

MICHAEL JACOBS

## The Sleep of Reason

The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain

By Paul Preston

(HarperPress 700pp £30)

The recent movement in Spain to give proper recognition to all the victims of the country's Civil War has prompted many Spaniards to denounce such intentions as merely 'raking up the ashes'. Paul Preston's chillingly powerful new book demonstrates how much the Spanish Right has to fear from dwelling too closely on the atrocities of twentieth-century Spain. The book, though generally much praised in its original, Spanish edition, has been predictably vilified by some, not least for its title. The idea of Franco instigating a Spanish 'holocaust' has been seen as a delusion of Preston's, as well as an inappropriate use of a term regarded by many Jews as their prerogative.

Yet, as Preston explains in an excellent early chapter devoted to the ideological background to Franco's rebellion, the horrific massacres and executions carried out by the Spanish Right were motivated by a deep-rooted anti-Semitism which, mysteriously, had survived even in a country that had officially expelled its Jews over four centuries earlier. Among the many murky thinkers whom Preston has studied is the once enormously influential Jesuit priest Juan Tusquets, who, ironically, was himself of Jewish blood. Tusquets, while later denying his role as a right-wing polemicist, was the person principally responsible for developing the idea of a 'Judeo-Masonic conspiracy' dedicated to the destruction of the Spanish Church.

Other dubious right-wing ideologues, such as the lawyer Onésimo Redondo, also brought into the equation an age-old Spanish fear of 'the Moor', while others confused the issue further by talking about a Bolshevik takeover of Spain. What emerges so clearly from Preston's book is that underlying all the muddled justifications for the rebels' actions was an utter disregard for people. There is abundant proof here of the way in which the

Spanish labourer was barely considered human by his employers.

Women too were treated with little respect by the rebels. Despite all the rebel propaganda aimed at portraying the Republicans as cruel barbarians capable of the ultimate crimes of raping and killing nuns, the rebels regularly incited their soldiers to rape, and murdered hundreds of pregnant women. Among the countless shocking stories that make up this book is that of Amparo Barayón (the wife of the writer Ramón Sender), inexplicably arrested on her return to her home town and eventually executed after her three-month-old baby girl had been taken away from her on the grounds that Republicans were not fit to bring up children.

Most discussions today of the Civil War usually include the line that horrific crimes

were committed on both sides. However, Preston takes the view that Republican atrocities were essentially hot-blooded responses to what he persuasively shows to have been the rebels' systematic policy of exterminating anyone who disagreed with their ideology. Though it is now impossible to make an accurate assessment of the numbers of those killed by either side in the war – the rebels greatly exaggerated their own losses, while repeatedly failing to record the executions for which they themselves were to blame – the evidence is that rebel crimes far outnumbered Republican ones. Franco, in Preston's eyes, was not only someone who has been treated far too leniently by history. He was also the perpetrator of an entirely unnecessary war.

Preston launches into his catalogue of horrors with the passion of an avenging angel, and a knowledge of the Civil War greater than that of any other contemporary historian. This lengthy book is at times as unsettling to read as it must have been to write (and the many years of its gestation can partly be explained by the need for a break from the intensity of its subject). Dense with information, it is also inevitably repetitive in its



*Republican prisoners packed into the fortress of Montjuich in Barcelona, February 1939*



descriptions: the reader begins to lose track of the number of times men are forced to dig their own graves, and women to drink castor oil. But such accumulation of information is necessary to Preston's argument, and made compelling through the energy of the writing and the author's novelistic eye for detail, such as in his mention of the anger felt by a Civil Guard captain in having to miss a society wedding in Zaragoza in the interests of dealing with a civic disturbance in a small village.

The reader is also treated to an unforgettable gallery of right-wing rogues and psychopaths, from well-known figures such as the propagandist Queipo de Llano (whose relish at evoking Republican cruelty was almost pornographic in tone), to the gun-toting priest who was happy

to shoot down people even as they knelt in church. Preston is of course too good a historian to see the war in purely black-and-white terms. He both meticulously examines such appalling Republican acts of repression as the massacre of rightist prisoners at Paracuellos (in which Santiago Carrillo, later the head of the Spanish Communist party, was implicated), and pays due attention to those dissenting voices of the Right who tried unsuccessfully to persuade Franco to temper his vindictiveness.

