

General Franco to be officially defined by Spain as a dictator

Spanish history academy director wants to amend text which says regime was 'authoritarian but not totalitarian'

General Franco, centre, with two leaders of the battles in the Teruel front in 1938 Photo: Rex



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By James Badcock, Madrid

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The new director of **Spain's** state-funded history academy has said that the official biography of **General Franco will be amended to define the man who led the country** for almost four decades as a dictator.

Carmen Iglesias, the director of the Royal Academy of History, announced the move in response to a controversy surrounding the existing entry on the Spanish military leader in the institution's biographical dictionary which described the Franco regime as "authoritarian but not totalitarian".

Speaking at a conference in Madrid, Ms Iglesias said that the 2011 publication would be corrected to reflect the dictatorial style of the man who **ruled Spain with an iron fist from the end of the country's civil war in 1939** until his death in 1975.

Ms Iglesias, the first woman to preside over the academy, said the entry for Franco had created an "unnecessary controversy" which would be addressed in the first digital edition of the biographical dictionary currently being produced.

Four years ago, in what was seen as a remarkable apology for **the Franco regime**, it was revealed that his entry in the dictionary – produced at a cost to the public coffers of €6.4 million (£4.7 million) – portrayed a man who "became famous for the cold courage which he showed in the field". The harshly repressive nature of his 36 years in power were glossed over.

The historian responsible for the entry on Franco was Luis Suárez, an expert on medieval history who was for many years the only person given access to **the dictator's family archive held by the Francisco Franco Foundation**.

Paul Preston, a history professor at the London School of Economics and Franco biographer, welcomed any improvement on a text he described as "laughable" and said that Ms Iglesias was being "brave" in wishing to correct what he said was the academy's right-wing bias.

"The original text was basically a hagiography of Franco, making him out to be a saintly figure and not even a dictator. It was offensive to all those who are not major fans of Franco, but as there was constant brainwashing going on during the 40 years of his regime, there are still quite a lot of those about," he said.

Prof Preston said that apart from the entry on Franco, many of the dictator's military supporters "guilty of monumental atrocities" were written about by "soldiers who portrayed their military careers and excluded their dirty deeds".

The Spanish historian Ángel Viñas was so indignant over the dictionary's treatment of Franco and other 20th century figures that he edited a riposte called "In the combat for history" in which 34 historians, including Prof Preston, rebut what they consider the inaccuracies of the academy's biographical dictionary.

"In the academy there have been and still are people who have not got over the legacy of Franco," said Mr Viñas, adding that the selection of Mr Suárez to write the entry on the dictator showed the institution was "fundamentally dysfunctional".

A spokesman for the Royal Academy of History said that there would be a complete revision of the dictionary as part of the digitalisation process but that it had still not been decided who would be in charge of revising the entry on Franco.

"There will be a protocol decided on by the academy as a whole; it is not just the decision of the director."

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