DIDACTIC UNIT 3

# Antonia Mecha:

## "A life cut short by injustice and indifference"

**IES Tirant Lo Blanc, Elche, Spain**

**2014-2017**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Title

Antonia Mecha: a life cut short by injustice and indifference.

## Grades addressed

15-16 year-olds. In Spain, the Spanish Civil war is usually taught to students of this age, but we consider that in a different country (with maybe a more shallow treatment of a foreign war), the age of the students addressed could be up to 17.

## Duration

7 sessions (50 mins. each)

## Sources

- Prezi presentation with a summary of the historical background (related to indifference) for the teacher's explanations.
- **Activities from a historical perspective: Activity 1.** Notice of 7 December 1936, President of the Commission of Culture and Teaching, José María Pemán.
- **Activities from a historical perspective: Activity 2.** Video repression in figures.mp4
- **Activities from a historical perspective: Activity 2.** Pictures of Antonia Mecha were taken from Pere Ibarra Chair (Miguel Hernández University, Elche).
- **Activities from a historical perspective: Activity 3.** The biography of Antonia Mecha was taken from Pere Ibarra Chair (Miguel Hernández Univerity, Elche).
- **Activities from a historical perspective: Activity 4.** The dates for the creation of the chart were taken from *La política educativa de la Segunda República*, M. Samaniego Boneu, Historia de España en el mundo contemporáneo, CSIC, 1977.
- The clip from the film *La lengua de las mariposas* (*Butterfly's Tongue*) is available in the file **butterflys tongue.mp4.**

## Aims

1. To consider the existence of indifferent witnesses as the necessary help to perpetuate the repression of the regime.
2. To identify the main features of the moral category of the indifferent.
3. To make the students socially reflect on the fact that the repression suffered by the educational system of the Republic (by means of the purge and suspension of teachers), along with the Spanish Civil War and Francoism, are unfinished chapters within the recent history of Spain; and to face this situation as a current event nowadays.
4. To make students identify indifference with evil when talking about tolerance toward injustice.
5. To make the Spanish Civil War public through the description and analysis of the education system of the Second Republic and the repression its teachers suffered during Francoism.
6. To raise awareness and foster students' critical thinking regarding the consequences of the repression of Francoism upon public education and especially upon its teachers.
7. To raise awareness of the importance of the analysis of legal documents used by the authorities as arbitrary mechanisms which modify the historical reality.

## Methodology

The methodology to be used in this didactic unit is mainly active and contextualised. A methodology which tries to foster participation and the involvement of students in the learning process, as well as their assimilation of the historical events and their reflection on those events taking place these days and which are closely related to past events. That is why most of the activities presented here will be worked mainly in small groups, since we think that in small groups students are more likely to express their ideas and reflections.

## Other aspects

- Classroom arrangements: Students will be sitting in pairs and in small groups.

- Groups: Students will work individually, in pairs and in small groups.
- Equipment: For the pictures and the chart, the teacher may need a computer with a projector to show them to the class or photocopies to hand them out to the students. For the projection of the film, the teacher will need a computer, some speakers and a projector.

# 2. BIOGRAPHY RATIONALE

We have focused in this unit on the idea of indifference as opposed to the concept of love. In this sense, we offer several activities to work on the indifference of citizens during the toughest years of the repression of Francoism after the Spanish Civil War, and which focused specially on teachers. That is the reason why our lesson plans revolve around this topic: the repression on Spanish educational practice.

We introduce two activities which may reflect and exemplarily show what it was about, why and how it was carried out. The first activity is based on the practical case of a teacher who suffered reprisal and the second activity is based on the ethical analysis of what indifference means through the film Butterfly's Tongue, which provides us with, on the one hand, a very rich and accurate sample of the consequences of such repression suffered by the teachers and, on the other, with a chance to reflect on the concept of indifference, which, as will be shown later on, involves ethical-moral considerations worth to be dealt with in class. Indifference is not, as it may seem, the lack of action, but an attitude which implies activity, action and, therefore, responsibility.

Raul Hilberg, the great historian of the European Jews' extermination, claims in his work The Extermination of the European Jews, regarding the behaviour of the European society before the Holocaust: *"Therefore, the rise of neutrality as a prevailing pattern of reaction was not a consequence of ignorance. On the contrary, it was the result of a strategy easier to follow and justify for the majority…, not openly disapproving of detentions or not doing something for the endangered victims could always be justified."*

What Hilberg calls neutrality, that is to say, neither one thing nor the other, is indifference. Such indifference whose action is the lack of action and of participation, it is letting others do, and it was the easiest and most comfortable stance as it could be rationalised and justified. And, in the light of those historical events, we should reflect on the present-day risk of justifying our attitude before events such as the massive migration from several countries of Africa or from Syria, just to take an example.

In the case of the Spanish Civil War, we are also facing an irrefutable historical fact: the repression on educational practice followed by the establishment of an indoctrinating educative system which went on, somehow or other, up until the fall of Francoism in 1975, and whose

influence on those generations should be analysed in deeper detail, as such influence may contribute to see the Spanish Transition under a more integral approach.

It is not coincidence that Francoism paid especial attention on education, repressively and punitively, not only by means of a purge and a witch hunt in the body of civil servants, arbitrarily and without any legal guarantee or procedural safeguards, but also by erasing all traces of the educational system that the II Republic had innovatively attempted to establish[1].

A clear summary of how education was an ideological battlefield during the Civil War can be found in the Report of the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations, Pablo de Greiff, about the Spanish Civil War, presented in the General Assembly of the United Nations on 22 July, 2014: *"The Special Rapporteur recalls the repression suffered by teachers right from the start of the Civil War, including summary executions of republican teachers and staff cleansing, which affected both public and private education, including religious teaching, from primary school up to university. Various studies have shown how the authorities in Spain during the dictatorship supervised the content of history teaching as a means of guaranteeing political and social consensus, by monopolizing public utterances concerning the country's identity and history. Beyond the use of the curriculum as an instrument of social control, schools became places where control could take on humiliating and stigmatizing forms. The children of parents who had been shot told how, in addition to that loss, at school they were obliged to wear uniforms that identified them as such."*[2]

Education was not only an issue during the Spanish Civil War, or even at the dawning of it, but it had been an ideological battlefield, as could not be otherwise, since the late 19th century and the early 20th century. Education as a field of social control has always been an urgent element for authoritarian regimes as a mechanism to monopolise the public discourse about identity and the national history, as mentioned in the report.

There is no doubt that the Spanish II Republic carried out several attempts to change the Spanish educational system. The controversy is in the degree of achievement of the aims that it had set as

[1] MORENTE VALERO, Francisco, *"La Depuración franquista del magisterio público. Un estado de la cuestión"*, in Annual Directory of UNED 2001-2002, pp. 661-688.

DE PABLO LOBO, Carlos, *"La Depuración de la educación española durante el Franquismo (1936-1975)"*, Foro de Educación, No 9, 2007, pp. 203-228.

[2] A/HRC/27/56/Add.1 paragraph 35.

well as the causes that blocked them[3]. Anyway, no matter more or fewer aims had been attained, the Republic set the public school reformation, as well as the ability to make culture reach the most traditionally invisible layers of society, as one of its goals. And it is within this conception that we can frame the role of women in this new educative view. A woman, represented by a teacher who aimed at emancipation, freer and devoid of the image that national-Catholicism had of her. This explains the fact that during the repression following the Civil War, women, especially those representing the Republican ideals, were the subject of such repression.

Another clear and documented example can be found in the Nazi Germany's occupation of Poland from 1939 to 1945. One of the first actions that they carried out by the Nazi authorities was the destruction and closing of universities and educational centres in an attempt to obliterate culture, their identity and their ability of resistance. Jan Karski, a member of the Polish resistance, provides us with a clear view to understand of education for the articulation of resistance and unity in moments of upheaval such as the ones Poland lived. Karski narrates how a secret educative system was developed, with its own system of certificates, exams, curriculum and so on, as a way of cultural survival and thus of resistance[4].

