‘Heroes to anonymous pensioners’: Francisco Franco’s ‘mutilated gentlemen’ and the erosion of veteran privilege in Spain’s transition to democracy

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Abstract

This article explores how during Spain’s transition to democracy in the 1970s and 1980s, Francoist disabled veterans of the Spanish Civil War navigated the disappearance of formerly hegemonic historical narratives which had hitherto defined their relationship with the state. While for Republican disabled veterans of the Civil War, the transition brought a degree of legitimisation, political emancipation and financial recognition, for Franco’s *Caballeros Mutilados or* ‘Mutilated Gentlemen’ the advent of democracy prompted a re-evaluation of their wounds, their legitimacy and the privileges they had hitherto enjoyed. In the post-dictatorship era, Francoist disabled veterans—who unlike Republican veterans, had enjoyed uncontested legitimacy under the regime—were viewed as inconvenient symbols of Francoism, and faced the challenge of preserving the legitimacy of their veteranhood in the age of democracy. In this sense, the case of the Francoist war disabled of the Spanish Civil War underscores the close link between historical memory and the well-being of the veterans of civil wars. While post-civil war governments often privilege certain disabled bodies over others, this is a precarious privilege that remains vulnerable to political fluctuations over time, as well as the shifting relationship between army, nation and state. In such cases, the ability of disabled veterans’ groups to adapt to changing perceptions of their right to support is crucial to the preservation of their veteranhood, as well as their ability to advocate for improved circumstances more broadly.

Key words: disability, veterans, Franco, transition, military

I

In May 1992, the liberal, centre-left newspaper *Diario 16* ran the headline 'The Government gives pensions of half a million [pesetas] per month to military war disabled'.[1] The accompanying article explained that former members of the *Benemérito Cuerpo de Mutilados de Guerra por la Patria* (Honourable Corps for the Mutilated in the War for the Fatherland, BCMGP)—which managed the pension claims of veterans wounded while fighting on Francisco Franco’s victorious side during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39—would receive between

[1] ‘El Gobierno da pensiones de medio millón al mes a los militares mutilados de guerra’, *Diario 16 Málaga*, 11 May 1992, 1.

237,000 and 525,000 pesetas monthly in government funds.[2] While in other contexts such generous pensions for war disablement might have been welcomed, here the pay-outs were framed as a scandal. In case readers had any doubts over whether veterans deserved such support, the article's subheading announced that one of the beneficiaries was a member of the Civil Guard who had participated in the failed coup d'état of 23 February 1981, an event which had threatened to destabilise Spain's fledgling democracy. Former members of the BCMGP—referred to under the Francoist regime of 1939-1975 as *Caballeros Mutilados* or 'Mutilated Gentlemen'—were incensed by this coverage, particularly the insinuation that they were antidemocratic agitators living as millionaires. In a riposte to the article published in the disabled veterans' magazine *Soldados Viejos y Estropeados* (*Old and Broken Soldiers*), one veteran pointed to the inaccuracy of the piece, particularly its failure to acknowledge variations in pensions for men of different ranks, as well as the benefits cap in force which restricted pensions to 233,631 pesetas per month.[3] More broadly, the author expressed concerns that the article was seeking to turn public opinion against members of the erstwhile Corps. The *Diario 16* piece encapsulated the transition-in-miniature that the Francoist war disabled continued to navigate some fifteen years after the ratification of the Spanish constitution in 1978. While for Republican disabled veterans of the Civil War, the transition brought a degree of legitimisation, political emancipation and financial recognition, for Franco's *Caballeros Mutilados* the arrival of democracy signalled a re-evaluation of their wounds, their legitimacy and the privileges they had hitherto enjoyed.

The long-term positioning and experiences of the maimed veterans of civil wars have received relatively little attention within broader scholarship on war disability, though the complex and often contested relationship between war, nation and reconciliation in such cases poses many questions over their fate.[4] In wartime, 'bodies are disputed territories because they symbolise the nations for which they are fighting'.[5] In the case of civil wars, the notion of the maimed body as contested territory is particularly acute given the presence of competing conceptualisations of the 'nation' within a particular state. As such, the multiple veteran cohorts which emerge from a civil war find that their social positioning in the post-war state, including access to state support, is contingent on the

[2] This would be equivalent to approximately 1424-3155 euros per month in today's currency: Coinmill.com [last accessed 17 June 2022].

[3] 'Mucho ruido para pocas nueces', *Soldados Viejos y Estropeados* (henceforth SVE) 11/4 (June 1992), p. 4. 233,631 pesetas amounts to just over 1400 euros per month in today's money: Coinmill.com [last accessed 15 Sept. 2021].

[4] The American Civil War is a significant exception to this. See, especially, Jeffrey Vogel, "Redefining reconciliation: Confederate veterans and the southern responses to federal Civil War pensions", *Civil War History* 51/1 (2015), pp. 67-93; Robin Bates, "'The ideal home of the South': the Robert E. Lee camp Confederate soldiers' home and the institutionalisation of Confederate veterans in Virginia", *American Nineteenth Century History* 17/1 (2016), pp. 23-41; James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill, 2011).

[5] Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford, 2009), p. 127.

perceived legitimacy of their service to the version of the 'nation' that has prevailed. That the experiences of disabled veterans of civil wars are intimately linked to historical memory is exemplified by the issue of disability pensions, where veterans of the losing side very rarely receive material support from post-civil war governments until regime change serves as a corrective.[6] Significantly, this has remained true irrespective of whether a civil war results in dictatorship or democracy.[7] The monetary exclusion of the defeated reflects the contested legitimacy of their service to the defeated side, and, more broadly, the tendency to view disabled veterans as 'living monuments' to war.[8] In the case of modern Spain, Paloma Aguilar has argued that disabled veterans of the country's fratricidal war became 'agents of memory' under Francisco Franco's right-wing, Catholic dictatorship.[9] More specifically, the regime transformed its own *Caballeros Mutilados* into symbols of the heroism and sacrifice needed to 'save' Spain from the clutches of the Second Spanish Republic's (1931-36) supposed 'Marxism'. In contrast, the neglected war maimed of the vanquished loyalist army served as constant reminders of the Republic's defeat.

Yet war wounds are not static, literally or figuratively. Just as wounds may heal over or deteriorate, shifting public narratives pertaining to civil war mean that maimed bodies are reframed and reassessed over time. The prestige of maimed veterans and veteran identity can wax and wane, especially as nations reassess old political battles, try to reckon with the legacies of dictatorial pasts, and re-evaluate the relationship between army and nation. This article analyses a snapshot of such a moment of reckoning, during Spain's transition to democracy after the death of Franco in 1975. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the two interrelated processes of political transition and military reform posed a serious threat to the position of the Francoist war disabled. On the one hand, the *Caballeros Mutilados*, who unlike Republican veterans, had enjoyed uncontested legitimacy under the regime, were viewed as inconvenient symbols of the dictatorship by post-Franco governments, and faced the challenge of preserving

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[6] See, for example, Marie Coleman, 'Military service pensions for veterans of the Irish Revolution, 1916-1923', *War in History* 20/ 2 (2013), p. 216; Peter Siani-Davies and Stefanos Katsikas, 'National reconciliation after Civil War: the case of Greece', *Journal of Peace Research* 46/4 (2009), pp. 571.

[7] In the U.S. case, veterans of the Confederacy waited until 1958 to receive federal points, by which time there were only two individuals still alive. Maimed soldiers of the losing side did, however, often receive more localised support at the state level. Vogel, 'Redefining Reconciliation', p. 89; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Massachusetts, 1992), p. 139.

[8] In the U.S.A., for example, R.B. Rosenburg has shown how homes for disabled confederate veterans were often enmeshed in attempts to exploit 'Lost Cause' heritage to political ends. R.B. Rosenburg, *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers' Homes in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). See also, Brian Matthew Jordan, '"Living monuments": union veterans amputees and the embodied memory of the Civil War', *Civil War History* 57/2 (2011), pp. 121-152.

