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Famine in Spain During Franco's Dictatorship (1939–52)

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Abstract

In the aftermath of civil war, Spain witnessed a period known as the 'Years of Hunger', which would extend throughout the post-war years (1939–52). The dictatorship would lay the blame on external factors, although the causes for the collapse of living conditions and food supply over that time lay in its autarkic policies. This article attempts to show that Spain was victim of a famine as a consequence of the economic policies of the Franco dictatorship. To analyse the Spanish case, we rely on the conceptual framework of famine studies throughout history. We will demonstrate that Spain suffered an extreme socio-economic crisis during the 1940s, but that it was not until late 1939 and 1942, as well as 1946, that a true famine took place. In order to characterise and explain it, we will analyse three different aspects: the rise in the cost of living, the spread of infectious diseases and death by starvation.

Keywords: Famine, Francoism, Autarky, Starvation, Diseases, Spain

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On 1 October 1936, shortly after the onset of the Spanish Civil War, in the city of Burgos, Francisco Franco took over as head of state before the Council of Defence: the body created in the aftermath of the failed rebellion of 18 July which sparked the civil war. To celebrate, Franco came out on to the balcony of the building and addressed the crowd. He promised that, among other things, he would 'ensure that there is no home without light or a Spaniard without bread'.[1] And he would not be mistaken: the rebels were able to feed the population during the conflict.[2] Yet he was wrong when it came to post-war years, where reality would prove to be quite different. With the end of the conflict in April 1939, a long post-war period began, marked by economic hardship, brutal repression, the close relationship with the Axis powers during World War II and international isolation after 1945. Those years have remained etched in Spanish collective memory as the 'Years of Hunger' (1939–52).[3]

The dictatorship propagated *urbi et orbi* the idea that the destruction brought about by the civil war, international isolation and a 'prolonged draught' were the source of all ills.[4] Yet historians and economists have long demonstrated that the collapse of living conditions and the slowdown of production after the civil war were rooted in the introduction of an economic policy based on national self-sufficiency or autarky. After the war, the 'New State' abandoned its successful economic policies and embraced the fascist-inspired autarky. Under autarky, the State sought to exert an iron-fist control over production and trade with a view

[1] 'El jefe del estado es obligado por la multitud a salir al balcón', *ABC (Sevilla)* (2 October 1936), 3.
[2] M. Seidman, *The Victorious Counterrevolution: The Nationalist Effort in the Spanish Civil War* (Madison 2011), 247-8.
[3] The period comprends includes the years when the national system of rationing was active. Rationing cards were a reflection of autarky policies.
[4] See, for instance, R. de la Cierva, *Historia del franquismo. Orígenes y configuración (1939–1945)* (Barcelona 1975).

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towards fostering industrialisation and turning Spain into a strong imperial power. The regime aimed to create a balance of payments surplus by stepping up domestic industrial and agricultural production, regardless of their opportunity costs, renouncing imports and promoting exports.[5] Nevertheless, during the war and in its aftermath, the Francoist regime and the German Third Reich set strong economic links. In the worst years of the famine, Spain exported raw materials (especially minerals) and agricultural products to Germany as a way to pay for war debts.[6]

The Spanish and international historiography has defined the post-war period as the 'Years of Hunger'. Despite significant progress made in the study of this period from economic, political, social and cultural perspectives, however, there has been no effort to assess whether the brutal decline in living conditions and widespread scarcity of food represented a famine. This article aims to do just that.

Francoism denied the existence of a famine at all times through silence and the twisting of reality. It used censorship to conceal deaths by starvation, malnutrition, disease or the abandonment of children. The dictatorship took an especially active role in censoring and controlling everything that was published concerning food and scarcity, particularly during the early 1940s. Yet it never failed to highlight the suffering and rationing brought about by war in other parts of the world before and after 1945.[7]

[5] See, among others, C. Barciela, M. I. López, J. Melgarejo and J. A. Miranda, *La España de Franco (1939–1975). Economía* (Madrid 2001), 23–8; A. Carreras and X. Tafunell, *Historia económica de la España contemporánea* (Barcelona 2006).
[6] A. Viñas, J. Viñuela, F. Eguidazu, C. Fernández and S. Florensa, *Política comercial exterior en España (1931-1975)*, vol. 2 (Madrid 1979). R. García Pérez, *Franquismo y Tercer Reich. Las relaciones económicas hispano-alemanas durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Madrid 1994).
[7] J. Sinova, *La censura de prensa durante el franquismo: 1936–1951* (Barcelona 1989), 246–52.

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When World War II ended, the Francoist regime used the international isolation to justify the scarcity and hide the failure of its economic policies. The import of Argentine wheat and corn throughout the end of the civil war prevented the situation from escalating. The 1946 agreement with the government of General Perón, however, would be decisive to leave the terrible years of the famine behind, and it was sold to the Spanish public opinion as a great political victory.[8]

Both the arrival of the 1950s, which saw an improvement in living conditions, and the years of the so-called Spanish Miracle eclipsed the hardships endured during the Years of Hunger in the memory of the population. Consequently, the triumphant discourse of a dictatorship that took credit for the progress and the arrival of the consumer society helped to further obscure the memory of those tragic years.[9]

The death of Franco in 1975 was followed by a difficult transition towards democracy which saw many Francoists (that is, those who participated in or collaborated with the regime) retain positions and influence. In this environment, only limited efforts to confront the Francoist past emerged, and the prosecution of crimes committed by the dictatorship remained unrealistic. Gradually, historians began to study the events that occurred during and after the war, focusing on matters such as violence and repression.[10] The dawn of the 'movement for the recovery of historical memory', around the year 2000, and the passing of a bill known as 'Historical Memory Law' in 2007 highlighted this trend. This also means

[8] R. Rein, *La salvación de una dictadura: alianza Franco-Perón, 1949–1955* (Madrid 1995), 72–88.
[9] A. Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain, 1939–1975* (Chichester 2010); M. Richards, *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-Making Spain Since 1936* (Cambridge 2013).
[10] There exist two studies encompassing the whole of Spain: S. Juliá (ed.), *Víctimas de la Guerra Civil* (Madrid 1999); P. Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London 2012).

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that historians have only focused their attention on the physical violence carried out by the dictatorship; as a result, the 'Spanish famine' has remained under researched. On the other hand, some scholars have indeed studied the socio-economic conditions endured during the post-war years and have associated them with Francoist repression, underlining the lower classes' struggle for survival as a form of resistance to the regime. Yet they have failed to conceptualise those events as a famine.[11]

The Spanish famine has not been defined as such and, therefore, has not been equated to other famines that occurred during the mid-twentieth century. Similarly, its periodisation or the places where it occurred have not been determined, and neither has the number of deaths.[12] Although some studies have provided an estimate of its victims, they have linked those deaths to the period immediately after the civil war or have not accurately determined the causes of death.[13] For instance, Juan Díez Nicolás limited his conclusions only to the

[11] See, for instance, E. Barranquero and L. Prieto, *Así sobrevivimos al hambre: estrategias de supervivencia de las mujeres de la posguerra española* (Málaga 2003); M. Eiroa San Francisco, *Viva Franco. Hambre, racionamiento, falangismo. Málaga, 1939–1942* (Málaga 1995); J. Prada, *Marcharon con todo. La represión económica en Galicia durante el primer franquismo* (Madrid, 2015); O. J. Rodríguez Barreira, *Migas con miedo. Prácticas de resistencia en el primer franquismo. Almería 1939–1952* (Almería 2008); M. A. del Arco Blanco, *'Hambre de siglos'. Mundo rural y apoyos sociales del franquismo en Andalucía Oriental (1936–1951)* (Granada 2007).

[12] Payne has asserted years ago that, in the first five years after the end of the war alone, at least 200,000 people perished due to malnutrition or related diseases, albeit without citing his sources for such an estimate. See S. Payne, *El régimen de Franco* (Madrid 1987), 267. Another study has pointed out that, during the entire 1940s, the gross mortality rates due to malnutrition per 100,000 inhabitants in Spain exceeded as much as 250 percentage points, yet it does not offer a fixed number of deaths. See I. Castelló Botía, 'Evolución de la mortalidad asociada a desnutrición en la España contemporánea: 1900–1974', *Revista de Demografía Histórica*, 18, 2 (2010), 39.

[13] No scholar has offered a precise number of deaths for the entire period or of deaths exclusively identified with the famine. In fact, most studies include in their estimations both the years of the war and the first years of the post-war as a single period, making it difficult to distinguish when the deaths actually occurred. Villar Salinas set the number at 246,000 victims (1936–39). Salas Larrazábal, 343,500 (1936–39) and 223,200 (1939–42). Díez Nicolás, 345,000 (1936–39) and 214,000 (1939–42). Ortega y Silvestre 346,000 (1936–39) and 194,000 (1939–42). Maluquer de Motes only provides data for the 1936–42 period, setting the number of deaths at 600,000. See J. Villar Salinas, *Repercusiones demográficas de la última guerra civil española* (Madrid 1942); R. Salas Larrazábal, *Pérdidas de la guerra* (Barcelona 1977); J. Diez Nicolás, 'La mortalidad en la guerra civil española', *Boletín de la Asociación de Demografía Histórica*, 3, 1 (1985), 55; J. A. Ortega y J. Silvestre, 'Las consecuencias demográficas', in P. Martín Aceña and E. Martínez Ruiz (eds) *La economía de la guerra civil* (Madrid 2006), 76; J. Maluquer de Motes, 'La incidencia de la Gran Depresión y de la Guerra Civil en la

period 1940–42. He also ran together deaths caused by hunger, disease and political repression to arrive at the figure of 214,000. Shortly thereafter, Ramón Salas Larrazábal also provided an estimate, but only with regard to people who had died of diseases during the 1940–43 period: in his figure of 159,219 victims, he excluded all those who died from starvation.[14]

The notable works mentioned above face another problem. While they acknowledge an increase in mortality rates after the war, particularly in 1941, they explain these deaths only as a consequence of the civil war. To support this claim, they argue that many of the deaths caused by the war were only registered after the conflict had ended.[15] By explaining the post-war death rate in this way, these authors overlooked the role of malnutrition among the causes of mortality.[16]

By contrast, this article seeks to classify the suffering of the post-war period not as 'years of hunger' but as a famine and to specify where and when it occurred. It is possible to argue that an extreme crisis in living conditions and food supply developed during the 1940s. Between late 1939 and 1942 the Spanish famine stood as its height, although in 1946 Spaniards suffered another year of famine. In 1946, bad weather and the international isolation that followed the end of World War II aggravated the consequences of the regime's autarkic policies. The Spanish famine differed from other interwar European famines like the

población de España (1931–1940): una nueva interpretación', *Revista de Demografía Histórica*, 25, 2, (2007), 150.

