

Javier Tusell, *Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy. 1939 to the Present*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2007; Translated by Rosemary Clark; 494 pp; £ 55 hbk, ISBN 978 0 631 20615 6.

Javier Tusell was proofreading the Spanish edition of *Spain: from Dictatorship to Democracy* when he died, aged 59, in 2005. He was one of the most important historians of twentieth-century Spain, a radio and newspaper commentator and a prolific writer. His obituary appeared in the European press and fellow historians organised public events to honour the Spanish professor. While scholars praised his research on the Restoration system and Francoism, the media concentrated on his political past. In particular, newspapers focused on his links with Christian Democrat organizations that led him to the Centre Democratic Union (UCD), the centre-right party led by Adolfo Suárez whose government spanned Franco's dictatorship and Spain's emerging democracy. During his years at the UCD, Tusell was elected councilor for Madrid and led the department for Artistic Heritage, Archives and Museums - the division of the Ministry of Culture that was to negotiate the return of Picasso's painting *Guernica* from the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Following three years of haggling, Tusell managed to get the canvas to Spain amid much controversy in 1981. His main political achievement was also his latest one. After the socialists' landslide of 1982, the historian left the UCD and returned to his chair at the university. When the conservatives returned to power in 1996, Tusell expected an offer from José María Aznar to come back to politics. However, the proposal never materialized and the historian remained working as a political pundit and academic until the end of his life.

Tusell's last book is a survey of Spanish history from the end of the Civil War in 1939 to the electoral victory of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, following the 11 March 2004 Madrid bombings. The book is roughly divided into three main chronological sections. The first one deals with the consolidation of Francoism after the Civil War (1939-51) and the so-called 'years of consensus' (1951-1965), that is, the period that witnessed the end of the dictatorship's international isolation and the US-backed changes in economic policies. The second part analyzes the late Franco years (1966-75) and the transition to democracy (1975-1982). Here the stress is on how social transformations affected domestic policies and elite's decision-making. The final section explores, first, the socialist governments of Felipe González (1982-96), especially the process of consolidation of democracy, the new decentralized structure of the Spanish state and the PSOE's economic reforms, and, secondly, Aznar's eight years in power (1996-2004), with an emphasis on the conservatives' political deals with Catalan and Basque nationalists, the question of ETA's terrorism and the War in Iraq.

*Spain: from Dictatorship to Democracy* is a competent, fluently-written textbook. The chronological framework is clear and it also coincides with the three main periods of the life of the author: Tusell's formative years during the early period of the dictatorship; his political militancy in the centre-right during late Francoism and the transition to democracy; and, thirdly, his life as scholar and commentator since the early 1980s. Himself a member of the Spanish intellectual and political elites, Tusell tends to focus on high politics and his approach is top-down. However, there is also room in the book for some comments on daily life under Francoism and culture in the democratic period. Additionally, *Spain: from Dictatorship to Democracy* includes a bibliographic selection at the end of each chapter that should be helpful for students of twentieth-century Spain.

Perhaps the main shortcoming of the book is that it brings nothing new in terms of historiography or analysis. In fact, most of Tusell's analysis of the Franco regime in *Spain: from Dictatorship to Democracy* can be already found in his *La dictadura de Franco*, a work published in 1988. His portrait of the Franco dictatorship as a regime with no clear ideological basis that was not truly fascist and managed to maintain a certain pluralism throughout became cliché among conservative historians, such as Stantley Payne, and, not surprisingly, the reformist elites of the Franco regime themselves. Nevertheless, this 'sanitized' picture of Francoism has been seriously challenged in the last two decades by historians such as Paul Preston, Martin Blinkhorn, Ismael Saz and Michael Richards and new research on repression has demonstrated the totalitarian and genocidal nature of the Francoist post-war tyranny.

Tusell's view of the transition to democracy is also fairly uncritical. This is somehow understandable. First, Tusell played a minor role himself as a Christian Democrat militant in the transition. Secondly, the peaceful transformation from dictatorship to constitutional monarchy has become an emblem of the existing democratic regime. Only recently, a few scholars have been ready to show a less idyllic portrait of a time that was to witness the rebirth of Spanish democracy. Nonetheless, *Spain: from Dictatorship to Democracy* improves when scrutinizing both the PSOE and the PP governments. It is in the last chapters of the book where the contradictions of González's rule and the twists and turns of Aznar's policies are clearly explained.

In short, undergraduates would benefit from this comprehensible work, its main asset being providing a clear summary of Spain's history from the end of the Civil War to the present in a single volume. However, those in search of new historiographical trends, updated interpretations of Spanish history or sophisticated analyses will have to look elsewhere.