[9] Paloma Aguilar, 'Agents of memory: Spanish Civil War veterans and disabled soldiers' in Winter, J., and Sivan, E., (eds), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge,1999), pp. 84-103.

the legitimacy of their veteranhood in the democratic era. At the same time, the Francoist war disabled were also swept up within a broader process of military reform, through which the Socialist governments of Felipe González (1982-1996) sought to roll back the political, cultural and economic privileges enjoyed by the Spanish armed forces over many decades. The need to reduce military personnel costs constituted a significant technocratic threat to the *Caballeros Mutilados* and their traditional relationship with the armed forces, and by extension the nation. Drawing on legislative texts and magazines published by Francoist veteran groups during the Spanish military transition, the article will therefore assess the experiences of veterans of the winning side of civil wars during and after regime change, focusing particularly on how new governments have sought to manage what has often been a highly emotive demographic, and how such individuals have navigated the disappearance of formerly hegemonic historical narratives which had defined their relationship with the state. In doing so, the article seeks to expand current understanding of veteran 'privilege', arguing that this is highly sensitive to shifting political narratives of war and the nation, and that the ability of veteran groups to adapt to such circumstances is vital to their long-term survival.[10]

I

Established in 1938, the BCMGP was conceived as a military corps whose members would, where possible, remain in active service.[11] This active service-model replicated the administrative structure of the 'Invalids' Corps' (*Cuerpo de Inválidos*), which had managed the war disabled since the eighteenth century up until the Civil War. Yet unlike its predecessor, the BCMGP was exclusionary in that it recognised only those wounded while defending the homeland against 'Marxism' (to use the regime's own highly-politicised terminology).[12] The exclusion of Republican veterans from the *Caballeros Mutilados*'s Corps was in keeping with the dictatorship's broader attitude towards former supporters of the Republic, who were stigmatised as 'reds' and subjected to a panoply of repressive measures, including summary executions, imprisonment, economic despoilment and removal from the workplace.[13] Francoist disabled veterans were lauded as heroes in the New Spain, though actual material support for rank-and-file conscripts tended to be meagre. In order to receive benefits from the state, wounded men had to go through a lengthy bureaucratic process, and their

[10] Martin Crotty and Mark Edele, 'Total war and entitlement: towards a global history of veteran privilege', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 1 (2013), pp. 15-32.
[11] *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (henceforth BOE), 540, 'Reglamento Provisional del Benemérito Cuerpo de Mutilados de Guerra por la Patria', 14 April 1938; Fernando Puell de la Villa, *Historia de la Protección Social Militar (12?65-1978): De la Ley de Partidas al ISFAS* (Madrid: Instituto Social de las Fuerzas Armadas, 2008), p. 185.
[12] *BOE*, 540, 14 Apr. 1938, art. 1.
[13] On the Francoist repression see, for example, Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London, 2012); Santos Juliá (ed.), *Víctimas de la Guerra Civil* (Madrid, 1999); Josefina Cuesta (ed.), *La Depuración de Funcionarios Bajo la Dictadura Franquista, 1936-1975* (Madrid, 2009); Julio Prada Rodríguez, *The Plundering of the Vanquished: The Economic Repression during Early Francoism* (Berlin, 2019).

applications could be denied if they failed to provide sufficient evidence of the circumstances in which their injuries were sustained or if their condition did not appear in the BCMGP's table of lesions.[14] In addition, the application process itself was subject to the arbitrary nature of the Francoist bureaucracy, and though the system was designed to impart an image of due process, in reality administrators had a degree of discretion when judging applications.[15] This discretionary system of governance was reflected in the prevalence of petitioning as a practice, both within the BCMGP and more broadly under the Francoist state administration, whereby individuals would write to local administrators, or even Franco himself, to request favourable intervention in their specific case.[16] Petitioning was also one of the few options open to *mutilados* wishing to advocate for improved circumstances within a dictatorial context which severely limited collective action of this nature.

Maimed officers and professional soldiers were better served by the BCMGP's provisions given that the least disabled were able to remain in active service and enjoyed relatively stable careers with the right to regular seniority promotions.[17] In addition, they tended to find the application process less demanding given that they were more likely to have contacts within the military administration willing to operate in their favour. Many *Caballeros Mutilados* worked within the administration of the BCMGP itself, which helped to foster a sense of community amongst those with a shared experience of the body's bureaucratic structures, notably the endless paperwork needed to secure membership. The duality between Francoist veterans and their disenfranchised Republican counterparts was clearly established in public discourse very early on in the regime's inception and would continue over the course of the dictatorship. This was further entrenched by the striking 'Corps spirit' which emerged around the BCMGP, influenced in part by the 'Africanist' origins of the Corps' founder, José Millán Astray.[18] As founder of the Spanish foreign Legion in 1921, Millán

[14] *BOE*, 540, 14 Apr. 1938, 'Formularios' y 'Cuadro de Lesiones Orgánicas y Funcionales'.
[15] Stephanie Wright, 'Of maiming and privilege: rethinking war disability through the case of Francoist Spain, 1936-1989', *Past and Present* 255/1 (2022), pp. 339-340.
[16] See, for example, Antonio Cazorla-Sánchez, *Cartas a Franco de los españoles de a pie (1936-1945)* (Barcelona, 2014).
[17] *BOE*, 540, 14 Apr. 1938, art 27. Note that the most severely disabled were given pensions instead, and the criteria for remaining in active service became more exclusionary over time. See *BOE,* 364, 'Ley de 12 de Diciembre de 1942 por la que se dictan nuevas bases del Reglamento vigente del Cuerpo de Caballeros Mutilados', 30 December 1942, esp. art. 6 pertaining to the new 'Permanent B' category of disability. For a more detailed discussion of Francoist war disability policies, see Wright, 'Of Maiming and Privilege', pp. 317-350.
[18] On the phenomenon of 'Corps spirit' in the Spanish armed forces see Julio Busquets, *El Militar de Carrera en España* (Barcelona, 1971), p. 202. On 'Africanista' culture and its legacies within the Civil War, see Geoffrey Jensen, *Irrational Triumph: Cultural Despair, Military Nationalism, and the Ideological Origins of Franco's Spain* (Reno, 2002); Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 2002); José E. Alvarez, *The Betrothed of Death: The Spanish Foreign Legion during the Rif Rebellion, 1920-1927* (Westport, 2001).

Astray had become known as the 'glorious *mutilado*' due to the wounds he had sustained while fighting in Spain's 1920s colonial campaigns in northern Morocco.[19] As such, the BCMGP reproduced the Legion's sacrificial imagery, and the *Caballero Mutilado* title was itself an adaptation of the term *Caballero Legionario* (Legionnaire Gentleman), used to refer to soldiers of the Legion. But the BCMGP also developed icons and traditions which had their roots in the Civil War, such as the veneration of the 'Mutilated Christ' of Malaga, a statue of Christ damaged by left-wing militias in the city's Sagrario Church in 1936 and soon adopted by the *Caballeros Mutilados* as a symbol of their self-sacrifice for the nation.[20] The Corps' adoption of the Archangel St Raphael as its patron saint, which would become an important fixture of the BCMGP's annual activities under the regime and beyond, also had its origins in the Civil War.[21] The BCMGP administration and culture therefore blended new and old elements, but its exclusion of Republicans and embracing of the 'Crusade' narrative of the Civil War rendered its positioning as a living monument to Francoist militarism clear.

