

To what extent did Franco impose a 'Fascist' state and identity on Spain?

by Jodie Collins

On 17 July 1936, leading generals of the Spanish military launched a rebellion against the newly elected Popular Front government of the Second Republic. It would fail as a *coup d'état*, but instead provoked civil war. The rebels were joined by the Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (FE de las JONS), an alliance formed between the Falange Española—Spain's fascist party—and the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista in 1934. In 1936, under the leadership of General Francisco Franco, the traditional conservative Carlists were then incorporated to create the Falange Española Tradicionalista de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (FET y de las JONS), later known as the *Movimiento*. This alliance, combined with the added military support of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, helped lead Francoist forces to victory, ending the war on 1 April 1939. Franco would reign as Caudillo until his death in 1975, and under his leadership the *Nuevo Estado* was developed.

There is ongoing historical debate over the nature of Franco's regime. It is widely argued that Francoism existed outside the sphere of fascism, and was instead a variant of authoritarianism or, sometimes, totalitarianism.¹ More recent literature has also explored to what extent the regime was sustained from below, rather than imposed from above as is most commonly held.² This essay will, however, attempt to demonstrate that the Spanish

¹ Gallego, Ferran, 'Fascistization and fascism: Spanish dynamics in a European process', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2012) 160.

² Anderson, Peter, 'In the Name of the Martyrs: Memory and Retribution in Francoist Southern Spain, 1936–45', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2011) 366.

state and identity was indeed fascist, and will cast doubt on the claim that the regime was not imposed upon Spanish society. This will be done by first studying the definition of fascism and the ways in which Francoist Spain fits in to this definition. Then it will be considered how the state and culture was inspired and shaped by fascist models, finally ending with a discussion on the ways in which the masses helped to uphold the Francoist state and its ideology.

What is Fascism?

In order to understand whether Franco's Spain was fascist, it is important to first establish what is meant when we talk about fascism. Different conceptions of the nature of fascism are at the core of the debate about whether Franco's Spain was a fascist state. As Roger Eatwell notes, one of the difficulties arises from the fact that it is a political phenomenon which lacks 'not only the "great texts" beloved by academic political theorists, but any serious body of thought.'³ He adds that this is partially owing to 'the fact that it preached activism, and was often anti-intellectual.'⁴ Moreover, its highly nationalistic character means that fascism will mould itself differently according to a nation's particularities and historical conjunctures.

Roger Griffin argued in the 1990s that fascism was a form of populist palingenetic ultranationalism—an ideology of 'revolutionary' national rebirth. With this definition in mind, Kathleen J. L. Richmond has described fascism as

³ Eatwell, Roger, 'Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1992) 162.

⁴ *ibid.*, 163; see also Blinkhorn, Martin, *Fascism and the Right in Europe 1919-1945* (Longman: Essex 2000) 94.

a core belief in the power of the nation as a higher entity and quasi-spiritual ideal. Service to the nation is thereby deemed as the worthiest of endeavours, requiring commitment and personal sacrifice. The fascist solution to the nation's ills depends on an acceptance that there must be a 'rebirth' or 'regeneration', whereby present systems and values are replaced by a 'new order', which itself finds its inspiration in defining moments or eras in the nation's history.⁵

This definition raises a number of issues. The first is that it is ahistoric. These palingenetic qualities had existed long before fascism reared its head. The idea of rebirth and the quasi-religious glorification of serving one's nation have been—and still are—common features of many capitalist and particularly imperialist states. This kind of ultranationalism may indeed be a characteristic or tool of fascism, but it also exists outside fascism. Furthermore, even if we dismiss these issues with Griffin's theory, it still leaves the question of what prompted this particular desire for a national 'rebirth'—there had been instability in Europe many times prior to the interwar period, but fascism developed in a specific historical moment.

