

FASCISM AND VIOLENCE IN SPAIN. A COMPARATIVE UPDATE.

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Abstract: Fascism in Spain? Almost no historian has spoken of fascism in Franco's Spain without denying it altogether, modifying conceptual boundaries or adding terminological parameters (para-, proto-, pseudo-, -ized). Yet, it is just possible that something is not being handled correctly. In this paper, through a critical review of some of the central features in the field of historical interpretation of fascism, comparative analysis is employed to re-examine the current characterization of the Franco Regime and identify it as fascist during the Civil War and immediate post-war period. In examining some of the latest historiographical debates and advances, this paper proposes a coherent reading of Spanish fascism. In this sphere historiography does seem to be in agreement: violence and its contexts occupies a central position in the analysis of fascism. Violence, institutionalization and context are some of the theoretical issues that aim at a re-evaluation of the position of Franco's Spain within the European family of Fascism.

Keywords: Fascism, Spain, Civil War, violence, fascistization.

Introduction: Whatever happened to fascism?

Little did Tim Mason (1995) imagine that his famous last question on the interpretations of the Third Reich would be useful for studying other geographical and chronological circumstances within the same historical context. In spite of inevitable differences, this question needs asking today with regard to the Spanish case. It is in fact a key and salient debate in contemporary Spanish historiography that affects the study and analysis of fascism and its historical and interpretative characteristics, beyond the Spanish case. Given the difficulties encountered in finding a solid niche for the Spanish case, not only the fascist party but the Spanish regime, in the supranational family of fascisms, the question is thus posed: was there fascism in Spain?

It would seem difficult to answer this question in the affirmative if some of the most successful historiographic and interpretative conventions on the matter are followed. In the same way that attempts were made to downplay the connection

between Italian and German fascisms,¹ Spain has always been regarded as lacking the entry-level requirements for any generic fascist category or matrix within the context of international historiography.² With a few notable exceptions, Spain occupies a marginal place in the research that has created the global interpretative framework for fascism.³ Highlighting a few authors to the detriment of a more complete historiographic picture, and personalizing the political forms and cultures of his regime in the figure, thinking or ideology of Franco (Griffin 1997), historiography on fascism has blotted out the Spanish case and its historical context of military dictatorship (1923-31) followed by a democratic republic (1931-36), a Civil War (1936-39) and then another military dictatorship (1939-75).⁴ Spain was a Catholic

¹ See for example, Bracher (1969, 1986) and De Felice (1969, 1975). Some more critical views can be found in Mosse (1999); Collotti (1990, 1994); and, Carchi (2003).

² That is not the case of some of the most relevant historians on Franco's Spain, that consider the need of using the term fascism, as Preston, P. (1995), *The Politics of Revenge. Fascism and the military in 20th century Spain*, London: Routledge; Casanova, J. ed. (2002), *Morir, matar, sobrevivir. La violencia en la dictadura de Franco*, Barcelona, Crítica. Spain was a fascism due to its social functions, for Casanova, J. (1992), 'La sombra del franquismo: ignorar la historia y huir del pasado', in Id. ed., *El pasado oculto. Fascismo y violencia en Aragón (1936-1939)*, Madrid: Siglo XXI. On fascism in Spain before the Civil War, see Gallego, F. (2005), *Ramiro Ledesma Ramos y el fascismo español*, Madrid: Síntesis; Id. (2005), 'Ángeles con espadas. Algunas observaciones sobre la estrategia falangista entre la Revolución de Octubre y el triunfo del Frente Popular' and 'La realidad y el deseo. Ramiro Ledesma en la genealogía del franquismo', in Gallego, F. and Morente, F. eds., *Fascismo en España. Ensayos sobre los orígenes sociales y culturales del franquismo*, Barcelona: El Viejo Topo, pp. 179-209 and 253-447; Id. (2010), 'Fascismo, antifascismo y fascistización. La crisis de 1934 y la definición política del periodo de entreguerras', in Martín, J.L. and Andreassi, A. eds., *De un Octubre a otro. Revolución y fascismo en el periodo de entreguerras, 1917-1934*, Barcelona: El Viejo Topo, pp. 281-354; González Calleja, E. (2008), 'La violencia y sus discursos: Los límites de la 'fascistización' de la derecha española durante el régimen de la Segunda República', *Ayer*, 71, pp. 85-116 and Id. (2011), *Contrarrevolucionarios. Radicalización violenta de las derechas durante la Segunda República, 1931-1936*, Madrid: Alianza. On fascism and Civil War see Rodrigo, J. (2012), 'Violencia y fascistización en la España sublevada', in Morente, F. ed., *España en la crisis de entreguerras. República, fascismo y Guerra Civil*, Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata, pp. 79-95. Not a fascism but a fascistized regime, for Saz, I. (1993), 'El franquismo. ¿Régimen autoritario o dictadura fascista?', in Tusell, J. et. al. eds., *El Régimen de Franco (1936-1975). Política y relaciones exteriores*, Madrid: UNED, pp. 189-201, also in Id. (2004), *Fascismo y franquismo*, Valencia: Universitat de València. For a general vision up to 1994, Pérez Ledesma, M. (1994) 'Una dictadura por la gracia de dios', *Historia Social*, 20, pp. 173-193. On the importance of the political evolution of the regime Tusell, J. (1988), *La dictadura de Franco*, Madrid: Alianza. On Catholicism, Falange and fascism Botti, A. (1992), *Cielo y dinero: el nacionalcatolicismo en España (1881- 1975)*, Madrid: Alianza; Saz, I. (2003), *España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas*, Madrid: Marcial Pons; Juliá, S. (2004), *Historias de las dos españas*, Madrid: Taurus. The latest approach to this debate is Gallego, F. (2012), *El evangelio fascista. Comunidad cristiana y Estado imperial en el nacionamismo contrarrevolucionario español (1931-1948)*, Barcelona: Península.

