



La guerra civil española

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Since its first publication, *The Spanish Civil War* has become established as the definitive one-volume history of a conflict that continues to provoke intense controversy. What was it that roused left-wing sympathizers from over the world to fight again

La guerra civil española Details

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Miquixote says

Unfortunately it has a predictably status quo left liberal slant.

" for some curious reason, has acquired the reputation of being a definitive history of the conflict - is pretentious, superficial, and factually unreliable. For a devastating critique, the reader should consult Vernon Richard's 'July 19, 1936: Republic or Revolution?' in *Anarchy*, No.5 (July, 1961)' and Richard's introductory remarks to Gaston Leval's 'Collectives in the Spanish Revolution ' (London, 1975). " - Murray Bookchin' p. 299 "The Spanish Anarchists".

There is little on the popular revolution which occurred in Spain during the war, a glaring ideologically based omission.

Chomsky, "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship" : "obviously the historian's account must be selective; from the left liberal point of view (like Hugh Thomas and Gabriel Jackson) the liquidation of the revolution in Catalonia was a minor event, as the revolution itself was merely kind of irrelevant nuisance, a minor irritant diverting energy from the struggle to save the bourgeois government...Thomas' extensive study barely refers to the popular revolution, and some of the major events are not mentioned at all."

How can so much work be done and such honours bestowed on such a 'major work', with such glaring omissions? An honest study of the Spanish Civil War MUST be accompanied by histories such as *The Spanish Anarchists* (Murray Bookchin), *Homage to Catalonia* (George Orwell) and *On Anarchism* (Noam Chomsky). But above all, Pierre Broue and Emile and Emile Temime's 'The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain'. Which is infinitely preferable as a general account of the Spanish Civil War. According to Chomsky, the best general history of the war.

In his favor, Hugh Thomas does give excellent suggestions on further study of the role of Anarchism in the bibliography. I can only assume the curious omissions are due to it being too risky in elite academic circles to focus too much (or at all) on the most 'dangerously' liberating democratic idea in history: anarchism, or if you prefer, libertarian socialism.

Bruce says

The British writer and historian, Hugh Thomas, first published this monumental work in 1961 and subsequently revised it several times, last in 1986. This review is of his final revision.

The Spanish Civil War has long been somewhat of a mystery to me, the events of that conflict having been overshadowed by the immediate onset of World War II as the Spanish war came to a close in 1939. I read this book to rectify my ignorance and clarify my confusion. The book accomplished all of that while providing fascinating reading at the same time.

The political situation in Spain had been in almost continual turmoil for more than four decades before the Civil War broke out in 1936. Those decades had seen a seemingly endless series of abrupt changes, including

the monarchy, military coups, a repressive dictatorship, the abdication of its king, and continuing struggles by whatever groups or groups were “out” to regain power. In 1931 a republic came into being, formed and led primarily by those on the center-left, including socialists (of various stripes), anarchists, communists (also of various stripes), and other smaller groups on the left, although many of these movements were not then very forthright about their leanings. The groups left out of the government at that time were the monarchists, the Church, groups with fascist leanings, anti-democrats of various persuasions, and those gradually identifying themselves as Falangists, sympathetic to the growing Nazi movement in Germany. In 1936 these right-wing groups revolted, becoming the side designated as Nationalists, against those governing, the Republicans. Rather quickly the revolt became a civil war, the Nationalists initially controlling most of the northwest of the country, except for the Basque region in the far north, the Republicans retaining the southeast, although there were cities, areas, and citizens in each of these broad regions with sympathy for the other side.

The war slogged on for three years with horrific atrocities being perpetrated by both sides. The gradual trend, however, was for the inexorable expansion of the territory held by the Nationalists, who ultimately won in 1939. The Nationalists under Franco had been able to overcome or at least put aside their internal differences in favor of military supremacy, and they were able to form alliances with and receive substantial support in the form of both personnel and materiel from the fascist regimes of Germany and Italy. The Republicans were supported primarily by Russia, the Spanish communists gradually becoming the principle force on the Republican side (not without almost continual fierce fighting among the various communist movements inside the Republic as well as intense struggles among all the forces on the left), but the lack of unity among the government ideologies contributed to their relative inefficiency. France, Britain, and the US continually vacillated in their intentions and attitudes, sometimes seeming to support one side and then another, sometimes attempting to blockade Spain so that outside aid could not be brought into the country, often giving vocal support to the Republic while secretly trying to undermine the communists, sometimes hoping to undermine the fascists on the other side. All this was being played out in the context of moves by Hitler in other parts of Europe, the western Allies never having a very coherent plan of response to the Spanish conflict. Countless individual citizens of other countries flocked to Spain, mostly on the Republican side, forming International Brigades that played a substantial if ultimately unsuccessful role in the fighting.

