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Till Kössler. "Towards a New Understanding of the Child: Catholic Mobilisation and Modern Pedagogy in Spain, 1900-1936." *Contemporary European History* 18:1 (2009): 1-24. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777308004803. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004803> .

Peter Anderson. "In the Interests of Justice? Grass-roots Prosecution and Collaboration in Francoist Military Trials, 1939-1945." *Contemporary European History* 18:1 (2009): 25-44. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777308004815. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004815> .

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Reviewed by **David A. Messenger**, University of Wyoming

How did the political culture of Spain develop in the years before the Civil War? What was the culture that succeeded it in the aftermath of the war? These two distinct questions inform the recent research of Till Kössler and Peter Anderson. Reading their two articles together in the recent issue of *Contemporary European History* together allows one to engage not only with very solid scholarship on modern Spain, but also to think of issues about politicization and mobilization in the context of a population often seen as 'apolitical' in the face of events which were to consume them, a society where "only a small minority was unconditionally political".¹ Both of these articles challenge that idea in interesting and provocative ways, putting forth a picture of Spaniards more engaged and more active in a variety of debates about culture and politics and their social implications before, during and after the Spanish Civil War.

Kössler's piece is a study of changes in Catholic education in the first third of the century, a time when at least 1/3 of elementary students and fully half of secondary students were educated in Catholic schools (4). Rather than portray Catholic education as a homogenous and moribund institution failing to confront secularization, Kössler emphasizes the diversity of change and innovation within the Catholic educational community and indeed sees the sphere of education as one where mobilization was extensive, diverse and had political as well as social consequences. In doing so, Kössler

¹ Michael Seidman. *Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002) 6.

challenges the long held view that “Catholics in Spain had not been organized for political and social action”, especially in comparison with other European Catholics and with Spanish socialist and anarchist movements.²

Chief amongst the innovators were pedagogues and parents who collectively, through pressure groups, academic journals and conferences formed a “Catholic educational public sphere”(6). The key actor was the *Federación de Amigos de Enseñanza* (FAE) and its journal *Atneas*. As Catholic education became more the preserve of the bourgeois, and as it became influenced by the dissemination of new psychological and pedagogical understandings of children and childhood, it also became stronger in the face of secularization as it sought to prepare a generation for “the apostolic re-conquest” (7). In setting out this line of argument, Kössler emphasizes not just the nature of reform in Catholic education, but also its larger implications for social and political mobilization. For this reviewer, Kössler’s argument is significant in that it exposes us to a perspective on Catholic political culture in the era before the Civil War.

The arrival of modernity and advertising of Catholic schools to appeal to middle-class parents coincided with pedagogical innovations such as field trips and less supervision over the movement of students outside the classroom (9-10). Also apparent was a new understanding of child psychology.

All of these methods were applied to the broader aim of the Church to re-Christianize society. In this way, the Church confronted the success of liberal, secular education amongst middle-class families head on. In rejecting traditional pedagogical techniques like forcing students to sit still and silent during lessons, the innovators made Catholic education more scientific and less about moral and religious development (15). Character formation became the focus of religious education and not simply training in religious practice (17). A variety of activities outside the classroom came to represent this new pedagogy, ranging from study groups to the establishment of a Catholic boy-scout movement linked to *Acción Católica*(20-21). By the time of the Second Republic, Kössler concludes, “faced with an openly hostile national government, many leading Catholics wanted the schools to become ‘training grounds for the apostles’” (21). Given the movement that had been active since the turn of the century, such a political mobilization of students for the Church was possible by the 1930s. In this way, Kössler suggests, the anti-modern image of the Church confronted a more activist political culture outside its parishes and schools is misplaced.