³ As, for example, in Griffin (1991); Luebbert (1991); or Mazower, M. (1998).

⁴ Highlighted authors are mostly Payne, S.G. (1961), *Falange. A History of Spanish Fascism*, California: Stanford University Press; Id. (1988), *The Franco Regime 1936-1975*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press; Id. (1995), *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press; Id. (1997), *Franco y José Antonio. El extraño caso del fascismo español. Historia de la Falange y el Movimiento Nacional, 1923-1977*, Barcelona: Planeta; or Linz, J.J. (1964), 'Una teoría del régimen autoritario. El caso de España', in Payne, S.G., ed, *Política y sociedad en la España del siglo XX*, Madrid: Akal, pp. 205-263. Basic references on Spain for Paxton, R. (2004), *The Anatomy of Fascism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf are Payne, Ellwood and Preston. Michael Mann's reference to a non-existent Spanish 'Third Republic' is obviously an editorial mistake, in Mann, M. (2010), 'Fascists', in Iordachi, C. ed., *Comparative Fascist Studies. New perspectives*, London: Routledge, pp. 187-214, p. 212. However, his chapter on Spain is more an analysis of contexts rather than of fascism in Id. (2004), *Fascists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 316-374 (I am quoting the Spanish version). Spain is almost non-existent in Costa Pinto, A. ed. (2011), *Rethinking the nature of Fascism*, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, or misunderstood, as in

country led by a military figure: not a fascism, but *something else*: a case of authoritarianism, or Gentile's (2002:147-171) definition of Franco's Spain as military authoritarianism or a military dictatorship with a few fascist nuances due to the influence of the Falange—which can be stretched from the original fascism of José Antonio Primo de Rivera to the FET-JONS single fascist party, created by Franco during the Civil War.

The most popular approach tends to distance the Franco dictatorship from the fascist family. My hypothesis is that based on current literature on international fascism and Spain, it does not seem reasonable to continue avoiding the use of this term.⁵ But this article is not intended as a study of the political homogeneity and identity of the regime or the lack of it, nor is it a study of the unstable balance between *caudillism*, monasticism, Catholicism, traditionalism, modernism, militarism or revolutionarism within Spanish fascism. It is not an enquiry into which term should be used to define Franco's regime: fascism, fascistized, or para-fascism:⁶ what is important in this sense is not the final definition but the assumption that there was a dynamic and constructive dialogue between different elements, singular possibilities and rhythms. Franco's regime developed within a context of domestic war and extreme violence, and the main question of this article is to understand the different cultural elements that historically contribute to the fascist *affirmation*, and whether fascism as a phenomenon, historical block or collective identity, generated a specific repertoire of violence and if that repertoire is recognizable in the experience of the Spanish war and postwar years.⁷ Obviously, violence was neither the most important characteristic of fascist political culture, nor the only channel to obtain the mass support needed to access power. But it is an inescapable dimension of the historical formation of fascisms, strengthened in Spain by the context in which fascistization

Pollard, J., 'Fascism and religion', pp. 141-164, in particular p.155. No one of the works quoted in footnote number 2 appears in Riley, D. (2010), *The civic foundations of Fascism in Europe. Italy, Spain and Romania 1870-1945*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁵ The notion of fascism in Spain permeates the works of Preston (1995); Saz (2003); Morente (2006); Gracia (2004) or González Cuevas (2011).

⁶ See Kallis (2003) on the similarities of three conceptual categories. In relation to the Spanish case, see Saz (1993) and Gallego (2010).

⁷ See the historiographical evolution of the topic of violence during the Spanish Civil War in Juliá (1999), Sevillano (2004), Rodrigo (2008), Prada (2010) and Preston (2011).

was developed, a civil war. Not only violence, but not without violence: the active acceptance of the regime, based on a sense of community and fraternity had much to do with the nationalist fear of internal enemies, the decadence of the country and the need for political cleansing.

