



Women, Gender, and Violence in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39)

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Photo: Kati Horna, *La mujer española antes de la revolución* (1938)

Women's experience during the Spanish Civil War was not only determined by the projects imposed by the Republican and the Francoist governments, but also by the violence unleashed by both rear-guards after the failed coup d'état in July 1936. Since they were the cornerstones of social and political reconstruction behind the frontline, as well as having their lives preconditioned by specific and opposed gender discourses, women were submitted in several ways to violence and control, despite the fact that violent processes were clearly asymmetric in their conception, procedures and consequences. On the Francoist side, women experienced rituals of humiliation strictly related to the control of their bodies and their reproductive condition, such as sexual violence, the shaving of their heads and the forced ingestion of castor oil. Despite the fact that this was not the case on the Republican side, women's experiences and identities were determined by a left-wing gender discourse that created different ways of patriarchal submission. Because conservative women were supposed to be subjected to the Catholic Church, left-wing committees and militiamen, engaged in a revolutionary project since the summer of 1936, aimed to "liberate" them as a key element of the "purification" process that was considered an essential prerequisite for the construction of the emerging new order.

Professor Cenarro teaches contemporary history and is regarded as one of the leading researchers of her generation. She is an expert on the Spanish Civil War, Francoism, as well as on social and cultural history. Her publications includes numerous articles and books such as *Los niños del Auxilio Social* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2009) and *La sonrisa de Falange. Auxilio Social en la guerra civil y la posguerra* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006). She is currently working on a book exploring the condition of women during Francoism.