



NEWS IMAGES VOICES SPORT TECH LIFE PROPERTY ARTS + ENTS TRAVEL MONEY INDYBEST BLOGS STUDENT OFFERS

Art Architecture Music Classical Films TV & Radio Theatre & Dance Comedy Books Puzzles and Games

Arts + Ents > Books > Reviews

Harper Press, £30, 700pp. £27 from the Independent Bookshop: 08430 600 030

The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain, By Paul Preston



HELEN GRAHAM | Friday 02 March 2012



Shares: 156 PRINT A A A

In Spain today, the civil war triggered three quarters of a century ago is still "the past that has not passed away". When a Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzón, internationally renowned for his championing of human rights, opened an investigation into the conflict's core of extreme extrajudicial violence (in which more than 200,000 people were killed), he was charged with abuse of power. Although Garzón* was acquitted this week, the fact both that he was put on trial at all and that judicial investigation into the violence is now blocked leaves unresolved the vehement memory polemics of Spain's civil society, and so renders Paul Preston's monumental, rigorous and unflinching study important and opportune in ways that reach far beyond the purely academic.

Ads by Google

Is it the End of Britain?

Could the Looming Financial Crisis Mean the End of Britain?
www.moneyweek.com/End-Of-Britain

2014 Annuity Calculator

How much income and Lump Sum will Your Annuity provide? Find Out Now!

Preston is Britain's foremost historian of modern Spain. He acknowledges his debt to those historians inside Spain who over the past three decades, despite huge social and political obstacles, have opened up the facts of this violence through painstaking research in local archives.

But Preston's own contribution is a major one, both in tracing the fundamentalist origins of the military coup that unleashed



Big Benefits Row – or just 'The Katie Hopkins Show'?



Nudity, weed and not a twerk in sight: Miley grows up in W interview

ELEPHANT APPEAL GET INVOLVED >

Search The Independent

Advanced Search Article archive Topics



Most Viewed Most Commented Most Shared



The Jump finale, TV review: Thank God that debacle's over, bring on Sochi



JK Rowling, Harry and Hermione: Harry Potter's neverending story



Leonardo DiCaprio reveals his childhood surrounded by drugs as he defends The Wolf of Wall Street role



Benefits Street's White Dee to join Katie Hopkins in live televised benefits debate



Philip Seymour Hoffman and Hollywood's drug addiction: Why did nobody care about his problem until it killed him?

INDEPENDENT IMAGES



SWPA 2014 SHORTLIST

INDEPENDENT PARTNERS

Corporate foreign exchange and international payments



www.compare-annuity.com/Calculator

Cholesterol Study

Looking for People with Cardiovascular Disease. Learn more.

clinlife.co.uk/High_Cholesterol

saw it as heralding the end of a cherished and familiar world; indeed as the end of "Spain".

From the beginning, Preston "reminds" us that while the conflict in Spain evolved into the "war of two equal sides", as subsequently enshrined in Western consciousness, it began in July 1936 as something very different. It was a military assault on an evolving civil society and democratic regime in the name of the "true nation", in defence of which the rebels were prepared to kill, or "cleanse", as their rhetoric proclaimed. General Queipo de Llano, whose troops laid waste to south-western Spain, called it "the purification of the Spanish people".

Recognising that the initial massive violence was generated by the military rebels themselves remains the biggest taboo of all in democratic Spain's public sphere. Franco's dictatorship has never been delegitimised since his death in 1975, notwithstanding the symbolic measures of recent years. It is this military responsibility, which Garzón* sought unsuccessfully to confront, that lies at the heart of Preston's study. He builds on a lifetime's research into the destruction of democracy in 1930s Spain to show how a military-led coalition against political and social reform triumphed, against the divided and inexperienced centre-left government of the Second Republic.

The conspirators' determination to deploy terror from the start was made clear in the prior orders of the coup's director, General Mola, to "eliminate without scruples or hesitation all who do not think as we do". Their aim was to reverse both the Republic's redistributive policies of land and social reform, and the cultural shift implied in its extension of literacy, co-education and women's rights. But resistance to the rebels in much of urban Spain created such logistical challenges that the coup would likely have failed, had it not been for the provision by Hitler and Mussolini of the aircraft that transported Franco's colonial Army of Africa to mainland Spain. This gifted the rebels the brutal force which effectively rescued the failing coup.