[14] Diez Nicolás, 'La mortalidad en la guerra civil española', 55; Salas Larrazábal, *Pérdidas de la guerra*, 421.

[15] See, for instance, Villar Salinas, *Repercusiones demográficas de la última guerra civil española*; Diez Nicolás, 'La mortalidad en la guerra civil española'; J. Diez Nicolás, 'La transición demográfica en España', *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 1, 1 (1971), 89–158; R. Gómez Redondo, *La mortalidad infantil española en el siglo XX* (Madrid 1992), 93 & 100.

[16] V. Pérez Moreda, D. S. Reher and A. Sanz Gimeno, *La conquista de la salud: mortalidad y modernización en la España contemporánea* (Madrid 2015), 75, 87–110 & 392.

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Ukrainian *Holodomor* (1932–33), the Greek famine (1941–42) or the Dutch *Hongerwinter* (1944), as it took place in two different periods (1939–42 and 1946) during a decade of scarcity and extreme destitution. The famine affected the southern peninsular area in particular, comprising agricultural regions and poverty-stricken areas: the arc between the provinces of Murcia, Castilla La Mancha, Andalusia and Extremadura. The famine affected both the rural and urban areas, despite the villages being closer to those fields used for agricultural production and the cities receiving a better supply of rations provided by the regime. Its main victims hailed from the lower classes, who lacked control over the means of production or resources to survive, in particular, day labourers and workers, as well as the poor, elderly, women and children from the poorest sectors of society.

We will first analyse the methodological framework and the sources employed, offering our definition of famine and incorporating it in the historiography of European famines. We will then define the Spanish famine based on the rise in the cost of living, the spread of infectious diseases and death by starvation. We will close our article with pertinent conclusions.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

Up until a few decades ago, famines were only classified through the existence of mass deaths caused by starvation. Since the 1980s, a wide range of disciplines have called this idea into question. In fact, in most cases during a famine, only 10 per cent of deaths are due to starvation. The remaining 90 per cent are caused by malnutrition-related illnesses.[17]

[17] T. Keneally, *Three Famines: Starvation and Politics* (New York 2011), 12.

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Moreover, famines are more a result of the intensification of 'normal' historical processes than of extraordinary events, and they do not always occur as a consequence of an actual scarcity of available food.[18]

Our ways of thinking about and classifying famines has also grown richer. There are definitions that make a distinction between a food crisis and a famine with concrete quantitative data, through the use of accurate scales related to their intensity or magnitude.[19] And yet, these conceptualisations expose serious difficulties when it comes to studying famines from the past, where historical sources, available data or assessment tools are not always readily available. When quantitative markers or precise indexes could not be applied, famine historians have relied on other qualitative tools that, although not as accurate as those used for current famines, are still effective. Cormac Ó Gráda states that a famine is a 'shortage of food or purchasing power that leads directly to excess mortality from starvation or hunger-induced diseases'.[20] This perspective distances us from a simplification whereby famine is identified only with death by starvation. It also helps to understand the effects of diseases not just in terms of death but also as regards the risks to health. Importantly, this perspective does not limit its analysis to the shortage of food; rather, it incorporates an essential variable: the fall of purchasing power to access food.

[18] S. Devereux, *Famine in the Twentieth Century*, working paper 105, Institute of Development Studies (Brighton 2000), 4.
[19] P. Howe and S. Devereux, 'Famine Intensity and Magnitude Scales: A Proposal for an Instrumental Definition of Famine', *Disasters*, 28 (2004), 353–72. See also P. Howe and S. Devereux, 'Famine Scales Towards an Instrumental Definition of 'Famine', in S. Devereux, *The New Famines: Why Famines Persist in an Era of Globalization* (London–New York 2007), 27–49.
[20] C. Ó Gráda, *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton 2009), 4. Other definitions follow similar lines of thought: P. Walker, *Famine Early Warning Systems: Victims and Destitution* (London 1989), 6; S. Devereux, *Theories of Famine* (Harvester Wheatsheaf 1993), Ch. 2.

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This definition of hunger encompasses two perspectives which explain the reasons why famines take place: either due to natural causes or human causes. The former links famines to nature and the lack of sufficient food resources for the population, as described by Thomas Malthus at the end of the eighteenth century. The latter includes Amartya Sen's ideas, for whom scarcity does not reside in the lack of food, but rather in the difficulties experienced by different social groups to access food in specific situations. For Sen, the state and its policies play a critical role in the origin of contemporary famines.[21]

Both the crisis in food production and its distribution are highly relevant to the study of famines. Although there may have existed natural causes that could have affected production, famines were never the exclusive result of these tragic historical processes: they have also been influenced by the role of humankind and its institutions. However, as some comparative studies on Europe have shown, natural causes (demographic pressure, climatic conditions, plagues, etc.) were a determining factor in the famines of medieval, modern and even some periods of contemporary times (nineteenth century).[22] In turn, from 1900 onwards, the expansion of capitalism, the strengthening of the state and the arrival of modern war since 1914 emphasised the human element (policies, conflicts, war, hoarding, speculation, etc.) to explain the famines that occurred at the time. It is within this second group where we should contextualise the Spanish famine.[23]

[21] T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London 1798), Ch. 7, par. 20; A. Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford 1981), 1–8; D. Arnold, *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change* (Oxford 1988), 43.
[22] G. Alfani and C. Ó Gráda, 'Famines in Europe: An Overview', in G. Alfani and C. Ó Gráda (eds), *Famine in European History* (Cambridge 2017), 3–4 & 16–24.
[23] C. Ó Gráda, 'Making Famine History', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 45, 1 (2007), 5–38 & 11; D. Curran, D. Luciuk Lubomyr and A. G. Newby (eds), *Famines in European Economic History: The Last Great European Famines Reconsidered* (London–New York 2015).

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To unveil the Spanish famine, we need to draw on a wide array of sources. These include sources from international diplomacy which provide a raw and distinct vision about the socio-economic situation. We can also draw on personal accounts taken from oral interviews or memoirs. In particular, documents produced by Franco's regime at the national, provincial and local levels, which provide a glimpse into the Spanish famine.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPANISH FAMINE

Rise in the Cost of Living

Famines have always been related to the availability of foodstuffs for the population. In interwar Europe, state policies—rather than the weather—played a decisive role in the origin of famines, as happened during the occupation of Greece by Axis forces.[24] In Spain, scarcity had its roots on the autarkic policy pursued by the dictatorship. It was not so much the destruction caused by the war, as claimed by the regime, but rather this policy which disrupted the advances that had improved Spanish agriculture in recent years.[25] A reduction in harvested areas and yields took place. There was also a decrease in the use of fertilisers,

[24] The Greek case may be a perfect example of this. See V. Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941–1944* (Cambridge 2006).
[25] C. Barciela, 'Los costes del franquismo en el sector agrario: la ruptura del proceso de transformaciones', in R. Garrabou, C. Barciela and J. I. Jiménez Blanco (eds) *Historia agraria de la España Contemporánea. 3. El fin de la agricultura tradicional (1900–1960)* (Barcelona 1986); M. I. López Ortiz, 'Los efectos de la autarquía en la agricultura murciana', *Revista de Historia Económica*, 14, 3 (1996), 591–618. Christiansen argues that the decrease in corn yield was the result of the produce commercialised in the black market, as well as the lack of fertilisers and working livestock, rather than state intervention. See T. Christiansen, *The Reason Why: The Post Civil-War Agrarian Crisis in Spain* (Zaragoza 2012).

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which, unsurprisingly, spurred a decline in production.[26] The imposition of poor wages and the rigid control of the workforce lowered costs but took away incentives to raise productivity.[27] Livestock levels also fell during the post-war period, mainly due to the difficulties in finding pastures for grazing, since these areas were destined to agricultural production, but also due to a decline in demand for an expensive product at a time of hardship: this entailed a drop in meat production (with its corresponding proteins) and the restricted availability of natural compost with which to increase yields.[28]

This scarcity was also brought about by the black-market phenomenon, which was a reaction to the tight (and enduring) regime control over a variety of foodstuffs. The regime fixed the price of the majority of basic commodities, forcing their sale at an official price throughout the country. Scarcity, supply control and poor prices paved the way for the rise of a black market across the country for nearly all products subject to official control. In reality, the scarcity was somewhat fictitious: any item could be found in the black market if one had enough money to pay for it. Further, those with access to any state-controlled product could hide it from the authorities and sell it as *estraperlo* (illegally) in the black market. This was the case of many farm workers, who formed a key social pillar of support for the dictatorship and were able to control supply and even profit from trading on the black market.[29]

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[26] M. Buesa, 'Industrialización y agricultura: una nota sobre la construcción de maquinaria agrícola y la producción de fertilizantes en la política industrial española (1939–1963)', *Agricultura y Sociedad*, 29 (1983), 240.
[27] J. M. Naredo, 'La agricultura española en el desarrollo económico', in Garrabou, Barciela and Jiménez Blanco, *Historia agraria de la España Contemporánea*, 455–99.
[28] R. Domínguez Martín, 'La ganadería española: del franquismo a la CEE. Balance de un sector olvidado', *Historia Agraria*, 23 (2001), 42.
[29] M. A. del Arco Blanco, 'La corrupción en el franquismo. El fenómeno del "Gran Estraperlo"', *Hispania Nova*, 16 (2018), 620–45.

