

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War

This book deals with one of most controversial issues of the Spanish Civil War (1936–9): the 'Red Terror'. Approximately 50,000 Spaniards were extrajudicially executed in Republican Spain following the failure of the military rebellion in July 1936. This mass killing of fascists seriously undermined attempts by the legally constituted Republican government to present itself in foreign quarters as fighting a war for democracy. This study, based on a wealth of scholarship and archival sources, challenges the common view that executions were the work of criminal or anarchist 'uncontrollables'. Its focus is on Madrid, which witnessed at least 8,000 executions in 1936. It shows that the terror was organized and carried out with the complicity of the police and argues that terror was seen as integral to the antifascist war effort. Indeed, the elimination of the internal enemy – the 'fifth column' – was regarded as important as the war on the front line.

Julius Ruiz has written widely on the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime. His first book, *Franco's Justice: Repression in Madrid after the Spanish Civil War*, was published in 2005 and in Spanish translation in 2012. His second book, *El terror rojo: Madrid 1936*, was published in 2012 and is currently in its third printing. It won the 2012 Hislibris Prize for the best nonfiction title published in Spain and was widely reviewed in the Spanish press. Ruiz has published articles in British, American, and Spanish journals such as *Contemporary European History*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, and *Historia y Política*. He has reviewed books for a large number of titles, including *English Historical Review* and *La Revista de Libros*. He is a member of the British Royal Historical Society.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence  
in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence  
in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

# The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War

*Revolutionary Violence in Madrid*

JULIUS RUIZ

*University of Edinburgh*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107054547](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107054547)

© Julius Ruiz 2012, 2014

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published in Spanish as *El terror rojo*. Madrid 1936 by Espasa Libros  
First English edition published 2014

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Ruiz, Julius, 1973–

The 'red terror' and the Spanish Civil War / Julius Ruiz.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-107-05454-7 (hardback)

1. Spain – History – Civil War, 1936–1939 – Atrocities. 2. Madrid

(Spain) – History – Siege, 1936–1939. 3. Extrajudicial

executions – Spain – History – 20th century. 4. Political

persecution – Spain – History – 20th century. I. Title.

DP269.53.R85 2014

946.081'1–dc23 2013044463

ISBN 978-1-107-05454-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

<i>Abbreviations and Spanish Terms</i>	page ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
Introduction	I
<i>The Figures</i>	3
<i>Historiography</i>	4
<i>'Checas' in Madrid?</i>	6
<i>Principal Theses</i>	8
<i>A Note about Sources</i>	14
1 On the Brink	16
<i>The Elections of February 1936</i>	16
<i>Antifascist Action, Fascist Reaction</i>	23
<i>Madrid Anarcho-syndicalism</i>	32
<i>The Military Conspiracy</i>	36
<i>The Killing of Calvo Sotelo</i>	39
2 The Military Rebellion	42
<i>Rumours and Mobilisation</i>	42
<i>The Botched Rebellion</i>	48
<i>The Battle Continues</i>	51
3 Antifascist Madrid	61
<i>Those Who Talk of Chaos Are Lying!</i>	61
<i>The Emergence of Revolutionary Tribunals</i>	66
<i>The Noble 'People'</i>	72
4 Forging the New Police	81
<i>Cleansing the Police</i>	81
<i>The Antifascist Criminal Investigation Police</i>	87
<i>The Creation of the Provincial Committee of Public Investigation (CPIP)</i>	101

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi		<i>Contents</i>
5	The Justice of the People	106
	<i>The Unspoken Fear</i>	106
	<i>The CPIP and the Network of Terror</i>	110
	<i>Gangsterismo</i>	121
	<i>Women</i>	138
	<i>Venturing Further Afield</i>	140
6	If It Is the Will of the People . . .	145
	<i>Responses to the Terror</i>	145
	<i>Two Exceptions: Manuel de Irujo and Melchor Rodríguez</i>	
	<i>García</i>	149
	<i>Bourgeois Republicans and the Terror</i>	151
	<i>The Jaén Trains</i>	153
	<i>The Death of General Eduardo López Ochoa</i>	156
	<i>The Cárcel Modelo Massacre</i>	158
7	Popular Tribunals and the Rearguard Vigilance Militias (MVR)	170
	<i>The Collapse of Republican Justice?</i>	171
	<i>The Failure of the Popular Tribunals</i>	175
	<i>The Creation of the Rearguard Vigilance Militias (MVR)</i>	180
8	A Fifth Column?	185
	<i>Origins of the Term 'Fifth Column'</i>	185
	<i>Survival Not Resistance</i>	188
	<i>Protecting the Family</i>	198
9	The Prison Problem	201
	<i>The Fifth Column Panic</i>	201
	<i>Prison Life</i>	205
	<i>Prison Conspiracies: CPIP Action, Government Inaction</i>	211
	<i>The Flight of Agapito García Atadell from Madrid</i>	217
	<i>The CPIP Takes Charge</i>	221
10	Paracuellos	231
	<i>The Meeting</i>	231
	<i>The Sacas of 7–9 November (I): A Well-oiled Machine?</i>	238
	<i>The Sacas of 7–9 November (II): Victims and Perpetrators</i>	246
	<i>Resistance and Foreign Intervention: Melchor Rodríguez</i>	
	<i>Stops the Evacuations</i>	257
	<i>The Dissolution of the CPIP</i>	263
	<i>The Operation Resumes – the Sacas from Ventas, San Antón,</i>	
	<i>and Porlier</i>	271
	<i>The End of the Massacres</i>	279
11	The Dirty War against the Fifth Column	284
	<i>The Special Brigades</i>	284
	<i>Police Reform, 1937–1938</i>	294
	<i>The Military Investigation Service (SIM)</i>	298