Finally, we retrieve the words of one of the inspirations of the new educative ideas, Francisco Giner de los Ríos, in relation to the neutrality of education. Those new ideas spread at the dawning of the II Republic and turned to be so valuable, today more than ever, if not:

*"According to this principle, school must be neutral, the same as education in all its degrees; but not to the truth, with the indifferent neutrality of the masses, which shrug their shoulders and mix up within the same disdain all those who are making the effort of taking them out of their brutalisation; and not neutral to Renán or Spencer's sceptic tolerance, based on the impossibility of knowing anything for sure, but to the awareness that even the greatest mistakes contribute with their contingent of truth, no matter how dense may be the dark with which they intend to cloud these mistakes. And, except for the respect with which the foreign law of the State can only devote the right of every individual, religious, scientific, political or any other communion, to the foundation of special institutions that direct education and the teaching of students in the most strict sense of its specific dogmas, such conception prefers, however, to foster the creation of other centres that, aiming at the top, intend to grow the common being*

[3] SAMANIEGO BONEU, Mercedes, *La Política educativa de la Segunda república*, CESIC, Madrid, 1977.

[4] KARSKI, Jan, *Historia de un estado clandestino*, El Acantilado, 2011.

*informing the roots, always alive and healthy, of such particular direction. This way, it refuses to go down to the realm where they contrast, fight and fester, avoiding the spoiling of that sense of unity, of respect and harmony in the child's soul, to whom we all owe a great respect."*

# 3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## 3.1. INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

**Before 1914**, democracy, respect for the law and defence of civil rights were scarce assets. They were present in countries such as France or Great Britain but absent in most parts of Europe. Moreover, in Russia, Italy, Germany or Spain, the Parliament was considered as an instrument of political management at the service of the ruling classes. This was due to corruption, restricted suffrage and the Kings' intervention.

**After 1914, the fall of autocrat empires led to a new stage of parliamentary democracies and liberal and republican constitutions**. However, in spite of that apparent victory of democracy, those governments were not able to solve the political, social and economic problems of the inter-war Europe. There were difficulties in the creation of new States in central and Eastern Europe, based on the principles of nationality, but with the inherited problem of national minorities inside and outside their borders. There were difficulties because of the national, linguistic, religious, ethnic or class division which led to a system with lots of political parties but weak. There were difficulties because of the economic crisis of the 1930s, which caused an increase of unemployment, a resurgence of conflict and a threat of revolution after the Communist regime settlement in Russia, the Communist revolutions break out in Hungary and Bavaria and a wave of strikes and workers' demands between 1919 and 1920. That environment frightened the middle class and contributed to the generation of a counter-revolutionary spirit.

In the background of the economic crisis and the social upheaval, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Scandinavia, all of them countries with a strong Parliamentary tradition, managed to consolidate Parliamentary democracy by the integration of the growing socialism into the system (by means of big political alliances) and the isolation of the radical political parties.

In Central, West, Balkan and Mediterranean Europe, where the liberal-parliamentary system had little tradition and liberal or conservative parties were helpless against the economic crisis and the social upheaval, authoritarian regimes were established. Basing on the need to stop revolution, they defended heated and aggressive nationalism, totalitarianism and the single party:

Italy with Mussolini in 1922, Spain with General Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in 1923, Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and Franco's military uprising in 1933. That way, by 1940, over half of the European political systems (such as France, Holland or Belgium's) were authoritarian or had decommissioned democracies after being invaded by the German army.

## The Spanish Civil War: Internationalisation of the conflict (1936-1939)

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War had great international impact due to the tense situation Europe was living, mainly owing to the expansionist policies of Italian Fascism and German Nazism. In the foreign political arena, Spanish Civil War became one more link in the chain of crisis which led to the outbreak of World War II, as well as the battle field of Fascism, Communism and Democracy.

Within the conflict of those three ideologies, and the intention of not worsening such tense situation, the USA pursued a policy of isolationism, whereas England and France pursued a policy of appeasement before Germany. This country was already back on track after its rearmament policy in 1932-33, but it also accepted the annexation of the Saar in 1935, as well as the remilitarisation of Rhineland in March 1936.

That way, when the Spanish government of the Republic asked for support to France on 19 July 1936, England notified France that if they took actions in Spain, England would not support the French foreign policy in facing up the German threat, as the important thing was to avoid the spread of the Civil War all over Europe. Thus, France, seeing Hitler and Mussolini's support to Franco on 25 July 1936, moved from supporting the Republic to leading the non-intervention agreement between France and England. 27 more countries, among which we find Germany, Italy, Portugal and the USSR, signed that agreement.

Despite this agreement, Spanish Civil War was marked by a foreign intervention and non-intervention. The **Nationalist faction** received the support of Italy and Germany, which allowed the relocation of the army from Africa to the peninsula on 24 July 1936. This support was almost unconditional until the end of the war, since if the military coup succeeded in Spain, a pro-French regime would be substituted by an opposite regime, whereas if a left-wing revolution succeeded a possible France-Spain front of Popular Front, together with the USSR, would threaten the development of the German foreign policy.

Salazar's Estado novo was also at the Nationalist Front's disposal from the very beginning, providing them with far-reaching logistical support and bringing the whole weight of its diplomacy to foster the victory of the rebels.

In December 1936, the Holy See made regular contacts with Burgos, in 1938 they interchanged ambassadors and the international Catholic influence took Franco's side. Moreover, Germany and Italy provided Franco with credit and made several compensations in the form of commercial-economic mechanisms.

In the **Republican Faction**, the Soviet support was a major contribution in the defence of Madrid in November 1936, but unlike the supplies of the Axis, the Soviet supplies had several problems: the piracy of Italian submarines, the marine control of Spanish shores imposed by Franco and the more or less strict Pyrenees border controls on war materials transport. The direct Soviet intervention coincided with the beginning of the International Brigades, set up thanks to the collaboration of European communist organisations with 60,000 volunteers of over 60 nationalities. From the very first moment, the Mexican government tried to help the Republicans and understood the war as one more example of external aggression to weaker countries. Regarding the initial little French supplies and the first purchase of weapons abroad, bypassing the non-intervention agreement, they were financed thanks to the sale of a quarter of the Spanish Gold reserve to the Bank of France, as well as to the Soviet support.

By the end of 1938, Franco had consolidated his situation and the only option for the Republic was to resist, hoping that it would not take long for other democracies to respond. However, the appeasement policy and the non-intervention agreement continued even when Hitler strengthened his actions in 1938, after the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland. This situation was confirmed after the Agreement between British and Italians, which meant that both parts would respect the Status Quo of the Mediterranean. Just the Nazi coup in Prague on 15 March 1939 eventually triggered the diplomatic revolution that the Republicans had been waiting for nearly three years, although it was too late.

## Franco's dictatorship during World War II (1939-1945)

With the Republic defeated in April 1939, an international situation quite favourable to fascism contributed to the consolidation of the violent counter-revolution which had already started with

the support of this same fascism. Meanwhile, Spanish attitude towards war wavered between ambiguous neutrality and not belligerency, as the country was a debtor with Germany and Italy.

**At the beginning of World War II (September 1939) Franco announced the country's neutrality** "forced" by the domestic political situation and the economic crisis. In any case, that neutrality implied the French and British acceptance of the Spanish territorial integrity if the war spread, and so, some agreements were signed with France and Portugal.