Furthermore, the idea of fascism as 'revolutionary' is also problematic. To be revolutionary suggests the overturn of a system, but in all cases fascism has been a reactionary movement, and its function has been to protect or reestablish capitalism. As Blinkhorn points out,

⁵ Richmond, Kathleen J.L., *Women and Spanish Fascism* (Routledge: London, 2003) 1.

many leftists ... were correct to insist that whatever the differences distinguishing Nazi Germany (certainly) and Fascist Italy (probably) from other right-wing dictatorships, all arose within capitalist economies, presented capitalism with no fundamental threat, allowed capitalism to recover and prosper, and accordingly belong to the same, however extended, family.⁶

This is not to say that fascism is necessarily anti-modern, a characteristic which is commonly attributed to it. Although fascists often draw on traditionalist values, rhetoric and imagery, and deride aspects of modern decadence to help attract support for its movement, in practice fascism also incorporates features of modernisation. Examples of this include the significance of the futurist art movement in Fascist Italy, or Nazi Germany's scientific and technological advancements.

David Renton has argued that writers like Rodger Griffin look at fascism 'through the intellectual development of fascist thinkers, rather than the actual practice'. He charges that by 'focusing on fascist intellectuals rather than fascist movements, [they] exaggerate the revolutionary content of fascist practice, and make fascism appear to be a much more positive movement than it was or is.'⁷ Renton instead insists that 'Fascism should not be understood primarily as an ideology, but as a specific form of reactionary mass movement.'⁸

⁶ Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 96.

⁷ Renton, David, *Fascism: Theory and Practice* (Pluto Press: London, 1999) 1.

⁸ *ibid.*, 3.

This dovetails with Leon Trotsky's definition, which is best summarised in the following passage: 'The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery.'⁹

Martin Blinkhorn has criticised this marxist analysis for 'more or less equating fascism with capitalism or at least regarding fascism as capitalism's tool'.¹⁰ He claimed that it either ignored or failed to account for fascism's 'other sources and preoccupations besides anti-leftism and pro-capitalism ... and that financial, manufacturing and landowning elites almost always preferred more conservative outcomes to the assumption of power by the revolutionary right.'¹¹ However, the marxist analysis simply puts fascism into its historical context. It is not argued that these elites who joined with fascists did not prefer more 'conservative outcomes' to fascism. What it is being argued is that under specific circumstances they see their preferred form of governance as no longer being sufficient. Fascism is adopted as a last resort to avoid social revolution.

⁹ Trotsky, Leon, *Fascism: What It Is and How To Fight It*, via Marxist Internet Archive [<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1944/1944-fas.htm>] Date Accessed 11.1.2015.

¹⁰ Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 95.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 95-6.

Alliance of the right in Spain

In Spain, the relative weakness of the Falange—‘the one indisputably fascist party in the 1930s’¹²—in relation to its conservative counterparts has been pointed to as evidence that the Franco regime was not fascist. Sidelining of the Falange could be observed particularly after the Axis defeat in 1945, but Blinkhorn has argued that even after the Civil War the Falange’s position in the regime was weaker than it appeared.¹³ He explains how Franco abandoned his ‘Falangist veneer’ in favour of a kind of authoritarian rule ‘inspired not so much by the Falange’s style of fascism as by the “national Catholicism” that had actually dominated the prewar Spanish right.’¹⁴ Therefore, it was the conservative coalition which led the regime, and the Falange had simply been used and discarded; Spain had been ‘fascitized’, but never became fully fascist. The Falange had been an instrument, but ‘the regime was never remotely Falangist in its essential character,’ Blinkhorn concludes. This contrasts with Mussolini’s regime, for example, whereby fascists ‘however limited their scope of operations and achievements, were important realities, and the regime was self-evidently a *Fascist* regime.’¹⁵

Francoist Spain has therefore been referred to as a so-called ‘parafascist’ regime; whereby ‘[u]nlike fascism, parafascism could be open about its links to the old political order and

¹² Preston, Paul, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the military in twentieth-century Spain* (Routledge: London, 2001) xv.

¹³ Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 81.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

was a better guarantee of continuity and stability.’¹⁶ It was Griffin who most notably categorised Spain under this term alongside other regimes such as Salazar’s Portugal and Metaxas’s Greece. Again, this viewpoint is rooted in Griffin’s assertion of the ‘revolutionary’ nature of fascism—he argues that these para-fascist regimes appropriated a “fascist style” but ‘never subscribed to a genuinely revolutionary transformation of politics and society’.¹⁷