However, the ultimate importance of Preston's relentless and impeccable research is as a reminder of the evil unleashed by Franco – a reminder that is especially needed at this time when the only trial being brought about by the 'Law of Historical Memory' is one di-

rected against the judge who has been investigating right-wing atrocities, Baltasar Garzón. Given the continuing legacy of Franco in today's Spain, the main consolation that can perhaps be offered to the families of his victims are the stories of remorse and intense psychological suffering affecting the villains featured in Preston's closing pages. Memorably framing the book is the terrible tale of Count Gonzalo de Aguilera. First described as proudly and indiscriminately shooting six of his labourers on hearing the news of Franco's rebellion, the Count ends up in 1964 murdering his two sons – a fitting epitaph to Paul Preston's devastating account of a country temporarily gripped by the sleep of reason.

*To order this book for £24, see the Literary Review bookshop on page 39*

NORMA CLARKE

## Some Years before 1963

The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution

By Faramerz Dabhoiwala

(Allen Lane/The Penguin Press 484pp £25)

A woman born in 1600 grew up being told she was the most lustful of God's creatures. Come 1800 and the message was reversed: she was 'naturally' delicate and pure. No longer having lusts of her own to manage, her role was to control the 'natural' lust of men and thus preserve civilisation. Dogmas about sexuality had undergone remarkable change. What remained the same was female subordination.

In this ambitious and wide-ranging book, Faramerz Dabhoiwala charts what he calls 'a history of the first sexual revolution'. He examines the religious, economic, intellectual and social pressures that provided the context for a shift in attitudes towards sexuality. The move from pre-modern to modern times was towards sexual permissiveness and privacy, and away from external controls of individual sexual behaviours. The story begins with punishment and sexual discipline and the preoccupation of both church and state with fornication. Why everybody cared so much is a good ques-

tion. It was not only zealous Puritans who sought out sexual miscreants but watchful neighbours of every stripe. Adultery was a crime; in 1650 it was made a capital offence, so being shopped by your neighbours was no small matter. Even if you weren't executed for having given in to sexual passion, you might be tied to the tail of a cart and whipped through the streets to satisfy the community. Meanwhile, although the evidence is limited, it does appear that the sense of wrongdoing was often internalised: Dabhoiwala cites the heart-breaking case of Mary Latham, an eighteen-year-old married woman convicted of adultery in Massachusetts in 1644 because a young man, James Britton, had once tried to have sex with her. Both were hanged, and both apparently felt justice had been done, their consciences salved by punishment.

Few would dispute the basic premise of this book – that the Enlightenment brought about transformations in social and sexual attitudes – and it is

hardly surprising that religious toleration brought sexual toleration in its wake; or, conversely, that religion in the shape of Protestantism was the driving force behind sexual discipline in the West. God was understood to be watching. Mapping the movement of these forces and linking them in a coherent argument is a challenge that, for the most part, Dabhoiwala rises gracefully to meet, although his title is misleading, and is in any case belied by the opening words of the prologue: 'We could start anywhere.' It seems we could go anywhere too, for contradiction and paradox dog every step of the way. To his credit, Dabhoiwala embraces these complexities, and while his grasp is more sure in the earlier part of the period than the later, he writes attractively, always clearly, and with a good eye for apt illustration.

Familiar material seems strange at times, in the best sense: the obsession of the eighteenth-century novel with the seduction plot here takes on new meanings. And strange matters, to me at least, are explained: for example, in the 1730s Patrick Delany, a dean of the Church of Ireland and popular Dublin preacher, produced an examination of polygamy which was printed by Samuel Richardson. Polygamy, it transpires, was seriously countenanced amongst Protestant intellectuals; and it was only by the end of the