Official sources reported that by 1941 50,000 Francoist veterans had been recognised by the BCMGP.[22] By the late 1980s, membership of the Corps had fallen to 24,875, though, crucially, by this point the BCMGP's membership had diversified to include all veterans maimed in subsequent armed conflicts and in service accidents throughout the dictatorship.[23] In this sense, though it shared many of its characteristics and traditions, the *Caballeros Mutilados*'s Corps which emerged on the other side of the dictatorship had evolved from its 1930s iteration. By the 1970s and 1980s, the BCMGP grouped together several generations of disabled soldiers, some of whom had not even been born at the time of the Civil War. Furthermore, though the Corps of course included conscripts who fought on the Francoist side, the BCMGP effectively operated a two-tier system between armed forces personnel proper, and conscripts who were generally viewed as 'civilians'. 'Civilian' disabled veterans had a more ambiguous relationship with the BCMGP compared to their military counterparts, and were refused certain benefits, such as support in case of mental illness, available to long-serving military personnel.[24] As time went on, and more and more Civil War veterans

[19] For an overview of Millán Astray's life and mythology, see Paul Preston, *Comrades! Portraits from the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2000), pp. 11-42.
[20] Marion Reder Gadow, 'Una Imagen Controvertida de la Semana Santa Malagueña: el Cristo de los Mutilados', in Francisco Javier Campos y Fernández de Sevilla (ed.), *Los crucificados, religiosidad, cofradías y arte: Actas del Simposium* 3-6 September 2010, pp. 213-224.
[21] Archivo General Militar de Ávila (henceforth AGMAV), C.2331, 60, 24, 'Santos Patronos. Propuesta del general de la Dirección de Mutilados para que se le designe como patrono del Cuerpo de Mutilados de guerra al arcángel San Rafael', December 1938.
[22] 'San Rafael Arcángel, Patrono del Benemérito Cuerpo de Caballeros Mutilados', *ABC*, 24 October 1941, 4.
[23] Unidad Gestión de Mutilados (henceforth UGM), Dirección de Mutilados, 'Asunto: Cuestionario "Disabled American Veterans"', 29 July 1988.
[24] For a more detailed discussion of this military-civilian divide, see Stephanie Wright, ''My husband… is an authentic psychopath': Spanish Civil War veterans, mental illness and the Francoist regime, *Social History of Medicine* 34/4 (2021), pp. 1247-1249. On the

died, the balance between 'civilian' and 'military' *mutilados* shifted as the ranks of the BCMGP were renewed with professional soldiers injured in more recent conflicts and in acts of service. In this sense, though the BCMGP had always been a militarised institution, over the years it increasingly became a body catering mainly for disabled armed forces personnel rather than specifically Civil War veterans of the Francoist side. Its Civil War-era iconography, however, remained unchanged, and by the 1980s the Corps was conspicuous in its embodiment of Francoist narratives of the 'Crusade'. This was a reflection of the stagnant culture of the armed forces, which through its formal educational structures perpetuated and normalised the dictatorship's version of history.[25] The army's increasingly anachronistic institutional culture would become a central focus of government concern during the transition to democracy. The attempted military coup in 1981 reflected the resistance of some of the more reactionary sectors of the armed forces to democratisation, and reinforced the need for a specifically 'military transition' within Spain's broader process of democratisation. Though the 'modernisation' of the Spanish army would continue well into the 1990s, the first and most complex period of military transition took place during the first Socialist governments of Felipe González, between 1982 and 1989.[26] It was during this period that the *Caballeros Mutilados* first began to experience the transition to democracy as an existential threat.

III

Spain experienced a gradual and 'pacted' transition to democracy following the death of Franco in November 1975.[27] In 1977, an amnesty law was passed, which stipulated that no charges would be brought against those who had committed crimes in the name of Francoism, including the torture of political prisoners, a piece of legislation which has come to be known as the 'pact of silence'.[28] This cautious approach to transition reflected concerns over the precarity of

ambiguous, if not hostile, attitudes towards the regime of *mutilados* from the Francoist rank-and-file, see Francisco Leira Castiñeira, *Soldados de Franco: Reclutamiento Forzoso, Experiencia de Guerra y Desmovilización Militar* (Madrid, 2020).

[25] See, for example, Gabriel Cardona, *El Gigante Descalzo: El Ejército de Franco* (Madrid, 2003), pp. 299-301; Roberto Muñoz Bolaños y Fernando Puell de la Villa, 'Introducción: Transición institucional, transición paralela y transición militar', *La Albolafia: Revista de Humanidades y Cultura* 14 (2008), p. 8; Carlos Navajas Zubeldia, 'El fin del "problema miltiar". La "modernización" de los ejércitos durante la primera época socialista (1982-1996)', *Ayer* 84/ 4 (2011), p. 66.

[26] Navajas, 'El fin del problema miltiar', pp. 54-67. Julio Busquets described the use of the term 'modernisation' as a euphemism for 'reform', used by the Socialist government to avoid irritating armed forces personnel. Julio Busquets, 'Las Fuerzas Armadas en la transición española', *Sistema* 93 (November 1989), p. 28.

[27] Alexandra Barahona De Brito, Carmen González Enriquez, and Paloma Aguilar, "Introduction" in Alexandra Barahona De Brito, Carmen González Enriquez, and Paloma Aguilar (eds), *The Politics of Memory and Democratisation*, (Oxford, 2003), p. 12.

[28] On the 1977 amnesty law, see, for example, José Babiano, Gutmaro Gómez, Antonio Míguez and Javier Tebar, *Verdugos Impunes: El Franquismo y la Violación Sistémica de los Derechos Humanos* (Barcelona, 2017), pp. 237-240.

democracy in Spain, fears which were not unfounded as the four foiled coup attempts of 1978, 1981, 1982 and 1985 would show. The gradual nature of Spain's political transition was reflected in developments relating to the war disabled of the Civil War.

It is tempting to consider the fate of Francoist and Republican disabled veterans in parallel, but in actual fact legislative developments relating to both sides came in isolation from one another. Indeed, Paloma Aguilar has questioned the reconciliatory nature of laws introduced to recognise the Republican disabled, particularly given that they tended to preserve the old cleavage between victors and vanquished.[29] Calls to recognise the Republican war disabled had been growing louder since the 1960s. In 1973 and 1974, 47 out of 561 *procuradores* (representatives in the Spanish parliament) agreed to sign a document supporting Republican *mutilados* in their attempts to secure pensions, to no avail.[30] Even after the death of Franco in 1975, it took some time before legislation was passed granting some form of pension to Republicans. The first law Republican veterans were able to benefit from was passed in 1976, which granted pensions in favour of Spaniards who had sustained injuries in the war but who were not permitted to enter the BCMGP.[31] This law did not refer to Republican veterans explicitly, and was so general that its beneficiaries included Francoist veterans with conditions sustained in war that did not meet the BCMGP's strict entry criteria, such as those debilitated by exposure to physical or chemical elements, including 'cold, heat, asphyxiating or tear gas'.[32] Certainly, this initial law was deeply disappointing for disabled Republican veterans who had waited most of their lives for official recognition and equal financial support.[33] The first piece of legislation to explicitly compensate Republican disabled veterans was passed in June 1980. It was praised by its parliamentary supporters for its 'moral value' and recognition of gratitude to those 'who fought in their youth and who left part of their body on the battlefield, and who have suffered much since then for having defended democracy in Spain'.[34] Yet attempts to achieve parity with Francoist veterans continued well into the 1980s. Many individuals

[29] Paloma Aguilar, 'Justice, Politics and Memory in the Spanish Transition' in Barahona De Brito et al., *Politics of Memory and Democratisation*, p. 113.
[30] Paloma Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy* (New York, 2002), p. 93.
[31] BOE, 84, 7 April 1976, "Decreto 670/1976, de 5 de marzo, por el que se regulan pensiones a favor de los españoles que habiendo sufrido mutilación a causa de la pasada contienda no puedan integrarse en el Cuerpo de Caballeros Mutilados de Guerra por la Patria".
[32] BOE, 84, 7 April 1976, art. 33.
[33] Abelardo Huerta, 'Cartas al Director: Mutilados de Guerra de la República', *El País*, 18 May 1978.
[34] BOE, 165, 10/7/1980, 'Ley 35/1980, de 26 de junio, sobre pensiones a los mutilados excombatientes de la zona republicana'. Words spoken by Socialist member of parliament Julio Busquets and quoted in the pamphlet *Reivindicació: Butlletí Informatiu: Lliga de Catalunya de Mutilats I Vídues de la Guerra d'Espanya*, 20 (April, 1980), held at the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica (henceforth CDMH), Incorporados, 119.

waited a long time for their applications to be processed; at the beginning of 1981, nearly 27,000 pension requests were still waiting to be approved out of the 47,555 received by the government.[35] In January 1982, the Republican League of *Mutilados* and Invalids of the Spanish War (*Liga de Mutilados e Inválidos de la Guerra de España*, LMIGE) took out a page-long advertorial in *El País* in which it detailed the ongoing injustices experienced by Republicans, and called for the creation of one single *Cuerpo de Mutilados* that would welcome veterans from both sides and 'eradicate once and for all the terrible symbol of the two Spains'.[36]

Despite such calls, none of the laws relating to the war disabled in the 1970s and 1980s proposed either to create a new Corps for all Civil War veterans, or to grant Republican veterans entry to the BCMGP. The fact that Republicans were managed by the Ministry of Governance while Francoists were considered the purview of the Minister of Defence offers a clue for understanding this continued separation.[37] The former were treated as a civilian issue as part of Spain's political transition, while the latter were to be managed separately as part of the country's later military reforms. This helps to explain why both groups were not dealt with at the same time, and why there was never any question of the two cohorts being merged, even though this would have constituted a highly symbolic gesture to post-Franco reconciliation between the 'two Spains'.

