

REVIEWS

Julián Casanova, *The Spanish Republic and Civil War*
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HOW THE REPUBLIC WAS LOST

The belief that the Spanish Civil War can essentially be reduced to a struggle between democracy and fascism, or fascism and communism, receives a salutary corrective as early as page two of Julián Casanova's excellent new history of 1930s Spain. While internationally it may be seen as yet one more conflict in a decades-long 'European civil war' that ended in 1945, the author correctly insists that the Spanish war, initiated by a military coup against a democratically elected government, was a war of many wars, some of them with long histories: a war to settle deep social conflicts, precipitated from the complex chemistry of the first truly democratic regime in Spanish history; a war of class struggle; a war of religion, between obscurantism and modernization; an ideological war around the concepts of the nation and fatherland; between antagonistic political beliefs, waged in an 'international context that had been thrown out of balance by crises of democracies and the onslaught of communism and fascism.' As Casanova observes, Spain's fate was little different from that of more than half of the twenty-eight European parliamentary or quasi-parliamentary democracies of the interwar years which, by the beginning of 1939, had succumbed to dictatorial regimes.

In 1930, Spain was still a predominantly agrarian country, although the industrial working class had doubled in size since the turn of the century, largely due to the economic advantages provided by Spain's neutrality in the First World War and the boom of the 1920s. But the country was marked by a highly uneven socio-economic development. Industry was almost

exclusively confined to the north and northeast, the Basque Country and Catalonia; in the south, a few thousand landowners held over two-thirds of the land while 750,000 landless day labourers eked out a living on near-starvation wages. These southern estates contrasted in turn with the small farmers of the north and northwest, working on plots too small to provide more than the means of subsistence. A combative working class was split between anarchists and socialists, divided by the question of the state and the working-class movement's participation in politics. Both of these, alongside republicanism, were products of the second half of the nineteenth century, with anarchism predating socialism. It was especially strong among the industrial workers of Barcelona, the anarcho-syndicalist trade union, CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo) claiming 400,000 members nationally in 1931; and, at the other geographical extreme, among the Andalusian rural proletariat. Even the cultural level demonstrated Spain's uneven development: on the one hand, an illiteracy rate of nearly half of all those over ten years old; on the other, a group of dazzling poets, novelists and playwrights leading the country into a literary renaissance.

The Republic was inaugurated virtually without bloodshed on April 14, 1931, two days after the Monarchy's overnight collapse as a result of republican victories in the major cities' municipal elections. The King paid the price for having supported the military dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, from 1923—when, under the spell of the Bolshevik revolution, Spanish industrial and agrarian working-class mobilizations frightened the Monarchy's dominant classes—until its collapse in 1930. The elections had been intended as no more than a straw in the wind to test public sentiment on the return to the Monarchy's previous manipulated parliamentary regime; to the surprise of almost all, the resulting gale blew the King and the pseudo-democratic order away. Popular anti-monarchical sentiment had been mobilized, at the most, by a 'revolutionary committee' created by all shades of republican parties' leaders in San Sebastián the previous summer which, after initial hesitation, the Socialist Party (PSOE) had joined. The immediate execution of two middle-ranking republican army officers who had jumped the gun no doubt increased anti-monarchical sentiment. Nonetheless, the Republic came, as it were, as a bolt from the blue, without mass struggles and the formation of a solid republican base; nonplussed, not knowing what to play, some local bands struck up the *Marseillaise* in celebration of the Republic's advent.

The Republic's five years of pre-war existence divides naturally into three periods: the Republican-Socialist biennium of 1931–33 which legislated sweeping reforms; a second biennium of centre-right government and counter-reform (1933–35); and the final period, five months of solely Left Republican government, which lasted until the military rising in mid-July

1936. It is to Casanova's great credit that he studies the Republic in detail—it takes up one-third of the book—rather than treating it as a mere preliminary to the Civil War, while keeping a keen weather-eye on comparative events in other interwar European powers. Nothing in the Republic's origins preordained its fatal outcome, he writes, since the necessary criterion of stability, that a 'large majority of the population accepted, or at least tolerated, the democracy introduced so swiftly', seemed initially to hold, whether sustained by hope or stunned by the whirlwind of events. The Constituent Cortes which, after the general elections of June 1931, enjoyed a massive Republican majority, demonstrated no radicalization of Spanish political life; no fascists, no communists, no anarcho-syndicalists. The non-Republican right was so miniscule an opposition, however, that it could play little or no part in shaping the Constitution, let alone represent 'the views of large sectors of Spanish society' who Casanova stresses, possessed 'strong economic, social and cultural power'. Following a tradition harking back to the first modern Spanish Constitution of 1812, the coalition fashioned the Constitution as 'a programmatic charter of what the Republicans already in power believed necessary to modernize Spain', rather than to provide a level parliamentary playing field for peaceful contention for power.