The military rebels now unleashed the mass slaughter of civilians. Preston's book tells the harrowing story of this "cleansing" war of terror as it unfolded across the entirety of Spain's territory. Even in areas where there was no resistance to the coup, the new military authorities presided over an extermination, mainly perpetrated by civilian death squads and vigilantes, of those sectors associated with Republican change. The victims were not only the politically active, or those who had directly benefited from reform, but also those who symbolised cultural transformation: progressive teachers, self-educated workers, "new" women.

As Preston shows, all these sectors were perceived by the army's rebel commanders as akin to insubordinate colonial subjects. His use of "holocaust" in the book's title will rightly spark debate. But Preston's intention is not to equate Spain with the Holocaust. Rather he wishes to effect a category shift in how people think about what actually happened in Spain, in order to suggest parallels and resonances between the cases which allow a deeper understanding of Europe's dark mid-20th century as a whole, and of the mechanisms of human violence itself.

Even in the areas of Spain where the military coup failed, in one crucial respect it "succeeded" fully. There too it unleashed extrajudicial killing which, combined with the killing in the rebel zone, would change Spain's political landscape forever. In Republican territory this killing, which for a time the government was powerless to prevent because the coup had collapsed the instruments of public order, was perpetrated against civilian

the killing and in reconstructing its complex consequences. What the conspirators intended was to crush the social challenge posed by the reforming project of the democratic Second Republic. They and their supporters – whether patrician elites, conservative townsfolk or inland peasantry –



What do you do when your team's losing so spectacularly? Turn to porn, of course...



Sally Bercow defends picture of 'kiss' with mystery man



The Amazing Spider-Man 2 - Trailer 2 (MTV)



Baby born in onesie



Devil Baby terrifies New York



Shoppers strip off in France

Recommended by



Wolf of Wall Street's Margot Robbie says 'thanks but no thanks' to Playboy shoot



FROM AROUND THE WEB



Manchester United's £37...
(GiveMeSport)



How Often Should You Wash...
(NaturallyCurly)



New engines for 2014 BMW...
(CarBuyer)



'Star Wars: Episode VII' Gets...
(MTV)

Recommended by

INDEPENDENT PARTNERS



[Search the Independent business directory](#)

[Find businesses across the country](#)

SPONSORED FEATURES

sectors assumed to support the coup. Some 50,000 people were killed, including nearly 7,000, mostly male, religious personnel.

These killings drastically undermined the Republic's international credibility – even though, as Preston reminds us, it was the coup that conjured the killing, creating the conditions that made it possible. Republican-zone violence was as ugly and unscrupulous as the rebels; it was, of course, also reactive. But once in existence it lived a life of its own. By the time that the Republican authorities were rebuilding public order and put an end to this killing, it had already reinforced support for Franco among the families of its victims.

After Franco achieved victory in spring 1939, the mass-murdering dimension inherent in war-forged Francoism became fully apparent, as the final section of Preston's study explores. Of the baseline figure of 150,000 extra- and quasi-judicial killings for which it was responsible in the territory under direct military control between 1936 and 1940, at least 20,000 were committed after the Republican military surrender in late March 1939.

In a bid to create the "homogeneous" nation of which the conspirators dreamed, based on traditionalist values and social deference, the regime engaged in the killing, mass imprisonment and social segregation of the Republican population. To do so, the regime exhorted "ordinary Spaniards" to denounce their compatriots' "crimes" to military tribunals. Tens of thousands did so – out of a combination of political conviction, grief and loss, social prejudice, opportunism and fear. Thus did the Franco regime, born of a military coup that itself triggered the killing, pose as the bringer of justice. But this was "justice turned on its head", given the notorious lack of fit between the acts of wartime violence themselves and those denounced and tried for them. No corroboration was required nor any real investigative process undertaken.

But, as Preston shows, matching culprits to crimes was not the real point of the exercise. Tens of thousands were tried merely for their political or social alignment with the Republic. As one prosecutor declared: "I do not care, nor do I even want to know, if you are innocent or not of the charges made against you." This was the Franco regime's "fatal" moment.

Through its choice of legitimising strategy it mobilised a social base of perpetrators, building on their fears and losses during the war, while, at the same time, it criminalised the Republican population, perpetrating an abuse of human rights on a vast scale.