**In the summer of 1940 Franco saw the weakness of France and England and moved from neutrality to not belligerency** in a Germanophile atmosphere which encouraged the entry into the war. For Germany and Italy it was all about Spain's geostrategic situation, both Atlantic and Mediterranean, and so they explored the possibility of Spain's entry in the conflict since the summer of 1940 through a series of interviews and bilateral meetings, such as the one in Hendaye between Franco and Hitler in 1940 or the one between Franco and Mussolini in Bordighera in 1941. Franco accepted a war pact as long as Hitler accepted several territorial claims in Gibraltar, the French Morocco, Oran, some Saharan lands and the Guinea Gulf, as well as the shipment of military supplies and provisions. Thus, a secret pact was signed, in which Spain was committed to support the Three-Power Pact (Germany, Italy and Japan) and to go to war against Great Britain on a date to be specified by the Spanish government. On the other hand, Great Britain tried to soften Spain's image as a supporter of Fascist countries and to keep Spain's neutrality through the economic agreement of April 1941, which guaranteed food and raw materials supply.

**From the spring of 1941, the upward trend of the Allies made Franco move back to neutrality**. The German invasion of the USSR in June 1941 triggered a more pragmatic alliance with the Axis but Franco's caution advised an indirect confrontation with the Communist regime through the "Blue Division", consisting of Falangist volunteers from October 1941 to November 1943. In December 1941, the USA entry into the war and the country's condemnation, together with Great Britain, of the intervention in the Russian front implied a modification of the pro-Nazi momentum of the Spanish government in 1942 as well as a pro-West turn of the Regime.

In October 1943, the war started to be unfavourable to the Fascist powers, and so the British and American governments required Spain the retreat of the Blue Division and the explicit abandonment of the non-belligerency attitude. So Franco eventually defined Spain's position as

"alert neutrality" in October 1943. Facing the Allies' threat to block oil supplies and to cut off wheat and rubber supplies unless wolfram exports to Germany were cancelled, Franco accepted the Blue Division retreat (November 1943), the cancellation of the mineral exports (1944), the dispatch of the Italian warships which were still in some Spanish ports, the dismiss of the Axis agents operating in Spain and the removal of the German consulate in Tangier.

After the German defeat in 1945, and the subsequent reorganisation of the world, the Allies started an international boycott of Franco's government, which kept diplomatic relations with the nuncio, Portugal and Switzerland. Francoism left behind the most clearly fascist aspects of the regime and presented itself as a Catholic, conservative and anti-communist regime, bastion of the western civilization against the communist enemy.

## 3.2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

### Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, Second Spanish Republic and the Spanish Civil War (1923-1939)

At the beginning of the 20th century, Spain was living a great political upheaval due to the crisis of 1898, which forced the turning parties, monarchical, liberal or conservative, to adopt a reformist policy that even so did not manage to modernise the political life of the country.

Despite all this, the Spanish society started an important economic development and a social modernisation featured by the higher classes, the intellectuals and the appearance of the mass print media. The impact of World War I increased the political and social problems: political unrest, social tensions and military issues in Morocco, which were an excuse for an authoritarian solution in September 1923, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera.

Dictatorship, which lasted for seven years, established two ways of government: the Military Directory (1923-1925) and the Civil Directory (1925-1930). The first one, on an interim and reformist basis, had a strong populist part supported by King Alfonso XIII to avoid monarchic and military responsibilities in the Disaster of Annual. Dictatorship influenced by the rise of Fascism all over Europe was presented as a way of political regeneration, but without a clear

ideological programme and with a single party, Unión Patriota (Patriotic Union), able to bring together authority, military defence and Catholic orthodoxy.

During the Civil Directory, Primo de Rivera tried to make his regime official by means of a plebiscite which put to the vote his domestic and foreign policies. He carried out a nationalist policy of government dirigisme, the promotion of public works, the granting of specific monopolies and state interventionism in labour regulations which caused a State debt seven times higher in 1929 than in 1924.

According to some historians, this system did not intend to finish the outdated system of the Restoration, but to avoid the democratisation of the Spanish political system. The dictatorship was unable to find the way towards a constitutional system, and so King Alfonso XIII withdrew his trust in him in 1930. After a short period of time, known as "the Dictablanda" (a softer dictatorship), the opposition began to get organised. The Republicans, the left-wing pro-Catalan parties and PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) signed the Pact of San Sebastian, in which they committed to provide an alternative to monarchy, creating a Revolutionary Committee that would later become the temporary government of the future Second Republic.

In 1931, the last government of the Monarchy took the task of calling for local elections on 12 April and they became a plebiscite for or against Monarchy. The republican powers won the elections in most large cities and, before this situation, King Alfonso XIII renounced to the throne and left the country. That new regime was acclaimed by the Spanish society in the hope of creating a new framework for a democratic coexistence, of updating the new State and of carrying out a program of important economic and social reforms.

**The Second Republic**, which was the first democratic regime in Spain, can be divided in three distinguishing parts:

a) The First Biennium (1931-1933)
b) The Black Biennium (1933-1936)
c) The victory of the Popular Front and the preparation of the military coup (February to July 1936).

***The First Biennium (1931-1933).*** After the local elections of 1931, a temporary government had been established by the liberal republican right-wing, the left-wing republicans, the radical republicans, the pro-Catalan and the pro-Galician nationalists. The right-wing monarchists, the Basque nationalists, the communists and the anarchists were outside that coalition.

The new Republic had to face social conflicts, the unrest of industry entrepreneurs, land owners and the Catholic Church hierarchy, as well as the impact of the international crisis of 1929, although to a minor extent, due to the little importance of foreign trade in the Spanish economy.

In the summer of 1931, democratic elections were held, with a government consisting of left-wind republicans and socialists. They introduced a set of military reforms to update the army and to put an end to the top-heaviness in the official positions, which caused some kind of uneasiness among those military officials, especially the Africanists, who had the intention of ending up with the order established by means of a military coup. The country's social life was secularised in order to avoid the influence of religion and a Constitution was elaborated in order to establish the non-confessional nature of the State, religious freedom, divorce, civil marriage and secularisation of graveyards. That triggered the protest of the Catholic Church against the religious reform.

Another key aspect was the land reform: Spain, a mainly agricultural country, needed to find a solution to the situation of farmers and the poor performance of agriculture. Its main aim was the expropriation of the large estates and the settlement of farmers, which divided the conservative powers of the country and the farmers, who, disappointed by the complete ineffectiveness of the reform, moved towards more revolutionary and violent attitudes.

Other autonomy-oriented reforms were passed, such as the Catalonia case, with regional autonomy and economic, social, educational and cultural competences. The Basque Country and Galicia were preparing their autonomy reform, but it was interrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War.

The labour conditions were improved: a 40-hour working week and higher wages. The educational labour was extraordinary: 10,000 schools were built, 7,000 new teaching posts were created and the model of co-educational, secular, compulsory and free school was adopted. We

want to highlight the Pedagogical Missions, aimed at the spreading of culture in rural areas, as is the case with García Lorca, who collaborated in theatre performances nationwide.

***The Black Biennium (1933-1936).*** All these previous reforms focused the political life, and so, the opposition of entrepreneurs, the Church, the Army and the land owners reorganised the monarchic right-wing and other authoritarian and coup-supporter organisations. On the other hand, workers fostered a wave of social conflicts encouraged by both the increase of unemployment and the harsh field-working conditions.

The country's monarchic powers moved to anti-democratic positions, some intellectual groups armed ideologically the right-wing and presented the Monarchy as the staunch defender against social revolution. Furthermore, there were some coup-oriented political parties and fascist nationalist-socialist small groups (inspired by the Italian fascism which defended direct action, fists and guns) willing to fight left-wing activists.

In 1931, new elections were held and the centre-right parties won. They dismantled all the reformist work of the previous two-year period, which caused the increasing radicalism of PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and of UGT (General Workers' Union). Those parties suggested not negotiating an agreement with the middle class and fostered social revolution, whereas the moderate sectors intended to stabilise the Republic and to go in-depth on the reforms introduced in the previous period.