Thomas is exhaustive in his presentation of the details and leaders (both civilian and military) on both sides of the war, and the reader needs a very clear head to keep them all straight. Nor is Thomas shy about providing masses of statistics regarding every conceivable aspect of the conflict. The many maps provided are essential and clear. Thomas has helpfully clarified events subsequent to the war and includes a couple of final chapters summarizing the causes, events, and consequences of the struggle.

This book is clear and inclusive, a solid and satisfying account of the Spanish Civil War. Not every detail of such a conflict can of course be included, even when alluded to. There are questions and issues that I find I want to pursue in greater detail, eg the killing of the poet Garcia Lorca, but for such things I shall have to turn elsewhere. For those readers preferring historical fiction, this book is probably not for them, personal narratives of the people involved instead requiring biographies, memoirs, or novels. Thomas’ book, though, is a good place to start for a comprehensive understand of the War’s events. Many readers will be content to go no further.

T. Fowler says

The story of this civil war, as told by Hugh Thomas, amazed me. Full of drama, courage and atrocity, idealism and deceit. It constantly surprises me how human societies can suddenly collapse, tearing themselves apart, and so easily resort to killing others whose beliefs differ. Is there a parallel to the current civil war in Syria? Where a rebel side seeks to overthrow a government which has lost touch with its people, but external volunteers enter to distort the picture. I knew little of the Spanish Civil War before this book, but it really has informed me well.

Christopher Saunders says

For decades, Hugh Thomas's **The Spanish Civil War** (first written in 1961 and periodically expanded and updated until Thomas's death) has been the standard English-language history of that cataclysmic conflict. Despite its forbidding length (1,100 pages in its last revision) and the topic's sheer scope, it's briskly written and surprisingly accessible. Thomas proves as adept sketching the war's convoluted origins (a break-down in Spanish society caused by labor unrest, disastrous foreign wars and an ineffectual monarchy that made Franco's reaction seem appealing), diplomatic dimensions (from the Republic's doomed attempts to court foreign support to Franco's easy alliance with Italy and Nazi Germany) and the messy military maneuvers. To a relative novice like me, the main thing standing out in Thomas's account is the utter brutality of both sides, with civilians regularly massacred, raped and otherwise mistreated in savage ways more expected from feud turf wars than a modern, "civilized" nation. Thomas is less perceptive addressing Spain's internal politics, with a simplified view of the different Leftist factions backing the Republicans, reducing key events like the liquidation of the Trotskyist POUM to a footnote, and occasionally lapsing into Cold War sloganeering about the Communist-progressive alliance. For all that, it's a rich and engaging portrait that holds up remarkably well considering subsequent scholarship and the minefields involved in analyzing it.

William2.1 says

The Spanish Civil War was the proving ground for much of the technology (tanks, aviation, artillery, etc.) used in World War II. This alone makes an account of it essential reading. The only one-volume history of war that I can compare Mr. Thomas's book to is Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and American in Vietnam*. The books are structurally different. Sheehan uses the central figure of Vann as a kind of biographical spine on which to build his history. *The Spanish Civil War* has no such core narrative thread. The story, in fact, is much more heterogeneous, since Thomas is interested in bringing the quantitative specifics of the war into the English language: planes, artillery, personnel, Italian, German and Russian contributions, etc. It is, in fact, extraordinarily detailed. Even actors of marginal significance, it seems, are named and their roles described. Sheehan, on the other hand, writing about an American war which played out on television in many private living rooms, has less such quantification to do. I think the saddest part of Thomas's book is the story it tells of the murderous dissension among the anarchists, communists, non-Stalinist Marxists (POUM) and socialists of the Republic.

