

<b>Institution: The University of Edinburgh</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 30 History</b>
<b>Title of case study: Republican Terror in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Research undertaken at the UoE since 2004 by Ruiz has re-examined the orthodox interpretation that Republican terror during the Spanish Civil War, which cost the lives of approximately 50,000 people, was the work of criminal or anarchist 'uncontrollables'. Through the publication of a best-selling book (2012) as well as linked media appearances, reviews and features, Ruiz's arguments have entered national consciousness in Spain as a result of extensive media coverage, shifting the terms of public debate and adding a valuable historical and critical perspective. His findings, which challenge the idea of 'spontaneous' Republican terror against 'planned' Francoist 'genocide', have been publicly acclaimed in Spain for their objectivity. Thus the case study demonstrates significant impact on public understanding.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Dr Julius Ruiz was appointed as a Postdoctoral Fellow in History at the University of Edinburgh in September 2004 to research a project on the 'Red Terror' in Republican Madrid. He was appointed as a lecturer in European History in September 2006 and has developed this work further into articles (2007, 2009a and b) and a book (2012).</p> <p>Republican repression in the Spanish capital during the civil war has remained a polemical issue but had not (until Ruiz's work) been the subject of detailed investigation despite the availability of extensive Republican and Francoist documentation. Madrid witnessed over 8,000 extrajudicial executions including the most controversial massacre of the conflict, the killing of 2,400 prisoners in Paracuellos de Jarama in late 1936.</p> <p>Ruiz's research on the 'Republican Terror' has progressed through a series of stages:</p> <p>i) The project began by focussing on the perpetrators of the terror. In an article published in the <i>Journal of Contemporary History</i> (2006), Ruiz showed that one of the most infamous so-called 'uncontrollables', Agapito García Atadell, was in fact a prominent Socialist figure who enjoyed widespread support within the party leadership. His popularity, Ruiz argued, rested on his apparent success in eliminating elements of the fascist 'Fifth Column', the 'fascist' internal enemy that was supposedly active in the capital.</p> <p>ii) While Ruiz's research indicated that Republican extrajudicial terror was organised and carried out by revolutionary tribunals, it also confirmed that executions were overwhelmingly concentrated in 1936. Since this fact was frequently used as evidence of 'uncontrolled' terror that was eventually eliminated by the Republican government, he turned his attention to Republican justice from 1937, visiting archives in Madrid, Salamanca and Amsterdam in 2006 to investigate the Republican judicial system. While it is true that regular 'popular tribunals' supplanted extrajudicial killings from 1937, his work indicated important continuities with the murderous early months of the civil war. The overall objective of the repression – the elimination of the ill-defined internal 'fascist' enemy – remained constant, but the means to attain this goal changed. 'Fascists' were no longer executed but sent to forced labour camps for punishment and re-education (Ruiz, 2009a).</p> <p>iii) Ruiz then returned to the study of perpetrators in 2007-8, using Republican documents to create a database of 4,500 policemen who carried out rear-guard policing duties in Madrid during the civil war. This demonstrated that the killers of 1936 were well-educated or had skilled backgrounds; there were few unskilled workers or peasants. It also indicated that the perpetrators were incorporated en masse into the new 'antifascist' Republican police force that was created in 1937-8. Those who failed to land a job lacked the support of left-wing Popular Front organisations</p>

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and were therefore vulnerable to being scapegoated as an 'uncontrollable' (Ruiz, 2009b).

iv) The final stage of the research, conducted 2009-11, used neglected Spanish as well as foreign sources, to conclude that the Republican government was complicit in the killings. Nevertheless, Ruiz was also able to demonstrate that Santiago Carrillo (the future Communist Party leader) did not 'order' the operation; it was the brainchild of a Popular Front revolutionary tribunal. In January 2012, his findings were published in *El terror rojo*, a substantial monograph.

**3. References to the research**Publications

J. Ruiz, 'Defending the Republic: The Garcia Atadell Brigade in Madrid, 1936', *The Journal of Contemporary History* 42.1 (2007), 97-115. DOI: [10.1177/0022009407071625](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009407071625)

J. Ruiz, 'Work and don't lose hope': Republican Forced Labour Camps during the Spanish Civil War,' *Contemporary European History* 18.4 (2009a), 419-442; listed in REF2.

