieth-century wars is never fully developed beyond a number of allusions in the text or in the fifty-six pages of informative notes. This seems to deepen the sensation that this is an electrically-charged and politicized monograph that simplifies and attacks everyone we disagree with through name-calling. Further, her representation of the Nationalists suggests their participation in the Civil War and their complicity with the Regime was monocausal: to "kill change" (50) and restore elite and Catholic control over the forces of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. Such characterizations may apply to the Carlists, but not all elements of the "Francoists," many of whom were moved to action by anticlericalism during the Second Republic or the Second Republic's political and extralegal malfeasance, as recently demonstrated in the work of an author Graham appears loathe to consult, Stanley G. Payne (see, for example, his *The Spanish Civil War* and *The Collapse of the Spanish Republic, 1933-1936*). That is most disturbing in a book that seeks to shed light on the crimes the "Francoists" have been getting away with: the Second Spanish Republic leadership was not only election-rigging and gerrymandering districts to politically quash its enemies, but forces within it, both legal and extralegal, were executing political prisoners long before Franco's July 1936 coup.

This was not an easy book to read as the essays differ in tone and voice, and Graham often bombards the reader with post-modern jargon. However, I can certainly see myself assigning it to graduate students along with the work of Payne in order to generate fruitful discussion about state of current Spanish Civil War historiography.

Enrique A. Sanabria  
University of New Mexico