Alongside genuine universal suffrage and a cabinet responsible to a single-chamber parliament went the Constitution's 'highly anticlerical' religious reforms: freedom of religion; separation of Church and state; the end of Church-run schools and the secularization of all education; abolition of state stipends for priests; the dissolution of the Jesuits and the introduction of civil marriage, divorce and burial. Some of these were controversial matters even for Republicans: the Prime Minister and Interior Minister, both practising Catholics, registered their 'No' votes and promptly resigned. As Casanova notes, the struggle between clericalism and anticlericalism 'was sharper in Spain than in any other European country of the time'.

By the 1930s, the public demonstration of Spanish anticlericalism and the popular violence which on notorious occasions accompanied it were already a century old. This was, on the one hand, a socio-cultural phenomenon irreducible to a simplistic causality, although its roots undoubtedly lay deep in the past, in the Church's ideological and economic power under the *ancien régime* and its unremitting defence of the true faith when it—or more correctly, the Inquisition—raised intolerance and intransigence to the altar of sanctity. On the other hand, Spanish anticlericalism's *political* aspect can be more precisely dated, for it coincided with the early-nineteenth century's liberal revolutions, which attempted to sweep aside all vestiges of the Old Order and with them, in particular, clerical power over society. The first massacre of clergy and church burnings occurred in 1835 in Madrid on rumours that monks had started a cholera epidemic by poisoning

drinking water. A century later, the Church had still not come to terms with modernity and secularization; it was accustomed to educating the children of the privileged and ignoring those of the popular classes; to providing welfare for the underprivileged meek; to fostering scab unions and to siding with employers against 'rebellious' workers, and to offering consolation to the poor in the next world, not this one. The increasingly unionized working class confronted the Church with the enmity it reserved for the class enemy, while the progressive—essentially metropolitan—middle-class professionals envisaged it as a power hostile to the country's modernization and hoped to legislate it into submission. Both overlooked the fact that the dominant classes had for centuries purveyed a shared religion to enforce their ideological hegemony and were not likely to surrender it easily. There were thus, as Casanova observes, three Spains: one that was extremely Catholic, anti-socialist and law-abiding, another moderately Catholic and a third highly anticlerical, with 'more Catholicism in the north than in the south, among landowners than among the dispossessed, among women than among men . . .'

It was soon evident, moreover, that the coalition's religious policy was providing a fertile terrain for the reaction to recruit and regroup its forces in defence of religion, public order, property and the family, resulting in the formation of the mass Catholic political party, the CEDA (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas). The religious measures—few of which were enforced because the coalition collapsed before the date on which they were to come into effect—nonetheless had a dramatic impact on pious Catholics, already seared before the Republic was a month old by an outburst of anticlerical incendiarism in response to an insignificant monarchist youth provocation. The Republic's founders never took seriously enough the Catholic reaction, as the author justly observes; the church burnings in Madrid and Málaga, which the government did not move immediately to stop, remained vividly etched in Catholics' memories.

The 'broad stabilizing coalition' which Casanova argues was essential to the Republic's consolidation received a blow only six months after the new regime's inauguration when Alejandro Lerroux, leader of the Radical Party, the oldest and largest of the republican parties, in a shift to the right, defected to the opposition; another insidious blow was the CEDA's refusal publicly to acknowledge allegiance to the Republic; and finally, a premature military rising in Seville in 1932, which was easily aborted. Added to this was the attrition of the Anarchists' 'revolutionary gymnastics': three insurrectionary uprisings in two years, which the government repressed.