However, as Paul Preston puts it, to ‘confine the search for fascism in Spain to the ... Falange Española is a meaningless exercise.’¹⁸ Every successful fascist movement has incorporated elites from traditional conservative backgrounds – as Blinkhorn himself notes, ‘without the complaisance of established elites neither Italian Fascism nor German Nazism would have won power.’¹⁹ But more importantly, this discussion of ‘fascistization’ and ‘para-fascism’ simply limits fascism to ideas and the particularities of party politics, and does not consider it as ‘the outcome of the evolution of the whole political space,’ as Ferran Gallego puts it.²⁰ Preston explains how

most fascist movements, except those created in the wake of German occupation, were responses to national crises and drew on national traditions. Thus, if Nazism and fascism, with all their differences, can be

¹⁶ Barreira, Óscar Rodríguez, ‘The Many Heads of the Hydra: Local Para-fascism in Spain and Europe, 1936–50’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2014) 718.

¹⁷ Aristotle, Kallis, ‘Para-fascism’, Blamires, Cyprian P. (ed.) *World Fascism: A Historical Encyclopedia. Volume 1: A-K* (ABC-CLIO: Oxford, 2006) 504-505.

¹⁸ Preston, *The Politics of Revenge*, xv.

¹⁹ Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 96.

²⁰ Gallego, ‘Fascistization and fascism’, 165.

accepted as the German and Italian counter-revolutionary responses to crises of German and Italian society, then a case can be made for the rightist groups which backed the rebels in the Civil War to be considered collectively as the equivalent Spanish counter-revolutionary response to the crisis of Spanish society.²¹

The conservatives of Spain joined with the Falange to pursue real policies with material effects—it was not merely a fascist ‘style’ or ‘vener’. Moreover, the FET y de las JONS came to power through paramilitaristic means—more in line with fascist methods than the parliamentary rise to power of Hitler or Mussolini. Though there may have been competing groups with tactical differences within the FET y de las JONS, they united for a fundamental cause on the same repressive programme. By joining together the rightist groups achieved what they all aspired to: ‘the corporatist state, the abolition of free trade unions, the destruction of the left-wing press and political parties.’²²

Militarism and physical repression

This leads us to examine the way in which the Franco regime defeated its opponents. By the end of the Civil War, Francoist forces had killed around 100,000 Popular Front supporters, many by death squads. Military tribunals which had been set up under the guidance of Nazi legal theorists tried ‘scores of military or civilian prisoners at a time with

²¹ Preston, *The Politics of Revenge*, 12.

²² *ibid.*, 28.

little regard to due process, [and] also sentenced thousands to death and tens of thousands more to jail terms of up to thirty years.²³

After the civil war had come to an end, a militaristic state structure remained in place. This was seen as vitally important to what was viewed by Franco and his Ministers 'as infected by the corrosive influence of "foreign" ideology. ... The Spanish proletariat, in particular, it was claimed, was 'sick'—contaminated by Bolshevism,' writes Mike Richards, and treating this Bolshevik virus was viewed as the priority of the regime.²⁴

'The militarist nature of the new regime was ever present in daily life,' writes Sheelagh Ellwood. Martial law remained in place and the military were present throughout civilian legislative and administrative bodies.²⁵ Ellwood highlights how the Cabinet reshuffle which Franco made in the immediate aftermath of the civil war

reflected both the need to develop legislative and administrative bodies which were not conditioned by the requirements of war and the desire to create at least the appearance of a regime in harmony with those of fascist Europe.²⁶

²³ Anderson, 'In the Name of the Martyrs', 359.

²⁴ Richards, Mike, 'Chapter 11: The Material Reality of State Power', Graham, Helen and Labanyi, Jo (eds.) *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press: 1995) 181.

²⁵ Ellwood, Sheelagh M., 'Falange Española and the Creation of the Francoist 'New State'', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1990) 221.

²⁶ *ibid.*

Thus, physical extermination of opposition didn't end with the Nationalist victory; it is estimated that as many as 200,000 people were executed in the post-war period.²⁷ By the end of the civil war there were over 270,000 held in the regime's prisons according to official statistics, and overcrowding had become an issue. To help alleviate this issue, a system of *liberated vigilada* was introduced, modelled on a similar system in fascist Italy, whereby prisoners would be released to labour miles away from their original homes and the local Falange and the Church hierarchy would report on their behaviour.²⁸ Concentration camps, established at the beginning of the civil war, were also used until 1947.