The large amount of strikes and struggles favoured the right-wing move towards fascist positions and the entry of CEDA (Orthodox Catholic and fascist party) activists into the Black Biennium government. Henceforth, the general strikes made the government hastily declare a state of war, especially in Asturias and Catalonia.

Asturian miners fostered a social revolution in 1934, which set the stage for the Spanish civil War. The Spanish Legion had to take action and for ten days every single insurgent was defeated, killed or arrested. Such revolution caused a government crisis, worsened by corruption and misappropriation of funds scandals which forced President Alcalá Zamora to call for elections in February 1936.

***Victory of the Popular Front and preparation of the military coup (February-July 1936).*** Two opposing groups appeared and the Spanish political life was divided into right-wing and left-wing. The latter grouped together as the Popular Front, which defended amnesty for the victims of the reprisal after the Revolution of October 1934 as well as the streamlining of the reforms already introduced during the First Biennium in 1931.

The victory of the Popular Front was not accepted by the country's reactionaries, who started a conspiracy against the Republic. Azaña was appointed President of the Republic and the new government resumed the reformist process stalled during the Black Biennium.

Some coup-plotters were removed from power and sent to different places (Franco was sent to the Canary Islands and Mola was sent to Navarra). However, some sectors of the right-wing considered the idea of the military coup d'état as the only solution for the stoppage of the democratic reforms. They tried to obtain German and Italian aids and to establish a military dictatorship without making it clear if Spain would become a Republic again or a Monarchy. The military uprising took place in Morocco, on 17 June, and the next day it spread throughout the nation.

The lack of a democratic culture, the political instability, the social conflict and the intransigence of its enemies, led the Republic towards social struggles of which the enemies of democracy took advantage in order to put an end to it.

We can consider **the Spanish Civil War** as the most important event in Spain during the 20th century. Many European, North American and Spanish historians consider the study of the Civil War from a double perspective: first, as the result of the Spanish social and political dynamics, and the tensions rising in Europe after the appearance of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany; and second, as the hard economic circumstances in the Europe and the USA of the 1930s.

Neither the conspiracy against the Republic, in July 1936, nor the Republican authorities and political parties took into account the possibility of a war. The failed military coup turned into a civil war because both the rebels and the legal republican government were supported by other countries despite the non-intervention Committee.

The uprising started in Melilla, and Mola, the director of such uprising, also rose up in Navarra. From North to South, the most important cities in Andalusia, Castile and Galicia were taken. However, Madrid and Barcelona resisted. The coup failed in the rest of the country and so the civil war broke out.

In the legal Republican area the Popular Militias appeared. As they were not supported by France or England (due to the non-intervention agreement), they asked for the USSR support and so the International Brigades were created.

In the rebel area, Franco was appointed Generalissimo and the war almost turned into a religious crusade. Hitler and Mussolini supported the nationalists with soldiers and weapons. Franco had the intention of winning the war, of getting rid of any dissidents opposing the dictatorial ideals, of re-educating and of "ideologically cleansing" the Spanish nation.

The reprisal of coup-plotters remained all through the war by means of war proclamations and trials without any legal guarantee, like the execution of the poet Federico García Lorca. The documentation referred confirm this reprisal: "…reprisal must be encouraged to spread fear and to paralyse the opponent."

It took time for the Republican government to organise the State security forces and it was unable to avoid that several despicable people committed atrocities against right-wing and religious Spaniards. But the difference lies in the fact that the Republican government did not encourage such offensive practices, it pursued them and brought the operators to justice.

Due to the external support that the rebels had and their military superiority they won the war on 27 March 1939, imposing a dictatorial regime and appointing Franco as the Leader of Spain. Shortly before, within the Republican Party, they ended up with the Negrín government and a National Defence Council was created. It was directed by Colonel Casado, Besteiro from the Socialist Party and the anarchist Mera. They reported by radio to be in contact with Franco in order to reach an "honourable peace", where "those who did not have blood on their hands" would have nothing to fear and should rely on "the Leader's magnanimity".

However, Franco did not recognize any agreement and this caused a climate of hostility based on the systematic repression and the assassination of all those Spaniards who took part in the defence of the legal order democratically established by the government of the Republic.

This active repression during the long Francoist dictatorship, the silence of the Spanish democratic Transition and the delay of the Spanish governments when passing the Historical Memory Act, requires on the academics' side the need to clarify what happened to all those people missing, assassinated or buried in over 30,000 mass graves, apart from the 120,000 people assassinated during the Civil War and Franco's Dictatorship.

The historian Francisco Espinosa claims that *"the historical memory simply represents the recollection of the history of those who lived it first-hand," adding: "Historians know that nearly every single documentation in the files is the memory of the winners, we must carefully pick the memory of the defeated, of the 'nobodies', whose voice does not usually appear in the story… We must pick the living memory from the lips of those who suffered it."*

## Francoism

During Francoism, especially during its first years, the type of regime established by the Nationalist Faction during the war was consolidated: power gathering, censorship, reprisal, corporatism, etc.

Its intention was to "regenerate Spain", banishing liberalism and democracy. Thus, its enemies (democrats, separatists, communists) suffered strong repression, as they were executed, sent to prison or exiled. The regime needed endorsement, task in which the Fundamental Laws of the Realm would have a key role. Some of these Fundamental Laws, such as the Law for Political Responsibilities, had been passed even during the war.

Franco Regime was a very long period, covering from the end of the war (1939) until the death of the dictator (1975). During its long existence, dictatorship was kept: although it adapted itself to the varying circumstances, the pillars of the regime stood still until the end, for instance the fierce repression against opponents.

When studying Franco Regime, most historians admit the existence of two stages: the first one, also known as Autarchy, up to 1959, and the second one, known as Developmentalism,

characterized by development policies, up to Franco's death. We will base on these categories, as they are the most widespread, as mentioned before.

### *Autarchy period, construction and consolidation of the Dictatorship: 1936-1959.*

#### Political organisation of the State.

It was a dictatorial state of a totalitarian character, highly influenced by Italian and German Fascism, especially in its first years. The political and military power gathered around the person of Franco, who adopted titles such as "Caudillo" de España ("Leader" of Spain) or "Generalísimo de los Ejércitos" ("Generalissimo of the Army"). He was also the National Chief of the "FET de las JONS Party" (Traditionalist Spanish Falange of the National Unionist Offensive Body), the only legal political party after the unification of 1937.

Those considered as enemies of the system were repressed until they were completely silenced. From the power positions, they insisted on the idea of "regenerating" Spain so as to get it away from Liberalism, Democracy, Separatism or Communism. That is why political parties or trade unions were banned and all institutions, laws and organisms of the Second Republic were suppressed, including the Constitution or the Statutes of Autonomy. In this sense, we can consider Francoism a kind of involution, as from 1812, when the first Constitution was passed, there was a tendency towards a liberal and democratic system.

The structure was supported by the groups which showed affinity during the war, the ones which later made up the "National Movement". These groups of influence were known as the "families" of the regime: the Church, the army and "la Falange" (the political party). The extent of the influence of such families depended on the evolution of the regime and the international circumstances.

As the Regime was the result of a war, its legalisation became a key task. In order to achieve that image of authenticity, the Fundamental Laws were passed:

- Fuero del trabajo. Highly influenced by the Italian Carta del Lavoro, it ruled the working relationships.
- Fuero de los españoles. It summarised the rights and duties of Spanish citizens, but with no grant of observance.

- Ley de Referéndum Nacional. According to it, the chief of the State could submit for enquiry those aspects which he considered relevant.
- Ley de Sucesión. It established monarchy as the succession to Franco Regime.
- Ley de Principios del Movimiento. It established the basic principles of the system and compelled civil servants to obey them.