In the end, the dismantling of the BCMGP took place with very little explicit reference to political 'reconciliation' on the part of Felipe González's government. Even in his 2008 memoir, Minister of Defence Narcís Serra would only hint at the political undertones of the move, explaining that the *Cuerpo de Mutilados* 'belonged to another era and had no reason for being in the current circumstances'.[38] This cautious approach reflected the need to tread carefully within the military transition so as not to foster a backlash which might destabilise the country's political stability. Spain had a long history of praetorian politics, something which became particularly destabilising from the nineteenth century onwards.[39] The capacity for the armed forces to unsettle civilian political life continued into the twentieth century, notably with the military dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera in the 1920s, and then, of course, with the military coup in 1936 and subsequent imposition of Franco's military dictatorship. During the Second Spanish Republic, Minister for War Manuel Azaña had sought to curb the influence of the armed forces in Spanish political life with his reform law of 1931, a move which was viewed in military circles as a direct attack on the army, and contributed to fostering a desire by certain generals to take matters into their own

[35] CDMH, Incorporados, 131,7.

[36] 'El gran problema de los mutilados de guerra de la zona Republicana', *El Pais*, 26 January, 1982, p. 18.

[37] BOE, 84, 7 April 1976, art. 4C.

[38] Narcís Serra, *La Transición Militar: Reflexiones en Torno a la Reforma Democrática de las Fuerzas Armadas* (Barcelona, 2008), p. 221.

[39] See, for example, Carolyn Boyd, *Praetorian Politics in Liberal Spain* (Chapel Hill, 1979).

hands.[40] Anxieties over the role of the armed forces in a post-Franco Spain were omnipresent during the transition to democracy, and Minister of Defence Serra was conscious to avoid comparisons with Azaña.[41] The Socialist government was keenly aware of how close the armed forces had come to destabilising democracy in February 1981, and faced the challenge of instituting widespread military reform without provoking further unrest.

The political danger posed by an overly autonomous army was not the only motivation for military reform. The 'military problem' also referred to the great inefficiency of the Spanish armed forces, which due to its rigid promotional structures had an excess of personnel, especially officers. This meant that a large proportion of the military budget under Francoism was spent on personnel costs, to the detriment of the levels of equipment needed for the competent functioning of a modern army.[42] The need to address inefficient promotional structures constituted a clear threat to the BCMGP. The great advantage of the Corps for its members was that it allowed disabled *militares* with the required functional capacity to remain in active service, and therefore subject to regular seniority promotions, something which was both financially and psychologically beneficial for those involved. Yet this structure also made the BCMGP vulnerable to the objectives of a reformist government seeking to slash the numbers of personnel. To give a sense of the scale of the cutbacks, since the 1980s the Spanish armed forces has reduced from 300,000 conscripted soldiers and navy personnel, to just 80,000 professional rank-and-file.[43] Within this context, the BCMGP was an obvious target of reform.

The disbanding of the Corps must therefore be understood as rolled up within broader moves to modernise the Spanish armed forces in the democratic era.[44] Change came gradually, and the first significant transformations to the BCMGP's mode of operations were legislated for in the budget for 1985, which stipulated that those injured after 31 December 1984 would be managed according to civilian pension law (*Clases Pasivas*).[45] Later, the legislation which would definitively disband the BCMGP in 1989 formed part of the law aimed at

[40] On the Republican military reforms see Michael Alpert, *La Reforma Militar de Azaña (1931-1933)* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1982).
[41] Navajas, 'El fin del problema miltiar', p. 54. For a comparative analysis of military reform under the Republic and transition to democracy, see Fernando Puell de la Villa, 'Las reformas militares de Azaña (1931-1933) y de Gutiérrez Mellado (1976-1979): una perspectiva comparada' in S. Granda Lorenzo, L. Martínez Peñas y M. Fernández Rodríguez (eds), *Perspectivas jurídicas e institucionales sobre guerra y ejército en la Monarquía Hispánica* (Madrid: Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, 2011), pp. 289-310.
[42] Navajas, 'El fin del problema militar', p. 52.
[43] José Ortega Martín, 'La transformación de los ejércitos de España (1975-1990)', *La Albolafia: Revista de Humanidades y Cultura* 14 (2018), p. 61.
[44] On the military transition, see Fernando Puell de la Villa, *La Transición Militar* (Madrid: Fundación Transición Política Española, 2012).
[45] BOE, 313, 'Ley 50/1984, de 30 de diciembre, de Presupuestos Generales del Estado para 1985', 31 de diciembre de 1984, capítulo II. Article 19 of the legislation exempted those injured prior to 1985, who would continue to be managed by the BCMGP.

restructuring the armed forces more generally.[46] The fate of the BCMGP was not a central focus of the legislation by any stretch, and the clauses pertaining to the Corps were, perhaps tactically, buried on the penultimate page of the 33-page bill and limited to five short paragraphs.[47] Nonetheless, the clauses relating to the *Mutilados*' Corps were singled out for criticism by various groups within both Congress and the Senate. The nature of this criticism reflected mixed levels of understanding of the Corps and its membership. Debating the measures in Congress in April 1989, Iñigo Cavero Lataillade from the Democratic and Social Centre party (CDS), for example, argued that given the age of its members, the Corps would soon be significantly reduced in number, and would therefore not constitute a large strain on the government's finances.[48] Other members of parliament showed a greater appreciation for the multiple generations of veterans within the Corps, expressing concern for younger personnel for whom the bill would signal the end of their military careers. José Nicolás de Salas Moreno of the Catalan party (*Minoría Catalana*) expressed concerns over the 'classist' nature of the clauses, which would mainly affect the 92 per cent of members from the rank-and-file on 'modest' incomes while preserving the privileges of generals.[49] On behalf of the Mixed Group (*Grupo Mixto*), Miguel Ramón Izquierdo protested that parliament could not dispense of the *mutilados*' rights as military personnel in one fell swoop, giving the example of a soldier rendered blind in an explosion in 1986, who had been sent home with no pension and only a meagre lump sum payment. As part of the *Cuerpo de Mutilados*, the man would have received 60,000 pesetas per month, but now was forced to sell coupons for the Spanish charity for the blind (ONCE) to support his family.[50] Salas Moreno also identified potential legal issues arising out of discrepancies with treatment of the Ecclesiastical Corps, as well as benefits secured for Republican veterans under the 1980 law.[51]

Despite such outcry, no party proposed removing the clauses dissolving the BCMGP altogether, a clear reflection of the Corps' perceived anachronism within a democratic Spain. In the Cortes, most groups proposed only minor changes aimed at preserving the rights of former members, such as expanding the deadline for final applications to the Corps (*Minoría Catalana*), expanding the entry criteria to include those disabled after December 1984 (*Grupo Mixto*), or ensuring that former BCMGP members would preserve promotions rights and not be worse off than Republican veterans (*Coalición Popular*, *Minoría Catalana*).[52]

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[46] This law was initially referred to as the Law of Military Functions (*Ley de Función Militar*) but was later renamed the Law Regulating the Regime of Professional Military Personnel (*Ley Reguladora del Régimen del Personal Militar Profesional*.

[47] *Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales* (henceforth BOCG), III Legislatura, pp. 108-1?, Serie A, Proyecto de Ley: Función Militar, 16 February 1989, p. 32.

[48] *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de Diputados* (henceforth DSCD), 455, Defensa, 27 April 1989, 15063.

[49] DSCD, 455, Defensa, 27 April 1989, 15061.

[50] DSCD, 11 May 1989, 194, Pleno y Diputación Permanente, 11088.

[51] DSCD, 455, Defensa, 27 April 1989, 15061-15062.