Their ideological imperatives seemed far more important to them than the fascist threat. "The carnival of treachery and rotteness," Ernest Hemingway had called it. Add to that the fragmentation of Republican Spain into Basque Country, Catalonia and an elected government which moved from Madrid to Valencia and then to autonomous Catalonia -- where it was perceived as a virtual *coup d'etat* -- and one wonders how those on the Republic side ever hoped to win. The Russians, for whom *everything* was political, were the worst. Their persecutions of the POUM were horrible. They thought they could run the war through collectivist

committees. The anarchists (no angels themselves; they burnt churches and killed ecclesiastics by the hundreds) were often shot at the front because they refused to take communist orders. Lastly, the hypocritical pretense known as the Non-Intervention Committee must be mentioned. Germany and Italy were supplying the nationalists with war material, as were the Russians the Republic, while at the same time sitting on the committee! Everyone seemed to know this but it allowed the British to turn a blind eye. How *convenient*. Chamberlain and Daladier's appeasement of Hitler at Munich was just around the corner.

David Steakley says

Wow. I had no idea. I thought I knew something about the Spanish Civil War, but I knew nothing. It was fascinating, the story of the anarchist left captured the government through democratic elections, and how the government's attempted adherence to the ideology was such a devastating handicap in the war against the falangists.

the conflicted sentiments on the part of the UK and the US over which side they should support, if either, reminds me of the current situation the US faces in the conflict in Syria and Iraq.

A must read.

Czarny Pies says

This is a great book which I feel has now been superseded by Antony Beevor's excellent history of the Spanish War. If you are uncomfortable allowing Antony Beevor, who is often accused of being right wing, to form your views on Spain, then read this work by Thomas.

I read both thirty years apart and found both worthwhile.

Zebardast Zebardast says

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David says

The Spanish Civil War is often read as a backdrop for the much larger Second World War and this is a solid approach to this regional conflict, but the conflict itself has had a much larger historical and cultural impact on the world of today than many readers may believe. For this reason, and many others, this remains a seminal moment [1936-39] in Western and world history.

Hugh Thomas's The Spanish Civil War, 50th Anniversary edition, remains the best, if exhaustive [1,116 pages -- Kindle Edition], single-volume history of the war. There are other good histories but this is the

narrative history many readers continue to return to, though it was originally published in 1961.

The reading experience is smooth; the research impeccable; the detail stunning; the historical insight subtle.

For readers looking to read only one book on this conflict, this would be the book to read.

Recommended for students of 20th Century European conflict and ideology

Rating: 5 out of 5 stars

Jim says

We tend to think of the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 merely as a run-up to the Second World War. It was that, as the Germans and Italians not only supplied the Fascists, but fought side by side with them. On the Republican side, the Soviet Communists supplied the Republicans and provided volunteers through the Comintern. Unfortunately for the losing side, Stalin was at the time purging the officers of the Russian army, resulting in the death of such great innovators as Marshal Tukachevsky as well as a large part of the Russian officer corps. Russia was to pay heavily for the timing of this madness: In 1941, the Nazis invaded Russia, and the Russians lost upwards of 20 million of its citizens.

Spain was a much smaller theater of war. In his *The Spanish Civil War*, author Hugh Thomas estimates the total war dead at 600,000. Franco's German assistance was of vital assistance to his cause, but the Communist assistance was affected by factionalism between Stalinist, Trotskyist, Anarchist, and Socialist groups who saw one another as political rivals.

Also fighting on the losing side were the International Brigades, including forces from Britain, France, the United States, Poland, Bulgaria, Belgium -- in fact, all of non-fascist Europe.

I read the original 1961 edition of this work, because my sympathies are solidly on the Republican side; and Thomas grew more rigidly conservative as he aged, becoming in the end Baron Thomas of Swynnerton and receiving honors from the Franco side.

This is by no means a quick read, but it is well written with an excellent bibliography, index, and appendices. Some of the maps, especially the one of the Fascist campaign in Catalonia, are confusing.

P J says

UKIP makes me want to vomit, although the BNP is worse. Reading again Hugh Thomas's gripping history, I was more moved than I expected to be by the great tragedy which befell Spain in the late 30s and which the liberal democracies allowed to happen by their fear of provoking fascist Italy and Germany.

Putting one's country first whatever the circumstances is a peculiar thing to do. To put one's own vision of what that country means before any other considerations crosses the borders of mental illness. There can be fewer more ridiculous figures than the childish and poisonous, maimed and bizarre, general Millan Astray shouting the Spanish Legionaries nonsensical motto – 'long live death!' (When, in the great hall of the University of Salamanca, the philosopher Miguel de Unamuno pointed out how stupid this was, he could

vary – ‘death to intellectuals, long live death!’ he cried.)