As for the power institutions, we highlight: the government, chaired by Franco; the Single Party, also chaired by the dictator (this party was not subject to any type of legalisation, as there were no elections); the Courts, or house of citizen representatives, with a merely advisory character and members chosen from the power; Civil Government and General Captaincy, the institutions for territorial organisation, chosen from the power as well; Town Halls and mayors, local chiefs of the Movement chosen by a civil governor. We want to emphasize the dictatorial and centralist character of all these institutions.

We cannot talk about a clear political ideology, but about the ideological control of society, the lack of freedom became evident especially in private life. We were in an extraordinary conservative and puritan society, where the institutions and organisations, controlled by the State, classified people both politically and ideologically. Religious education was basic in the creation of the "National Spirit". Catholic religion was the only one allowed. It became the basic ideology of the Regime and of the educational system. The role of women was totally pushed into a domestic field, where they became mothers and wives. This also involved a backward movement in relation to the years of the Second Republic, when women had had a remarkable participation in political life.

### Opposition: exile, repression and resistance.

Repression's basic aim was the negation of any type of opposition to the Regime (the enemies of Spain), achieved thanks to the Law for Political Responsibilities (1939), the celebration of military or civil trials or the general practices carried out during the war, such as the night walks. The end of the war did not imply the cessation of such practices, but a really strong repression carried out towards the defeated. This repression was controlled from the power, which allows us to speak about the Institutionalisation of Repression.

The Law for Political Responsibilities was completed with the Law for the Repression of Communism and Freemasonry in 1940. It allowed to exercise legal actions against the accused of defending ideas contrary to religion, homeland and the basic institutions. The directions were established from the power, while the army was in charge of putting them into practice. There was not an independent judiciary branch, which extended the defencelessness of the accused before the Court-martials.

Among the most usual practices, we can talk about working in roads and mines, confiscation of properties, purging of civil servants and professionals, dismissals and, of course, prison, executions and exile. Concentration camps were kept at the beginning of the post-war period, most of them improvised in headquarters, convents and even bull rings (for example, in Alicante). As for the figures, we can talk of about 50,000 people executed during the post-war era and of about 280,000 people under arrest. Many people took up exile, especially to France and Mexico, where they recovered the republican political action, with the celebration of Courts and the election of a government which remained until 1977.

Despite repression, there was a more and more minority opposition in this period, formed by groups of guerrilla fighters (maquis) who intended to conquer the peninsula from the Pyrenees. They did not get any international support and eventually gave up their activities. There were also groups of urban and rural guerrilla in several places all over the country.

Political opposition, still in secrecy, got unstructured little by little. It only remained in exile.

### Economy.

War caused starvation, poverty and the dismantling of the Spanish economy. The Regime's respond was late and inadequate. The main aim was the economic self-sufficiency, or autarchy. Its central concepts were the regulation of international trade (import and export controlled by the government) and the furtherance of national industry.

This autarchic policy, together with the post-war circumstances, caused starvation and poverty until the early 50s. There was a shortage of some products, smuggling and rationing. The international isolation contributed to the lack of food. The purchasing power of Spaniards was very low, which caused a drop in the demand, reduction of production, increase of unemployment and reduction of competitiveness.

The State inspected economy through price control, the furtherance of industry, especially of capital goods, or the creation of monopolistic public enterprises, most of them loss making (Iberia, Renfe, Endesa, etc.).

The result was a deep economic stagnation, made evident in the drop of production, consumption and standard of living, as well as a clear economic stagnation in relation to Europe, which was in fact recovering from war, partially thanks to the Marshall Plan aids.

### International relationships.

We can see an evolution in the international relationships, related to the European circumstances. In this sense, World War II was the turning point which would determine the alliances of the Regime.

Just as in World War I, Spain did not take part in World War II. However, the attitude was not neutral now, as there was a clear alignment towards the Axis powers. We moved from impartiality to belligerence. Due to the fact that the post-war situation did not allow any bigger participation, Spanish involvement was focused on diplomatic and economic support, as well as on the Blue Division, a body of volunteers who fought along with the German troops in the West front. After interviews with both Hitler in Hendaye and Mussolini in Bordighera, Franco claimed for economic and territorial compensations in the North of Africa.

The Axis defeat caused a change, not only in foreign politics (we come back to impartiality) but also in the Regime's own identity – Fascism lost its relevance, Falangists were set aside from the main power positions and the Regime was shown as Catholic, conservative and highly anti-communist.

Spanish alignment during the war years left the country internationally isolated from 1945 onwards. Spain was not accepted into the UNO, which also recommended its member states the recall of their ambassadors from our country. Spain was also out of the Marshall Plan and the NATO aids.

However, as cold war consolidated and the world's division in blocks becomes a reality, the country's geostrategic situation and Franco's clear anticommunism, made us attractive for the United States. During the 1950s, Franco's Spain was not internationally isolated any longer. In

1950, Spain was admitted into the UNESCO, in 1955 into the UNO, and in 1958 a new Concordat with the Holy See was signed. Also noteworthy on their own were the agreements signed by the US in 1953, in which Spain received economic aids in return for the establishment of American military bases in Spanish territory. The visit of President Eisenhower in 1959 confirmed the end of the isolation.

## *Economic development and social changes: 1959-1975.*

It was during this period that great economic growth happened, which caused social changes. However, politics remained virtually as it had been during the first period: a dictatorship, with a complete lack of democracy and freedom; we were still apart from the rest of Europe (we were not part of the EEC); repression kept on being the only response to the demand for freedom and to opposition.

Economic changes let us call this stage "developmentalism".

### Economic growth.

Economy grew to a level never before seen, although more slowly than in other countries in Western Europe. This growth was a consequence of legal measures such as the "Plan for stabilisation" (end of Autarchy, furtherance of industry, external goods receipt and reduction of interventionism) and the "Plans for economic and social development" (four-year plans based on industrial development).

Industry was the wellspring of economic growth. Some foreign companies invested in Spain, such as car multinational corporations, attracted by low salaries and the lack of labour and union rights. The leading sectors involved in the technological progress were iron and steel, automotive, naval, textile, footwear or furniture industry, as well as chemistry. Regarding industrial areas, Biscay and Catalonia not only remained but grew; Madrid, Valencia, Alicante, Ferrol, Vigo o Valladolid became new industrial centres.

Agriculture also updated: there was an important furtherance of irrigation, mechanisation, rural migration, rise of productivity, diversification and regional specialisation. Latifundia and small farmsteads were kept, both scarcely productive, although the policy of lands concentration had good results in some areas.

We can also see a process in which the third sector (services) became more and more important, typical of a developed country. Means of transport, the communications system and foreign and domestic trade improved noticeably. In the services sector, we can highlight the development of tourism, especially sun and sand tourism, which became an important source of income for Spanish economy. There was a massive influx of tourists, mainly European, attracted by the weather, the beaches and cheaper services than in other inshore countries.

The consequences were basically the growth of GDP and of per capita income, the price decrease, the exports increase and employment. This led to greater purchasing power, which also contributed to increase demand and consequently to increase in production. However, we want to point out Spain's external dependency on capital and on technology as a negative point. The new economic activities also caused the economic disequilibrium downtown-suburbs, as, with the exception of Madrid, the most populated and developed areas and the ones with greatest economic activity were placed on the coast.

Developmentalism also fostered the modernisation of society, due to the increase of urban population, to changes in professional structures and to contact with foreign tourists. This modernisation appeared with changes in consumption and cultural habits, characteristic of a modern society: fashion changes, customs, social habits, incorporation of women to workplace, drop of the Church's role in the mindset of population, reduction of illiteracy rate, etc. It is important to explain that all these changes were more obvious in coastal and developed regions, whereas rural areas lagged behind.

### Politics: persistence of the Regime.

Economic and social modernisation did not affect, however, the Regime's institutions. We can talk about "ultra conservatism", as the concentration of powers around Franco remained, as well as the lack of political pluralism, rights or freedom. There were several slight changes:

In 1967, the Organic Law of the State was passed. Franco remained as the head of the State and the figure of vice president appeared (Carrero Blanco). The Law of Religious freedom was also passed this year. It was very restrictive.