[52] BOCG, III Legislatura, 108-6, Serie A, Enmiendas, 7 April 1989, E.418-419, E.2, E. 133, E.418-419.

When the amendments were voted on in the Cortes, the Socialist majority ensured that none were approved, and in the end, only two minor changes proposed by Socialist delegates were incorporated into the text passed onto the Senate.[53]

The most extensive suggested amendments came in the Senate, where the conservative party (*Coalición Popular*) proposed that only those who had already reached retirement age would be forced to retire, while the rank-and-file would remain professional soldiers, retaining the promotional rights enshrined within the 1976 law pertaining to the BCMGP, and able to continue in the roles they currently occupied.[54] Conservative senator and vice-president of the Senate Juan de Arespacochaga condemned the 'rigidity' of the Socialist Group in failing to rectify the law dismantling the Corps in the face of military concerns, recalling that the *Mutilados* Corps had 'existed for over two centuries and that its members are all those who, in act of war, were maimed, irrespective of their political ideas.'[55] This appeal to the BCMGP's pre-Francoist history was insufficient to convince a majority of delegates. In the end, the only further amendments accepted were the inclusion of a sixth article, which maintained some of the honorary prerogatives enjoyed by former members of the BCMGP in accordance with the 1976 law.[56] The failure to achieve significant concessions on articles pertaining to the dissolution of the Corps did not prevent even conservative deputies voting to support the law more broadly, which was ultimately voted in with the support of both main political parties.[57] That the *mutilados* were considered acceptable collateral damage within this process was revealing of the strong political consensus which existed over the need for structural reform of the armed forces inherited from the dictatorship. Furthermore, the concession relating to honorary privileges suggests that the Francoist connotations of the Corps were of subordinate importance to the need to make budgetary savings.

In the final draft of the 1989 law, the legal provisions relating to the BCMGP stated that the Corps would be disbanded or 'extinguished' (*extinguido*), and that all members would pass to retired status, except for Generals who would be

[53] These consisted of the addition of the *Sección de Inútiles* ('Unfit Section', mainly catering to those with psychiatric and neurological conditions), as well as an article stipulating compatibility with the 1976 law. BOCG, III Legislatura, 108-6, Serie A, Enmiendas, 7 April 1989, E.38. BOCG, Senado, III Legislatura, 315 (a), Serie II, Proyecto de Ley: Reguladora del Régimen del Personal Militar Profesional, Texto Remitido por el Congreso de los Diputados, 19 May 1989.

[54] BOCG, Senado, III Legislatura, 315 (c), Serie II, Proyecto de Ley: Reguladora del Régimen del Personal Militar Profesional, Enmiendas, E. 365. Previously, members of the *Mutilados*' Corps over the age of retirement had been classes as 'in specific situation' ('*en situación específica*'), a reflection of the right of members to remain within the Corps until their death.

[55] 'Arespacochaga, contrario a suprimir el Cuerpo de Mutilados, *ABC*, 30 June 1989, 36.

[56] For the final text, see BOE 172, 20 July 1989, 'Ley 17/1989, de 19 de julio, Reguladora del Régimen del Personal Militar Profesional', disposición final 6, 'Cuerpo de mutilados de guerra por la Patria', 23146-23147.

[57] 'El Congreso aprueba la ley de la función militar con votos del PSOE y del PP', *El País*, 11 May 1989.

classed as reservists. The *mutilados* would henceforth be managed according to the laws relating to civilian pensioners, and reassurance was given that their pensions would be at least equal to the amount they had been receiving before. The final article relating to the BCMGP stated that the *mutilados* would have the rights of all retired military personnel and would also maintain the honorific benefits provided for in the 11 March 1976 law. By avoiding a public confrontation over the more political reasons for disbanding the Corps, Serra was able to further pursue a military reformist agenda while, in the process, quietly disassociating the democratic Spanish government from a body which had become a conspicuous relic of Francoist military culture. That the BCMGP was extinguished with little explicit reference to its links with Francoism did not mean that the Corps' problematic heritage was not an underlying motivation for its dissolution. Other military personnel who fell victims to the culls, such as members of the Ecclesiastical Corps (*Cuerpo Eclesiástico*) and the Royal Guard (*Guardia Real*), were permitted to continue their careers in other units, an option unavailable to the *mutilados*.[58] Here the *mutilados* undoubtedly fell victim to prejudiced attitudes towards disability within the armed forces and broader government. With the degradation of the symbolism which had always legitimised their position within the armed forces, the disabled were no longer considered valuable or even 'useful' military personnel in the post-Franco era.[59] The development of the 1989 law therefore illustrates the dual challenge faced by the *Caballeros Mutilados*. Not only did the delegitimisation of their Francoist-era framing narrative undermine their long-held symbolic connection to the nation, but their perceived 'usefulness' as active soldiers was also under threat within the prevailing context of dramatic structural change. In this sense, the challenges faced by Francoist Civil War *mutilados* in the 1980s resulted from the erosion of both institutions, the Francoist regime and the armed forces, which had hitherto served as guarantors of their privilege.

IV

The decision to move former members of the BCMGP to the purview of the civilian pension law or *clases pasivas* had some significant implications. In material terms, the impact of the law varied greatly according to the age and rank of the individual. Least affected were those who had already reached retirement age, and whose existing pensions—calculated according to their final rank—did not supersede the benefits cap in force. Those most affected were veterans who were too young to have served in the Civil War, those younger generations of lower ranking soldiers who had been injured before completing their military training or having the opportunity to rise through the ranks, and who had not accrued the years of service required to receive a full military retirement pension. According to the previous legislation, young service personnel who became injured would receive a disability pension while receiving income from a stable

[58] DSCD, 455, Defensa, 27 April 1989, disposición final cuarta, 15061.
[59] For a discussion of the language of 'usefulness' in the context of war disability under Francoism, see Wright, 'Of maiming and privilege', pp. 322-323, 327.

job within the armed forces, and enjoying the regular promotions and salary bonuses to which all military personnel were entitled. Under the new legislation, those whose injuries made it impossible for them to carry out any work would continue to receive a pension, but those with less severe wounds would instead receive a one-off compensatory payment, which varied according to injury type. A leg amputee, for example, would receive a lump sum of 4,049,232.30 pesetas, equivalent to around 24,336.35 euros, a considerably lower figure than they would have earned over the course of their careers if permitted to continue in active service.[60] In this sense, though disabled military personnel were not denied financial support altogether, for the most affected younger generations the change in financial circumstance was considerable. For the Civil War generation, the material impact was relatively minimal, though some complained that under the new regulations they were actually receiving less than their Republican counterparts. Resolution for these cases were pursued in the courts, relying on the provisions of the 35/80 law on Republicans which stipulated that any discrepancies between payments to both sides would be compensated.[61]

More universally painful across all generations of disabled service personnel was the blow dealt by the 1989 legislation to their military identities. For the first time since 1938, the Francoist war disabled would not be singled out for special recognition as military personnel, but would instead join the ranks of pensioners injured or incapacitated within the civilian world. For former members of the Corps, this was considered a devastating turn of events; in the words of the Association for *Caballeros Mutilados* (ACM)—whose president was himself a Civil War *mutilado?*—the 1989 law forced 'heroes' to become 'anonymous pensioners'.[62] As this turn of phrase implied, former BCMGP members not only feared the material implications of the 1989 law, but also the detriment to their honour, military prestige, and the patriotic narratives through which they had come to understand their wounds. It is important to note that the former BCMGP's provisions were not viewed by its members as privileges, but rather as the rightful remuneration to which the *Caballeros Mutilados* were entitled as active members of the armed forces. For example, the fact that under the new legislation, the *mutilados* would be forced to retire below the age of retirement of 65 was seen as a great injustice. As active service personnel, this change was a clear violation of the career stability to which all military personnel—not just the maimed—were entitled. In the June 1992 edition of *Soldados Viejos y Estropeados*, the authors explained how the

> Corps remained in the ranks of the Spanish army for 275 years… They carried out their duties corresponding and according to their physical limitations (wounds or lesions). This was never a gift, the Invalids or

[60] José L. Sacristán Cebri?án, 'Posible película de horror', SVE 1/1 (1991), *Soldados Viejos y Estropeados* 1/1 (1991), p. 27. Peseta to euro conversion calculated using Coinmill.com [accessed 26 May 2021].
[61] SVE 1/1 (1991), p. 10.
[62] *Revista ACM: Asociación de Caballeros Mutilados por la Patria* (henceforth ACM) 1/1 (February 1994), p. 31. Diario Oficial del Ministerio del Ejército, 92/II, 25 April 1940, 271.

