

2017

Review of Fernando del Rey and Manuel Álvarez Tardío, eds. *Políticas del odio: Violencia y crisis de la democracias en el mundo de entreguerras*

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Recommended Citation

Seidman, Michael (2017) "Review of Fernando del Rey and Manuel Álvarez Tardío, eds. *Políticas del odio: Violencia y crisis de la democracias en el mundo de entreguerras*," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 42 : Iss. 2 , Article 22.

<https://doi.org/10.26431/0739-182X.1278>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs/vol42/iss2/22>

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Rey, Fernando del and Manuel Álvarez Tardío, eds. *Políticas del odio: Violencia y crisis de la democracias en el mundo de entreguerras. Biblioteca de Historia y Pensamiento Político. Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, 2017, 510 pp.+ ill.*

By reaching well beyond the Peninsula, this collection of eight essays successfully breaks with Spanish historiography's conventional—and usually self-imposed—Ibero-centrism. It argues that after the brutalization of the Great War, hatreds became more common and intense throughout Europe and produced powerful ideologies which demanded the expansion of the state to circumscribe or eliminate demonized targets. To achieve these goals, radical ideologies in power compelled their citizens to work and fight. In much of Europe, the classic liberal world of a minimal state and compromise among political parties crumbled. The editors' introduction properly attempts to escape from the “*maniqueísmo*” and “*simplismo*” of the dichotomy “*fascismo-antifascismo*” (29), and it rightly criticizes Ernst Nolte for positing that the interwar period was “*la era del fascismo*” (22), which was fully successful only in Italy and Germany. Political violence characterized southern, central, and eastern Europe much more than the venerable democracies of the west, even if it could not be ignored in the latter. In the western democracies state antifascism effectively limited fascist movements.

In his chapter, Fernando del Rey makes stimulating observations concerning the revolutionary consequences of the First World War. The war introduced a new era of genocide in the Ottoman Empire, which Rey admirably summarizes, even as he downplays the Islamic component and the initial publicity by the Allies given to these state-sponsored mass murders. Rey insightfully suggests that the Bolsheviks foreshadowed Fascists and Nazis, all of whom instituted extremely violent party dictatorships that targeted dehumanized enemies while directing their energies to prepare for war. Communist revolutions provoked nasty counterrevolutionary dictatorships in eastern Europe and centrist republics which would not eliminate old elites in Germany and Austria.

Sandra Souto Kristrín emphasizes the weight of Socialist and Communist youth in revolutionary violence. The myth and reality of revolution attracted both leftist and rightist young people throughout Europe. The author is particularly acute on the radical evolution of Socialist youth. José Antonio Parejo Fernández artfully stresses the popular support for fascism, whose youth was tired of the traditional domination of their elders and reveled in violence, which they viewed as “*hermoso, heroico, deportivo*” (199). By dedicating themselves to their party, leader, and nation, they willingly abandoned their freedoms. Jesús Casquete treats the “latent” civil war in Germany, 1929-1933. Unlike the French Revolution, which was nationalist but did not promote hatred of other nations, the Nazi Revolution was grounded in loathing. The author focuses on Nazi street violence in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg, where Communist militants fought Nazis and where a good number of defeated KPD activists opportunistically joined the SA after 1933. Casquete's archival examination of “*la violencia desde abajo*” (280) illuminates several major themes of this volume.

Roberto Villa García explains how the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution bolstered anti-parliamentarism of both the left and right. He argues that postwar electoral reforms in many nations encouraged radicalization. For example, in 1930s Spain, elections were more violent than in France, the UK, and the USA, where voting systems

remained stable. He attributes the relatively high level of violence in Spain to the strength of its revolutionary left and the unwillingness of the CEDA to secure Republican democracy. He concludes convincingly that the Spanish electoral experience resembled that of Germany, Italy, and Portugal rather than the western democracies.

Nigel Townson makes the excellent point that political violence in the USA—unlike in Europe—was largely racist and nativist, not engendered by fascism and communism. He shows the abusive treatment of German-Americans during the First World War. Following the war, immigrant radicals replaced the Germans as targets, a change encouraged by the American Legion and, more generally, hostility to the growth of labor unrest. Nevertheless, the rule of law prevailed and prevented mass deportations of radicals, even as anti-Catholic nativism of the 1920s followed the Big Red Scare. A regenerated Ku Klux Klan fostered this nativism and a renewal of racism. Hypocritically enough, the Klan—a major force behind the lynching of hundreds of blacks—based its anti-Papism on the Church’s “fanaticism.” President Franklin Roosevelt remained reluctant to challenge the racist status quo of his solidly Democratic South, even as he encouraged the union movement, the most integrated sector of US society. The American workers’ movement experienced more violence than any of its western democratic counterparts.

Julio de la Cueva Merino’s chapter intelligently analyzes anticlerical violence throughout interwar Europe and beyond. He exposes the differences among various nations: in the Greek and Finnish civil wars, the revolutionary left tolerated churchmen; in Italy and Russia less so; in revolutionary Mexico, Spain and France hardly at all. Although the author examines eighteenth and nineteenth century French anticlericalism quite well, he paints an overly victimized picture by omitting to mention the dominant anti-Republican and *anti-dreyfusard* attitudes of churchmen. His analysis of anticlerical violence during the Spanish Civil War, which was executed by activists from all Popular Front parties (not just anarchists), is especially revealing.

In his erudite essay, Manuel Álvarez Tardío explores the definition of political violence and how European institutions reacted to it. Revolts against economic crisis do not explain political violence. Instead, those regimes that possessed prewar democratic constitutional roots (USA, UK, France) were able to overcome the challenge of violent political radicalism. In contrast, in Italy, Germany, Austria, and Spain—where democratic constitutionalism was newer and weaker—violence was not effectively circumscribed. In Weimar Germany and Popular Front Spain, street violence reflected the decline of political consensus and the state’s failure to maintain its monopoly on the use of force. In addition, violence showed that many in positions of power were not committed to the defense of pluralist democracy or the rule of law.

My criticisms of this fine volume are minimal. However, in a work dedicated to political violence, which sometimes employs concepts such as “European civil war” or the “second 30 Years War,” the authors ignore the strength of postwar pacifism. After all, the democracies largely ignored the egregious Nazi attacks on its own citizens—Gentiles but especially Jews—and the UK and France declared war only after repeated violations of international treaties and borders of conservative republics.

It is impossible within the word limits of this essay to give a full picture of the richness of this volume, which is accompanied by germane photos. The collection’s comparative approach sets a standard for future Spanish historiography.

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