In 1969's government there were no more Falange members. The most important group was the Opus Dei Technocrats, although there was disagreement between Falangists and technocrats, for

instance the Matesa Case (corruption of some Ministers). In this same year, Juan Carlos of Borbón was appointed as Franco's successor, with the title of Prince of Spain (there was a law of 1947, according to which monarchy was the substitute for the Regime). Franco thought of him as a way to follow his Regime, and so Juan Carlos accepted and swore alliance to the principles of the movement.

### Opposition.

In the last years, opposition to the Regime increased. Some crimes were considered as military rebellion and the state of emergency became a frequent resource. Detentions and police brutality also increased.

The Church (II Vatican Council) defended reformist hypothesis. Several catholic associations were used by anti-Franco youngsters (e.g. the so called JOC, Christian Working Youth), whereas other types of organisations were banned. There was an increasing toughening of Christian core communities, of youngsters and of young priests.

There was also a workers' uprising, and a subsequent atmosphere of social conflict hidden during the first decades of Francoism. In the 60s, a new type of unionism appeared. The organisations previous to dictatorship had been muzzled. Just the UGT (General Union of Workers) kept its activity in hiding. CCOO (Workers' Committees) appeared. It was an independent trade union which fostered the labour struggle, through strikes and demonstrations, as well as the political struggle.

In 1970, death penalty was decreed on ETA activists, on the so-called Burgos Trial, which caused numerous social protests and international pressure. So Franco exercised the right to pardon, but kept turning to a systematic repression against opposition.

Regarding political opposition, there was a renovation of leaders in the traditional political parties and new opposing powers appeared, both left-wing and conservative. Political parties were still in hiding, so they acted clandestinely. We can mention PCE (Communist Party of Spain), PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), Democracia Cristiana (Christian Democracy), nationalist parties such as the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party), CDC (Catalonia's Democratic Convergence), ERC (Catalonia's Republican Left-wing). We can also mention the appearance of

terrorist groups such as ETA (Basque Country and Freedom), FRAP (Anti-fascist and Patriot Revolutionary Front) or GRAPO (First of October Anti-fascist Resistance Groups).

#### Regime's agony.

In 1973, Carrero Blanco was appointed President of the Government, the person in charge of granting the Regime's continuity and of ensuring the union of the several "families". This same year, he was assassinated by ETA. In 1974, Carlos Arias Navarro was named President of the Government. He intended to bring liberalising and ultraconservative positions closer, although his government clearly opted for the latter.

Opposition groups protested in the streets, with labour and students uprisings. The activism and brutality of terrorist groups also increased. Political opposition groups unified in the so-called Democratic Coordination.

Being the dictator ill, Morocco's occupation of Sahara took place. Morocco's King, Hassan II, organised a peaceful march, the Green March, consisting of the mobilisation of thousands of civilians. Facing the possibility of a military conflict in such challenging times, Spain recognised Morocco's occupation in the Madrid Accords.

A few days later, 20 November 1975, Franco died. Then the process of Democratic Transition started and ended with the passing of the current Spanish Constitution.

## 3.3. HISTORICAL MEMORY

When democracy started in Spain and after the Spanish Constitution was passed in 1978, a new process of revision and research on the consequences of the repression during and after the Spanish Civil War was started. However, this process was not apparent until the late 90s due to the Spanish Transition to Democracy, when the Amnesty law was passed in an attempt to forget the past. At the end of the 90s Republican victims' relatives claimed their right to know where their relatives had been buried in order to bury their mortal remains with dignity, as most of those missing during the SCW had been thrown to common graves.

During the struggle, human rights were violated systematically in both sides. The victims in the Republican side during the civil war were approximately 38.563, according to the Francoist version, carried out by Francoist Minister Eduardo Aunós Pérez as a part of a General Trial to judge the Red domination in Spain. Some Historians, as Ramón Salas Larrazábal, raise the amount of victims to 70000, but in any case, the total amount does not seem to exceed 50000 murders. Most of the victims were conservative politicians, landowners and people belonging to the Christian Church as priests, monks and nuns. This last group of religious people was about 6832, according to the research of Antonio Moreno Moreno.

Regarding the total amount of victims in the Francoist side (the side that rose up against the Legal Republican Government by supporting General Franco), it is quite difficult to calculate it, because the facts were concealed not just during the war but also during Franco's Dictatorship. The research to understand the truth has been hard and complex. First of all, many murders and disappearances were not recorded. In addition, the access to the documents and files has been not allowed for a long time. It was not until 2008, when the Spanish society started to get to know the first accurate and independent researches about the significance of the Francoist repression. In 2008, thanks to a bill of complaint lodged by the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory of Majorca, Judge Baltasar Garzón started a research. The judge found and collected 143.353 names of missing people during and after the Spanish Civil War due to Francoist repression. According to the Spanish Association of Judges for democracy, "Spain is the second country in the world after Cambodia with most victims of enforced disappearance, whose remains have not been recovered nor identified yet." The total amount is higher than the enforced disappearances in Argentina, Chile, Peru and Guatemala all together.

In both sides there was violation of Human Rights, but there is a crucial difference between both sides. The victims from Franco's side were compensated morally and materially. Their remains were buried with dignity. By contrast, the defeated were forgotten and in many cases their remains were hidden in mass graves whose location is nowadays unknown. The disappearance of corpses and the unknown whereabouts were used as repression tools by Franco's Government to punish not only victims but also their families, who could not bury their relatives' remains with dignity and had to live with uncertainty. In addition to enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions, Franco's Government promoted the children enforced disappearance by stealing the children's identity, whose consequences the Spanish society is still suffering.

On 17 March 2006, The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed unanimously the condemnation of Franco`s Regime and the violation of Human Rights perpetrated in Spain from 1936 to 1975. The Parliamentary Assembly urged the Spanish Government to erect monuments to commemorate all victims.

The 27 October 2008 Human Rights Committee established in a report that the Spanish State should:

a) consider repealing the 1977 amnesty law; (b) take the necessary legislative measures to guarantee recognition by the domestic courts of the non-applicability of a statute of limitations to crimes against humanity; (c) consider setting up a commission of independent experts to establish the historical truth about human rights violations committed during the civil war and dictatorship; and d) allow families to exhume and identify victims' bodies, and provide them with compensation where appropriate.

This committee considered that the 1977 Amnesty Law, which amnestied a lot of crimes committed until 15 December 1976, and which so included enforced disappearances with extrajudicial executions, was unlawful and contrary to International Treaties signed by Spain, now that those crimes are considered as crimes against humanity and they do not expire.

On 31 October 2007 the Spanish Parliament passed the Law 52/2007, promoted by the Spanish Prime Minister, Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who belonged to the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE). It can be read "The Historical Memory Act acknowledges and broadens rights, and establishes measures, for those who suffered persecution or violence [...] during the civil war and the period of dictatorship, including the right to obtain a declaration of redress and personal acknowledgement as a form of redress for the victims of the Franco regime (including victims of torture)." This law dealt with the illegitimacy of the courts during the Spanish Civil War due to political, ideological or religious reasons, as well as the Tribunal for the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism, and the Tribunal for Political Responsibilities and Court-martials. Certain orphan's pensions and certain measures for the identification and location of the victims were established, as well as the withdrawal of the military uprising, the Civil War and the Dictatorship memorial. However it did not include the opening of mass grave.

The Popular Party, a conservative party, won the general elections in 2011. This party opposed to this law. The new Prime Minister, Mr. Mariano Rajoy, reduced the budget of the law so that it remained with no effect.

On 10 February 2012 the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, requested Spain to abolish the 1977 Amnesty Law because it was contrary to the International Law on Human Rights.