The coalition's one indubitable success was its school-building programme to replace the Church's establishments and to reduce the high illiteracy rate; more than 10,000 schools were built by 1934. However, other

measures, especially an under-funded agrarian reform and Manuel Azaña's military reforms, were much less successful. No progress was made to palliate unemployment, which reached its height in 1933—Spain's worst year of the Great Depression; Catalonia was granted autonomy but not the Basque country; and, most serious of all, after two years in power, the coalition fractured. This opened the way to the CEDA's resounding victory in the general elections of November 1933, with the Radical Party as runner-up. The CEDA initially gave parliamentary support to the Lerroux government, while José María Gil Robles, an astute lawyer and CEDA leader, soon made public his strategy. First collaboration with the new government, then participation in it and finally its take-over, with the aim of revising the Constitution. If this proved impossible, 'other means'—obviously extra-parliamentary and non-democratic—would have to be found. In the meantime, the Radical-led government, under CEDA pressure, reversed religious reform, virtually brought to a halt agrarian reform, and lowered agricultural wages in what the left called 'the black biennium'.

Amid growing polarization, the Socialist Party now spoke of armed insurrection against any CEDA ministerial participation, a break with its previous stance in favour of republican legality and parliamentary democracy as a peaceful means to achieve socialism. At home, Gil Robles's ranting against democracy in favour of the 'totalitarian concept of the state', the emergence of the still miniscule fascist Falange, and the fascist leanings of the CEDA's youth movement; and abroad, Hitler's rise to power and the crushing of Austrian socialists at the hands of Chancellor Dollfuss, raised for the left the spectre of domestic and international fascism. In October 1934, three CEDA members joined the Cabinet, and the poorly planned socialist insurrection began, taking hold briefly in Catalonia and more profoundly in Asturias, where a coalition of Socialist, Anarcho-syndicalist and Communist militants held out for nearly a fortnight in a genuine attempt at social revolution. For the first time in a century, anticlericalism reared up murderously too: thirty-four priests, seminarists and brothers were assassinated and a great many churches fired or blown up. At General Franco's instance, units of the Spanish Foreign Legion and Moroccan troops, as well as over 15,000 soldiers and 3,000 paramilitary Civil Guards, were brought in to repress the rising. They did so with extreme brutality, carrying out summary executions under martial law. Some 1,100 deaths, 2,000 wounded and countless numbers of insurrectionists imprisoned, together with 300 military and paramilitary troops killed, was the final cost.

The 'Red October', Casanova stresses, was not the Civil War's opening battle, as is sometimes claimed, or the end of all constitutional coexistence. Only sixteen months later, a general election was held within the legal republican-democratic process although the CEDA shed any thought of

stabilizing the Republic. In May 1935, Gil Robles—now War Minister in a CEDA-dominated cabinet—appointed General Franco Chief of the General Staff, and reinforced the rightist elements in the army's top echelons, all of whom would play significant roles in the 1936 military rising.

General elections were held in February, 1936. The left formed a broad alliance in the Popular Front, which included leftist Republican parties, the socialist PSOE, the youth organization and trade-union bloc, Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), the Communist Party (PCE), and the recently formed dissident-communist POUM. The right, on the other hand, was more divided than in 1933. The electorate gave the Popular Front a small margin of victory; but on the insistence of Largo Caballero, UGT secretary general, who refused to return to the first biennial coalition in which he had served as Labour Minister, only the leftist Republican parties were to govern under Manuel Azaña's premiership. When the latter was elevated to the presidency in May and tried to restore the Republican–Socialist coalition under Indalecio Prieto, the Basque Socialist leader whose 'centrist' faction controlled the PSOE national committee, Largo Caballero threatened to break the Popular Front pact. In Prieto's place, the Left Republican, Santiago Casares, was named Prime Minister and War Minister.

His 'weak government' is often blamed for failing to thwart the military conspiracy; but this, Casanova maintains, is to underestimate the PSOE's open schism which prevented all hope of reinforcing the government. He sees Prieto himself as partly to blame: not only had he been actively involved in planning the Asturias rising, but had embarked on the process of replacing Niceto Alcalá Zamora, the Republic's President, without having assured his alternative policy of leading the government. And Alcalá Zamora had added more than his own share to the Republic's destabilization by 'excessive meddling' in the democratic process: first attempting unavailingly to dismiss Azaña from the premiership over the passage of the Religious Bill in May 1933, and then succeeding four months later, the very day after Azaña had won a vote of confidence in the Cortes, in order to make Lerroux Prime Minister. Alcalá Zamora thereafter blocked Gil Robles from the premiership in the second biennium; finally, using the mechanisms of presidential power, he formed a centrist party to fight the February 1936 elections, which was a complete electoral failure. But his replacement by Azaña did not enjoy the success the latter hoped for, since it weakened the Left Republican government which much needed his hands-on political skills as premier as the hour of supreme peril for Spanish democracy approached.