The Spanish case should be taken into account in the historiography as a potentially paradigmatic example, at least in the analysis of two elements of the common fascist ethos: the model of fascist violence, and the conceptualization of the process of fascistization. Here, I will address the possibility of studying those two elements of the preliminary construction of a fascist society and national community by placing the interpretational focus on Spain in a preferential but non-exclusive manner. As I shall point out in this article, the conceptualization of the first period of Francoism as fascism can considerably enrich, from a comparative point of view, both knowledge of contemporary Spain as of fascism itself. Spain offers a small but privileged observatory for the analysis of the inter-relations between violence, war and fascism, and therefore of the process of fascistization, of the construction of a fascist regime. To do this, and drawing upon the work of Herbert (2004) as a model, I will rely on some of the most recent debates on what fascist violence was, on how the debates around this category can enrich our knowledge of Spain's process of fascistization and, on how Franco's Spain can be categorized: on a comparative, historiographical update.

Fascism and violence.

The consolidation of fascism depended on the adequacy of the fascist political projects to the contexts in which they developed. Angelo Tasca (1938:3) stated in 1938 that any general theory of fascism must be grounded in an analysis of all the phases of concrete phenomena, their diverse characteristics and historical processes, the particularization of common (but not identical) elements, and convergent practices and propitious contexts such as war. The most recent studies, such as Bartov (1996) and Kramer (2007) probe the connection between total war and fascism,

exploring the common spheres of collective punishment, mourning and learning from violence. At least three common explanatory elements from World War I can be comparatively identified in the European context of fascist social construction. First, the experience of mass death defined the political panorama of the interwar years, so that early fascisms in Europe developed much of their mythical, cultural and identity structure as a result of brutality (mass rituals, violence, racism, xenophobia). Second, there was an ultra-nationalist and patriotic desire for regeneration of the nation and construction of a homogeneous and strong national community, which was understood by ex-combatants as a community of suffering and pain. Third, violence became an acceptable way of eliminating threats to the national community, using means ranging from ideological expulsion to physical extermination of internal or external enemies.

However, this does not lead to a de-contextualized causal relationship. After the Great War there were fascisms in defeated, victorious and neutral nations, as well as hundreds of thousands of ex-combatants who did not become fascists. Something that necessarily happened everywhere there was a fascist regime was a war. While the relationship between war, fascism and violence is evident in its social and intellectual origins, the link becomes more diffuse in the analysis of how fascist societies and regimes evolved. But in fascist regimes, total war fulfilled a circular role, both as an original need and as a radicalizing force. War was a favorable and *necessary* framework for fascism, and for the development of its model of violence. Throughout its early years and phases of definitive institutionalization, fascisms demonstrated a firm will to re-define the identity parameters of society using certain pre-conceived stereotypes that allowed no margin for ambiguity (Mosse 1978, 1990). From genesis to street fighting, *squadristo*,⁸ and the rise to power, the fascist community was rooted in the myth and gospel of political violence, which later also served to radicalize movements. Acceptance of violence was a homogenizing chisel under which the implicit ideological impurities that contaminated all triumphant fascisms would be chipped away. Violence became the parapet behind which conservatives

⁸ See, for example, Lyttelton (1974), Albanese (2001, 2006), Ebner (2011) and Franzinelli (2004).

took refuge, seduced by the political magnetism of fascism: the lifted arm, the hammer, the front lines of the counter-revolution. They were fascinated by its ontological nature and dazzled by its ludic contempt for death. This classic fascistization pattern can be seen in the Spanish right wing during the Second Republic. It is also evident in the German population between the Weimar period and early *nazification*, which involved the convergence and congruence of leader, party, nation and State (Fritzsche 1998, 2008). The German case is the most well-known and offers the best description of the gradual transition from terror to extreme labour exploitation and genocide, achieving the maximum expression of this propitious context.

Some interpretations of fascism tend to reduce it to barbarism and genocide without attributing to it any of the intellectual aspirations which it had of developing a political or social project. Yet the analyses of the various fascist social projects and practices show a violence that was sustained by creative or generative rhetoric and experience.⁹ Fascism should not be seen as an authoritarian and violent interim without identitary will, nor as some irrational political spasm. Rather, it was the real, desired and deliberate mode in which fascists equipped themselves to interpret the world and interact amongst themselves and with those who were not like them. Today, violence and terror are thought to be intrinsic to the coercive and formational dimensions of the fascist historical block (Kallis 2008). Some of its precise forms and contours are now better understood, along with its potentially genocidal nature (Kallis 2009). Furthermore, the glorification of violence, the aesthetic representation of struggle and the consideration of these as values in and of themselves have been identified as qualities that distinguished fascisms from other contemporary *isms*. But as a whole, historiographic reflection on something as protean as fascist violence is rather unsatisfactory. In fact, fascist violence is mainly understood as what Italian fascists exerted during their *squadista* period and after they attained power (Elazar 2001; Dogliani 1999:17-19). It is not conceived as a condition, a state or a metaphor of fascism itself: a central element of the real, concrete and daily life in fascist

⁹ On the intellectual background of fascism, see Sternhell et al. (1989), Gentile (1993) and Koonz (2003).

political cultures and identities. As a consequence, there is no agreement on whether an exclusive and specific dimension of violence actually exists.