> *Mutilados* were always considered useful to the Nation and we continue to consider ourselves useful to this.[63]

At the heart of the *mutilados* concerns over being transferred to the civilian pension system or *clases pasivas* (lit. 'passive classes') was that their disabilities would be disassociated from their 'heroic' military origins, therefore stripping them of their superior moral worth compared to other disability groups, and that they would no longer be considered full, 'active' citizens. Such fears were revelatory of the internalised ableism that had underpinned the BCMGP's operations all along, whose discourse of 'usefulness' had always sought to distance the *Caballeros Mutilados* from the stigmatising label of 'invalidity' rather than changing the label itself. As we will see, such anxieties also help to explain the notable persistence of Francoist *Caballero Mutilado* culture amongst surviving members of the BCMGP, even when this appeared to contradict their broader political aims within a democratic Spain.

Writing in the first edition of *Soldados Viejos y Estropeados*, the president of the Cultural Association of Military Invalids of Spain's (Asocación Cultural de Inválidos Militares de España, ACIME), Juan Pesquero Granullaque, was clearly shaken by the news that the BCMGP had to 'disappear': 'Naïve but also courageous we still cannot believe it and the worst is that we cannot digest it.'[64] Beyond the material and professional implications of the 17/1989 law, the disbandment of the BCMGP was viewed as a 'mutilation of their honour' and a 'spiritual lesion'.[65] There was particular anger at attempts to separate the *mutilados* from more cultural aspects of military life, such as the annual Day of the Armed Forces (*Día de las Fuerzas Armadas*). In 1992, an ACIME editorial addressed to King Juan Carlos lamented that the *Caballeros Mutilados* had not been able to greet him at the celebration, explaining that 'We… are sorry that the members of a glorious Corps… should be forgotten so recently.'[66] Such concerns over the *mutilados*' exclusion from military life were enmeshed in broader anxieties over their shifting relationship with the nation. In addition to the legal reasons why members of ACIME should have been included in the Day of the Armed Forces—notably the provision in the 1989 law which retained the right of the *Caballeros Mutilados* to continue occupying 'a place of honour (*lugar de honor*) in military, official and social occasions'—the editorial contended that there was another, more moral, imperative to include the *mutilados*:

> The other reason is one of the heart, of emotion, of pride in having given part of one's physical integrity in the service of Spain. A Nation [sic] that is not proud of its military *Mutilados* or Invalids, renounces part of itself, the *mutilados* are a consequence of the defence of the Nation or of one's preparation for the defence of this. One cannot demand of the people, represented by the Armed Forces, that they give themselves in defence of

[63] 'Historia de un Cuerpo', SVE 2/4 (June 1992), p. 28.
[64] 'Editorial', SVE 1/1 (1991), p. 3.
[65] 'Borrón y cuenta nueva' and 'Rompiendo una lanza en pro de los mutilados de guerra', SVE 3/6 (January 1993), p. 29, p. 31.
[66] 'Un dia', SVE 2/4 (June 1992), inner front page.

> the Homeland and they are later forgotten and abandoned. The Armed Forces, the People, the Nation should feel proud of their wounded and injured in service to the Homeland.[67]

Not only were such statements reminiscent of outdated notions of the armed forces as the spiritual embodiment of the nation, but also reflected the fear of being forgotten within a modern Spain which did not value Civil War-era sacrifices. In a 1992 feature on the León chapter of the former BCMGP in *La Crónica 16 de León*, reproduced in ACIME's magazine, ageing *mutilados* were described as 'the forgotten ones, the heroes that people look at with pity as they pass in the street without knowing that they are looking at their own history'.[68] Another feature from the January 1993 issue of the magazine told the story of an elderly *mutilado* who spent his days sitting alone on a park bench.[69] Having served in the Protectorate and subsequently maimed in the Civil War, the old soldier now lived a life of solitude supported by a daughter who came to clean the house and deliver food to him several days a week. The author lamented the absence of communal homes for such people, and the lack of 'solidarity' within society. The message within such features was clear: these erstwhile heroes had been completely abandoned by a modern society apathetic to their sacrifices for the homeland.

Despite their collective despair, former members of the BCMGP did not respond in a homogenous way to the 1989 legislation. Rather, two distinct disabled veterans groups developed out of the defunct BCMGP. The first association to gather together members of the former Corps was the aforementioned ACIME, established in 1989 and sustained by annual member contributions of 1000 pesetas each.[70] By July 1991, ACIME reported that it counted approximately 13,500 members, which constituted 61 per cent of the BCMGP's former membership.[71] The association kept members up to date with legislative developments, offered a vehicle for collective action against the legal and financial fallout of the 1989 and subsequent laws, while offering a space for solidarity between members and the continuation of the BCMGP's cultural practices, such as the annual St Raphael commemorations. However, it was not long until certain rivalries arose between different members of the association. The precise origins of these remain unclear, though particular animosity appears to have arisen over a misunderstanding over payment for some legal consultancy work.[72] The result was the formation of a breakaway group in 1992, named the *Caballeros Mutilados* Association (*Asociación de Caballeros Mutilados*, ACM), whose stated aim was to defend the economic, honorific and legal interests of its

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[67] 'Un dia', SVE 2/4 (June 1992), inner front page. BOE 63, 'Let 5/1976, de 11 de marzo, de Mutilados de Guerra por la Patria, disposición común 7ª; BOE 172, 20 July 1989, disposición final 6.6.
[68] 'Marcados por la violencia', SVE 2/4 (June 1992), p. 22.
[69] 'Un anciano', SVE 3/6 (January 1993), p. 23.
[70] 'Asamblea General', SVE 1/1 (1991). The widows of *mutilados* were also permitted to join for the reduced annual fee of 500 pesetas.
[71] 'Programa de Mutilados', SVE 1/1 (1991), p. 9.
[72] 'Nueva Asociación', SVE 3/8, (August 1993), pp. 8-9.

members, to conserve the 'military spirit' of the Corps, and to promote solidarity between *mutilados*.[73]

ACIME, the larger and altogether better organised of the two, was considerably more adept at adapting to Spain's changing socio-political landscape. Most importantly, ACIME seems to have understood at an early stage that with the advent of democracy, the relationship between the *mutilados* and the state had fundamentally changed. Whereas under the regime, veterans needed to petition the state individually for improvements to their benefits, the new context of democracy required (and facilitated) a different strategy based on collective advocacy, which would enable disabled ex-servicemen to challenge legislative changes in the courts and to pressure those shaping the laws in the *Cortes* and in Europe. An important prerequisite for achieving the latter was the need to distance disabled military personnel from Francoism. ACIME adopted a number of strategies to recalibrate the legitimacy of the *Caballeros Mutilados* within a democratic Spain, which included muting its links with Francoism, forging connections with other veterans' groups at both the national and international level, and supporting members in their attempts to secure judicial solutions to their complaints.