Dismayed by its unexpected electoral defeat, the CEDA made a decisive shift to authoritarianism; 'everyone got the message', Casanova writes: the need to 'abandon the ballot box and take up arms'. Meanwhile, the party's

youth movement was defecting *en masse* to the Falange, whose members engaged in destabilizing street violence in Madrid—to add to the daily increase of verbal violence—with attempted assassinations of prominent figures and armed clashes, to which the Socialist youth, bent on creating militias, responded in kind. Countering Stanley Payne's claim that strikes in CNT-dominated zones were at a historic level, Casanova correctly maintains that in the trade union's major strongholds of Barcelona, Saragossa and Seville the CNT was relatively quiescent. It was rather a massive socialist-led invasion of land in Badajoz, which took over seven times more land than under all the previous agrarian reform, that frightened the dominant classes into believing that the government had lost control.

Immediately after the Popular Front electoral victory, right-wing army officers started to conspire in earnest. The government posted many of them away from Madrid: General Franco to the Canaries and General Mola, the clandestine 'director' of the planned rising, to Pamplona. On May 25, Mola issued the first 'confidential instruction' to the conspirators in which he proclaimed the need for violent repression to ensure the coup's success. The military rebels would take him at more than his word. The assassination of José Calvo Sotelo, now the right's most prominent leader, in the early morning of July 13—by Republican security forces, in revenge for a comrade's murder the previous day—finally concentrated any wavering officers' minds. Though the government had no part in Calvo Sotelo's killing, it was widely blamed for it by conservatives, who would rally to the military rising, which began on July 17 in Morocco and extended to the peninsula over the next three days.

Confidence in a rapid rebel victory was quickly dispelled when the insurrection in most major cities, notably Madrid and Barcelona, was crushed in the streets by a combination of loyal security forces and political and trade-union militants. Where this combination failed, or the security forces went over to the rebels, the rising was almost immediately successful as in Seville and Saragossa. The fact that less than half the army and security forces united behind the rebellion was the principal reason why the coup failed in its principal objective and turned into civil war. In short, the insurrection fractured the Republic but did not overthrow it: the heartland of the Catholic peasantry in the north, except the Cantabrian coast, fell to the rebels; so, too, did latifundist Andalusia and part of Extremadura in the south. The Republic held five of Spain's major cities, the bulk of its industry and the Bank of Spain's massive gold reserves; the military had taken only a large portion of the country's bread-basket. It appeared then that the Republic must win the war.

That it did not is the problematic underlying the five thematic chapters Casanova devotes to the war. But first he sets the scene of the conflict's early

days. The new but still all-Republican government's initial mistake was to order the army's demobilization in the hope of seeing the rebels' manpower wither; instead it led to its own soldiers disbanding, many of them joining the militias which anti-militarist trade union and political activists were creating in place of an army. The government, however, ordered the people to be armed, although many had already seized weapons from barracks and army depots where they had defeated the military. A fissiparous revolution from below, resulting in a multitude of committees to run local affairs, undermined the state and deprived it of its last coercive power, armed force, whereupon it expired. In pursuit of the enemy, the revolution marched over its inanimate body without stopping to breathe new life into it. On the rebels' side, General Franco, who had flown from the Canaries, took command in Morocco and appealed to Germany and Italy for aid. Both rapidly concurred, sending transport planes to ferry Spain's only professional combat force, the Army of Africa, to Seville. A column formed of its legionnaires and Moroccan troops rapidly began to advance northwards towards Madrid.

The first thematic chapter plunges us straight into the horror of the rearguard assassinations on both sides. The first to be shot were army officers, either for having failed to rise—under martial law the insurgents contumeliously termed loyal Republican officers 'rebels'—or, on the other side, as traitors for having risen and failed to win. After them, for the insurgents, came Republican officials, leaders and ordinary CNT and UGT members, left-party activists, known Popular Front supporters, masons, Republican schoolteachers, civil servants, professionals and intellectuals. All 'the rats, the red scum', who had to be 'surgically eliminated' to save the Fatherland and 'western Christian civilization', and to ensure the rearguard's pacification, amounted to nearly 100,000 people according to the meticulous research carried out in the last few years. For their part, the revolutionaries eliminated some 55,000, of whom 6,832 were regular and lay clergy, and 280 women religious. After them came all those considered the people's 'oppressors': prominent Catholics, right-wing party leaders and activists, factory owners and employers, and gunmen of the scab trade unions.