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Despite allowing some to feather their own nests, hunger meant the dictatorship failed to win deep-rooted social support during the post-war period, as evidenced by the discontent in the population caused by the scarcity. However, shortages also offered a means for social and political control for the regime,[30] since, thanks to its welfare policies or even the intervention of the 'Caudillo' himself, it could present itself as an indispensable guarantor of food and survival of the Spanish people.[31]

The cost of living is critical to understand the dynamics of the Spanish famine. After the war, its levels rose dramatically, contributing to a lenient monetary policy which led to an unprecedented inflation.[32] Maluquer de Motes has described the 1940s as an era of 'accelerated inflation', which caused serious difficulties to the working class. The regime's own statistics (Spanish Statistical Office) identified a 75 per cent rise in the consumer price index between 1935 and 1940 alone. Nevertheless, an assessment of the Higher Council of Chambers of Commerce, which was more focused on actual market prices and analysed up to sixty different products, determined the index increase at 145.2 per cent for the same period.[33] The rise in the cost of living persisted throughout the entire decade with different variations, despite the regime's efforts to conceal that data.[34] This would be reflected

[30] C. Molinero and P. Ysas, 'El malestar popular por las condiciones de vida. ¿Un problema político para el régimen franquista?', *Ayer*, 52 (2003), 279–80; M. A. del Arco Blanco, 'Hunger and the Consolidation of the Francoist Regime (1939–1951)', *European History Quarterly*, 40, 3 (2010), 458–83.
[31] C. Molinero, *La captación de las masas: política social y propaganda en el régimen franquista* (Madrid 2005); A. Cazorla Sánchez, *Cartas a Franco de los españoles de a pie (1936–1945)* (Madrid), 303–36; C. Hernández Burgos, 'The Triumph of "Normality", Social Attitudes, Popular Opinion and the Construction of the Franco Regime in Post-War Rural Spain (1936–1952)', *European History Quarterly*, 46, 2 (2016), 296–7.
[32] Barciela, López, Melgarejo and Miranda, *La España de Franco*, 57–8. See also M. J. González, *La economía política del franquismo (1940–1970). Dirigismo, mercado y planificación* (Madrid 1979).
[33] J. Maluquer de Motes, *La inflación en España. Un índice de precios al consumo, 1830–2012* (Madrid 2013), 76.
[34] The National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO), Foreign Office (FO) 371/73342, *British Embassy Report*, 8 March 1948. In 1947, the cost of living experienced a 12.6 per cent rise, whereas in 1946 it surged 35.5 per cent.

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especially on food, clothing and footwear, as acknowledged by the regime's own statistics (see Table 1). Housing, household or other expenses also experienced a sharp increase but did not rise to the same level as that of basic necessities.[35] As a result, the rise in the cost of living would have a severe impact on the lower classes in particular.

Table 1. Cost of Living Index in Spain (1939–50)

Cost of Living Index (July 1936 = 100)			
	Second Semester 1939	1940	1950
Food	177.7	214.6	649
Clothing and Footwear	190.1	204.7	688.3
Housing	105.8	108.9	202.9
Household Expenses	134.9	162.8	463.7
Other Expenses	127.4	145.8	367.1
General Index	153.6	178.1	529.3

Source: Spanish Statistical Office [(1952), p. 151].

The arrival of Francoism signified a complete halt to social progress in labour relations. The dictatorship banned all unions, persecuting, imprisoning and executing

[35] Maluquer de Motes, *La inflación en España*, 78.

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Republican union leaders. It established a single union under state control in the same vein as fascist regimes. A fall in wages and the deterioration of working conditions soon followed. In the agrarian sector, wages remained frozen and day labourers suffered extreme exploitation in an asphyxiating working environment which simultaneously served the interests of large, medium and small landowners.[36]

Political discrimination could exacerbate the situation. A person's political past could determine his or her future and that of their relatives: supporters of the military uprising were frequently rewarded, whereas many of those loyal to the Republic were purged or lost their jobs. The situation was extremely difficult in the rural areas: with a backdrop of excess labour, already present in the Republican period, many former Republicans throng together in village squares seeking a living wage to support their families. Many of them would be met with the 'revenge' of the landowners, who preferred to employ workers loyal to Franco.[37]

The contrast between post-war wages and a high cost of living placed the feeding of the lower classes in jeopardy. A British report on working conditions stated that in 1940, in Seville, the wages of industrial workers had increased by 25 per cent with respect to 1936; the cost of living, however, had risen by 100 per cent.[38] At the worst period of the Spanish famine, the situation became even more dire: in 1941, the price of basic foodstuffs had risen

[36] C. Molinero and P. Ysás, *Productores disciplinados y minorías subversivas. Clase obrera y conflictividad laboral en la España franquista* (Barcelona 1998). For a regional study, see R. Moreno Fonseret, *La autarquía en Alicante (1939–1952)* (Alicante 1994), Ch. 6. After the war, wages were fixed at 6 pesetas in almost all provinces. See T. M. Ortega López, 'Las miserias del fascismo rural. Las relaciones laborales en la agricultura española, 1936–1948', *Historia Agraria*, 43 (2007), 544–8.
[37] A report written from exile stated that 'former soldiers of the Francoist army have priority to work' and that, to be employed, all workers were demanded to have 'their papers in order', which required the approval of the Falange or the Vertical Union. Archive of the Communist Party of Spain (APCE), Activists Section, Box 92–2, *Informe de la situación en España, 1940*, 16. See also A. Cazorla Sánchez, *Desarrollo sin reformistas. Dictadura y campesinado en el nacimiento de una Nueva Sociedad en Almería, 1939–1975* (Almería 1999), 113. For the concept of 'bosses' revenge', see T. M. Ortega López, *Del silencio a la protesta. Explotación, pobreza y conflictividad en una provincia andaluza, Granada 1936–1977* (Granada 2003), 71.
[38] TNA, PRO, FO 371/24508, *Labour Conditions in Spain*, 1940, 139–66.

by 300 per cent.[39] Regime authorities recognised the problem: in 1941, the Falange's provincial secretary in Seville had already expressed his 'anguish concerning the horrendous hunger situation', for 'not only unrationed basic commodities are lacking, but also the prices are fixed out of reach for the lower classes, and the rationing is not enough in itself for normal feeding.'[40]

Living off official rations seemed an impossible feat. The products allowed did not comply with the amount of food needed to maintain health and were limited to a series of items from which hardly a meal could be cooked; sometimes even the promised items failed to appear, as was the case with oil or bread.[41] Faced with this scarcity, it was necessary to find what was needed to complete the diet by other means. It is here, therefore, where social classes set each other's alimentary fate: those with access to the means of production (agrarian or industrial) or to product distribution (merchants or state employees) could ensure their sustenance, either because they had access to these items or because they could easily afford the high cost of living and obtain them in the black market. In turn, salaried workers or the unemployed were faced with a bleaker reality.

The Francoist authorities were aware of the difficulties facing the working class. Some of them even prepared reports to explain the extent of the scarcity, such as the one submitted to Franco himself in 1945 (see Figure 1). The report examined the cost of living and its social repercussions in the period between 1942 and 1945. Despite toning down reality, it showed that over 90 per cent of a farm worker's wage was destined to feeding,

[39] TNA, PRO, FO 371/26890, *Postal Censorship Reports*, 1941, 41–50.
[40] General Archive of the Administration (AGA), Presidency of the Government (PG), National Delegation of Provinces (DNP), Box 20574, Monthly Report, Seville, January 1941.
[41] R. Abellá, *Por el Imperio hacia Dios. Crónica de una Posguerra (1939–1955)* (Barcelona 1978), 68; Moreno Fonseret, *La autarquía en Alicante (1939–1952),* 109–14.

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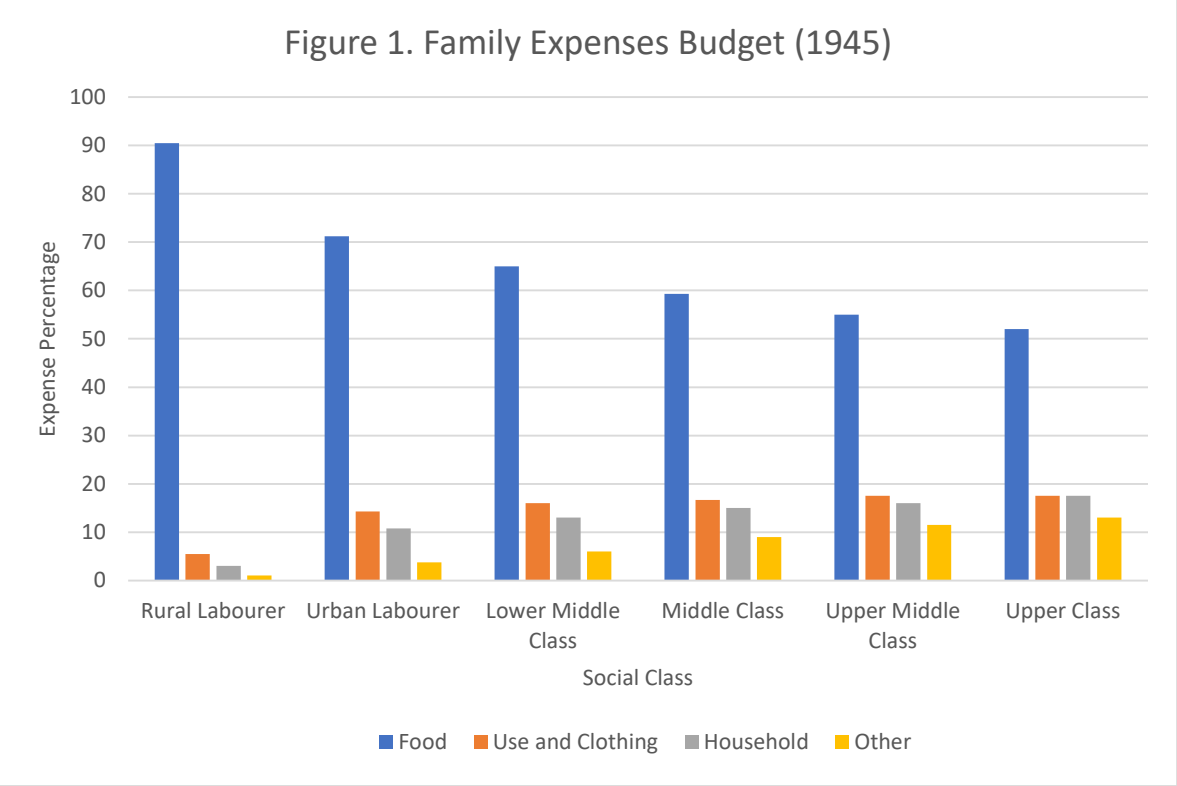
which incidentally involved products which were scarcer, more necessary and whose price rose more dramatically during the 1940s.[42]



Source: FNFF, Document 94 (Author's chart).