With regards to the former, a key aspect of ACIME's discourse from its founding in 1989 was to present the BCMGP as a continuation of several centuries of Spanish policy towards military invalids. A pair of cartoons in the very first ACIME magazine set the precedent for future issues. The first, captioned 'This is how we as Invalids and *Mutilados* were treated from Alfonso X the Wise until the Law of 5/76, via Azaña' showed a long line of maimed soldiers wearing military uniforms from different eras being welcomed by an official while the rear-end of a horse stood to the side. In the accompanying image, captioned 'This is how we are treated by the 17/89 and 31/90 laws', the horse had bolted, in the process giving the amputee at the front of the queue a powerful kick with its hind legs.[74] After centuries of respectful treatment, the *mutilados* felt that they were being kicked to the curb. This idea of continuity remained an important feature of ACIME's self-representation. Subsequent covers of the association's magazine were dedicated to images of historic Invalids' corps, such as pensioners from the reign of Charles III (1759-1788) and Ferdinand VII (1808, 1813-1833), captioned with explanations outlining the uniforms worn by 'our ancestors belonging to the *Cuerpo de Inválidos*'.[75] This appeal to history was not unfounded. Historian Fernando Puell de la Villa has outlined the shifting nature of military welfare structures since the eighteenth century, drawing attention to the Spanish army's tradition of managing the war disabled within the armed forces.[76] Yet it is important to note which particular elements of history were being foregrounded

[73] ACM 1/1 (February 1994), pp. 91-92.
[74] SVE 1/1 (1991), 13, 9. The 31/90 law was the legislation pertaining to the state budget for 1991, which confirmed the forced retirement of former members of the BCMGP, albeit for the later date of 1 January 1992. BOE, 311, 'Ley 31/1990, de 27 de diciembre, de Presupuestos Generales del Estado para 1991'.
[75] SVE 2/4 (June 1992), 3. 'Nuestra portada', SVE 3/6 (January 1993), p. 1.
[76] Puell de la Villa, *Historia de la Protección Social Militar*.

over others in such narratives. Though the Mutilated Christ of Malaga and St Raphael were omnipresent within ACIME's activities and publications, explicit references to Francoism, the Civil War and even the BCMGP itself, were relatively rare. In this sense, the continuity narrative put forward by ACIME skirted over the more conspicuous ways in which the BCMGP departed from its ancestors, particularly its exclusionary nature with regards to Republican veterans, and its Civil War-era iconography.

In addition to this discursive rebranding, ACIME sought to strengthen its position by forming alliances with other veterans' groups, both within and outside of Spain. This enabled ACIME to further distance itself from internal politics linked to the 'two Spains' by inserting its struggles within a more universal struggle for veterans' rights. ACIME was particularly interested in fostering connections with the Republican League of *Mutilados* and Invalids of the Spanish War (*Liga de Mutilados e Inválidos de la Guerra de España*, LMIGE), the Portuguese Association of the Disabled of the Armed Forces (Associaçao dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas, ADFA), and the World Veterans' Federation (WVF).[77] Initially, the leadership of ACIME was in talks with LMIGE and ADFA to form an 'Iberian Federation', which would later apply to the WVF for membership as a whole. In the end, ACIME was granted entry into the WVF in 1993 as the official representative of Spain, with the agreement of LMIGE and the Union of Ex-combatants of the Spanish War (*Unión de ex Combatientes de la Guerra de España*, UNEX), which grouped together veterans who had served on both sides of the Civil War.[78] This success allowed the *mutilados* to reassert their positioning as representatives of the nation, while enabling ACIME to learn about the structure and organisation of other groups in order to apply insights to their own organisation. ACIME's organising committee noted that it found conversations with the Portuguese ADFA particularly productive, given that they had in common their status as professional soldiers.'[79] Like ACIME prior to the 1989 legislation, Portuguese veterans remained in active service and were able to benefit from promotions and employment opportunities. ACIME was especially interested in the close collaboration which existed between ADFA and the Portuguese government, which was at that time reportedly constructing a headquarters for the association in Lisbon, and working with the association to run a successful work rehabilitation programme.

The desire to work with LMIGE was also significant, as it signalled an openness to working across the Francoist-Republican divide while maintaining the two separate organisations, perceived to be facing different challenges. The real prize though, was achieving recognition within the WVF. When explaining the importance of joining the federation, ACIME cited the 'respect and trust' the WVF enjoyed on a global level, explaining that securing membership would open up a lot of opportunities, particularly for collaboration with the Permanent Commission on European Affairs.' This was a clear reflection of the legal routes

[77] SVE 2/4 (June 1992), p. 11.
[78] SVE 3/8, (August 1993), p. 29.
[79] SVE 2/4 (June 1992), p. 12.

ACIME hoped to pursue in order to protect their rights, particularly through Spain's recently acquired membership of the European Union. Again, the Portuguese example served as a model: 'ADFA, which years ago had considerable problems getting its rights recognised, today, after fighting with the support from the WVF, has all the recognition and support from its country'.[80]

In contrast, ACM, the second association to emerge after the disbandment of the BCMGP, was insular in nature, and unabashed in referencing its links to Francoism. By incorporating the *Caballero Mutilado* term within its title, the association self-consciously positioned itself as the rightful heir of the BCMGP, in part a strategy to acquire the former BCMGP's headquarters at 107 Velazquez Street in Madrid.[81] In the inaugural issue of the ACM magazine, the association's president Tomás García Lerín expressed his desire for the ACM to be 'made almost in the image' of the BCMGP, and criticised ACIME directly for failing to refer explicitly to the BCMGP in its statutes, 'as if it was deliberately avoiding its name'.[82] Within ACM's mouthpiece, references to political figures associated with the regime ranged from relatively subtle allusions to the mythology of Millán Astray and the 'war of liberation' (the Francoist language used to refer to the Civil War), to more bombastic rants about the decline of Spanish virility in the democratic age.[83] In this sense, as well as providing information on legislative updates relevant to former members of the BCMGP, ACM's magazine provided a space for the sharing of reactionary opinions on current affairs. In January 1996 a *Caballero Mutilado* using the pseudonym Alonso Quijano—the real name of Don Quijote in Miguel de Cervantes's seventeenth-century masterpiece—expressed his anger at the decision made by Felipe González's government to grant Spanish nationality to former members of the International Brigades, who, reproducing the Francoist regime's language, he dismissed as 'reds' whose interference had prolonged the Civil War.[84] In the face of a rapidly changing world, ACM's strategy was not to adapt but to go on the defensive, reasserting the pride and patriotism of the *Caballeros Mutilados* who 'stumps in the air', were 'examples of misfortune and glory'.[85]

Though ACIME appeared relatively liberal compared to the overt Francoist apologism expressed by ACM, the former did constitute a vehicle for the preservation of Francoist-era traditions which had been recognised as problematic in other arenas. The Mutilated Christ of Málaga, for example, continued to form an important part of ACIME's iconography despite the fact that the Holy Week procession for the icon had not taken place since 1977 on account

[80] SVE 3/8, (August 1993), p. 34.
[81] 'Recurso de Reposición sobre devolución del Patrimonio', ACM, 1/2 (June 1994), pp. 12-14.
[82] ACM 1/1 (February 1994), pp 3, 24, 45.
[83] ACM 1/1 (February 1994), p. 18; ACM 2/3 (April 1995), p. 22; ACM 2/4 (Jan 1996), p. 24.
[84] 'Agravio comparativo: Desde la otra orilla', ACM 2/4 (Jan 1996), pp. 10-12. Miguel de Cervantes was another icon of the BCMGP and its predecessors, given injuries sustained by the author at the battle of Lepanto in 1571.
[85] 'Y fuimos declarados a extinguir… no extintos', ACM 1/1 (February 1994), p. 59.

of its Francoist connotations.[86] The Mutilated Christ was not the only element of ACIME's aesthetic that recalled the BCMGP. The inside back cover of the August 1993 issue of *Soldados Viejos y Estropeados* featured an image of a statue, presumably erected within the grounds of Velazquez 107, of an arm amputee raising his right arm in the fascist salute.[87] The plinth he stood on featured the Francoist coat of arms. Such images constituted a paradox when considered alongside ACIME's considerable efforts to adapt to democracy by minimising its links to Francoism. Indeed, such aesthetics seemed to contradict the condition of WVF membership which stipulated that members be apolitical and non-religious.[88] Also noticeable by their absence within ACIME's magazines were references to the continued challenges faced by Republican veterans. These were referred to rarely, and mostly in relation to cases where *Caballeros Mutilados* received less under the 1989 provisions than Republicans did under the 1980 legislation.[89] This framing of the issues surrounding Republican pensions appeared strikingly out-of-touch considering the decades of utter neglect faced by the *mutilados* of the defeated side.