# 4. BIOGRAPHY

Antonia Mecha Campello is a very special victim of the Spanish Civil War (1915-2005).

She was imprisoned in the first post-war years and, once she was freed, she was sent to an asylum where she was for the next 52 years, when she died on 7 September 2005. She was 90 years old by then.

She was born in Elche. Her family lived in a humble house at Daoiz street. Despite the economic troubles of her family, Antonia must have made a huge effort to study Bachillerato. She was able to study because at nights she also worked making shoes or whatever. Her determination allowed her to become a teacher and she even started studying Medicine at Murcia University, which was interrupted by the civil war. She worked as a teacher at San Plácido Orchard and some other schools.

After the war, being 24 years old, Antonia Mecha was sent to Elche women's prison. She had been arrested since 11 April 1939 and in July she was transferred to the military justice. On 5 February 1940 she was sent to Orihuela prison and on 11 August 1941 she was taken to Monóvar prison. For some time she was at Hospital Provincial and then on 14 February 1942 she entered Alicante Adults' Reformatory.

Her family remembers that she had her hair shaved and, being a vain lady, she was taken to the street in such condition from time to time. She was also purged with castor oil, which must have been a long ordeal. However, when she was finally judged by a court martial in a summary trial (num. 3,302) in Alicante on 10 March 1943, the charges were really meaningless.

The military court sentence said: ANTONIA MECHA CAMPELLO, of left-wing background. During the Red domination she lived in houses which had been confiscated to right-wing people. She made active propaganda of such regime and for some time she worked as a police assistant in the instructions of reports on order elements, developing bureaucratic services. The trial let Antonia Mecha obtain parole in March 1942, as she had been 2 years, 11 months and 14 days in prison.

Antonia Mecha was also tried in a summary trial on 12 May 1945, and she was in Alicante Reformatory until 19 June of that same year.

From the 1930s onwards, she was in mental hospitals in Murcia and Valencia, and she ended up confined in the Psychiatric Farm of San Juan of Alicante. She was there for the last 52 years of her life. Her family always accompanied her and the remember a sweet, polite, clean woman, surprised by her partners' strange behaviour and with the obsession of still being in prison or, as she used to say, kidnapped.

# 5. ACTIVITIES

## 5.1. ACTIVITIES FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### The historical context of the purge of education since 1936

Students read the following document and answer the questions:

Explain the difference between the term "punitive" and "preventative".

How does Franco's regime justify the repression on education?

> *It is unnecessary to introduce the Vocals of the Commissions for the purge of the teaching staff with the transcendence of the sacred mission that you have been entrusted. Before the perspective of a new Spain, better than the one we have been watching these years, it is reasonable and just to thoroughly devote to the teaching purge.*
>
> *The character of the purge that we are carrying out today is not only punitive but also preventative… The individuals integrating revolutionary hordes, whose outrageous behaviour produces such fright, are simply the spiritual offspring of professors and teachers who, through institutions such as the Free Teaching Institution, forged doubting and anarchic generations. If we want the blood of our martyrs to be profitable, we must fight the system of honouring and upraising those who are the inspiration of evil, who preserved the punishment for the mass victims of their tricks.*
>
> **Notice of 7 December 1936, President of the Commission of Culture and Teaching, José María Pemán.**

## A life cut short by repression

First, students are shown the video **repression in figures.mp4** (to be found in **Sources, Activities from a historical perspective: activity 2**)

Students are shown the pictures of Antonia Mecha (to be found in **Sources, Activities from a historical perspective: activity 2, Pictures 1 and 2**) and answer these questions:

- What do these pictures evoke? What feelings do they rise in you?
- Which of the following charges could be a reason to go to prison nowadays?

  a) *"Left-wing tendency"* (Luis Castaño Reguero sentence to 6 months and one day, 11 December 1939).

  b) *"Highly anti-fascist jokes"* (Luis Castaño Reguero sentence to 6 months and one day, 11 December 1939).

  c) *"Passive resistance to the establishment of the principles of the National Unionist Movement"* (Asunción Junquera Mera sentence to 6 years and one day, 10 March 1942).

d) *"She refused to hang the portraits of the Leader and José Antonio on her school because she did not feel the cause, also forbidding the children of the national anthem and wave"* (Asunción Junquera Mera sentence to 6 years and one day, 10 March 1942).

e) *"She made political active propaganda of the regime"* (Antonia Mecha Campello sentence to 6 months and one day, 10 March 1942).

## The historian's workshop: a glimpse of history through its life lessons

Students read the biography of Antonia Mecha (to be found in **Sources, Activitites fom a historical perspective: Avtivity 3**) and answer the questions:

- Why was Antonia Mecha arrested?
- When was she arrested?
- What actions were relevant in order rot modify her behaviour?
- How do you think those actions influenced her after she was freed?
- How long was Antonia Mecha in the Psychiatric Farm of San Juan of Alicante? What was the political regime in Spain at that time?
- Do you think these repressive actions could take place again nowadays?
- Point out a relevant example which has made an impact on you recently.

**ANTONIA MECHA CAMPELLO**

Antonia Mecha Campello is a very special victim of the Spanish Civil War (1915-2005).

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She was born in Elche. Her family lived in a humble house at Daoiz street. Despite the economic troubles of her family, Antonia must have made a huge effort to study Bachillerato. She was able to study because at nights se also worked making shoes or whatever. Her determination allowed her to become a teacher and she even started studying Medicine at Murcia University, which was interrupted by the civil war. She worked as a teacher at San Plácido Orchard and some other schools.

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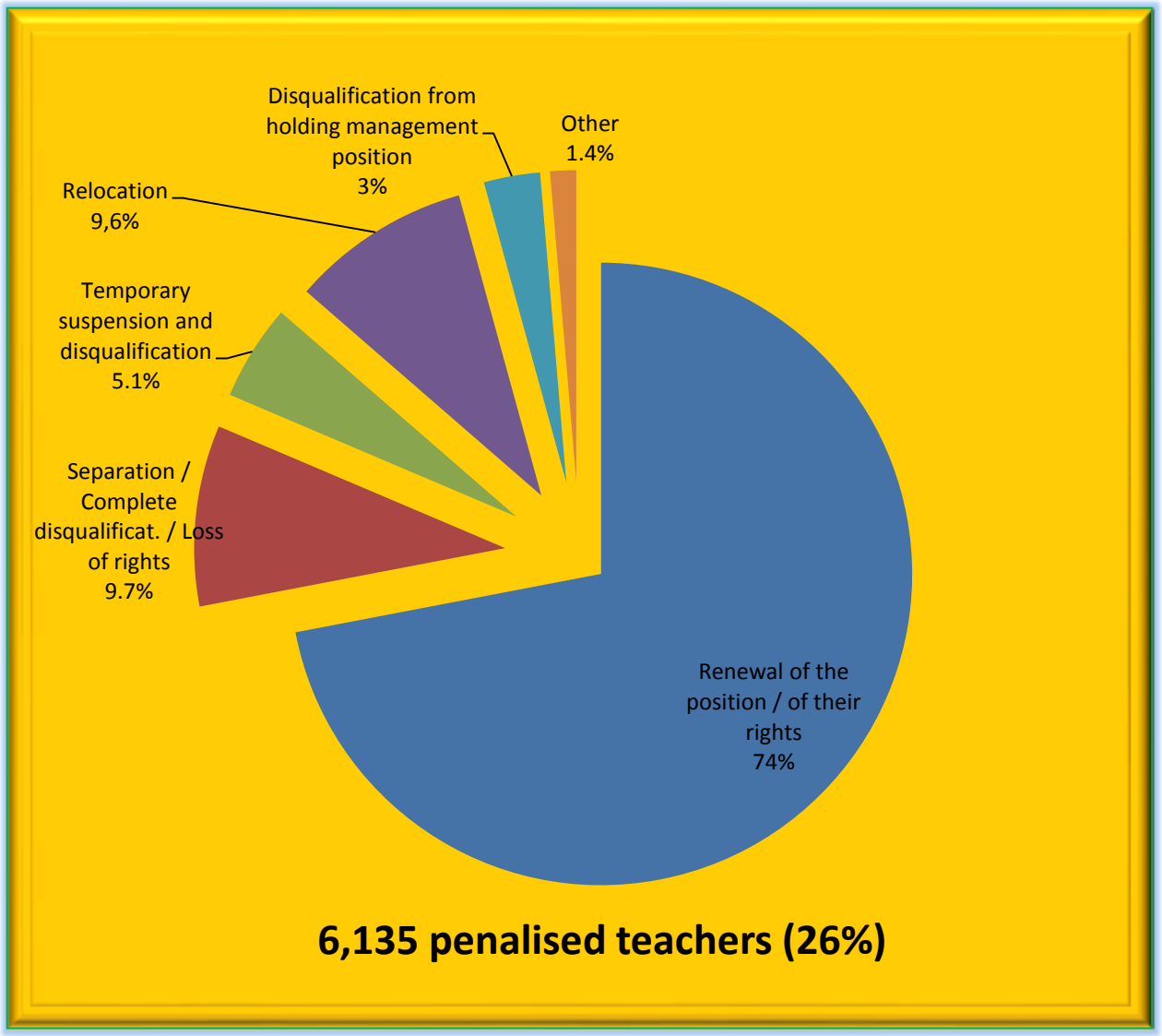
***Source document: Antonia Mecha's biography from Cátedra Pedro Ibarra, University of Elche.***

