

Julián Casanova, *A Short History of the Spanish Civil War*.
Bloomsbury: Academic, 2021, 230 p.

Julián Casanova's work holds a special place in the series of short histories published by Bloomsbury Academic in recent years. First published in 2012, this book provides valuable insight into the war and all the significant factors that contributed to it. Casanova's decades-long experience in teaching at the University of Zaragoza and investigating the history of the Second Spanish Republic and the Civil War, with particular emphasis on the anarchist movement and the development of wartime repression, further contributed to the quality and conciseness of the text. The revised edition includes a preface that stresses the importance of contemporary memory debates regarding the war. The memory disputes mainly revolved around the fact that Spain had never properly dealt with the legacy of the Francoist repression, represented mostly by the thousands of unexhumed Republican victims that remained buried in mass graves throughout the country. The author further points out that the transfer of Francisco Franco's remains from the *Valley of the Fallen* (*El Valle de los Caídos*) in 2019 marked another turning point for the state and the introduction of the new politics of memory that the government of Pedro Sánchez decided to uphold. Furthermore, the introduction traces the causes of the conflict to 1898, the year when Spain lost the final parts of its empire to the United States, and then proceeds to outline the subsequent crises and most important socio-political conflicts during the period of the monarchy, the military dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–1930) and the Second Republic (1931–1936).

The first two chapters (*Spain split in half; Holy war and anticlerical hatred*) study the phenomena that emerged at the onset of the war. What was intended to be just another *coup d'état* soon evolved into a civil war. In the initial chapter, the author explains the events of the first months of the conflict – the country was effectively split into two zones (republican and nationalist/rebel), the rebels' rapid advance, the crisis of republican authorities and the emergence of various revolutionary militias in their zone. The second section analyzes the reprisals and war crimes, with a special focus on their brutality during the summer and autumn of 1936. Casanova stresses the difference in the nature of reprisals – in the nationalist zone the mass violence was planned by the top-ranked generals even before the war and it was rapidly set-in motion in an organized manner against all the perceived enemies of the Spanish nation. Thus, the "reds" category included the political and union leaders, liberal and left-wing intellectuals, clerks and schoolteachers. On the other hand, the republican authorities were powerless to stop the mass violence of the militias and other revolutionaries that took over the role of the army. The forced collectivization of the economy and property occurred in both urban and rural areas, which was followed by the repression against all who were seen as "counter-revolutionary" forces – the upper classes, the industrialists and owners of large estates, the right-wing sympathizers and the clergy. Furthermore, Casanova mentions the role of the church on both sides. The Roman Catholic Church in Spain sided with the rebels from the beginning, it provid-

ed the generals with religious legitimacy by marking the war as the “Crusade” and it took an active role in the repression. Yet, the church faced widespread anticlerical violence in almost all parts of the republican zone (excluding the Basque Country) that involved looting and desecrating churches and the harsh treatment of bishops, priests, monks and occasionally nuns.

The third part discusses international aspects. Both nationalists and republicans urged for foreign financial and military aid in a matter of days. While the response from Rome and Berlin was quick and positive for the rebels, the democratic powers (the United Kingdom and France) opted for the creation of the Non-intervention Committee. Designed to include all the great European powers, it still greatly benefited the Francoists because the governments of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany continued their supply of weapons, financial loans and they kept sending professional soldiers and advisors. However, the Soviet Union eventually decided to help the Republic, as well as to organize the International Brigades of volunteers to fight for the republican cause. As the author points out, the key officials of the Comintern that organized the Interbrigades in Paris were André Marty, Luigi Longo and Josip Broz Tito. In the long run, the international factor proved to be one of the most decisive for the outcome of the conflict as the support from Mussolini and Hitler significantly exceeded all types of aid the Republic was getting from the USSR, Mexico and sporadically France.