Blinkhorn highlights that Franco repressed the left 'no less strenuously – and far more bloodily—than Mussolini,'²⁹ and Preston recalls how even Heinrich Himmler had observed in 1940 that the Franco regime repressed the Spanish working class more brutally than the Nazis had repressed German workers.³⁰ 'An eagerness to exonerate the Franco regime from the taint of Fascism,' writes Preston, goes with a readiness to forget the degree of which it repressed its enemies, as well as the Spanish troops sent to fight on the Russian front with the Nazis.³¹

²⁷ Richards, 'The Material Reality of State Power', 179.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 81.

³⁰ Preston, *The Politics of Revenge*, 9.

³¹ *ibid.*, 12.

It therefore is of no surprise that the enemies and victims of Franco's regime at the time considered it to be fascist.³² Whether the regime can be classified as fascist or not, 'the outcome for the person in the street, on the farm, or in political detention was much the same.'³³ But even many 'old shirt' Falangists from before the Civil War considered the regime as fascist, and Franco himself also clearly identified the regime as fascist, when in a 1942 state speech he declared that 'the world had only the choice between communism and fascism.'³⁴ He would also write to Hitler to assure him that he would 'always be a loyal follower of your cause,'³⁵ and at a meeting of the National Council of Spanish Falangists on 8 December 1942, he was reported to have said that '[t]he German and Italian and Spanish Revolutions are phases of the same general movement of rebellion of the civilized masses of the world against the hypocrisy and inefficiency of the old system.' After the Second World War had ended in 1945, however, fascism was directly associated with the defeated Axis, and it would have been political suicide to refer to oneself as fascist. Indeed, it was reported towards the end of the war that '[f]aced with the ultimate victory of the Allied Nations, [Franco] has been compelled to recognize the anomalous position of Spain in her diplomatic relations and to deal with a people who may soon

³² Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 81.

³³ *ibid.*, 82.

³⁴ The Associated Press, 'Franco Says World's Choice is Fascism or Communism: FRANCO DEFINES WAR ALTERNATIVES', *New York Times*, Dec 9, 1942, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, pg. 1

³⁵ Manhattan, Avro, *The Vatican in World Politics* (Gaer Associates: New York, 1949) 87.

insist upon political liberty.³⁶ In order to ensure stability the regime attempted to overcome the 'Axis stigma.'³⁷

Autarkic economy

Another way in which the state could exert control and curb opposition was through autarky, or national 'self-sufficiency'. This was the Franco regime's strategy of industrialisation, and meant that resources, production, prices and labour were tightly regulated by the state. It restricted imports of modern machinery, instead enforcing coercive policies to drive down the price of labour. As Richards explains, it 'contained relatively novel elements drawn from the authoritarian corporativism of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as well as other long-established means of class repression—the uncontrolled brutality of the forces of order and the manipulation of material resources.'³⁸

These autarkic policies began to be built from the moment Franco's forces began gaining territory in 1936 during the civil war. Particularly, a Decree of 25 September 1936 prohibited 'all political and politically-oriented workers' union activities', and a law made on 10 January 1937 regulated the 'confiscation, census and administration of goods belonging to the political and union organizations of the Popular Front.'³⁹ As Sheelagh M. Ellwood writes, even though the war had been won by the Francoists, 'the undertaking of

³⁶ Anna Lane Lingelbach, 'Franco Camouflages Spanish Fascism', *Current History*; July 1, 1945; 9, 47; Periodicals Archive Online, 23.

³⁷ Payne, Stanley, G. 'Franco, the Spanish Falange and the Institutionalisation of Mission', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2006) 200.

³⁸ Richards, 'The Material Reality of State Power', 181.

³⁹ Ellwood, 'Falange Española ...', 219.

the Ministry for Syndical Action surpassed what might be required by a war economy – which indicates how far the Nationalists considered the political control of the workers to be an immediate but by no means provisional necessity.’⁴⁰