Consumed foodstuffs were a reflection of both sides of the autarkic policy and its consequences. While the poorest had access to a less varied and nutritive diet, other social

[42] The wages used in the calculus were above the actual wages paid at the time, and the case of unemployed labourers was not acknowledged. See Francisco Franco National Foundation (FNFF), Document 94, *Estudio sobre el costo de la vida (según datos de la Revista 'Comercio, Industria y Navegación de España')*, November 1945.

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classes managed to avoid hunger. In 1942, the civil governor of the Balearic Islands put it succinctly: faced with an insufficient rationing, 'wealthy people find a solution by stocking up pastries, sweets, fruits and any other items they desire through the black market, paying excessive prices; in turn, the employee and the labourer, who are subject to the fateful reality of their salary or wage, must pawn their health and existence by relying on products of scarce nutritional value […] paying highly inflated prices for them.'[43]

The regime's scientists knew this very well. Dr Jiménez Díaz, referring to a research paper on population nutrition between 1941 and 1943, argued that 'the health problem' of 'the poorest sectors of society' stemmed 'almost exclusively from their inability to consume adequate diets'.[44] The research done by some US scientists in the poorest neighbourhoods of Madrid in those years confirmed this finding: the dietary intake of the Puente de Vallecas's population was far below the necessary requirements in terms of calories, calcium, proteins, vitamins (A and B) and animal protein. More than 25 per cent of individuals over five years of age complained of weakness and fatigue, and other mental disorders were also detected (irascibility, apathy and loss of memory).[45]

The most disadvantaged social groups embraced a series of strategies to survive. Some of them have been deemed 'resistances' to the regime's policies, whereby an uneasiness was expressed towards the *status quo* and the policies adopted by the dictatorship, representing also an essential means to escape hunger.[46] These were staged by humble and anonymous individuals, often widows or women trying to save their families and whose

[43] AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20545, 'El abastecimiento en la provincia', 1942.
[44] C. Jiménez Díaz, *Estudios de Nutrición* (Madrid 1941–43), 18.
[45] M. I. del Cura and R. Huertas, *Alimentación y enfermedad en tiempos de hambre: España, 1937–1947* (Madrid 2007), 125–7.
[46] Rodríguez Barreira, *Migas con miedo*, 202 and ff.; A. Cabana, *La derrota de lo épico* (Valencia 2013).

husbands were serving time or exiled.[47] The most important of these resistances came in the form of estraperlo: the attempt to sell a product on the black market in order to earn money which would help to satisfy the trader's own nutritional needs.[48] Another resource employed by the weakest was theft, which grew exponentially during the post-war period and revolved particularly around foodstuffs.[49] Some workers and day labourers refused to work for the meagre wages being offered to them, demanding in turn food that ensured their sustenance.[50] Certainly, scams related to rationing cards to attempt to obtain more food supplies (falsifications, identity theft or use of cards of deceased individuals) were also very common.[51]

Another source of resistance to hunger came from the use of artificial or replacement food (*ersatz* products), a commonplace practice in 1940s Spain (and in Nazi-controlled Europe).[52] The working class resorted to them to alleviate scarcity, searching for (cheaper) substitute products to complete their diet. Often, these items were supplied by the regime during rationing and they had to accept them, since the original products were impossible to

[47] G. Román Ruiz, *Delinquir o morir. El pequeño estraperlo en la Granada de posguerra* (Granada 2015), 56–62; Barranquero and Prieto, *Así sobrevivimos al hambre*.
[48] M. A. del Arco Blanco, 'El estraperlo: pieza clave en la estabilización del régimen franquista', *Historia del Presente*, 15 (2010), 65–78; O. J. Rodríguez Barreira, 'Cambalaches: hambre, moralidad popular y mercados negros de guerra y postguerra', *Historia Social*, 77 (2013), 149–74.
[49] O. J. Rodríguez Barreira, 'Lazarillos del Caudillo. El hurto como arma de los débiles frente a la autarquía franquista', *Historia Social*, 72 (2012), 65–87; J. F. Gómez Westermeyer, 'Historia de la delincuencia en la sociedad española. Murcia, 1939–1949. Similitudes y diferencias en otros espacios europeos', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Murcia (2006).
[50] 'Faced with the terrible misery of agrarian wages in the provinces of Seville, Málaga, Huelva and other areas of Andalusia, [farm workers] refuse to work unless access to food is guaranteed for them.' See APCE, Activists Section, Box 92–2, 'Informe de la situación en España, 1940', 15.
[51] Abellá, *Por el Imperio hacia Dios. Crónica de una Posguerra (1939–1955)*, 84; Del Arco Blanco, *'Hambre de siglos'*, 267.
[52] Some examples for Norway: G. Hjeltnes, 'Supplies Under Pressure: Survival in a Fully Rationed Society: Experiences, Cases and Innovation in Rural and Urban Regions in Occupied Norway', in T. Tönsmeyer, P. Haslinger and A. Laba (eds), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II* (Basinstoke 2018), 71–4.

find (other than in the black market). There were substitutes for petrol, wood gas generators, rubber, paper and, of course, food.[53]

But the despair of the poor (and their will to live) is demonstrated by the consumption of foodstuffs that were not a part of the popular diet.[54] At the worst stages of the famine, a British traveller who was passing through Spain reported that 'the poor live off acorns and chestnuts.' He also mentioned that, once in El Campillo (Huelva), a donkey perished and people jumped at it to get any piece of its flesh they could lay their hands on. In some areas, 'the hungry poor are eating cats and dogs, which they steal whenever they have a chance.'[55] It was not uncommon, of course, to resort to herbs or any type of plant found on the side of the road, in the mountains or next to sown fields. A neighbour in Mijas (Málaga) claimed that 'there was no food', so 'common people ate whatever they could find: cardoons and herbs of all kinds.'[56] In Lucena (Córdoba), herbs were even commercialised and sold 'at one or more pesetas per kilo'.[57]

Infectious Diseases

The fall in production, coupled with supply issues and the spectacular rise in the cost of living, directly influenced nutrition throughout the post-war period, making the population

[53] J. M. Lozano Nieto, *A sangre y fuego. Los años treinta en un pueblo andaluz* (Córdoba 2006), 255; C. Velasco Murviedro, 'Sucedáneos de posguerra', *Historia 16*, 131 (1987), 11–20. Author interview with Luisa Hernández-Carrillo Ibáñez (born in 1930), Campotéjar (Granada), 12 July 2018.
[54] D. Conde Caballero, *Tiempos sin pan. Una etnografía del hambre de postguerra en Extremadura*, PhD thesis, National University of Distance Education—UNED (2019). For this phenomenon in occupied Belgium, see D. Luyten, 'Between Employer and Self-Organisation: Belgian Workers and Miners Coping with Food Shortages Under German Occupation (1940–1944)', in Tönsmeyer, Haslinger and Laba, *Coping with Hunger*, 147.
[55] TNA, PRO, FO 371/26890, *Postal Censorship Reports, Economic Conditions*, 1940, 40–50.
[56] R. Fraser, *Mijas. República, guerra, franquismo en un pueblo andaluz* (Barcelona 1985), 80.
[57] Lucena Municipal Archive (AML), Plenary Acts (25 April 1944–26 November 1945), Box 413, Session of 25 October 1944.