J. Ruiz, 'Incontrolables' en la zona republicana durante la guerra civil: el caso de Luis Bonilla Echevarria,' *Historia y Política* 21 (2009b), 191-218.  
<http://www.cepc.gob.es/publicaciones/revistas/revistaselectronicas?IDR=9&IDN=672&IDA=27405>

J. Ruiz, *El terror rojo* (Barcelona, Espasa Libros, 2012); listed in REF2.

Grants

British Academy, small research grant, 2006 (PI: J. Ruiz) £1470, Forced labour camps in Republican Spain 1936-1939; Ref No: SG-43824.

Carnegie Trust, small research grant, 2006 (PI: J. Ruiz) £500, Forced labour camps in Republican Spain 1936-1939.

AHRC Research Leave Scheme award, 2007 (PI: J. Ruiz) £17330. The "Red Terror": Repression in Republican Madrid during the Spanish Civil War; Ref No: RL/PID No: 143909/AID No: 129662.

**4. Details of the impact**

Over the last decade, the nature and legacy of Republican and Francoist killings during and after the civil war has provoked intense and often bitter discussion within Spain. Ruiz has made a significant contribution to what has been an extremely politicised and polarised debate by offering a more critical and objective perspective informed by empirical archival research. In so doing, he has challenged orthodoxies and myths, enabling a more informed public understanding of the civil war and its longer-term effects.

In January 2009, Ruiz published an article in the current affairs magazine *El Noticiero de las Ideas* critiquing magistrate Baltasar Garzón's October 2008 order to prosecute posthumously leading members of the Franco regime (including the dead dictator himself) for genocide. Ruiz showcased his arguments in an extended review essay published in the *Revista de Libros* (the Spanish equivalent of the *TLS* or *LRB*) in April 2011 (see 5.1). According to Álvaro Delgado-Gal, the editor, it 'had a great impact on opinion in Madrid', because it did not 'accept the conventional and entrenched positions of the debate' (correspondence with Ruiz, 14/4/2011). Delgado-Gal then commissioned Ruiz to write a 5,000 word review of Paul Preston's controversial book *El Holocausto Español* [*The Spanish Holocaust*]. This essay, which contrasted claims of 'uncontrollable' Republican terror with evidence taken from Ruiz's research, was published as the lead review in the December 2011 issue (5.2). Three months later, Delgado-Gal commented that the article had been 'enormously talked about in Spain' and commissioned Ruiz again to write an extended review of Michael Seidman's *The Victorious Counterrevolution*, a re-examination of the

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Francoist war effort (correspondence with Ruiz, 19/3/2012). This appeared in the November 2012 edition.

It was on the basis of this growing reputation as a prominent historian in the public sphere that Espasa Calpe, one of the Spain's largest commercial publishers, offered Ruiz a book contract in 2009. Before publication on 17 January 2012, Espasa informed the author that *El Mundo*, Spain's second-largest national daily, wanted to serialise the book. The three-page feature (as well as a 3 minute audio commentary by Ruiz on its website) appeared on Sunday 15 January 2012 (5.3), and the editor Pedro J. Ramírez, tweeted his over 78,000 followers that he wished to read the book. The article was followed two days later by a 'question and answer' interview on the main theses of the book that appeared on the newspaper's website (5.4), which in turn prompted 33 Facebook 'recommends' and 17 tweets. The publication of the book was accompanied by interviews and features in other national dailies such as *ABC* (96 Facebook 'like', 36 tweets and 26 comments), *La Razón* (60 Facebook 'like' and 14 tweets) and *La Gaceta* (5.5 – 5.7). Ruiz was interviewed on radio for the national state network (*Radio Nacional*) and Carlos Herrera's popular morning show on *Onda Cero* (5.8) among others. The Spanish state press agency, EFE, also issued a press release on the book, which meant that Ruiz's findings were disseminated in the provincial press (see e.g. *El Correo* of Bilbao (5.9) and *El Norte de Castilla* of Valladolid). This Spanish media coverage, extremely unusual for an academic monograph, caused book sales to rocket. 2,000 copies of *El terror rojo* were sold in the first month of publication, prompting a reprint in February 2012. A total of 2,900 print books were sold in the first 6 months of publication as well as 70-e-books (email correspondence with Ruiz from publisher 25/6/2012). Espasa currently has a catalogue of 1,341 titles, and Ruiz's book was one of 24 listed as a 'bestseller' on its website (spring - summer 2012). In June 2012, he participated in a television documentary on the terror that was broadcast on the regional channel *Telemadrid*, and which was triggered by the publication of the book. Reviewing the book later in the year, historian Juan Avilés wrote in *El Mundo* (9/11/2012) that 'the appearance of Julius Ruiz's well-conceived and documented study is to be celebrated...because *El Terror Rojo* demolishes the comforting thesis that, unlike the rightist repression which was planned and organised from above, the leftist repression was the work of "uncontrollables".'