Fascist violence should not be only understood as that exercised by movements, powers, states, groups or individuals that had been defined, self-defined or potentially defined as fascists. It was part of an ideological, political and emotional self-defining that included the heavily weighted experience of masculinity and the body (Spackman 1996; De Grazia 1992). Fascist violence had its own specific nature and showed what Woodley (2009) describes as its three main functions: 1) social cleansing, 2) generating a combat experience and horizontal solidarity (to which we could add vertical obedience) and, 3) projection, exhibition and ostentation of force and power. In times of both peace and conflict, violence fed a culture of war involving a cult of the fallen, of leadership and of death. It consisted of “anti-praxis”, a “ritualized mode of political action”, present in the building processes of a fascist society and identity in Italy, Germany and Spain, among others (Woodley 2009:121).

Among the highest objectives of the fascist social projects were social and racial relocation, as well as expulsion of the ontological *other*. If anything characterized it, it was the use of violence for social amalgamation. The violence in Mussolini’s Italy was not limited to the millions of accusations and hundreds of thousands of arrests in peacetime or the wartime internment of Jews, who were excluded from the public sphere by means of the 1938 Racial Laws that officially sanctioned the racist essence of Italian fascism.¹⁰ In Germany, the national community coalesced by eliminating internal dissidence and social and racial impurities under the banner of law, order and the construction of a dictatorship of “mutual favours” (Aly 2005). Violence, terror and a state of emergency were the most effective political weapons for the nazification of the State: the *Völk* were Aryanised and protected under this new flag by separating out and eliminating political dissidence, by expelling those who were socially ‘different’ and by preventive measures against those considered racially ‘inferior’.¹¹ Violent and exclusionary

¹⁰ For example, Poesio (2011), Franzinelli (1999), Collotti (2003), Pisanty (2007), Cassata (2008), Fabre (2005), Israel (2010) and Germinaro (2009).

¹¹ See Marcuse (2001), Gellately (2001), Wachsmann (2004, 2008), Caplan (2005) and Bessel (1994).

practices were cumulative and gradual, creating a dynamic that led to the Nuremberg Laws and then to the *Kristallnacht* and the placement of Jewish minorities in ghettos, for example. Fascism required its own non pre-established framework of opportunities for the journey from a merely reactive condition to a proactive essence based on a rhetoric and practice of struggle, combat and suffering (Herbert 1997).

All fascisms create, adapt, adopt, re-invent myths of violence. Fascisms embraced the regeneration and construction of their nation, which was conceived as a biological and historical community of like-minded individuals threatened by foreign elements (Griffin 2007). The specific nature of Griffin's palingenetic fascism could in fact be nothing but an experience of purification, cleansing, destruction and ruin — a necessary foundation upon which to rebuild the Nation, according to Spanish fascist Agustin de Foxá. Destruction was a precondition for reconstruction, since the national community could only emerge “through violence itself”. The primary experiential framework within the fascistization process was one of familiarity and co-existence with violence, which appeared to break open “the surface of reality” (Gallego, 2005b:374). It was a vehicle for hierarchy, discipline, ranking, and horizontal solidarity dominated by a notion of force, the occupation of the territory of power: the central element of a *lofty* project of social, cultural and human restructuring: of the fascistization of Spain and the elimination of the so-called anti-Spain.

Fascist violence and Spain

In Spain the circumstances surrounding the Civil War accelerated the dimensions, times, possibilities and forms of fascist violence. Murders for reasons of occupation and political cleansing, imprisonment, ideological/political/identitary re-education, the specific nature and scope of violence against women, even the indiscriminate use of castor oil —a new form of torture and humiliation attributed to D'Annunzio and used extensively by fascist repression forces— were, in the Civil War, a pre-condition for the fascistization of society, by means of death, violence, intimidation,

participation, direct implication, acceptance, modernization and sacralisation. The violence was intended to eliminate, re-educate and regenerate parts of society. In the framework of two different total wars, the Spanish of 1936-39 and the World War of 1939-45, the rearguard became an immense laboratory for a fascistization that required a military victory to guarantee its survival. Death, the cult of the fallen and the exaltation of violence were key elements in a Spanish fascist political culture that was originally both Falangist and *Jonsistas* (Ledesma Ramos' Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista). They reflected the capacity to “show simultaneously the possibility of dying and the disposition to kill” (Gallego 2005a:209) that earned the Falange its front-line position in politics during the *days of struggle* in the Second Republic. It was the ludic and rhetorical contempt for death that positioned fascism as a viable possibility in this new period of war, and was later translated into a plethora of stories in which the death of the best became a sacrifice for the Homeland. Yet it was the context, or more specifically the crisis leading to a *coup* and the elevation of a civil war to the status of a sacred cause, which widened the margin of acceptance and the need for violence at a time when cries for a domestic war were voiced from many different political and social spheres within Spain, including the fascistized currents.