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more susceptible to the development of diseases. The physiology of nutrition had shown not only that foodstuffs were important because of the energy they supplied, but also that physical wellbeing and the body's immune defence system were dependant, to a large extent, on nutrition.[58] British diplomat Arthur Yencken referred to this idea in 1941 when speaking about Spain, arguing that, in most cases, those deaths were not the result of diseases themselves, but rather of the patients' low level of resistance to other infections due to the complete weakening caused by malnutrition.[59]

Until 1936, Spanish health standards were equivalent to those of other European countries. During the first third of the twentieth century and the Second Republic, significant reforms in healthcare were introduced, and the country took part in the international health movement.[60] The civil war put an end to this progressive trend in the health sector. Nevertheless, the breakthroughs achieved in previous years contributed, at least until 1938, to make the situation less extreme among the population of both the Republican and rebel factions. Since then, the health status of the Republican area worsened considerably, whereas the situation in the military rebel areas remained within normal levels.[61]

The conditions were not at all favourable in the aftermath of the war. José Alberto Palanca (Director General of the Department of Health of the New State) showed his concern in a late-1939 report, underscoring the presence of diseases such as smallpox, exanthematic typhus, diphtheria or typhoid fever and blaming the Republican population in the conquered

[58] J. L. Barona Vilar, *La medicalización del hambre: economía política de la alimentación en Europa, 1918–1960* (Barcelona 2014), 102.
[59] TNA, PRO, FO 371/26891, *Yencken Report* (22 August 1941), 69–71.
[60] J. L. Barona and J. Bernabeu-Mestre, *La Salud y el Estado. La administración española y el movimiento sanitario internacional* (Valencia 2008).
[61] J. L. Barona and E. Perdiguero-Gil, 'Health and the War. Changing Schemes and Health Conditions During the Spanish Civil War', *Dynamis*, 28 (2008), 103–6, 116 & 119–21.

territories for spreading them. The Rockefeller Foundation also described an exacerbation of this situation since 1939, as a result of the emergence of infectious diseases immediately after the civil war.[62]

Health conditions in the country declined after the war. The state was incapable of tackling the misery due to the lack of available resources (hygiene and sanitation), food deprivation, poor housing and the disarray of healthcare structures caused by the war. In that context, the Spanish Department of Health prioritised relations with Nazi Germany over the interests of the Spanish health system instead of establishing a cooperation with Allied countries.[63] An acute development of infectious diseases took place, which affected both morbidity and mortality (especially in infants).[64] The regime's official sources, which tended to conceal information, point to a re-emergence of exanthematic typhus, malaria, smallpox, diphtheria, tuberculosis and typhoid fever, particularly between 1939 and 1942 (see Figure 2). We should also highlight the massive rise in deficiency diseases as a result of a poor-quality diet, such as pellagra or paresthetic-causalgic syndrome, which increased the vulnerability of the poorest social groups to epidemics.[65]

Exanthematic typhus was an epidemic disease that defined the Spanish famine. It was caused by a bacterium (*Rickettsia prowazekii*) transmitted by the body louse. Also known as

[62] J. L. Barona, 'La salud de la población según los informes internacionales (1936–1940)', *Congreso Internacional La Guerra Civil Española 1936–1939* (Madrid 2006); Del Cura and Huertas, *Alimentación y enfermedad*, 111–18.
[63] D. Brydan, 'Axis Internationalism: Spanish Health Experts and the Nazi "New Europe", 1939–1945', *Contemporary European History*, 25, 2 (2016), 291–311.
[64] E. Rodríguez Ocaña and F. Martínez Navarro, *Salud pública en España: de la Edad Media al siglo XXI* (Granada 2008), 87–8. After the worst of these diseases was over, some high-ranking officials acknowledged the existence of exanthematic typhus, smallpox and diphtheria in the country. See J. A. Palanca, *Las epidemias de la posguerra. Discurso lado en la solemne sesión celebrada el día 28 de marzo de 1943 en la Real Academia de Medicina* (Madrid 1943), 11–13.
[65] Del Cura and Huertas, *Alimentación y enfermedad*, 139–81.

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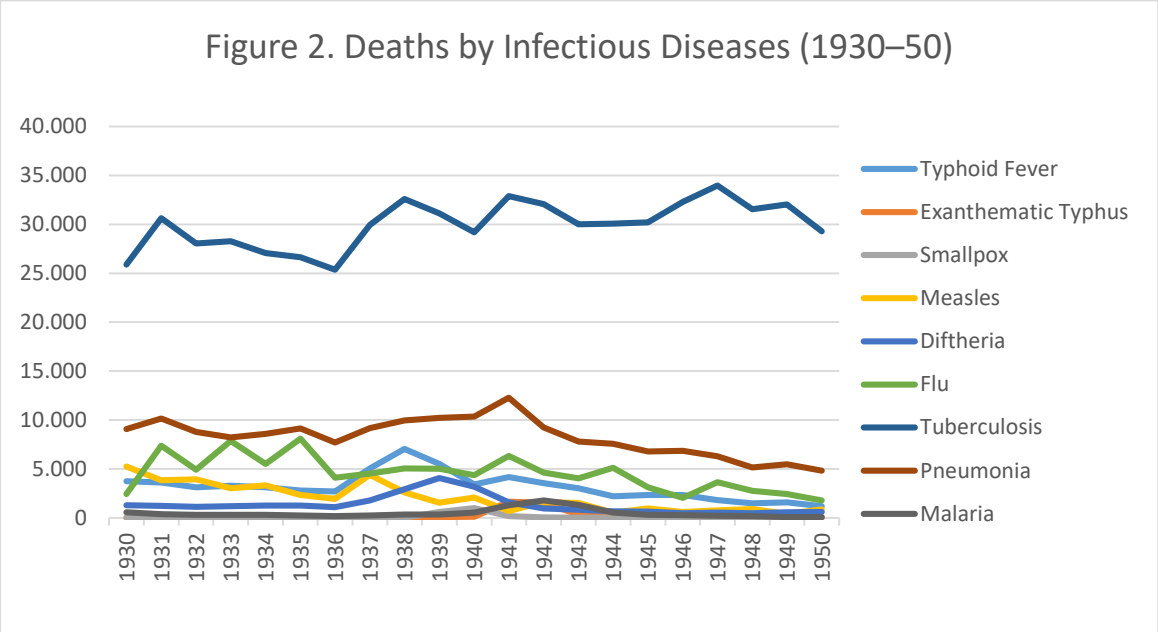
'trench fever', its onset was related to the aftermath of wars or natural disasters. It was associated with poverty, overcrowding, poor feeding and lack of hygiene, and it spread especially over the southern half of the peninsula, given that warmer temperatures allowed for the growth of the body louse, which acted as vector.



Source: Spanish Statistical Office, *Fallecidos por enfermedades infecciosas*, Yearbook 1951.

The typhus epidemic in Spain developed between 1939 and 1943. However, Francoist authorities attempted to delay the disclosure of its existence to avoid outshining the

triumphalist discourse maintained by the dictatorship after 1939. In Málaga, the outbreak of the epidemic occurred in June 1939, but it was not until April 1944 that the first news appeared in the local press. Moreover, it took some time for the authorities to intervene: the initial meetings to address the problem did not take place until December 1942 and March 1943 and went undisclosed.[66] Ultimately, the epidemic came under control with British assistance and, particularly, the massive American help funnelled through the Rockefeller Foundation, which by 1943 began sending Spain thousands of doses of Cox's vaccine.[67]

The regime used the typhus epidemic to pursue its political agenda. First, to justify its origin by laying the blame of its emergence on the Republican side and its supporters, identifying them with the miserable conditions that favoured the outbreak of the disease.[68] Second, it used the fight against the epidemic as a propaganda tool, attempting to show the kindness of its policies towards the disadvantaged and linking it to the autarkic discourse, according to which Spain had to be saved and reformed in order to achieve its imperial destiny.[69]

Data about the typhus epidemic are revealing. Formerly a residual infectious disease (with an occasional and specific outbreak) during the first third of the twentieth century, it would eventually turn into a matter of state between 1941 and 1943 (see Figure 3). The worst

[66] C. Jiménez Díaz, 'Memoria sobre el estado nutritivo de la población madrileña (1941–1943)', *Estudios de historia social*, 5 (1978), 401–65; I. Jiménez Lucena, *El tifus en la Málaga de la postguerra. Un estudio historicomédico en torno a una enfermedad colectiva* (Málaga 1990), 39; I. Jiménez Lucena, 'El tifus exantemático de la posguerra española (1939–1943): el uso de una enfermedad colectiva en la legitimación del "Nuevo estado"', *Dynamis*, 14 (1994), 189.
[67] E. Rodríguez Ocaña, 'Tifus y laboratorio en la España de posguerra', *Dynamis*, 37, 2, (2017), 512–15.
[68] In line with the German case, where typhus was deemed inherent to 'inferior races', justifying their repression and, later on, the Holocaust. See E. Rodríguez Ocaña, 'Tifus y laboratorio en la España de posguerra', 491.
[69] Lucena, 'El tifus exantemático de la posguerra española', 185–98. For the nationalist aim of the autarkic policy, see M. Richards, *A Time of Silence. Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936–1945* (Cambridge 1998).

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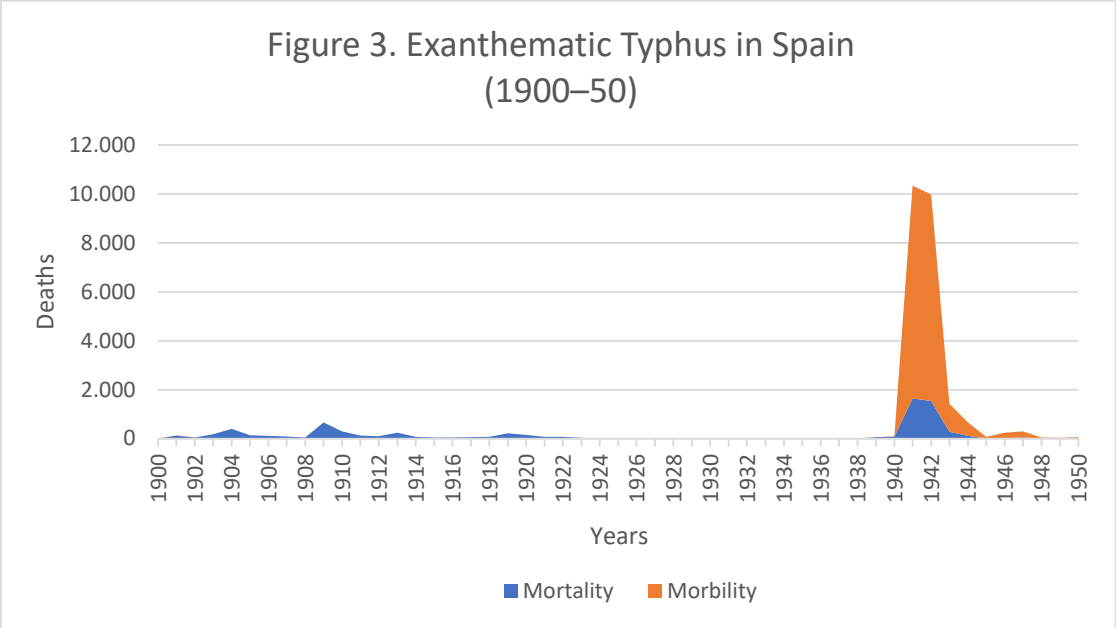
years were 1941 and 1942, where the number of infections rose to 8500 and deaths exceeded 1500.[70] Yet these official numbers must have been far below the real figures, for in many cases they were not immediately recorded in the civil registries or else were entered under different causes of death.[71]



R. Navarro García (ed.) *Análisis de la sanidad en España a lo largo del siglo XX* (Madrid 2002), 210–11.

The geographical spread of exanthematic typhus coincided with the areas we have highlighted for the 'Spanish famine': Madrid, Andalusia, Castilla de la Mancha, Southern Levante and Extremadura.[72] The presence of the disease was unrelated to the civil war fronts.