The repression, writes the author, an expert on the matter, used in both zones the same dehumanizing idiom, the need for 'public hygiene' to cleanse the country of its enemy. With the exception of the organized slaughter of some 2,000 political prisoners during the defence of Madrid, the single largest mass killing on either side, the worst spate of wartime assassinations on both zones occurred in the first three months. Even so, there were significant differences: many voices, unheard on the rebel side, were raised in the Republican zone against the slaughter; by early September a new government under Largo Caballero began to create a

semblance of public order, which slowly put an end to the killings there. But not soon enough. News of the anticlerical violence which included the disinterment of nuns' coffins, widespread burning of churches and desecration of religious objects, was broadcast round the world, creating an extremely negative international image of the Republican zone. On the rebel side, with an occasional exception, tight censorship kept the assassinations out of the news. The Church, which would soon sanctify the insurgents' war as a 'religious crusade', turned a blind eye, though hundreds of clergy were witness to the repression, executed not only by the military, but by Falangists and normally law-abiding conservative Catholic citizens.

It is with considerable relief that the reader closes the page on these horrific events and turns to the international situation whose main outlines are well known: the complete 'farce' of Non-Intervention, as Casanova puts it, zealously fostered and observed by a Britain in the grip of appeasement, and the French Popular Front government, whose initial idea it was; and on the other side, its equally zealous non-observance by the Fascist powers in Franco's favour. At a time of widespread European rearmament, 'no country showed an interest in stopping the Spanish war'.

Without Fascist aid, most of it provided on credit, the rebels would not long have been able to continue the war, let alone win it. Apart from the Nazis' Condor Legion, Germany and Italy together provided tens of thousands of troops (mainly Italian), nearly 1,600 war planes, thousands of armoured vehicles and hundreds of field guns. Equally important were the 3,500,000 tonnes of oil provided on credit by Texaco and Shell—double the amount imported by the Republic—without which Franco's army could not have manoeuvred as rapidly as it did. Not wanting to provoke Britain and France, with whom he was still seeking an anti-Fascist alliance, Stalin initially held back; but blatant Nazi and Fascist intervention increasingly alarmed him. Ensuring that all European powers were made aware that Soviet aid to the Republic was not in support of advancing revolution, in October 1936 the first Soviet shipment of arms—and the first contingent of the International Brigades—reached Madrid in the nick of time to help prevent the capital's fall. In all, the Soviet Union sent 700 war planes and 400 armoured vehicles, plus some 2,000 pilots, engineers, military advisers and NKVD secret police. The number of International Brigaders who fought at one time or another totalled 35,000, but no more than 20,000 were ever in the field at the same time.

'The Republic spent as much money losing the war as the Francoists did winning it', Casanova writes: some \$600 million (of 1939 dollars) each. The Republic's war effort could not have continued long without the Bank of Spain's gold reserves, among the largest in the world, valued at \$805 million. Gold worth \$518 million was shipped to the Soviet Union and spent

on arms and supplies. The Bank of France also acquired \$195 millions' worth. The two sides' parity of expenditure is deceptive, however. Franco received not only more but an inestimably higher quality of arms; unable legally to obtain armaments from the democracies, the Republic was often forced to use intermediaries and arms dealers. Apart from constant swindling, 'shoddy weaponry and bribes cost the government perhaps \$100 million', says the author. The money virtually ran out in August 1938, and the Soviet Union provided a \$60 million loan to enable the Republic to continue the war.

On September 4, 1936, with the revolution's militias unable to stem the Army of Africa's advance on Madrid, Largo Caballero became Prime Minister and War Minister, and his cabinet included two Communist Party ministers, the first in Western Europe. The government's major tasks were to oversee the state's reconstruction, the militias' militarization, the revolution's contention—and with it an end to violence in the rearguard—and the centralization of power. The government, which shortly was joined by four anarchist ministers, advanced on all of these fronts but one: military success. It could not even lay claim to Madrid's successful defence since it secretly left the capital—abandoned to its fate was the popular view—on the eve of Franco's offensive. The fall of Málaga, in a state of chaotic militia defence, to Italian and Spanish forces in February 1937 opened a political Pandora's box which was sealed again, in the process sealing Largo Caballero's fate, by bloodshed in May in Barcelona's streets, as Anarchist and POUM militants fought, in defence of the revolution, against Communist and Socialist forces defending exclusive commitment to the war.