The following chapters (*The Republic at war; The new order*) examine the course of the conflict, the institutional development of the warring parties, as well as the political turmoil and alliances that accompanied it. The coalition government of Francisco Largo Caballero (made of liber-

al republicans, socialists, communists and anarchists) from September 1936 managed to settle down the revolutionary chaos, restore the authority and reorganize various armed units into the People’s Army of the Republic. Although, it couldn’t resolve the internal disputes between the parties. The conflict from May 1937 in Barcelona forced the prime minister out of office. On that occasion, an armed quarrel erupted between the government forces, moderate socialists and communists on one side and the anarchists and the POUM (anti-Stalinist communists) on the other. The victory of the former marked the end of the revolution, but internal struggles were far from over. Continued defeats on the battlefield caused a strife between president Manuel Azaña and new prime minister Juan Negrín regarding the strategy of further resistance and the possibility of a negotiated surrender under the Franco-British support, which lasted until the end of the war. On the other side, no such political upheaval was evident in the rebel zone. In October 1936 Francisco Franco was appointed “head of state“ (*El Jefe del Estado*) and promptly initiated the process of forming a centralized authoritarian system. He merged various conservative and fascist entities (traditionalist *carlists* and the Falangist party) into a sole political party and started a diplomatic campaign for international recognition. The successful strategy on the battlefield, with significant aid from Italy and Germany, eventually brought him total victory.

The sixth section provides an outlook on the course of the war and main military operations. Casanova emphasizes the fact that the Republic was mostly in a defensive position and it faced a constant loss of territories (roughly 50% of the country in 1936, northern industrial regions in 1937, complete severance of land connections between Madrid and Barcelo-

na in 1938 and total defeat in 1939). Additionally, he states that the slow advance of Franco's troops was actually a strategic move. Franco opted for a long-drawn-out war of attrition to grind down the enemy. These tactics enabled the complete destruction of rival forces and laid the foundation for the widespread reprisals that followed the takeover of territory. Such war brutality left a devastating toll on Spain – nearly 600.000 dead, of whom 100.000 were due to the repression unleashed by the rebels and 55.000 due to the violence in the republican zone. Almost half a million people were imprisoned in jails and concentration camps and the postwar repression (1939–1946) took additional 50.000 lives. In the epilogue, the author summarizes the postwar retribution, along with the position of Francoist Spain during the Second World War and its international isolation after 1945 due to its close ties to Hitler from the previous period. Moreover, Spain and Portugal were the only European countries that managed to preserve the dictatorships from the interwar period and keep the regime well into the Cold War era. In conclusion, the author mentions that the Civil War and the dictatorship have affected several generations of Spaniards, which in

turn significantly influenced the course and the outcome of the democratic transition in the late 1970s.

The constant publishing of revised editions of the book adequately reflect its scientific quality and conciseness, as well as the significance of the topic. The work remains highly useful for those who are new to the history of the Spanish Civil War, but the experts in the field may benefit from the analysis of the most recent historical, political and mnemonic debates about the conflict, as well as understand why and how certain aspects of the war get (re)examined in both public and scientific sphere. The bibliographic commentary at the end of the book is noteworthy as it presents the latest findings about certain specific topics from both Spanish and international scholars. The structure of the thematic approach may occasionally make the reader lose track of the chronology of events, but it neatly separates the main characteristics of the war (causes of the conflict, institutional evolution in both zones, international implications, course of military operations, wartime and postwar repression) and enables the deeper understanding of those particular aspects.

Dimitrije MATIĆ

Roderick Beaton, *The Greeks: A Global History*.
New York: Basic Books, 2021, 608 p.

Professor Roderick Beaton, in his latest book *The Greeks: A Global History*, sets out to provide a multi-millennial synthesis of Greek history, stretching from the Bronze Age to the Modern Period and present it as an integral whole that, although having some breaks, has nevertheless managed to retain overall continuity. The author's specific goal, was to analyse the nature and form of Greek identity

transformation, as well as the global impact of Greek history and culture. Beaton stressed that it was the specific way in which the Greeks managed to constantly reconfigure their identity that made it so rich and resilient, thus allowing it to last through the ages. Beaton's book is historiographically very interesting, as it seeks to depict Greek history in a 'long-duration' perspective, similar to authors such