[70] R. Navarro García (ed.) *Análisis de la sanidad en España a lo largo del siglo XX*, 210–11.
[71] Lucena, *El tifus en la Málaga de la postguerra*, 39–40.
[72] Dr Janney, head of the Rockefeller Mission in Spain, assured British Ambassador Samuel Hoare that the epidemic was present 'in the main cities of Southern Spain, across a line drawn from Badajoz to the other end

A Rockefeller Foundation report of August 1939 confirmed that the disease indeed affected these areas, referring also to an 'endemic problem' for the south-eastern region. The Madrid cases, however, were noteworthy, for its poor neighbourhoods, asylums and prisons were the hotspots where the disease thrived.[73]

In 1941, the main outbreak of exanthematic typhus took place. One of the cities hardest hit by the disease was Málaga, where the mortality rate was thirty times higher than the Spanish mean. The city council was ineffective in fighting the epidemic and had to request additional funds to the government in Madrid. There were 436 deaths registered in that year alone as a direct result of the disease; by mid-July, 2000 cases had been recorded in the city, albeit the Rockefeller Foundation suspected that 'at least twice this number actually occurred.'[74] The province of Granada was also affected, particularly at the existent pockets of infection in Motril. In April 1941, the outbreak of the disease was confirmed 'at various points in the province' of Murcia. In June, Almería announced that the epidemic 'continues its progressive course, although not at an alarming rate'. In July, the disease spread to Seville: in that month alone, 198 patients were hospitalised and 36 deaths were registered. In September 1941, Málaga authorities stressed that exanthematic typhus was in remission. A similar situation was reported in Cádiz, despite the disease having especially impacted the capital and the major cities of Jerez de la Frontera and Algeciras.[75] It is worth noting that the

of the country'. See TNA, PRO, FO 371/26891, *Sir Samuel Hoare Report*, 1941. The British consul in Madrid thought likewise. See TNA, PRO, FO 371/26890, 11 April 1941, 140–41. However, there were isolated cases in other regions, for instance, in La Coruña (AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20549, *Informe sobre el abastecimiento y las enfermedades en la provincia de La Coruña*, 1941), Navarra (AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20557, Monthly Report, Navarra, April 1941) or Cuenca (AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20549, Monthly Report, Cuenca, July 1941).

[73] Barona, 'La salud de la población', 21.

[74] Eiroa San Francisco, *Viva Franco*, 44; Jiménez Lucena, *El tifus en la Málaga en la postguerra*, 90–2; Reports, Rockefeller Foundation Health Commission, June 27, 1940–June 30, 1941, 81.

[75] AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20569, Monthly Report, Granada, April 1941; Box 20557, *Estudio sobre el abastecimiento en la provincia de Murcia*, 20 May 1941; Box 20564, Monthly Report, Almería, June 1941;

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case of Andalusia clearly demonstrates that the typhus epidemic was not related to the civil war. The western region was controlled by Francoist forces from the start, and cities like Granada and Málaga were eventually under rebel influence as well: in the first case, the coup triumphed, and in the second, the city was occupied as soon as February 1937.

By 1942, the epidemic was still present in the southern arc of the peninsula, although with lesser virulence. In January, 'some cases, luckily a few,' were detected in Málaga, but in November no cases were registered at all. The same cannot be said for poorer provinces like Almería, where in November 1942 it was reported that 'the annual outbreak of exanthematic typhus has begun, and three cases have been recorded so far.'[76] In 1943, the disease began to recede and was limited to specific areas.[77] Nevertheless, Almería continued to experience outbreaks of the disease even in 1946.[78]

The Franco regime was overwhelmed by this state of affairs, as attested by local accounts. The disease was indeed defeated at a local level, despite municipal authorities lacking the appropriate means to effectively combat it.[79] The poverty endured by the infected represented another obstacle for the eradication of the disease. Disinfection of individuals and their garments was paramount, and a change of clothes was deemed necessary. But this was not always available to the working class. Hence, in Águilas (Murcia), local authorities acknowledged that it would be 'difficult to eliminate' the disease 'as long as families lack

Box 20574, Monthly Report, Seville, July 1941; Box 20556, Monthly Report, Málaga, September 1941; Box 20658, Monthly Report, Cádiz, September 1941.

[76] AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20594, Monthly Report, Málaga, January 1942, and Monthly Report, Málaga, November 1942; Box 20581, Monthly Report, Almería, November 1942.

[77] Lucena, *El tifus en la Málaga de la postguerra*, 93.

[78] For the village of Fiñana, see AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20660, Monthly Report, Almería, May 1946.

[79] Lucena, *El tifus en la Málaga de la postguerra*, 105 and ff.

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the means of living for their hygiene and change of clothes, which are now being offered as much as it is possible, although it is still not enough for them after delousing.'[80]

The spread of exanthematic typhus was directly linked to supply problems and the scarcity triggered by the regime's policies. This is indicative of the fact that the most acute stage of the typhus epidemic coincided with a lack of disinfecting products such as soap. In Madrid in 1941, British Ambassador Sir Samuel Hoare reported to London that there was a lack of disinfectants of any kind, which rendered health authorities powerless to stop the epidemic: soap supplies were running short and soap factories were shutting down 'due to a lack of raw materials.'[81]

As we have argued above, the social groups most afflicted by the disease were those identified with the Republic. The clearest case would be that of the Republican prisoners who filled Francoist jails and were subject to unsanitary conditions. In May 1941, an epidemic of exanthematic typhus was declared in Málaga's prison: there was such dearth that the authorities requested 'overalls so that [prisoners] do not remain naked while their clothes are being disinfected'.[82] At Reus (Tarragona) concentration camp, where sanitary and hygienic conditions were unfit for humans, many prisoners contracted the epidemic and died. A quarantine was also imposed.[83]

In many cases, beggars and tramps carried the disease as a result of the terrible hygienic conditions in which they lived. The dictatorship forbade mendicity and loitering,

[80] AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20557, 25 August 1940.
[81] TNA, PRO, FO 371/26890, 2 April 1941, 111–16.
[82] Historical Archives of the Province of Málaga (AHPM), Civil Government. Supplies. Box 12397, 20 May 1941.
[83] J. C. García-Funes, 'Espacios de castigo y trabajo forzado del sistema concentracionario franquista', unpublished PhD thesis, Public University of Navarre (2017), 511 & 551.

concentrating them in shelters and lodgings. These were favourable spaces for the spread of the disease among the poor living there. In Valladolid, typhus had almost disappeared by 1942, but the main outbreak of the disease was centred around the town hall's shelter for beggars, which had a capacity for 100 people and yet at the time held 300.[84]

Social class became the most significant variable to explain the deaths. In Málaga, more than 75 per cent of those dead by typhus were day labourers. In the Catalan industrial area, the combination of poor feeding and unbearable sanitary and hygienic conditions prompted the onset of the disease. In Zaragoza, the provincial head of the Falange acknowledged that the rise in 'sick leaves registered in industries and trades' was due to 'supply difficulties', with a prevalence of 'tuberculosis- and nutrition-related diseases'. The motive was clear: 'Sick workers cannot afford the expenses of a preventive cure or to subject themselves to the overfeeding recommended by doctors as a first measure.'[85]

In the cities, the typhus epidemic spread across the poorest neighbourhoods, as acknowledged by Granada authorities. The British consul in Madrid had the same impression during his visit to a high-ranking official of the Francoist administration. Upon seeing a map of the city marked with flags over those places where outbreaks of typhus had been detected, he observed: 'The most affected neighbourhoods were the poorest.'[86] The inhabitants of these humble neighbourhoods were the least capable of defending themselves against the epidemic and, therefore, ended up being its main victims.

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[84] FNFF, Document 27197, *Informe de la Dirección General de Seguridad*, 5 February 1942.
[85] Lucena, *El tifus en la Málaga de la postguerra*, 103; J. Serrallonga Urquidi, 'Subordinación, abastos y mortalidad. La Montaña catalana, 1939–1945', *Historia Social*, 34 (1999), 63; AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20579, 18 June 1941.
[86] AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20569, Monthly Report, Granada, April 1941; TNA, PRO, FO 371/26890, 11 April 1941, 140–1.

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Death by Starvation

During World War II, the critical situation in Spain caught the attention of international organisations, which introduced measures that, without resolving the critical post-war economic situation, certainly contributed to halt the deaths by starvation. In only six months, the American Red Cross distributed '20,000 tons of food valued at $4,000,000'.[87] Notwithstanding the difficult international context, the British embassy signed a contract with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to supply Spain with stores of Canadian wheat held by Britain in the United States. In 1941, the government of Argentina also sent Spain 50,0000 tons of wheat, 120,000 bales of cotton and 1,500 tons of meat.[88] A good part of this help was channelled through Auxilio Social, a Falangist welfare institution under the auspices of the dictatorship. And, although overwhelmed by the generalised scarcity, it was able to present itself to society as upholding Francoist social and welfare policies.[89]

In 1944, an international expert in charge of assessing the state of European nutrition ranked Spain among those nations 'impacted by supply shortages', stating that the 'severe' restrictions imposed by the civil war had extended after the end of the conflict 'to such a degree that, in 1941, the gravity of the nutritional status of the population was slightly better than that of Greece'. Since then, it was argued, things had 'slightly improved'.[90]

[87] *Keesing's Contemporary Archives, Vol. No. 4, July 1940–June 1943* (London 1940–43), 4848.
[88] The first shipload was of 15,000 tons of wheat. See E. Allison Peers, 'Spain week by week', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 18, 70 (April 1, 1941), 94.
[89] O. J. Rodríguez Barreira, 'Auxilio Social y las actitudes cotidianas en los Años del Hambre, 1937–1943', *Historia del Presente*, 17 (2011), 127–47.
[90] Y. M. Biraud, 'Health in Europe: A Survey of the Epidemic and Nutritional Situation', *League of Nations Bulletin of the Health Organisation X (4)*, (1943–4), 557–699. See also Barona, 'La salud de la población', 32.