The explosion of 1936 meant a radicalization that actually broke with prior experiences, accompanied by a dramatic increase in the subjects and objects of violence. Some of the mechanisms of power of the rebels in 1936 can be interpreted as elements for the construction of a fascist regime. Among them, especially the phenomenon of violence. The cleansing mechanisms involved the identification of the internal enemy followed by incarceration, extra-judicial execution and subsequent disposal in mass burial sites: in the first months after the coup, almost 60,000 people, a majority of civilians, were assassinated in the areas where the coup was initially successful, where there were not military combats nor irregular fights for the control of power. The figures of fascist violence increased to approximately 130,000 in the postwar period, according to widespread historiographical agreements (Rodrigo 2008). Violence —a crucial, and even natural element of fascisms— reached new

heights in Spain, surpassing other fascistized societies of its time. And it was mandated and executed by the insurgents of 1936, composed of military, monarchic, Falangist, Carlist (Ugarte, 1998) and Catholic elements, or more frequently, a non-exclusive combination of these.

Even more fell under the parallel model of violence based on judicial control, mass classification and forced labour: half a million prisoners just in concentration camps (Rodrigo 2005). Thus executions and deaths by judicial mandate with the aim of socio-political cleansing extended this black chronology into the 1940s and approached, in absolute figures, the number of deaths in combat. In sum, it was a total war against the non-combatant population. This leads to at least three possibilities. First, that the *coup* and Civil War were planned, organized and carried out in part to establish a framework and context for another project: political cleansing in the rearguard. Second, that terror was the privileged mechanism of power during the bloody summer of 1936 due to its relational, communicative, novel and pedagogic nature as well as its massive and collective character. Third, that murders and elimination needed a prior and parallel construction of political cultures, radicalized in times of total mobilization, intended to define and exclude the *other*,¹² the enemy, thereby making violence against it acceptable.

According to José Pemartín, “becoming part of the Falange” meant to volunteer for “direct action” (Parejo 2008a:62). The Falange gained its political primacy within the “New Spain” in the Summer and Autumn days of political cleansing in 1936. In the province of Salamanca, the initial political repression was not carried out directly by the army, but by the Civil Guard and Falangists volunteers (López and Delgado 2007:142), authorized by the military and political powers. In Teruel the identity of the perpetrators as “Falangist, Requetes and civil guards” is noteworthy (Cenarro 1996:184), as the Falangist presence has been amply demonstrated, not only in the justification of violence and the identification of victims, but also in its direct implementation (Prada 2010:132-46). Preston certifies to the widespread presence of Falangists in the cleansing and punishment sorties of the

¹² On otherness and its images, see Núñez Seixas (2005, 2006) and Sevillano (2007).

rebels in their own rearguard. Violence was “directed, performed and encouraged [...] by the immediate juxtaposition of the needs of the rebel military leaders [...], the opportunism of the Spanish Falange [...] and interests of the Catholic Church”(Sevillano 2004:75). The result was clear: the Falange grew rapidly, becoming the executive mechanism of terror, with the new recruits in the blue shirts of the Falange being those who more actively participated in political cleansing. Up to October 1936, 34 percent of the rebel troops, ready for combat or in the process of becoming so, were integrated volunteer militia units, nearly 37,000 Falangist and more than 22,000 Requetes (Casas de la Vega 1977:17-19). The Party leader Manuel Hedilla at the end of 1936 “led a vanguard force of 80,000 volunteers, framed in FE de las JONS units, with their own uniforms, supplies and services (...) there was a Second Line, with more than 100,000 armed men”(Jerez, 237).

The speech of Hedilla broadcast on Christmas Eve 1936 was symptomatic of what actually had happened and was happening, as he appealed to “sow love through the villages” and to limit the cleansing to “leaders and murderers”. He banned, with questionable success, the Falangist regional leaders Arcadio Carrasco and José Moreno Badajoz in the Basque Country and Navarre from participating in repressive actions, in order to prevent “innocent victims”. A few months earlier, in September 1936, he had recalled that they had to distance the Falange from a “bloody reputation, which could hurt us for the future”: no personal hate could be “satiated”, no one could “punish or humiliate those who, through hunger or despair, voted for the Reds”. Shootings were “made and ordered, independently, by the Information Service of the Falange, the Chief of Police and Civil Guard”, the Falange being “the most widely distinguished in this work, earning hate and unpopularity” and producing through its presence “fear and not love, as its admirable doctrines advise” (Thomás 1999:95-).