The republic was not innocent, there were bad men, and bad things were done; but these were not policy. For Franco and the nationalists murder was policy. But the right was disciplined: anarchist units were handicapped by the necessity of holding meetings before going into action. Squabbling on the left was rife and sometimes murderous.

Thomas’s book is long, at over a thousand pages, but is so worth reading again. I was gripped enough to suspend disbelief (or do I mean belief) and to hope as I turned the pages, that the ending would be other than that which I knew it to be. Seventy years is a long time and the right all over Europe still hopes that the rest of us will forget.

The International Brigades are rightly famous and this month Spain will give the elderly survivors Spanish passports. These people fought for what they believed in rather than for their country. The Garibaldi battalion fought much better than the regular Italian units on the nationalists’ side did. (Germans, of course, were different and the Condor Legion made a major contribution to the nationalist victory: Spain was the Wehrmacht’s training ground for Poland, France and Russia.). Largely by the influence of McCarthy and his henchmen, the Abraham Lincoln battalion was declared subversive in 1946. European democracy did not behave like that, (we should not forget Greece however). Those of us who believe that Europe is more important than its individual states should read this book. Read it, and vote against UKIP and its ludicrous identification with a nationalist pseudo-history and false Churchillian imagery.

Olethros says

-Su edición supuso muchísimas cosas.-

Género. Historia.

Lo que nos cuenta. El libro La Guerra Civil Española (publicación original: The Spanish Civil War, 1961) es un acercamiento al conflicto en España en 1936 que retrocede en el tiempo para analizar situaciones previas y que se extiende un poco más de su final para plantear ciertas consecuencias.

¡Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

Erik Graff says

After Mom left Dad she developed a medical condition which she could not pay for--despite the fact she worked full-time at a hospital--and had to move back to Norway where medical care was available for free, even for a native daughter who had taken on U.S. citizenship years before. I visited her there upon graduating from seminary and met the fellow, Egil, whom she was ultimately to wed.

Egil Karlsen, like many Norwegians, had a condo on the Mediterranean shore of Spain, not too far west of Malaga. For the rest of Mom's life we were to get together either there, occasionally, or, annually, when she and he would come to visit her family and friends in the States. Ultimately, I visited Spain three times: once with Linda, once alone and once with my brother Fin.

Prior to the first visit I decided to read up on modern Spanish history and, scanning the bookshelves, came upon Thomas' *The Spanish Civil War*. It was an ideal choice as it covers much more than the war itself, going way back in explaining the political, cultural and class divisions of the country which led to the conflict. The period of the thirties was pretty familiar to me in its North American and European aspects, but the focus on Spain was new.

Surprisingly, in Spain I found few young people interested or very knowledgeable about their recent history. Andalusia appeared to be pretty political, judging by the stickers and painted slogans (mostly left wing in those parts) all over the place, but the best conversation I had about the civil war was with an older taxi driver. The only younger person who ever got into the subject with me was a female lawyer I spent an afternoon with in Madrid while changing planes.

Jack says

Of the three histories of the Spanish Civil War I've read, Thomas's is the most comprehensive and balanced. He seems not to have an ideological axe to grind, which is impressive considering this war was inherently ideological. He focuses on the social and political causes of the war, the diplomatic and international consequences of it, and the military maneuvers that eventually led to Franco's victory. If you read one history of the Spanish Civil War, you wouldn't be wrong to choose this one.

Brian says

Hugh Thomas account of the Spanish Civil War is the most thorough version of the events written to date. His writing style makes the reader believe the entire account could be fiction. It is very easy to read and you hardly feel like you are reading history at all. The Spanish Civil War is one of the most devastating conflicts of the 20th century. It is the precursor to World War II and showcased as well as trained some of Germany, Italy and Russia's top talent. The sheer devastation of tactics involved bullied a civilian population and decimated a country. The rise of Francisco Franco and his victory over the communists was made possible by fascist intervention. The democracies of the world worked hard to try and effect a peace but they were unsuccessful against the determination of the fascists and the communists to prolong the conflict. This is a complicated conflict to understand but Hugh Thomas tries to simplify it as much as he can. This is the best start to understanding the Spanish Civil War and for those who want to understand how World War II began.