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In 1946, diplomatic reports mention a worsening of the socio-economic situation and a re-emergence of deaths. The *Daily Telegraph* informed that starvation was a real factor in the lives of the poor of Southern Spain: in Córdoba, 'men, women and children are dying of hunger or from diseases resulting from malnutrition.' In autumn 1945, the director of the Red Cross in Arjona (Jaén) desperately requested help because people were 'dying of hunger' in the village, something which the civil governor of the province also acknowledged. These facts even reached the Caudillo himself by means of reports which recognised that the supply policy pursued drove 'thousands of people to hunger, anaemia, tuberculosis and death'.[91]

The civil war and the immediate post-war period disrupted the improvement of the nutritional status of Spaniards, which had begun around 1900. Some studies focused on the apparent consumption of foodstuffs throughout the twentieth century demonstrate that an acute alimentary crisis took place during the 1940s, with dramatic consequences for the population.[92] Diets at the time were characterised by the low caloric consumption, marked deficiency of calcium, scarcity of animal proteins and relative deficiency of iron and several vitamins.[93] Calorie intake levels, as well as proteins and other nutrients, would not be restored until the 1950s. Between 1940 and 1951, the apparent consumption mean per capita was always below 2,300 kilocalories per person and per day (in 1931, however, it reached 2,846 kcal), which was well below an individual's biological needs. But this distribution per capita

[91] TNA, PRO, FO 371/60411, *Reports February, March, April, May*; PRO, FO 498/1, *Spain Annual Report*, 1946; TNA, PRO, FO 371/60412, 'Starvation in Southern Spain', *Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 1946; Spanish Red Cross Archives (ACRE), General Medical Examination Section. Arjona. Supplies, 1945. Box 2381, File 3, 14 October 1945; AGA, PG, DNP, Monthly Report, Jaén, April 1946; FNFF, Document 10918, 'La voz de la calle', July 1946.
[92] M. González de Molina, D. Soto, J. Infante and A. Herrera, 'Crisis agraria y crisis alimentaria durante el Primer Franquismo. Los "años del hambre" desde un punto de vista biofísico', research paper for the *XIV Congreso de la Asociación de Historia Contemporánea* (Alicante 2018).
[93] J. R. Villalbi and R. Maldonado, 'La alimentación de la población en España desde la posguerra a los años ochenta', *Medicina Clínica*, 90 (1988), 46.

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was uneven, which positioned those groups economically and socially weaker far below the estimated means. During the post-war period, 30 per cent of the population was unable to meet their calorie needs (some 2,250 kcal), which would have disastrous consequences for their health.[94] The consequences of malnutrition had an impact on the height among the different socio-economic groups in Spain during the post-war period. Anthropometric studies show a dramatic drop in male height as a result of the autarkic policies implemented after 1939. The lower classes and the poorest regions, like south-eastern Spain, would suffer the biggest decline in heights compared with other areas, like Catalonia.[95]

Deaths by hunger were part and parcel of the post-war landscape, which demonstrates that the memories of the hardships borne during those years were absolutely real. As the poet Juan Bernier would recall, after the war was over, it was common to find 'men, strewn about the streets, like paper'.[96] Deaths by starvation occurred in two stages: first, in 1939–42, when the hunger was more severe, and then, in 1946.

Unlike Francoist sources, diplomatic sources fail to register deaths by starvation until 1940, although they do acknowledge the severity of the situation before that time. British diplomacy underscored food scarcity, the high price of food in the black market and its poor distribution, which led to a quarter of the Spanish population to be 'practically starving'.[97]

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[94] X. Cussó Segura, 'El estado nutritivo de la población española 1900–1970. Análisis de las necesidades y disponibilidad de nutrientes', *Historia Agraria*, 36 (2005), 341 & 345–6.
[95] J. M. Martínez Carrión, J. Puche Gil and J. M. Ramón Muñoz, 'Nutrición y desigualdad social en la España de Franco: evidencia antropométrica', in A. Segura, A. Mayayo and T. Abelló, *La dictadura franquista. La institucionalització d'un règim* (Barcelona 2012), 281–4.
[96] M. A. del Arco Blanco, '"Morir de hambre". Autarquía, escasez y enfermedad en la España del primer franquismo', *Pasado y Memoria*, 5 (2006), 241–58; S. Rodríguez López, *Memoria de los nadie. Una historia oral del campo andaluz, 1914–1959* (Seville 2015), 459–96; J. Bernier, *Diario* (Valencia 2011), 393.
[97] TNA, PRO, FO 371/23168, *Alan Hillgarth Memorandum*, 17 November 1939.

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French diplomacy would agree with this reading and would further highlight that it was the erroneous autarkic policy which was at the heart of the matter.[98]

In November 1940, British Ambassador Hoare gathered in a telegram the testimony of a British military official who had visited Southern Spain and had forwarded concerning news about the issue of food and 'many actual deaths from starvation'.[99] A 1941 report included a section related to the country's economic situation, with an emphasis on the food question: a traveller claimed that 'the biggest problem is food' and that 'large swathes of the population are dying of hunger or nearing starvation.' An informer even mentioned 'the truly horrific and catastrophic hunger in Spain'.[100]

Francoist authorities also formally acknowledged (in their internal correspondence) those deaths from starvation, even dating its emergence to the early months after the end of war. The case of Almería is particularly revealing. Already in September 1939, the civil governor requested help from Madrid, warning about 'deaths by hunger'. In Garrucha municipality, 39 such deaths had been registered between April and September of that year. In September, Líjar authorities reported that 5 people had 'died of hunger'. The situation extended into 1940: in the town of Rágol, 'several deaths by hunger' were registered 'as a result of the lack of work and supplies.' Attention was drawn to the threat of more deaths in Garrucha, and the local doctor certified that 'more than 50 neighbours are sick with symptoms of avitaminosis.'[101]

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[98] F. Alía Miranda, 'La España que vio el embajador Pétain: Hambre y descontento social en 1939', *Historia Social*, 82 (2015), 91.
[99] TNA, PRO, FO 371/24509, Telegram, 29 November 1940.
[100] TNA, PRO, FO 371/26890, *Postal Censorship Reports*, 1941, 40–50.
[101] AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20495, Telegram, September 1939; AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20495, 20 September 1939; AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20495, 1 March 1940, 26 February1940. Other deaths by hunger in the province: Berja (1 March 1940) and the capital of Almería (23 January 1940).

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The hardest year was 1941. By then, the authorities in Madrid were concerned about the massive rise in daily deaths in the city of Cádiz, which had increased 'from 10 to around 40 or 50,' and speculated on 'whether the cause of death was avitaminosis'. The provincial head of the Falange acknowledged that these deaths were due to the 'lack of food or the resulting aggravation of [the] disease[s]'.[102] In accordance with the dictatorship's figures and the difficulties to determine deaths by starvation, deaths doubled in Cádiz during the first trimester of 1941 with respect to 1940 and even with respect to the war period (see Table 2).

Table 2. Monthly Deaths in Cádiz (capital and province), January–March (1937–41)

YEAR	JANUARY		FEBRUARY		MARCH	
	CAPITAL	PROVINCE	CAPITAL	PROVINCE	CAPITAL	PROVINCE
1937	248	950	152	712	250	846
1938	270	1150	179	913	204	833
1939	175	800	154	715	157	766
1940	155	760	168	804	156	845
1941	276	1438	251	1447	362	1900

Source: AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20658, 5 May 1941.

Some medical evidence of these deaths by starvation has remained. Between 1940 and 1943, the Biomedical Research Institute, headed by Prof Jiménez Díaz (in collaboration with the General Health Office), carried out research in working-class Spanish neighbourhoods on the nutrition of Spaniards, sometimes with the assistance of international

[102] AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20658, 28 April 1941 and 5 May 1941.

specialists. The results were shattering and included photographs of emaciated bodies, hunger edemas or poor bone formation in children. The medical process of death by starvation was described and divided into three consecutive periods ranging from the onset of the initial symptoms to weakness, the inability to perform work, complete immobilisation and death.[103]

Once again, the majority of deaths occurred in Southern Spain. Between 1940 and 1941, there was an increase in gross mortality rates of more than 20 per cent with respect to 1935 in the provinces of this region.[104] In late 1939, out of the 100 deaths registered in the village of Fortuna (Murcia) during the last six months, 50 of them were due to starvation.[105] In the winter of 1940, the British vice consul in Almería asserted that 'starvation in this city is a reality I see every single day.' In February 1941, in Alhama de Granada (Granada), other 'cases of death by starvation' were registered. In that same month in Seville, a 'large number of deaths' occurred 'in hospitals […] due to malnutrition', but there were also 'people dying of hunger in the streets.' A similar situation could be observed in Málaga in September 1941, where 'hundreds are dying of hunger.'[106] The north and centre of the Iberian Peninsula, however, were less affected by famine. In provinces like Huesca, some isolated deaths by starvation were recorded, but the evidence points to the fact that the actual situation was not so extreme. In the north-western region of Galicia, the elderly cannot recall anyone having died of hunger at the time, although they do remember people 'begging and asking for