In terms of its significance, Ruiz's research project has been publicly acclaimed for its objectivity and lack of partisanship. Writing in the culture section of the centre-right *ABC* on 12 February 2012, 'M.A.V.' praised his 'exhaustive investigation'; two months later, on 11 April, Jorge Reverte, columnist in the centre-left *El País*, paid tribute to his 'magnificent and well-documented study', albeit one that was 'uncomfortable' reading for some. Ruiz has also received several dozen e-mails from satisfied readers from across the socio-political spectrum. These include messages from relatives of those who perished in the terror in Madrid, but also an e-mail from a nephew of one of the perpetrators, who sent family documents relating to the post-war fate of his ancestor.

In April 2013 *El terror rojo* was re-issued as a cheap paperback by Espasa. A month later, it was awarded Spain's 2012 Hislibris Prize for best history book (5.10). Hislibris is the country's largest community of history bloggers and its website attracts 200,000 visitors a month. The award is evidence of the reach of the research amongst the Spanish public and of the wide recognition accorded to it in shifting the terms of public debate. In June 2013, Dr Ruiz accepted an offer from Espasa to write an 80000-word monograph on the Paracuellos de Jarama massacres in Madrid. The book is due for publication in 2014.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

### Newspapers

5.1 "Las metanarraciones del exterminio", *Revista de Libros*, no. 172, April 2011, pp. 8-12.

<http://www.revistadelibros.com/articulos/las-metanarraciones-del-exterminio>

or

<http://tinyurl.com/nhrejvy>

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5.2 “Vino viejo en odres nuevos”, *Revista de Libros*, no. 180, December 2011, pp. 3-6.

<http://www.revistadelibros.com/articulos/vino-viejo-en-odres-nuevos>

or

<http://tinyurl.com/nzpe6sz>

5.3 Crónica supplement, *El Mundo* 15 Jan 2012, pp. 12-14. [available as pdf copy on request]

Web sources

5.4 *El Mundo* website (18 Jan 2012):

<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2012/01/17/cultura/1326802166.html> or

<http://tinyurl.com/q6ahcxy>

5.5 ABC coverage of the publication of *El terror rojo* (22 Jan 2012):

<http://www.abc.es/20120122/cultura/abcp-terror-rojo-madrid-republicano-20120122.html> or

<http://tinyurl.com/ohe8suf>

5.6 *Le Razon* 23 Jan 2012):

<http://www.larazon.es/noticia/3032-espana-bajo-el-terror-rojo> or

<http://tinyurl.com/q7anu44>

5.7 Interview with Ruiz in *La Gaceta* (23 Jan 2012):

<http://www.intereconomia.com/noticias-gaceta/cultura/todo-frente-popular-intervino-matanzas-revolucionarias-20120122> or

<http://tinyurl.com/q6w7jmo>

5.8 Carlos Herrera’s radio interview with Ruiz (1 Feb 2012):

[http://www.ondacero.es/audios-online/herrera-en-la-onda/entrevistas/herrera-habla-julius-ruiz\\_2012020100085.html](http://www.ondacero.es/audios-online/herrera-en-la-onda/entrevistas/herrera-habla-julius-ruiz_2012020100085.html)

5.9 *El Correo* (20 Jan 2012):

[http://www.elcorreo.com/agencias/20120121/mas-actualidad/cultura/mujeres-bando-nacional-fueron-esenciales\\_201201211007.html](http://www.elcorreo.com/agencias/20120121/mas-actualidad/cultura/mujeres-bando-nacional-fueron-esenciales_201201211007.html) or

<http://tinyurl.com/q4a8c57>

5.10 Hislibris:

<http://www.hislibris.com/primeros-resultados-del-iv-premio-de-literatura-historica-de-hislibris/comment-page-1/> or

<http://tinyurl.com/q9psxb5>