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

<i>Contents</i>	vii
12 Dealing with the Legacy of the Terror: Forced Labour for Fascists 1937–1939	304
<i>The Selective Punishment of 'Uncontrollables'</i>	305
<i>The Creation of Labour Camps</i>	313
<i>The End of García Oliver's Dream</i>	320
Epilogue	324
<i>The Hunters Become the Hunted</i>	324
<i>Red Terror, Blue Terror</i>	332
<i>Annex 1 Post-curfew Passwords Issued by Police Headquarters in Madrid</i>	339
<i>Annex 2 The Network of Terror</i>	341
<i>Annex 3 Prisons in Madrid Autumn 1936</i>	343
<i>Annex 4 Evacuations from Madrid's Prisons 28 October to 4 December 1936</i>	345
<i>Sources Consulted</i>	347
<i>Archives</i>	347
<i>Newspapers and Official Bulletins</i>	349
<i>Cited Bibliography</i>	351
<i>Maps</i>	363
<i>Glossary of Key Figures</i>	369
<i>Index</i>	377

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence  
in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Abbreviations and Spanish Terms

AIT	Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores
AP	Acción Popular
ASM	Agrupación Socialista Madrileña
<i>avenida</i>	Avenue
<i>caballerista</i>	Supporter of Francisco Largo Caballero/Left-wing Socialist
<i>calle</i>	Street
CEDA	Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIEP	Comisión de Información Electoral Permanente
CIV	Cuerpo de Investigación y Vigilancia
CNT	Confederación Nacional de Trabajo
CONS	Centrales Obreras Nacional Sindicalistas
CPIP	Comité Provincial de Investigación Pública
DEDIDE	Departamento Especial de Información del Estado
DGS	Dirección General de Seguridad/Director General de Seguridad
<i>Duque</i>	Duke
<i>Duquesa</i>	Duchess
FAI	Federación Anarquista Ibérica
FE	Falange Española
FLOE	Federación Local de Obreros de la Edificación
FNTT	Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra
FUE	Federación Universitaria Escolar
GNR	Guardia Nacional Republicana
IGM	Inspección General de Milicias
IR	Izquierda Republicana
JAP	Juventudes de Acción Popular
JDM	Junta de Defensa de Madrid
JJLL	Juventudes Libertarias

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

*Abbreviations and Spanish Terms*

JONS	Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista
JSU	Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas
MAOC	Milicias Antifascistas Obreras y Campesinas
<i>Marqués</i>	Marquis
MVR	Milicias de Vigilancia de la Retaguardia
NKVD	Narodny Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del (The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
<i>paco</i>	Sniper
<i>paseo</i>	Gangster-style execution
PCE	Partido Comunista de España
<i>Plaza</i>	Square
PNV	Partido Nacionalista Vasco
POUM	Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista
<i>prietista</i>	Supporter of Socialist Indalecio Prieto/Right-wing Socialist
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
PSUC	Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya
<i>saca</i>	Illegal extractions of prisoners for execution
SEU	Sindicato Español Universitario
SIM	Servicio de Investigación Militar
SUC	Sindicato Único de la Construcción
TYRE	Traditionalistas y Renovación Española
UGT	Unión General de Trabajadores
UHP	Unión de Hermanos Proletarios
UME	Unión Militar Española
UR	Unión Republicana

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Preface

This monograph was originally published in Spain in January 2012. I am enormously grateful to those readers who took the time and effort to contact me with their stories of the terror in Madrid. I would also like to thank those who sent me documents and pointed out errors. The writing of this book would not have been possible without the assistance of many institutions and people. Financial support was provided by the AHRC, the British Academy, and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. The intellectual support of friends and colleagues within the School of History, Classics and Archaeology is also much appreciated. Gordon Pentland, Ewen Cameron, Jill Stephenson, and David Kaufman deserve special mention. However, this book would not have been possible without Jim McMillan, my first head of school, who died at the peak of his powers as a historian in 2010.

I am indebted to Stanley Payne, Frances Lannon, Tom Buchanan, Pedro Barruso, Fernando del Rey, Manuel Álvarez Tardío, Roberto Villa García, and Emilio Sáenz-Francés for countless discussions on the Spanish Civil War. Particular thanks for Julio de la Cueva, Nigel Townson, and above all Rob Stradling for reading parts of the manuscript. I am also grateful to my editors at Espasa and Cambridge University Press for making this book available to both a Spanish- and an English-speaking readership. Espasa has also kindly given permission to reproduce maps that originally appeared in the Spanish version of the book. Some archival material in this study has previously appeared in my articles “‘Incontrolables’ en la zona republicana durante la guerra civil: el caso de Luis Bonilla Echevarria,” in *Historia y Política* 21 (2009) and “‘Work and don’t lose hope’: Republican Forced Labour Camps during the Spanish Civil War,” in *Contemporary European History* 18 (4) (2009).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05454-7 - The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid

Julius Ruiz

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

xii

*Preface*

It goes without saying that this book would never have been completed without the love of my wife, Cheryl, and our children, Oliver, Nicholas, and Laura. It is dedicated to the memory of my great-grandfather, grandmother, and father who suffered the Civil War and its consequences.

J. R.  
Edinburgh, 2013.