[103] Jiménez Díaz, *Estudios de Nutrición*, 111–13.
[104] Diez Nicolás, 'La transición demográfica en España', 108–10.
[105] Richards, *A Time of Silence*, 143. There were also deaths in Cartagena in 1941. See Royal Academy of History (RAH), Juan Antonio Suanzes Archive, G, Box 119, Registry 8469, 5 February 1941.
[106] TNA, PRO, FO 371/24508, *Report of 6th December 1940*, 256–65; AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20569, Monthly Report, Granada, February 1941; TNA, PRO, FO 371/26890, *Report of 8th February 1941*, 71–2; TNA, PRO, FO 371/26891, *Telegram from Tangier*, 22 September 1941.

bread'.[107] And in the Basque Country, the rise in the cost of living and the drop in salaries severely affected the urban workers' productivity, yet no deaths by starvation where reported.[108] The same cannot be said of Basque prisons, where political prisoners starved to death or perished due to post-war diseases.[109]

The situation improved after 1942, yet diplomatic reports throughout the decade continued to draw attention to the scarcity ravaging Spain. The Italian ambassador assured the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Galeazzo Ciano, that 'economically, Spain has never been in such a miserable position as it is today,' albeit without making any reference to the deaths by hunger.[110]

This state of misery and destitution persisted into the 1940s. The explosive mixture of food scarcity, low wages, unemployment and a high cost of living triggered by the black market would drag the most disadvantaged social groups into malnutrition. The situation worsened in 1946, however, a year described in some accounts as 'the year of hunger'.[111] This increased hardship was a direct consequence of the adopted economic policy, the international isolation at the end of World War II and, in particular, the drought of the 1944–

[107] In Altorricón (Huesca) a child died of starvation. FNFF, Document 26028, 29 August 1939; for Galicia, see interview with Genoveva Álvarez Castiñeira (born in 1938), Cospeito (Lugo), 16 August 2016 and interview with Cesareo Lozano Sendán (born in 1936), Cospeito (Lugo), 17 August 2015.
[108] M. González Portilla and J. M. Garmendia, *La posguerra en el Pais Vasco. Politica acumulación y miseria*. (Donostia, 1988), 52–3.
[109] E. Zubiaga Arana, *La formación del régimen franquista en Bizkaia. Represión, políticas de captación y actitudes sociales (1937–1945)*, PhD thesis, University of the Basque Country (UPV) (2016), 61.
[110] Ministero Degli Affari Esteri, *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani. Nona serie: 1939–1943. Vol. VI* (Rome 1986), 507.
[111] 'El año del jambre' in some areas of Andalusia. Interview with Diego Gutiérrez González (born in 1933), Granada, 13 December 2018.

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45 crop year. Rainfalls decreased by 50 per cent with respect to a regular year, especially affecting the centre and south of the peninsula, where deaths by starvation were registered.[112]

In 1946, diplomatic reports mention a worsening of the socio-economic situation and a re-emergence of deaths. The *Daily Telegraph* informed that starvation was a real factor in the lives of the poor of Southern Spain: in Córdoba, 'men, women and children are dying of hunger or from diseases resulting from malnutrition.' In autumn 1945, the director of the Red Cross in Arjona (Jaén) desperately requested help because people were 'dying of hunger' in the village, something which the civil governor of the province also acknowledged. These facts even reached the Caudillo himself by means of reports which recognised that the supply policy pursued drove 'thousands of people to hunger, anaemia, tuberculosis and death'.[113]

The victims of this tragedy were those most vulnerable to the extreme conditions imposed by the post-war economic intervention, such as salaried workers, children, widows or the elderly—social groups which, for different reasons, had no means to access the necessary foodstuffs to survive.[114] Among the five people who died of malnutrition in Níjar (Almería), for instance, three of them were older than 60 years of age, another 16 and the other barely 6 months.[115]

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[112] J. M. Lorente Pérez, 'La gran sequía del año agrícola 1944–1945', in Servicio Meteorológico Nacional (ed.) *Calendario meteorofenológico* (1945), 79–83; C. Tames, *El régimen de humedad de la España Peninsular en relación con la agricultura durante el periodo 1940–1953* (Madrid 1954), 11.
[113] TNA, PRO, FO 371/60411, *Reports February, March, April, May*; PRO, FO 498/1, *Spain Annual Report*, 1946; TNA, PRO, FO 371/60412, 'Starvation in Southern Spain', *Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 1946; Spanish Red Cross Archives (ACRE), General Medical Examination Section. Arjona. Supplies, 1945. Box 2381, File 3, 14 October 1945; AGA, PG, DNP, Monthly Report, Jaén, April 1946; FNFF, Document 10918, 'La voz de la calle', July 1946.
[114] A. Jarne, 'Vencidos y pobres en la Cataluña rural: la subsistencia intervenida en la posguerra franquista', *Historia del Presente*, 5 (2005), 173–5.
[115] AGA, PG, DNP, Box 20495, 20 September 1939.

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Rural or urban labourers were severely afflicted by the famine. Unlike landowners or rural tenants, they only had their low and irregular wages to support their families. An old neighbour of the Alpujarra region in Granada stated that, 'due to the extreme hunger, people were really starving. If you didn't grow things…because not everyone had lands to harvest and eat. And if you didn't have land to eat, well, you suffered….'[116] This was confirmed by Francoist authorities in 1941, when they acknowledged that the majority of rations supplied in the villages of Granada were destined to help the 'unemployed workers', who had no possible access to a wage at that time of year.[117]

Being poor in the 1940s could mean being at risk of death. The dramatic fall in dietary intake had a direct impact on health. Some accounts testify to the increase in mortality rates among the working class. Studies in nutrition developed by scientists in the humble neighbourhoods of Puente de Vallecas, Madrid, repeatedly supported this assumption.[118]

Children were among those suffering the most severe consequences of food scarcity, and their bodies were less prepared to endure its effects. Many of them were orphans, whereas others could not be fed by their unemployed parents or by mothers who, in many cases, were heads of the family as a result of their husbands' death in the war, exile or imprisonment. The civil war and the subsequent years reversed the downward trend in infant mortality in Spain which had remained unchanged since the beginning of the twentieth century, and its pre-war rates would not recover until 1942. The year 1941 was the worst, with a 28.9 per

[116] Interview with Juan Rodríguez Ortega (born in 1937), Cástaras (Granada), 14 October 2018. A neighbour of Archidona (Málaga) also states the same: 'Day labourers suffered hunger because the wage was 15 pesetas and a kilo of bread was worth as much, 15 pesetas, and so they died of hunger.' See F. Arcas Cubero (ed.), *Yo estaba allí. Una historia de la guerra civil y el franquismo en Málaga* (Málaga 2011), 327.
[117] AGA, PG, DNP, Monthly Report, Cádiz, April 1941, Box 20658.
[118] Jiménez Díaz, *Estudios de Nutrición*, 257 & ff.

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cent increase in mortality in children of less than a year. The increase in mortality rates in the region was even more significant: the Mediterranean coast, Andalusia and Extremadura (but also Galicia) saw their rates rise by more than 30 per cent.[119]

CONCLUSIONS

Between the end of the civil war in 1939 and the disappearance of rationing in 1952, Spain endured a situation of scarcity and misery stemming, essentially, from the Francoist regime's autarkic economic policy. In the 1950s, the tentative economic liberalisation, American economic assistance and progressive end of the international isolation would result in an improvement of living conditions.

Despite the regime's propaganda and silence, a famine developed in Spain during the post-war years. This was a decade marked by economic hardship, but there were also two instances that seriously aggravated the situation: the period between late 1939 and 1942 and, later, 1946. The famine was geographically located in the southern arc of the country, in the regions of Murcia, Castilla de La Mancha, Extremadura and Andalusia. Although food was produced in the countryside, it was in the cities where the rationing supplies where bigger and more diverse. However, the famine affected both the rural and urban areas.

Social class and its relationship with the means of production were determining factors in the fight against the famine. The lower classes, some of whom had identified with the political project of the Second Republic, were the most affected: rural or urban salaried workers, women, elderly or children coming from families disrupted by the war or the

[119] Gómez Redondo, *La mortalidad infantil*, 86, 92–3.

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dictatorship's revanchist policy. It is not possible to establish a link between the victims of the famine and the militancy in Republican political parties; yet, it can be argued that the lower social classes represented one of most important pillars of the Republican project.

In order to understand the political and social attitudes towards the Francoist regime during the post-war years, the Spanish famine has to be taken into account. In certain moments, the lower classes were on the brink of starvation, struggling against the high cost of living and the spread of diseases. The middle classes were also affected by impoverishment and the dire situation, but their lives were not at risk. Hunger and famine are critical to explain the dynamics of political opposition to Francoism during this period. The Francoist regime controlled the population through food supply and its paternalistic social policies which deactivated most kinds of political mobilisation. On the other hand, resistance practices like *estraperlo*, thefts and small transactions in the black market should be understood as a real fight for survival in the context of a famine triggered by the dictatorship's policies. The outcome of these dynamics was the stabilisation and survival of the Francoist regime: despite harsh socio-economic conditions and international isolation, the dictatorship eventually managed to control the social and political attitudes of the population and overcome the long post-war period.

The Spanish famine meets many of the parameters set by famine studies. In this article, we have highlighted three of them. First, the high rise in the cost of living, endured with miserable wages or without any source of employment whatsoever, which shaped the fate of many. Second, the onset and spread of infectious diseases that killed off the weakest members of society. And third, death by starvation, which the regime would attempt to conceal but was the order of the day.

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The Spanish famine must be understood as a phenomenon inherent to the famines that ravaged Europe throughout the interwar period of the twentieth century, which were largely rooted in the interventionist, authoritarian or totalitarian policies implemented by anti-democratic governments. This is a famine which cannot be fully grasped without taking into account the policies adopted by General Francisco Franco and his supporters. A famine that really took place and that we have tried to bring to light to understand and explain Spanish post-war years.

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