The contradictions and tensions between theory and practice, between the rhetoric of integration and the policy of cleansing, were obvious throughout the war. The theoretical model of fascist coercion Falange had shown for years, the recovery, regeneration and assimilation of *red*, leap through the air along with the coup and the new opportunities it would offer. Jose Maria Fontana Tarrats, provincial

chief of Falange in Tarragona, recognized that the scale and speed of “repression” made “almost nonexistent” the possibility of fascistization by means of integrating dissidents. The duration of violence prevented, thus, its integration into a larger project of integration and construction of national community. The indoctrination and fascistization of the society included the impregnation of fascist culture on the “usable” part of the enemy, on the “non destroyed red mass”, as the Falangist leader and Franco's brother-in-law Ramón Serrano Suñer said in April 1940 (Cited in Molinero 2005:24).

The Falange was presented as the main civilian force by the military rebels, who recognized in it the armed wing of the counterrevolution, the means by which the communist menace would be defeated and Spain cleansed. And the Falangists acted accordingly. They were actors in the violent praxis of the homeland, active participants in the cleansing process executed by the Spanish “africanist” military, and were those who most actively legitimized a healing, fair and legitimate violence against the Anti-Spain. Was it a violence “in the service of a reactionary project that aimed to restore the traditional social order in all its forms”? (Cenarro 1998:13) It does not seem that the rebels’ project was solely reactionary and restorationist. It aspired, rather than to a traditional order, to a New order that could incorporate tradition. Although many years after Dionisio Ridruejo declared his revulsion, for personal and political reasons, to the “direct violence of those months” (Ridruejo 1976:119), in times of war he called for a violent fascist synthesis of tradition and transformation. For Pedro Laín, that had the “Christian value of just violence, and calls for violent action in the service of national justice”(Laín Entralgo 1941).

Violence as a specific praxis or cultural repertoire is thus located on a gravitational axis between fascist movements and experience, the axis of life itself in a fascist community. As in Germany and Italy, post-war Spain constructed a sacralising and absorbing rhetoric that elevated violence and death to a mystical experience. This was coherent with a view of life, politics and society defined by continuous combat; a state of permanent war was the moral and effective violence demanded by Mussolini (Thompson 1991). Thus, for fascists a regenerated nation

had to demonstrate its vitality through aggression, response capacity and a disposition towards war (the *holy war* described by Ernesto Giménez Caballero), violence, suffering, martyrdom, and blood (Rodrigo 2012). The just and healthy war latent in human nature, this sublime phenomenon reflecting the demands of a youthful people, was the privilege of only a few generations (Zunino 1995:355; Falasca-Zamponi 1997). Immolation of the ‘best’ Germans, Italians and Spaniards filled the martyrologies of the three countries, but in Spain the numbers were much more elevated. The most important Spanish *martyr*, fascist leader Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera (executed in November, 1936) had anticipated and announced the triumphal notion of the fascist community as a people in arms against the enemy, a chosen people with a universal destiny. The strength of this national community would be based in part on the self-protective separation from and common exploitation of its internal enemies, the defeated.

In their own words: the war of 1936-1939, the reference point and foundation of the New Spain, created an opportune framework for what fascist ideologue Dionisio Ridruejo called the “true national community” (Morente 2006:223), based on the foundational experience of combat, camaraderie, struggles and power control. In the words and writings of fascist intellectuals the goal was to cleanse, correct, protect and heal the true community of Victory. This was coherent with the dual dimension of historical cleavage and acceleration proclaimed by fascism, which gave content to the palingenesic narration of the ancient past and immediate and recent history of Spain, that included catholic Empire: Spanish fascists declared themselves Catholics, and considered Catholicism the basis of their political culture (Gallego 2012). It also served as an articulation of a genealogy, of the constituent process of Spanish fascism and of the dictatorial regime born from it (Cobo and Ortega 2008). Destruction was a pre-requisite for the constructive project, and violence would be understood as a necessary means to build a better society through demolishing, burning, purifying, and transforming society, land and individuals.

That was fascistization: without that extension of the practice of coercion, murder and political cleansing, it is not possible to understand the nature of the

resulting power of violence or the ways in which Spanish fascism was developed. This was clearly reflected in the exponential increase in the political weight of the (pure) Fascist party (FE-JONS), before and after its unification with the Traditionalist Communion into the (impure) single party (FET-JONS) by military dictate in 1937.¹³ Without a context of violence, fear, survival and identification it is not possible to understand how explicit political affiliation to fascism increased so suddenly or how fascism in its practices and rhetoric (or daily *experience*) permeated all spheres of life in the rearguard, from the fascist salute of Catholic bishops to re-education, moral regeneration and *de-marxisation* in prisons and concentration camps.