Worse still, the regime, buoyed up by the Cold War, then kept alive these binary categories for nearly 40 years, through its apartheid policies and an endlessly reiterated discourse of "martyrs and barbarians". This is what marks Francoism apart – the lasting toxicity of its originating strategy, which still burns the social and political landscape of 21st-century Spain, three and a half decades after the dictator's death.

That Spain's public sphere is still shaped by the values and perceptions bequeathed by four decades of Francoism is blindingly evident in the Garzón case. Inside Spain, the afterlife of violence remains; and with it the need for a democratic coming-to-terms, inherent in which is an openness to the difficult past. Preston's study is history as a public good, a substitute for the truth and reconciliation process that has not taken place in Spain and an antidote to those who still regard Franco as a good Christian gentleman.

That this remains unfinished business is clearly indicated by the child-trafficking scandal recently exposed in Spain, whose origins stretch back to the dictatorship's criminal social-engineering policies. The picture is clear: the victimised social groups are the same as those who, in 1936, were subjected to the military rebels' "prophylaxis".

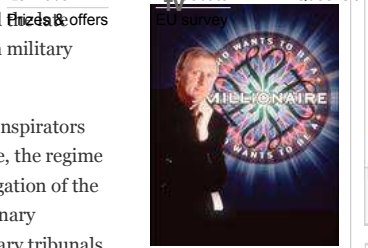
Helen Graham is professor of modern Spanish history at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her new book, 'The War and its Shadow', will be published by Sussex Academic Press in May. Paul



Business videos from commercial thought leaders

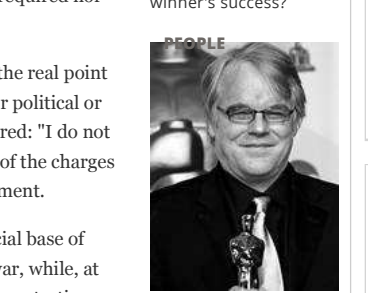
Watch the best in the business world give their insights into the world of business.

Win £100 voucher
New Career
Kenya
EU debate
EU survey



Can you make it to the million-pound question?

Who Wants to be a Millionaire ends this evening, but can you emulate the first winner's success?



Hollywood's addiction: Why did nobody care about Hoffman's problem until it killed him?



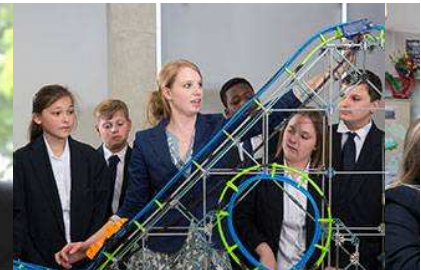
Why is Facebook blue?

... and 9 other things you didn't know about the world's biggest social network



Michael Fabricant: Minister for Selfies

A flick through the MP's Twitter account reveals a treasure trove of self-snapped shots



READER SURVEY

Take our short survey for your opportunity to win one of two £100 Amazon vouchers.

INDEPENDENT PARTNERS
New Career
York Break
Teaching
EU debate
Queensland
EU survey



Join the Independent business directory

Register your business for free >

INDEPENDENT PARTNERS

The English Tee Shop. Exclusive offer.



FINANCIAL GUIDES & REPORTS What's this?

Planning for retirement: Your guide to a secure future Download FREE Guide

How anyone can make money trading shares Request Free Book

New limited edition CD from Aberdeen and Jazz FM Request free copy

A handy guide to help get you started with an Investment ISA Download Free Now

Are you looking to rent a flat or house in London?

ES Rentals

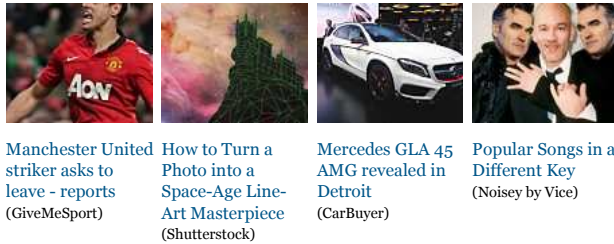
	Bedford Avenue, Bloomsbury, London, Greater London, WC1B 3 bed. £950 PW
	King Square, London, Greater London, EC1V 4 bed. £750 PW
	Goswell Road, Goswell Road, London, Greater London, EC1V 2 bed. £625 PW

e.g. 'Borough', 'SW10' **SEARCH >>**

Preston will be speaking at the 'Independent' Bath Literature Festival on Wednesday 7 March (bathlitfest.org.uk)