Out of autarky, a black market emerged. This, in turn, caused inflation, and combined with the rationing system, hunger and subsistence became major issues.⁴¹ Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco describes how this situation was seized upon in the establishment of the *Nuevo Estado*:

the wealthier social strata could avoid hunger; they had financial resources, of course, but often also beneficial political contacts and safe access to the black market. Many rural smallholders and tenants ... had the advantage of their own agricultural production to fall back on. ... Perhaps unsurprisingly, these groups could also sell produce illicitly on the black market, especially if they had political connections. It was precisely amongst these social groups – the middle and lower middle classes – where Francoism found its broadest social support. Urban workers and rural day labourers ... did not have the same opportunities to escape from hunger. ... As the numbers of the indigent and itinerant poor grew, they were increasingly associated with ‘the defeated’ and demonized – ‘as the epitome of anti-Spain’. Extreme economic exploitation was, in turn, justified since these groups were ‘alien to the nation’.⁴²

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ del Arco Blanco, Miguel Ángel, ‘Hunger and the Consolidation of the Francoist Regime (1939–1951)’, *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (2010) 460.

⁴² *ibid.*, 469.

Moreover, the working classes would be punished disproportionately for participating in the black market. For example, according to del Arco Blanco, ninety per cent of those found guilty of selling goods on the black market in Algeria and Malaga provinces in the mid-1940s were either rural day labourers, workers, the unemployed, and poverty stricken housewives. 'Thus while the regime's grassroots supporters prospered, those from the defeated side suffered fines and found themselves sent to prison and work camps.'⁴³

So autarky was a key tool in dividing and ruling the Spanish nation. Del Arco Blanco thus concludes that autarky in Franco's *Nuevo Estado* shows how '[a]t the grassroots of society rank and file victors staffed Francoist institutions and carried out the regime's policies,'⁴⁴ and that supporters of the regime could 'feather their own nests by plucking the rich pickings offered to them by the very black market system that benighted the lives of the defeated.'⁴⁵ For this reason, he concludes that the Franco regime 'was not simply imposed from above'.⁴⁶

Thus we can see that Franco's economic policies bolstered the middle classes and encouraged them to play an active role in its repressive practices. Rather than fascism being imposed from below, like all political organisations the Francoists sought to reward and to activate its political base.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 474.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 479.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 460.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 479.

Fascist Culture

The culture that became embedded in Francoist Spain has been summarised by del Arco Blanco as ‘the disqualification of those who had lost the war (the “reds”), and the negation of everything the Republic had stood for (qualified with the prefix of “anti-”).’⁴⁷ This ‘war culture’ was sustained through myths, symbols, ‘heroes’, ‘martyrs’, commemorations and values, encouraging ‘victory not reconciliation, and punishment rather than forgiveness.’⁴⁸ And importantly, it was here that the Falange was able to make one of its most significant impacts.⁴⁹ Right up until the 1970s it was the Falange which exerted control over the media and propaganda. This ‘gave the regime an appearance, and Spain a politico-cultural atmosphere, there were ostentatiously “fascist”,’ writes Blinkhorn.⁵⁰

One of the key tools for establishing this culture, already firmly established in Spanish society, was religion—or more specifically Catholicism, the declared state religion under Franco. During the civil war, the Spanish Catholic Church had played an important role in rousing support for the rebels and Francoists—to whom it had given full support—with the bishop of Salamanca, Enrique Pla y Deniel, declaring the Civil War as a ‘crusade for religion, the Fatherland and Christian civilization’ in September 1936.

⁴⁷ Richards, ‘The Material Reality of State Power’, 196.

⁴⁸ del Arco Blanco, ‘Hunger and the Consolidation of the Francoist Regime’, 459.

⁴⁹ Ellwood, ‘Falange Española ...’, 223.

⁵⁰ Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 81; see also Preston, *The Politics of Revenge*, 28.

Spanish Catholicism aimed to instil 'a way of disciplining the work-force by granting the possibility of 'redemption' through total obedience to authority.'⁵¹ The Francoist state's direct association with Catholicism, as opposed to the Republic's secularism, meant it could attract support from 'respectable' Spaniards and seize upon the language and imagery of religion to convey its own legitimacy.

Peter Anderson discusses how memory of the war, particularly the bereavement of Francoists who had lost loved ones as a result of the war, was used by the regime and incorporated into a culture of retribution. It is here that Anderson stresses the extent that the culture of Francoism was enforced *from below*. Citizens could not only find material gain through participation in this culture of retribution, but also some kind of spiritual gain through bestowing meaning to their bereavement.⁵²

For example, funeral services for those who had fought for the Nationalist side reinforced the idea of relatives' death 'as a sacrifice that purged Spain of its Marxist enemies'.