With such an enormous level of violence against the *internal enemy*, Spain was the last act in the phase of fascistization before World War II.¹⁴ After 1939, fascistization would only occur in the extremely violent contexts of occupation, mob violence and war. Seen in a comparative perspective, of the two possibilities — entropy or radicalization— proposed by Paxton (2004:175-201) for the fifth, long-term stage of fascism, the process that finished with the outbreak of World War II and included the Spanish war, closed the doors to the former. Thus, the War only allowed the latter and was the necessary step to achieving full potential for fascism.¹⁵ World War II paved the way for the expansion of fascism, which reached its climax and possibly its highest point of ‘perfection’ and convergence between project and praxis thanks to the favorable framework of total war, extermination, occupation, invasion and racial and social relocation. In times of war the ‘peacetime’ practices of incarceration, sterilization, re-education, pillaging and exclusion became overcrowding, elimination, annihilation, relocation and displacement.¹⁶

In this manner, fascism had offered as much “intellectual ammunition” as prominence to the extreme utopias of the nation-state, a framework which National Socialism fostered through a “powerful model for eliminating the other”,

¹³ Different visions of the Fascist party can be found in Ellwood (1983), Chueca (1983), Thomàs (2001) and Rodríguez (2000). Particular aspects, such as cultural or institutional, are highlighted in Juliá (2004), Ruiz Carnicer (1996), Molinero (2005), Richmond (2004) and Cenarro (2006).

¹⁴ The local and regional perspective of fascist administration is studied in Suárez Cortina (1981), González Madrid (2004, 2006), Cobo and Ortega (2006), Parejo (2008b) and Sanz Hoya (2009).

¹⁵ See also Andreassi (2004) and Allen (2002).

¹⁶ See, as an example of a boundless bibliography, Hilberg (1961), Aly and Heim (2003), Aly (1999), Browning (2004), Friedländer (1997, 2007) and Bartov (2000).

systematically and effectively (Kallis 2009:19; Kallis 2010). This is what actually took place on Spanish soil between 1936 and 1939-42, and in 1939 and especially from 1941-42 on in Germany, Italy and more extensively throughout Europe, as in Croatia, Slovenia or Romania.¹⁷

Preliminary conclusions.

Fascism was not a fixed but a moving picture. But it becomes fossilized between paradigms and historical minimums when considered a collection of negations, an inflexible ideal-type or a snapshot of essential conditions. This also denies the principle of comparability and the diachronic dynamics of its historical formation processes. In contrast, an analysis of the process of fascistization circumvents the problems derived from encapsulating fascism within inter-war Europe, allowing for a better understanding of its own cultural and identitary elements as well as its dynamics of change (Finchelstein 2010). The debate around the concept of fascistization and its historiographic usefulness as a subject in itself—rather than an intermediate stage between fascism and authoritarianism or a sort of historical and theoretical concession—has still not reached the depth it deserves. Fascistization,

¹⁷ The policies of Mussolini, particularly in relation to his territorial aspirations towards the East, reflected a consistent anti-Slavic prejudice. From 1941-42 on it was manifest in a thick network of concentration camps for prisoners and civilians that extended from Italian Yugoslavia all the way down the Italian peninsula. From mid-1940 on the Jews were sent to concentration camps, especially Ferramonti in Calabria, or deported to extermination camps by the Salò regime. This affected a quarter of the Hebrew population of Italy, similar to the Shoah in France. Thus the process of internment and deportation of Italian Jews fits a broader social and political radicalization during wartime which should be considered not as the exception but the 'perfection'. The context of violence, in Pavone, C. (1991), *Una guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza*, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri; Pezzino, P. (2007), *Anatomia di un massacro. Controversia sopra una strage nazista*, Bologna: Il Mulino. The deportations, in Mayda, G. (2002), *Storia della Deportazione dall'Italia, 1943-1945*, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri; Matard-Bonucci, M.A. (2008), *L'Italia fascista e la persecuzione degli ebrei*, Bologna: Il Mulino. Italian Camps, in Borgomaneri, L. (2006), *Crimini di guerra. Il mito del bravo italiano tra repressione del ribellismo e guerra ai civili nei territori occupati*, Milan: Fondazione Istituto per la Storia dell'età contemporanea and Guerini e Associati; Di Sante, C. ed. (2001), *I campi di concentramento in Italia. Dall'internamento alla deportazione (1940-1945)*, Milan: Franco Angeli; Id. ed. (2005), *Italiani senza onore. I crimini in Jugoslavia e i processi negati (1941-1950)*, Verona: Ombre Corte; Kersevan, A. (2008), *Lager italiani. Pulizia etnica e campi di concentramento fascisti per civili jugoslavi 1941-1943*, Rome: Nutrimenti; Capogreco, C.S. (2004), *I campi del Duce. L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista (1940-1943)*, Turin: Einaudi. Solonari, V. (2010), *Purifying the Nation. Population exchange and ethnic cleansing in Nazi-allied Romania*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press. Also significant was the Magyarization of Hungary under Horthy by means of linguistic, racial and identity homogenization. Nagy-Talavera N.M. (2001), *The Green Shirts and the Others. A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania*, Iasi-Oxford-Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies; Mazower, M. (2008), *Hitler's Empire. Nazi rule in occupied Europe*, London: Penguin Books, pp. 437-453.

understood as the proactive process of construction, consolidation and radicalization under fascist dictatorships, is central to understanding the differences between the Italy of 1922 and of 1943, the Germany of 1933 and of 1942, and the Spain of 1936 and of 1939-45.