Peter Anderson, in the same issue of *Contemporary European History*, tackles a different era and issue but with the same desire to expand our understanding of political culture and mobilization. Over the last few years, there has been a transformation of Spanish historiography, as well as the politics of memory in Spain, in the emphasis on exploring

² Juan J. Linz. “Church and State in Spain from the Civil War to the Return of Democracy” *Daedalus* 120:3 (1991), 159-160.

the violence and terror of the Franco regime. Initially focused on regional studies of violence against civilians during the Civil War, this has increasingly shifted to studies of the post-war Francoist period.³ Increasingly, such work seeks to do some things differently than the research on violence and atrocities in the civil war era. Rather than simply quantify the violence, more work has been done with reference to the “behavior and attitudes” behind repression, a sort of “history from below”.⁴

Anderson similarly wants to move away from the numbers of Franco’s victims to examine “the regime’s support base as a driver of Francoist terror.”(27) He does so by focusing on the processes of prosecutors that charged those with crimes against the regime in the aftermath of the Civil War. Not only did such grass-roots activity lead to many successful prosecutions, it also made them possible for, as Anderson notes, it was at the municipal level where the regime did not have enough police to carry out a program of organized, judicial terror on its own (28). Drawing not only on Spanish historiography but also on the influential work of historians like Robert Gellately with reference to Nazi Germany⁵, Anderson develops his argument by defining the Francoist conquest of Spain as an ‘occupation’, followed by ‘pacification’, which ultimately led to ‘collaboration’.

As early as 1936, as Nationalist forces took over southern Spain, they faced rebellions against their new authority. Waves of violence befell these regions as the conflict turned local.

The result was a large number of judicial processes, especially in the period after the end of the Civil War against those suspected of Republican violence in 1936. In the Cordoba province, Anderson builds on the established record of some 60 000 cases to document that in many villages upwards of 14% of the population faced investigations by prosecutors (37). Studying the trial records of 74 from the Pozoblanco region, Anderson was struck by the significance of denunciations and correspondence from the municipal level in preparing each case. Drawing first on information from local mayors and Falangist officials, prosecutors then would order those same officials to gather the testimony of other ‘upstanding citizens’; this was what would then form “the bedrock of the case for the prosecution” (38).

While we might expect mayors and Falangists to cooperate in this way, Anderson’s key argument is developed from evidence that suggests more popular involvement of a variety of citizens seeking to settle scores (personal and/or political)and make themselves valuable to the emerging Francoist regime. Landholders were most often those who sought to play a role, especially given the divisiveness of land reform in the Second Republic and initial period of the war in southern regions like Pozoblanco (39-40). The

³ Miguel Cabrera, “Developments in Contemporary Spanish Historiography:From Social History to the New Cultural History” *Journal of Modern History* 77 (Dec. 2005) 1005.

⁴ Cabrera, 1007

⁵ Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

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use of respected women of towns and villages as witnesses was also a common practice, especially in the case of women who were widowed when their husbands were killed during local violence in the war (41). These widows, as well as other town members, portrayed themselves as victims of Republican violence and pillaging not because they echoed the rhetoric of local Falangist bosses, but rather because of some identification with the new regime (whether overtly political or not). (43-44)The result, for Peter Anderson, is greater insight into the process of “making Francoism” in Spain and thus into the very nature of a distinct political culture that required a much broader level of participation than often assumed (44).

The recent issue of *Contemporary European History* offers one article from the era before the Spanish Civil War, one from the period immediately after. Both seek to challenge prevailing ideas about apolitical and inactive populations in Spain, the first the Catholic Church in the face of the Second Republic, and the second the masses in the face of Francoist repression. In making arguments about how Catholic education mobilized and modernized itself in the first part of the century, Till Kössler urges us to see Spanish Catholicism responding to the challenges it faced; similarly, Peter Anderson wants us to reject the commonly held understanding that Francoism was only the preserve of a few ‘families’ or constituencies in society. Taken together, these two articles offer a promising reconsideration of political culture and social and political mobilization in twentieth century Spain.

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— Commissioned for H-Diplo by Diane N. Labrosse