You may also like these



Manchester United striker asks to leave - reports (GiveMeSport)
How to Turn a Photo into a Space-Age Line-Art Masterpiece (Shutterstock)
Mercedes GLA 45 AMG revealed in Detroit (CarBuyer)
Popular Songs in a Different Key (Noisy by Vice)

From around the web

Tribal Communities in South Africa Subject of New, Gorgeous Musical Documentary (Firsts.com)

Top tips on piano lessons for kids (Roland)

Johnny Rotten gets honored & clowns Miley Cyrus at the BMI London Awards (Nightlife Television)

American Rappers are Turning to British Producers (Noisy by Vice)

Manchester United do not need a top four finish (GiveMeSport)

Make Your Own Simpsons Avatar (5dollarblog)

Ofcom should decide on media ownership, say Lords (Evening Standard)

More from The Independent

Allah vs atheism: 'Leaving Islam was the hardest thing I've done' (19 January 2014)

This is how much a night out with George Clooney costs (23 January 2014)

Shia LaBeouf caught on camera headbutting man in south London bar after he 'insults his girlfriend's mother' (17 January 2014)

Here's why Seth MacFarlane killed off Brian in Family Guy (14 January 2014)

Philip Seymour Hoffman and Hollywood's drug addiction: Why did nobody care about his problem until it killed him? (04 February 2014)

Benefits Street: One Show viewers complain after Paul O'Grady calls cast 'sacrificial lambs' (16 January 2014)

Recommended by

Ads by Google

Corporate Wine Events

Legendary Corporate Entertainment Events By Jascots - Call Now!
jascotscorporatewineevents.co.uk

9 Best Stocks to Own Now

Here's a list of recommendations that several top analysts agree on
www.dailytradealert.com

We Want to Read Your Book

Publishing poetry, novels, memoirs, how-to, religious, most genres.
dorrancepublishing.com

Suggested Topics : **Catalonia** | **Spain** | **Military** | **Democracy** | **History**

0 COMMENT



Post a Comment

Login



Post



Coca-Cola's multicultural Super Bowl ad infuriates Twitter users

Angry users claimed that people living in the Unites States should #SpeakAmerican



How to use the toilet - as explained by the Sochi Winter Olympics

Snowboarder reveals 'bathroom rules', including No Fishing



Mourinho credits 'Scot' McCulloch for inspiring Blues to victory over City



Thank God that debacle's over, bring on Sochi

The Jump finale, review: Damp squib sees NONE of original contestants still standing

Arts & Ents blogs



Clean Bandit's live performance of Rather Be

Show Me

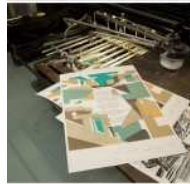
Between: and

Location:

By clicking 'Search' you are agreeing to our Terms of Use.



Moderate sales and lots of people at Delhi's India Art Fair



Friday Book Design
Blog: Faber Fine Press



Don't miss a beat

Get our weekly email round-up of the best arts and entertainment stories

[Sign up >](#)

Independent Travel Shop



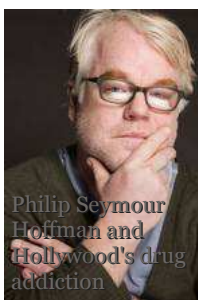
5* Halkidiki holiday
from £499pp
[Find out more](#)



Audleys Wood Hotel, Hampshire
from £99pp
[Find out more](#)



Luxury St. Anton ski holiday
from £379pp
[Find out more](#)



Philip Seymour Hoffman and Hollywood's drug addiction



Arnold throws herself headfirst into Sochi gold rush



Tougher times for Amazon as rivals get smart



Harry Potter's neverending story



Starting the week in A&E



[Search The Independent](#)

[Advanced Search](#)

[Article archive](#)

[Topics](#)

[Terms & Policies](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cookie policy](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Complaint form](#)

[Email newsletters](#)

[RSS](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Subscriptions](#)

[Apps](#)

[Work for us](#)

[Evening Standard](#)

[Homes & Property](#)

[iJobs](#)

[Advertising Guide](#)

[Syndication](#)

[Novaya Gazeta \(English\)](#)

[ES Business Connections](#)

[ES Rentals](#)

© **independent.co.uk**