Preface of the Spanish translation of the book "Rivalry and revenge: the politics of violence during civil war" (Cambridge University Press, 2017). The Spanish translation was published by ICIP/Edicions Bellaterra in 2021.

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When we were kids, my siblings and I used to spend a few weeks of summer with our grandparents in a village on the Costa Brava (Savage Coast). One summer, my paternal grandmother's uncle, "Tío Manolo", came from Santander to spend a few days at the beach with us. Tío Manolo was an energetic, talkative, and witty bachelor in his seventies. He could spend hours talking, recounting the story of his life, which was deeply marked by the civil war and the Franco dictatorship.

Tío Manolo was recruited by the Republican army when he was seventeen; he was part of the so-called "baby bottle draft." He survived the battlefield but lost his brother Ernesto (our great-grandfather), a commander in the Republican army, on August 17, 1937, in the midst of the Battle of Santander. At the end of the war, the Francoists arrested Uncle Manolo, who spent at least seven years in various prisoner camps. He used to tell us that he was alive by sheer luck because, despite being sentenced to death multiple times, for some unknown reason, the prison guards never called him for execution. When he was released, he was nearly thirty years old and had spent most of his adult life knowing little more than prison, violence, torture, and hunger. He was a true survivor and a model of resilience; it's no wonder we were mesmerized by him.

The story of Tío Manolo and his brother was that of combatants who fought for the Republic and against fascism, and lost. Whenever I asked my grandmother about the remains of her father, she told me they are in Puerto del Escudo. But in this place on the border between Burgos and Cantabria, to this day, there is only a cemetery for the Italian soldiers who died in combat and a monument to General Sagardía, a Francoist who earned the nickname "the Butcher of Pallars" for the massacre he perpetrated in that Catalan county. In other words, not only do fascist mausoleums still stand, but there is no cemetery or monument for the Republican soldiers who, like my great-grandfather, lost their lives defending the Republic. This speaks volumes about the shortcomings of Transitional Justice and the failures of Spain's Historical Memory policy.

In addition to our uncle's stories, our grandmother often talked to us about her maternal grandfather, who de facto adopted her when the coup separated my grandmother from her parents and sisters in the summer of 1936. "El Abuelo" was a Catalan nationalist landowner, a member of the Lliga Regionalista, a deputy in the Catalan Parliament, and a friend of Cambó. Therefore, he was conservative, and for a time he had to hide in the forests of the Pyrenees, threatened by anarchist militias who intended to kill him. Although he had been exiled for being a Catalan nationalist during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, El Abuelo became the mayor of his village after the civil war, showing timely sympathies for the Falange. He tried to help Tío Manolo when he arrived in his village at the end of the war, fleeing the Francoists. He couldn't prevent his arrest, although we believe—or rather speculate—that, in some way, he intervened on his behalf, and that's how Tío avoided execution. Within the apparent chaos and arbitrariness of Francoist repression, there was some capacity for agency among local political elites, especially mayors and notable figures like El Abuelo.

Despite starting out fighting for the Republican side during the war, Tío Manolo spent some time on the Nationalist side, with the goal of trying to save his life. Toward the end of the war, he

decided to return to the Republican side, even though by then it was clear that the loyalists were going to lose. When El Abuelo asked him why he made that decision, Tío Manolo replied that the Nationalists knew he wasn't one of them. Apparently, within the Francoist ranks, they used to call him "el rojo" (the red).

That is to say, Uncle Manolo had a strong left-wing identity that was somehow visible. He was able to hide his ideology for a time, but this deception wasn't sustainable for long. Likely influenced by the death of his brother, his final commitment was to the Republican army, even though this came at a tremendous cost.

Beyond the anecdotal, the story of my ancestors connects well with various themes developed in this book: the role of local political elites and the agency of unarmed civilians in perpetrating violence; the importance of political mobilization and political identities in the context of a civil war; the role of emotions in explaining human behavior during times of war. I suppose that my family's history made me realize, from an early age, that civil wars are profoundly complex phenomena, and this sparked my interest and passion for studying civil wars at the "micro" level. It is at the micro level, after all, where the different life stories take place, where gray areas and contradictions exist, as well as the most human and inhuman aspects of conflicts.

Writing a book with a strong empirical component on the Spanish Civil War has not been easy because it is the war my grandparents and great-grandparents lived through, and it is a conflict that has deeply marked contemporary Spanish society and its politics. It is challenging to analyze a conflict that is so emotionally close with an analytical lens. I believe, in any case, that I have managed to conduct a rigorous analysis of the conflict and that I have been able to elucidate some patterns that have not been sufficiently emphasized in the existing literature on civil wars or the historiography of the Spanish Civil War. For example, the argument that violence within the Republican ranks was entirely chaotic does not hold up with the empirical findings presented here. Even so, left-wing violence was significantly less than that of the right, which had no moral or ideological restraints. This is why, as historians have documented, the violence against civilians by the Nationalist side far exceeded that perpetrated by the Republican side. Additionally, inhumane tactics like bombing civilian squares were carried out primarily by the Nationalist side.

Although the book discusses two sides and establishes a certain theoretical symmetry between them, the sides in Spain were not symmetrical either in the type of ideology that motivated them to fight or in the armed power they wielded. The alliance of the Nationalist side with Italian and German fascism also contributed to some of the worst massacres in contemporary European history. This book aims to make a new contribution, more analytical than historiographical, to the study of the Spanish Civil War, but this should not be interpreted as "revisionism." The politicization of the arguments presented here would only distort them. I am writing this in the preface because I am particularly concerned about the manipulation of history being carried out by the far right in Spain, which is also incapable of acknowledging the crimes of Francoism or the illegitimacy of the Francoist coup, of which they are heirs.

As a comparative political scientist, I hope this book is read as a contribution to the study of violence in civil wars, beyond Spain. However, I also hope it helps clarify some of the dynamics that took place in Spain during the terrible conflict that was the civil war. This is not the type of book I imagined writing when I was a child and promised Uncle Manolo I would write about his life, but I hope it serves as a tribute to all those who, like him, lived through this struggle and suffered its dire consequences.