## The repression in figures

The students are shown the chart in **Sources, Activities from a historical perspective: Activity 4** and then they analyse it. After the analysis, they answer the following questions:

- Bearing in mind that in 1936 there were 23,627 teachers in Spain, what do you think about the fact that 6,135 were penalised?
- After doing the previous activities, do you think the repressive aim upon education was achieved?
- How did this purge affect the Spanish educative system during Francoism?



## The citizens' indifference

Students write a short report on the importance of "education within freedom" in a democratic state. The teacher asks them the question "Do you think that the different types of education may influence to a greater extent the indifference of society towards cases such as Antonia Mecha's?" to introduce the topic and make them think.

## 5.2. ACTIVITIES FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE: Indifference nowadays

Students analyse the following documents about both of the processes and analyse if they were biased in their application.

1. The first activity consists of 3 sets of small activities:
   - In groups, students read and comment the following sentences and fragments about indifference:
     a) The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death but the indifference between life and death. (Elie Wiesel)
     b) The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them but to be indifferent to them; that's the essence of inhumanity. (George Bernard Shaw)
     c) Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored. (Aldous Huxley)
     d) "The worst possible outlook is indifference that says, 'I can't do anything about it; I'll just get by.' Behaving like that deprives you of one of the essentials of being human: the capacity and the freedom to feel outraged. That freedom is indispensable, as is the political involvement that goes with it." (Stephane Hessel)
   - In groups, students define the term "indifference". Then they must find a suitable antonym for the term "indifference".
   - In groups, students answer these questions:
     a) Is indifference an emotion or a value?
     b) Is it positive or negative?
2. Watch *Butterfly's Tongue*.

   Watch *Butterfly's Tongue*[5], a film set in the winter of 1936, in a small village in the North of

[5] **Original title:** *La lengua de las mariposas*
**Year:** 1999
**Time:** 97 mins.
**Country:** Spain
**Genre:** Drama

Spain (Galicia), where a young boy discovers the world at the hands of a republican teacher, Mr Gregorio. When the teacher is arrested, the boy is forced to insult him as everybody in town does. We have chosen this film to get into the issue of the Republican school and the repression it suffered.

After watching the film, students answer these questions:

- What is the image evoked by the film of the republican teacher?
- Why does the young boy shout at the teacher the words that he had taught him? Were all his teachings useful?
- Analyse the stance of Ramón and Rosa, Moncho's parents, at the end of the film: they both insult and shout at the teacher when he is arrested, but for different reasons. Despite being a republican, Ramón hides his ideals whereas Rosa is an uneducated woman who represents the obedient peoples who accept reality as it is.

  How can we describe both characters' stance? What is its relation with the issue of indifference?
- Can you think of any other endings for the teacher? What stances should have changed?

3. We want our students to reflect on indifference, relating it with the attitude of the Spanish post-war society before the repression suffered by the Republican school.

   Students write a composition using the ideas that they have been reflecting on in the previous activities: "Is indifference a silent support for injustice?" or "Does indifference imply a loss of humanity?"

**Director:** José Luis Cuerda
**Script:** José Luis Cuerda, Rafael Azcona y Manuel Rivas (based on three stories by Manuel Rivas)
**Music:** Alejandro Amenábar
**Photography:** Javier Salmones
**Production:** Sogetel & Las Producciones del Escorpión & Grupo Voz
**Cast:** Fernando Fernán-Gómez, Manuel Lozano, Alexis de los Santos, Gonzalo Uriarte, Uxia Blanco, Elena Fernández, Guillermo Toledo, Jesús Castejón

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## Glossary of terms

The following glossary of terms should be photocopied and handed in to students who are not Spanish.

- **FUERO (regional code of law):**

  Basic Law of the State enacted as a Constitution and granted by Franco. This kind of laws date from the Middle Ages when feudal lords granted a group of laws, rights or privileges for a given territory or social group. These laws were based on ancient written documents and customary rules.

- **FALANGE ESPAÑOLA DE LAS JONS (Spanish Phalange of the JONS):**

  Fascist political party resulting from the merger of two different parties: Ramiro Ledesma's JONS (Committees of the National Syndicalist Offensive) and José Antonio Primo de Rivera's Falange Española (Spanish Phalanx). During the II Spanish Republic this party used violence as a part of social action, including bloody confrontations against Socialists and Communists. After the Spanish Civil War it became the only legal political party in Spain. Its ideology was based on National Syndicalism, Fascism and Anticommunism, as well as unyielding defence of National Catholicism. The party was dissolved by Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez after Franco's death during the Transition to Democracy.

- **PARTIDO REPUBLICANO RADICAL SOCIALISTA (Radical Socialist Republican Party):**

  Spanish Political Party emerged in 1929 from a split up of Alianza Republicana (Republican Alliance). This party supports Anticlerical and Jacobin liberalism. The majority of its members came from Masonic lodges. It was part of the interim government of the II Spanish Republic and was involved in the San Sebastián Deal.

- **UNIÓN REPUBLICANA (Republican Union):**

  Spanish political party emerged in 1934 from the split up of the Radical Democratic Party and the Radical Republican Socialist Party. It certainly played an important role before the Spanish Civil War. It was part of Popular Front together with Communists, leftist Republicans and Progressives. After the Spanish Civil War it became one of the most important Republican forces in exile.

- **GENOCIDE:**

  According to the UN 1948 Convention, and following the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, *"genocide is defined as the extermination of a nation or an ethnic group."*

- **FREEMASONRY:**

  It is an initiatory, non-religious, philanthropic, symbolic and philosophical institution based on a sense of brotherhood. They claim to pursue the quest for the truth, the promotion of the social and moral development of human being and social progress. The Free Masons are organized in basic structures called "lodges".

- **NON-INTERVENTION AGREEMENT:**

  It was an organisation founded in 1936, on the motion of France and supported by the UK, to avoid foreign participation in the Spanish Civil War and the internationalisation of the conflict at a time of greatest strain among democracies and dictatorships in Europe. Although many countries joined the pact, the agreements signed were not observed.

- **HERO:**

  According to the philosopher Fernando Savater and from a moral point of view, *"a hero is someone who shows the virtue as strength and excellence through the example of his actions."*

- **"RED":**

  A synonym of "republican" during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. Applied to persons.

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