Ten months earlier, at the start of the conflict, the Anarchist movement had recognized that this was not the time for revolution, only the enemy's defeat mattered. But the military insurrection had precipitated the very revolution it was intended to prevent; and in the ensuing power vacuum there was no stopping its spread. Factories and businesses were collectivized or put under workers' control, while just over half of the nearly 5,500,000 hectares of arable land expropriated by August 1938 was being legally farmed by CNT and UGT collectives. But under the revolutionary ferment a struggle for power and control of scarce arms was being waged. That was the real meaning of the Barcelona fighting: the Communist Party's increasing influence in the army and political life and the growth of its membership due mainly to Soviet aid. Direct government intervention finally stopped the fighting in the streets and shortly thereafter ended the revolution's consolidation.

The immediate beneficiary of the crisis was Juan Negrín, a 45-year-old socialist physiologist, polyglot and acknowledged expert in financial affairs—as Treasury Minister he organized the dispatch of gold to

Moscow—whom President Azaña appointed Prime Minister to put an end to the indiscipline and ‘disarray’ in the rearguard, especially in Catalonia and Aragón. The government took over public order in Catalonia, dissolved the Anarchist-dominated Council of Aragón and sent in Enrique Lister’s Communist army division to break up the rural Aragonese collectives. More easily expedited, the POUM—‘Trotskyite provocateurs’ and ‘fascist spies’, clamoured the Spanish Communist Party—was outlawed, its army division disbanded and its leader, Andreu Nin, one of Trotsky’s former secretaries, was ‘disappeared’; in fact kidnapped and murdered by the NKVD. The affair further deepened the distrust between Communists and the rest of the political organizations, especially the Anarchists and left Socialists, and it made clear, too, the Republic’s serious ongoing problems of internal political discord which were a considerable stumbling block to winning the war. On the other side of the lines there was no such problem: Franco, by now head of the so-called Nationalist state, crushed dissent in the bud, forcibly uniting the Falange and Carlists, the only permitted civilian political organizations.

Negrín’s war policy, in the author’s words, was a ‘desperate attempt to introduce a democratic and disciplined alternative [to the revolution] that would bring about a change in British and French policy’. To fight on, in short, until Britain and France called off their crippling non-intervention, or failing that, to link the Spanish war to the increasingly imminent European war. The entire Republican north, with the Basque Country’s heavy industry, had fallen to the enemy by October 1937, tipping the balance of power in Franco’s favour. The brief Republican conquest of Teruel in the bitter winter of 1937–38, and its recapture led immediately to Franco’s rebound offensive on Aragón which fell in only three weeks, and to securing a foothold in western Catalonia; by mid-April 1938, his army reached the Mediterranean at Vinaròs, cutting the Republic in two. Franco’s strategy after March 1937, and his several failures to take Madrid, was to wage a war of attrition, a ‘systematic occupation of territory accompanied by a necessary clean-up operation’—a euphemism for repression, of course—which the Generalissimo declared ‘preferable to a rapid defeat of the enemy armies that will leave the country infested with adversaries’.

In the spring and early summer of 1938, when his diplomatic offensive failed to achieve a negotiated settlement to end the war, Negrín launched his last major military gamble: the Ebro offensive which began in the last week of July 1938. Its aim, according to Casanova, was not to defeat the enemy, an impossible task, but to negotiate from a position of strength a ‘less than unconditional surrender’ by cutting a corridor through enemy territory to relieve Valencia and restore direct communication between the two Republican zones. In more dramatic form, the Ebro offensive

initially followed the pattern of the Republic's previous major battles: Brunete, Belchite, Teruel. First, the attack, a daring crossing of the Ebro by night, which took the enemy by surprise, followed by a short advance before being halted by the reinforcements Franco rushed to the front. This time, however, the Republican troops—almost all Communist-led—were ordered to resist where they stood, and for nearly four months, exposed to heavy artillery barrage and infantry attack, they held on, until the survivors were ordered in mid-November to retreat back over the Ebro. Nothing but time had been gained and a great deal sacrificed: 60,000 battle-hardened soldiers dead and wounded and the considerable loss of scarce war material. Even time ran against the Republic. At the end of September in the Munich Pact, Britain and France handed over Czechoslovakia—the only democracy still left in central-eastern Europe—to Hitler, thereby evincing without a shadow of doubt the democracies' continued refusal to aid the Spanish Republic. Between Christmas and February 4, 1939, Catalonia was lost, Barcelona falling without resistance amidst a massive civilian exodus to France.