Anderson writes of how Jesuit Father García Alonso, in his oration for a particular funeral ceremony

beseached the bereaved relatives amassed before him to take comfort from the fact that the deaths they mourned formed a necessary sacrifice to save the country from "the atheist and communist revolutionary hurricane which

⁵¹ Richards, 'The Material Reality of State Power', 176.

⁵² Anderson, 'In the Name of the Martyrs', 363.

would have robbed Spain of its true essence and would have converted the country into a satellite of Russian Bolshevism".⁵³

A decree of August 1939 'stipulated that compensation could be paid to those who could demonstrate they had been "subject to vicious persecution" or who had a relative that had suffered, in the words used in the decree, "a gory martyrdom"'.⁵⁴ Franco's supporters could also put in requests for the confiscated property of known Popular Front supporters or those who had fled their homes.⁵⁵ Anderson highlights that many participated in this process not simply for material purposes—'[t]hey also did so because they understood their experience of suffering during the war as part of an ideological conflict cast as a contest between 'good' and 'evil' which granted them the right to seize their enemies' property.'⁵⁶

Similar to this was the important role of denunciation within local communities. As Anderson writes, 'ordinary Francoists often colluded with the forces of the state or took the initiative in selecting which supporters of the Republic should be sent before a firing squad or locked behind bars.'⁵⁷ Moreover, they used the tools available to them to 'to avenge personal slights and grudges or to gain pecuniary advantage.' Far from being

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 362.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 365.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Anderson, Peter, 'Singling Out Victims: Denunciation and Collusion in the Post-Civil War Francoist Repression in Spain, 1939–1945', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2009) 8.

imposed, Anderson concludes, denunciation instead put the state at the disposal of its citizens.⁵⁸

However, rather than supporting the argument for fascism 'from below', Anderson provides overwhelming evidence that the regime actively sought the participation of its supporters by highlighting the extent that the Francoist state encouraged and rewarded this behaviour. Fundamentally, it was the circumstances that the state had established which facilitated the actions carried out by its citizens. For example, Anderson notes how

the regime did all it could to encourage denunciation. The Code of Military Justice that regulated the entire trial process effectively created a denouncer's charter and allowed prosecutions to begin through 'any denunciation worthy of consideration'. Denunciations did not even have to be signed before 1941. ... Following the occupation of a village or town the new authorities set up special denunciation centres and placed announcements in newspapers and government publications exhorting people to denounce Republicans. Francoists even made it an offence not to register denunciations against Republicans known to have committed crimes.⁵⁹

Thus there was a complex interplay between the policies of the regime and its popular base. Clearly supporters of the regime participated, often on their own initiative, in pursuing revenge against their enemies. However, the structures, frameworks and

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 16.

rewards for such behaviour were established by the regime. Far from being 'from below,' Fascism was facilitated from the highest levels of the Franco regime.

Conclusion

The debate about whether Franco's regime can be considered fascist or not has to a large extent become overly focused on semantics. Too much importance is placed on the role of ideas, while fascism's historical and practical politics are pushed to the sidelines. In the sphere of political practice, it is clear that the programme of the FET y de las JONS were rooted in the same desire to defeat the organised working class as Italian and German fascism. It carried this programme out in such a repressive manner that it attracted the admiration of the Nazis themselves; its economic policies were modelled on and harmonised with those of fascist Italy and Germany. The FET y de las JONS was considered fascist by its opponents with good reason, and Francoist Spain was openly identified with fascism by Franco himself, and was admired by 'old Falangists'.

To return to the question, it is indeed the case that Franco imposed a fascist state and identity on Spain. He did this primarily through a bloody and ruthless victory in the civil war, but he was also able to mobilise and reward his own popular base in support of the regime in the post-war period. There can be little doubt that Franco's regime was imposed from above, but like all governments, it sought to maintain and legitimise its rule by actively encouraging its supporters to participate in its implementation.

To conclude, Gallego is correct when he says that Spain was one of the most prominent examples of fascism. Not only in its capacity for 'exerting violence against its own population and uniting its patrons into a single party under propitious civil war conditions,'⁶⁰ but also for its ability to incorporate the fascist purpose behind the civil war into the identity of Spain beyond the war.

⁶⁰ Gallego, 'Fascistization and fascism', 173.

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