

Heather Dewey

Title: “Mass Graves and Remembrance: Scholarly Memory of the Red Terror in Spain”

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Paper written for: History J495: Senior Seminar–War and Memory (Spring 2016)

At the end of this semester, **Heather Dewey** will graduate with a History major, an Honors Medal, minors in Spanish and Creative Writing, and a certificate in International Studies. Afterwards, she hopes to be accepted into a doctoral program to continue her studies in the effects of political regimes and historical narratives on the memories and historiography of nations like Chile, Spain, and the Soviet Union. Over the summer, she will be taking courses in Russian and will continue to practice Spanish. In her spare time, she writes psychological horror stories and is working on a novel that she and her sister (an illustrator) hope to self-publish. Attending IPFW has been one of the greatest times of Heather’s life, and she would like to thank everyone in the History Department and others who have helped her develop and grow as a scholar and as a person.

Abstract

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was fought between the Second Spanish Republic and the Nationalists led by Francisco Franco. The Nationalists won and Franco became dictator, resulting in the continuation of the White Terror, a period of executions, murders, and oppression of former Republicans and their supporters. However, these actions were not written about for a long time due to repression by the dictatorship. When Franco died in 1975, the deceased Republicans were still not discussed because the two political sides of the government wanted to preserve the nascent democracy by not dredging up old wrongs. However, in 2000 the exhumations of Republican mass graves began in earnest, and many organizations and individuals started to push for the inclusion of the White Terror in scholarly memory.

In addition to the White Terror, the Civil War saw a period known as the Red Terror, which included violent actions and murders of political fascists and clergy members by the Republicans. The Red Terror, then, is the term used to describe the surge of violence that swept through the Republican side of the war, and included murders, attacks, and church burnings. Changing public opinion has resulted in the Red Terror being explained by scholars as the result of select “uncontrollables” not related to the Second Spanish Republic. These “uncontrollables” would not have been encouraged in any form by the government, but would have been acting through their own sense of justice. The people targeted were those associated with the old hierarchical regime of Spain, which was why many in the clergy were chosen as victims.

While it has 1/3 of the death toll of the White Terror, it is still important due to its significance in the Civil War and how it changes the perception of the Republican side. After studying changing public opinion in Spain and the gradual inclusion of the “uncontrollable” narrative in scholarly sources, I have determined that a growing idealization or development of a positive public image of the Republicans affected collective memory. The change in collective memory in turn morphed scholarly memory, demonstrating how historians are affected by their environments in the writing of history.

Bibliographical Note

Because my project was focused on changing trends in scholarly memory, many of the sources were secondary source books written about the Spanish Civil War and Republican violence. The other main source of knowledge came from the archives of two of the most popular Spanish newspapers, *ABC* and *El País*. I translated many of them from the original Spanish, and was also able to access the official archives of the Francoist regime to see how the Red Terror used to be discussed. I chose these sources because I wanted to determine how collective memory changed due to the exhumations of mass graves, and how this in turn affected the scholarly memory of academic resources.