So how to make sense of ACIME's adaptability in some areas compared to the persistence of Francoist iconography in its aesthetics and culture? It is conceivable that members of ACIME were simply ignorant to how problematic many aspects of their culture were within a post-transition Spain. This can in part be explained by the genuine emotional attachment that many members felt towards such traditions, which were understood as much through the lens of Christian faith as ideological affinity with Francoism. Not only were images of the Mutilated Christ and St Raphael frequently reprinted in *Soldados Viejos y Estropeados*, but individual members submitted poems and eulogies to the icons, a clear reflection of members' affective engagement with both figures.[90] Despite having been historically conceived within the Francoist regime's attempts to separate Spanish society according to Civil War cleavages, the *mutilados* who formed part of the BCMGP did not necessarily understand themselves in these terms. Raised within the cradle of the armed forces where Francoism's version of history was wholly normalised, the *Caballeros Mutilados*, particularly younger generations, did not primarily understand themselves within the victor-vanquished binary, but rather as a crucial part of the army, detached from such political questions. As Serra noted in his 2008 memoir, one of the main challenges his government faced in the military transition was that the armed forces ascribed to 'values which were increasingly detached from those shared by the majority of society and that, under the auspices of being military and patriotic, remained a continuation of those belonging to Francoism.'[91] As the

[86] Reder Gadow, 'Una Imagen Controvertida, p. 221.
[87] SVE 3/8, (August 1993), inner back cover.
[88] 'FMAC', SVE 2/4 (June 1992), p. 12.
[89] SVE 1/1 (1991), p. 40.
[90] See, for example, 'Al Cristo de los Mutilados', SVE 1/1 (1991), p. 43; 'Un Patrón', SVE 2/4 (June 1992), inner cover; 'Credo del Mutilado', SVE 3/6 (January 1993), p. 34; 'Oración al Arcángel San Rafael', SVE 3/8, (August 1993), inner cover.
[91] Serra, *La Transición Militar*, p. 224.

aesthetics of ACIME showed, such was the cultural symbiosis between army and regime, that it was possible to be immersed in what to outsiders was clearly Francoist culture, without those involved necessarily recognising or acknowledging this as specifically 'Francoist'. This paradox reflected the depth of the existential challenge posed by the transition, which made contested territory out of the previously stable concept of the *Caballero Mutilado*. Despite recognising the need to move on, it was psychologically challenging for former members of the BCMGP to reconfigure their understanding of their own corporealities beyond Francoism's narratives, particularly with reference to their relationship to the nation and armed forces.

In subsequent years, ACIME would further distance itself from the cultural heritage of the BCMGP, and this adaptable approach proved more sustainable in the long run than the reactionary position adopted by the ACM. Though ACIME is still fighting to secure work rehabilitation for disabled service personnel within the armed forces, it is now recognised as the legitimate voice of disabled service personnel, with official sponsorship from the army and Spanish government.[92] In the meantime, it has helped its members to secure some tangible successes, such as clarifications over access to prosthetics, as well as more recently the establishment of a resource centre for disabled military personnel.[93] With the exception of the annual St Raphael celebrations which still continue, its Francoist heritage would now be easy to miss to those unfamiliar with the history of the BCMGP. In contrast, the ACM has now fallen into obscurity. As the trajectories of both associations have shown, the ability to adapt to the delegitimisation of Francoist narratives of the Civil War, has proven essential in resisting the rolling back of disabled veteran privileges since 1989.

V

Despite the disappearance of the ACM, the kinds of apologist narratives fostered by the association have found echo within Spain's more recent growth of right-wing populism. Disabled service personnel have become useful symbols for a far right seeking to highlight supposed 'injustices' against good Spanish patriots. In 2016, the neo-Nazi welfare organisation *Hogar Social Madrid* (HSM), which provides charitable support exclusively to Spaniards, occupied the BCMGP's former headquarters, purportedly to protest the removal of non-permanent military personnel upon reaching forty-five years old. Echoing the language of the early 1990s relating to the *Caballeros Mutilados*, HSM said it wished to defend those 'forgotten heroes who gave everything for this country and who have been

[92] For the most up to date information on ACIME's activities, see the association's official website: www.acime.es [accessed 3 June 2021]
[93] SVE 3/8, (August 1993), p. 7, 10-11; 'Qué es CRIDMIL?, www.acime.es [accessed 3 June 2021].

spurned by the State'.[94] Similarly in 2017, right-wing commentator Guillermo Rocafort wrote an homage to the *mutilados* on the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the Directorate General of *Mutilados*, where he critiqued the 'ingratitude' of the Spanish people, who have forgotten to honour 'heroes' such as those disabled 'for the Fatherland'.[95] On the surface, such calls to inclusivity could be viewed in a positive light. From a disability studies perspective, the separation of disabled service personnel from the armed forces in 1989 seems regressive, especially when this meant reversing a policy which had adopted a relatively inclusive approach to maimed soldiers. Yet it is hard to view the appropriation of the *Caballeros Mutilados* by the extreme right as rooted in genuine concern for disabled people, especially given that this apparently accommodating attitude comes at the behest of an anti-democratic, xenophobic and misogynistic political project exclusionary of so many other social 'others'. It is telling indeed that calls by the far right to commemorate the *Caballeros Mutilados*'s sacrifices are never inclusive of the Republican war maimed, and also fail to acknowledge the limitations of the BCMGP's provisions even in their Francoist heyday, which were always inadequate for the rank and file, subject to the arbitrary nature of Francoism's paternalistic administrative structures, and, of course, exclusionary—not only of Republicans but also of Francoist veterans with mental and physical illnesses.

In 2015, president of ACIME Andrés Medina, reflected on the troubled years of the military transition, when 'We were not well viewed even within the [military] institution.'[96] Yet since then, in Medina's view, the dissolution of the corps has come to be regarded as a 'grave error', and for several years now ACIME has been calling for the creation of an Honorific Military Corps for the Disabled (*Cuerpo Honorífico Castrense de Discapacidad*) which would see disabled service personnel return to the military fold, albeit in an administrative and honorary capacity.[97] The political mainstream remains cautious of such proposals, and so far, even conservative governments of the twenty-first century have been wary of resurrecting a model of disability provision similar to the BCMGP.[98] Though the Francoist connotations of the *Mutilados* Corps offer a

[94] 'La historia del palacete okupado por los neonazis: allí murió Millan Astray', *ABC*, 12 December 2016; 'Hogar Social Madrid okupa un palacete en el barrio de Salamanca: "Nada nos va a parar"', *El Confidencial*, 11 December 2016.

[95] '80 Aniversario de la creación del Cuerpo de Mutilados por la Patria' originally featured in *La Gaceta*, 22 January 2017, reprinted at clasespasivas.net: https://www.clasespasivas.net/80-aniversario-de-la-creacion-del-cuerpo-de-mutilados-por-la-patria/ [accessed 3 June 2021].

[96] 'Discapacidad en acto de servicio', *Revista Perfiles* 309 (2015), https://minisites.once.es/new/sala-de-prensa/publicaciones-y-documentos/Perfiles/anteriores/2015/Perfiles-309/discapacidad [accessed 3 June 2021].

[97] See, for example, 'Entrevista a Andrés Medina, presidente de ACIME', https://www.acime.es/index.php/nacional/976-entrevista-a-andres-medina-presidente-de-acime (2015), [accessed 3 June 2021].

[98] 'El caso del teniente Gras', *El Pais*, 7 January 2012; 'El PP descarta recuperar un "cuerpo de mutilados" por sus connotaciones "franquistas"', *El Confidencial Digital*, 22 January 2018.

convenient excuse for shelving such proposals (time will tell whether the rising influence of the far right in mainstream government will foster a context more open to change in this regard), the issue of cost remains, and is likely to temper attempts to return to the active service model of former times.

The challenges that contemporary, post-transition disabled veterans continue to face testify to the great detriment to disabled veteran privilege posed by their perceived association with a now largely discredited political project. More than four decades after the death of Franco, the bodies of the disabled remain contested territories within a nation still struggling to come to terms with its dictatorial past. In this sense, the case of the Francoist war disabled of the Spanish Civil War underscores the close link between historical memory and the well-being of the veterans of civil wars. While post-civil war governments often privilege certain disabled bodies over others, this is a precarious privilege that remains vulnerable to political fluctuations over time, as well as the shifting relationship between army, nation and state. In such cases, the ability of disabled veterans' groups to adapt to changing perceptions of their political legitimacy to support is crucial to the preservation of their veteranhood, as well as their ability to advocate for improved circumstances more broadly.