The writing was on the wall. Freezing and half starved in Madrid living on a daily ration of 100 grams of bread and lentils—Dr Negrín's pills, they were popularly called—riddled by a fifth column and disheartened but not beaten by the army's constant defeat, the true believers held faith; but there were ever fewer of these. Non-Communist Republicans feared a Soviet-style dictatorship if the war continued. To culminate all the previous political strife, the war ended as it had begun, with a military coup led by Colonel Casado, commander of the Republican Army of the Centre in Madrid, against the Negrín government in early March 1939. The military had lost faith in the premier's reiterated call for continued resistance. The coup then turned into a civil war in the capital's streets between Communist-led troops trying to crush Casado—who believed that, 'between officers', he could negotiate a more favourable surrender with Franco than Negrín—and Anarchist military supporting the coup, which in five days left some 2,000 dead. Casado won the day, but to no avail. In his relentless determination to eradicate the enemy to its very roots, Franco offered nothing more than his accustomed 'unconditional surrender'. Only a month previously, he had issued a Political Responsibilities Act, whose effects, dating back to the 1934 Asturian rising, became his principal repressive law. On March 28, without any guarantee of sparing Republicans from the bloody repression to come, the Madrid front raised the white flag and Franco's troops marched into the capital they had never been able to take. Four days later, 'having captured and disarmed the red army', Franco proclaimed the war at an end.

In a brief epilogue Casanova discusses the reasons for the Republic's defeat, citing a number of Spanish and foreign authors who unanimously

ascribe it to the international situation, an opinion which Casanova in general endorses. But the British military historian Anthony Beevor, also cited at some length, offers a different reading. It was the Republic's High Command and its Soviet advisors' 'disastrous conduct of the war' in engaging in conventional offensives, normally implemented for 'propaganda purposes', against a better-armed and trained army which 'gradually destroyed the Republic's army and resistance'. This is a view broadly similar to that which some surviving Communist and ex-Communist soldiers and political commissars expressed to me, over thirty years ago, about their innermost thinking in the course of the war. They added two further failures: Negrín's in not renouncing much earlier all hope in the irresolute democracies; and the PCE's, in not renouncing its sectarian politics towards the revolutionary left. Without these fundamental mistakes, they believed, it should have been possible to forge a politico-military strategy which answered the question: what could the Republic do alone in unfavourable circumstances—which under-used military strengths were available, which political compromises, which sacrifices were necessary—to win the war? Wishful thinking, hindsight, of course, but the cost of defeat was certainly higher than an innovatory attempt to stave off that fate.

Casanova's book must stand beside the very best on the Republic and Civil War available to an English-language readership. It is the product of a new generation of Spanish historians who came of age at the beginning of the transition to democracy after Franco's death, since when the number of works in Spanish on the 1930s has risen exponentially. The majority of these are local or regional studies—categories which should by no means be depreciated, for without them no new syntheses of the period are possible. An outstanding example of a regional study is the recently published *Atlas of the Civil War in Catalonia* (*Atles de la Guerra Civil a Catalunya*, 2010), with more than 400 maps detailing every imaginable military and political aspect of the war on land, sea and in the air, on which a team of historians and cartographers worked for five years under the leadership of Antoni Segura, Joan Villarroya and Víctor Hurtado of Barcelona University, a project generously financed by the Generalitat, Catalonia's autonomous government.

In terms of 'generations' of Spanish historians, the one born just after the Civil War's end and which participated actively in the transition, has also produced notable work on the Republic and the war. Santos Juliá, most outstandingly in his biography of Manuel Azaña; Angel Viñas in his massively documented trilogy—in particular new material from Russian archives—on the Republic during the war; and Julio Aróstegui by his long dedication to 1930s Spain come immediately to mind. Casanova's generation, among whom Enrique Moradiellos, in his work on the war and its international,

especially British, ramifications, is another exemplar, is well prepared to transcend a narrow historical perspective of the Iberian Peninsula—Casanova has taught at two universities in the US as well as holding a chair at Saragossa University; Moradiellos has lectured at London University and is a professor of Contemporary History at the University of Extremadura—and is notable for its readiness to look unblinkingly at Spain's recent past without that past weighing heavily on its critical faculties. Moreover, it does so with style and brio.