The fact that Spain had a civil war may give an impression of historical impermeability in the Spanish territory and its historical subject vis-à-vis the surroundings. Nothing is farther from reality. The fascist violence in Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Serbia, geographical areas that were allies of the fascist Axis or occupied by the Reich, should be included in the analysis of the dynamics determining the nature of fascism in Europe, along with the classic examples of Italy and Germany. War and occupation policies were the opportune framework in which German fascist political, racial, cultural and economic projects could be developed (Feldman and Seibel 2006). All these experiences show, seen as a whole, that war was an almost *natural* condition for the construction of the fascist State. Spain should also be included, at least in the period until 1945.

Purging, protection of the fascist community, and the transformation of society by violence were constants, with a dual endogenous/exogenous nature during this stage of fascism. Radicalization in times of war was a homogenizing phenomenon among the various European fascisms; but Spanish fascism was the only one imposed by catalyzing, radicalising and winning an internal war. In this context of social hierarchization, violence became a mechanism for regeneration and punishment, a vehicle for the re-composition of society, a tool for enriching the Nation, the space in which to identify and stereotype the *other*.¹⁸ War served as an opportune framework for fascistization by violence on at least three levels. For individuals it generated horizontal and vertical solidarity while cultivating the fascist identity. Politically, it constructed a framework for the acceptance of coercion, war and terror (and thus of fascism as their historical container) between political groups and identities which were not fascists but would accept, justify and supply the party-militia (composed in

¹⁸ As happened in Nazi Germany, where violence was the cornerstone of the German fascist project of well-being for the Arian race, following Aly (2005); Fritzsche (2008:163). (I am quoting the Spanish version).

Spain of monarchists, traditionalists, the military and the Church). Socially, it preserved the national community in rhetoric and practice by separating it from the *other*, the anti-Spain, in the definitive clash with the *true* Spain.

That is why it is incomprehensible and disconcerting to hear the insistence on distinguishing Spain from the rest of the fascist family by emphasizing the authoritarian nature of Franco's regime. At most, it is conceded that Spain may have incorporated some marginal movements that fascistized a part of society, politics or culture by osmosis and mere imitation, as in France or Portugal. The complexity and heterogeneity of its political supports, from conservatives to national-catholics or the military, is shown to be incompatible with fascism, despite being a common characteristic of all fascist dictatorships. But nowhere are the Spanish Civil War nor political violence treated as a framework for the fascistization of society, although war was a necessary context for all fascisms and violence against the inner enemies as happened in Germany, Italy, Croatia. Thus, fascism is many times reduced to certain aesthetic and power practices that do not include the experience of violence. Though unsubstantiated, the standard argument holds that the primary impact of fascism on Spain was cosmetic and short-lived —something that quickly ran its course and died out. These features supposedly ended, disappeared or dissolved 'naturally' around 1945 in parallel with the partial elimination of fascist symbolism and phraseology from Spanish politics. Francoism both in war and peace was a complex and heterogeneous regime that defined itself as fascist and on several occasions as totalitarian. It was an extremely violent regime with many categories of internal enemies including democracy, parliamentarianism, socialism, communism and anarchism. It was an organic regime of political syncretism and a fascist party-movement with Roman salutes, exaltation of the fallen and of ex-combatants, a cult of violence, leader worship, an identity project based on a palingenetic historical synthesis and a political and identity socialization in the values of fascism kept alive through juvenile, feminine, labour and political organizations.

When analyzed as a fascism that was not defeated by the Allies or defascistized by force and territorial occupation, the Spanish case can hardly be

considered as a *younger* brother or distant relative but as paradigmatic in the chronological axis, full-fledged exemplar of fascism. It is also a paradigmatic regime within the family of fascisms, because it was born of an internal war and used violence as its main vehicle for fascistization. In fact, a re-reading of the latest historiography on the Spanish case aims to consider it as a unique example of a fascism established by civil war, military victory and an era of violent, martial fascist expansion that resisted the de-fascistization of Europe thanks to weak internationalization. Franco's Spain, at least between 1936 and 1945, should in conclusion be a central reference point for the analysis of both the construction process, fascistization, and the final result, fascism. Evidently a good part of this debate derives directly from the main question regarding the ultimate meaning of fascism and the theoretical approach required. Application of the term fascism in any given context depends to a large degree on how the term is understood. But, to end with a counterfactual: if Franco's regime had fallen in 1945 (instead of decomposing in 1975-78), would the consensus around its definition as fascist not be broadly accepted?

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