



# The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge (Text Only)

*Paul Preston*

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## **The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge (Text Only) Paul Preston**

A rousing and full-blooded account of the Spanish Civil War and the rise to prominence of General Franco.

No modern conflict has inflamed the passions of both civilians and intellectuals as much as the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39. Burned into our collective historical consciousness, it not only prefigured the imminent Second World War but also ushered in a new and horrific form of warfare that would come to define the twentieth century. At the same time it echoed the revolutionary aspirations of millions of Europeans and Americans after the painful years of the Great Depression.

In this authoritative history, Paul Preston vividly recounts the political ideals and military horrors of the Spanish Civil War – including the controversial bombing of Guernica – and tracks the emergence of General Franco's brutal but extraordinarily durable fascist dictatorship.

## **The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge (Text Only) Details**

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# **From Reader Review The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge (Text Only) for online ebook**

## **Dale says**

This is a high-level history of the Spanish civil war, focusing mostly on the political and social aspects of the war. Preston is, naturally, quite sympathetic to the Republican cause, and offers detailed and compelling evidence of the mass murder perpetrated by Franco's nationalist forces.

The stance taken toward the civil war by Britain, France, and the US is quite revealing of the inherently corporate- and imperialist bias of those governments at the time. The League of Nations voted a 'non-intervention' pact, which was blatantly ignored by Germany and Italy and basically ignored by the Soviet Union (though the USSR never offered enough aid to allow the Republican forces to win). Britain and France turned a blind eye to the German and Italian intervention, and enforced an embargo against the Spanish Republic, but not against the nationalist forces. Obviously British and French corporate interests felt safer with a right-wing military dictatorship than with a participatory democracy - especially if Communists were allowed to participate.

It doesn't take hindsight to understand that Britain and France would have been far better off supporting the Republic. It is even possible that a strong response to fascism in Spain would have allowed them to circumvent Nazi expansionism. But, as we know now, capitalism has an easy relationship with fascism, and a very uneasy relationship with democracy - witness the hysteria and propaganda coming from the US media regarding Venezuela.

The fascist forces were fully supported by the Catholic church. In fact, there was the spectacle of priests and bishops calling for the mass slaughter of labor leaders, liberals, socialists, and communists. And it was the support of the Catholic church that drove the US government to not support the Republic. Of course, despite its proclaimed adherence to the non-intervention pact, the US was well aware that US oil companies were delivering oil to the nationalists, and did nothing about it. Profit is profit, after all.

Franco finally died 37 years after the end of the civil war. He's still dead. And, sadly, so are some 150,000 Spaniards executed by the nationalists.

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## **Rob says**

It's quite frankly impossible for me to believe that anybody could have carried this off better. Paul Preston is editor of the Routledge/Cañada Blanch Studies on Contemporary Spain book series and here proves himself to be the doyen of scholarship of the topic. Yes, it's heavily angled towards the Left in terms of sympathy but to complain of that would be to complain about Human Rights themselves - I find it chilling that so many Spaniards will still praise Franco for his 'strong leadership'.

That said, Franco is portrayed very much as a follower in the conflict, less ideologically driven than his forebears, stolid and simply in favour of maintaining the centuries long status quo of Spanish conservatism. Nor is the Left's inability to unite glossed over - a sad tale that continues to this day the world over.

The narrative is rapid with the reasons for the failure of the Republic to hold on to power well drawn and the story of the War itself compellingly told. Especially strong is the section on the motivations of the European powers - Neville Chamberlain and the British Tory establishment are portrayed witheringly, Mussolini as an incompetent and Stalin as an arch cynic.

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### **Nacho Martín says**

En general bien. Tiene cosicas, como llamar a Alcoy "ciudad portuaria", que te dejan la mosca detrás de la oreja sobre el rigor del conjunto.

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### **Paul Maynard says**

Shocking tale of warfare. Got to be a lesson for all.

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### **Sergio Armisén says**

No está mal, este es un gran escritor y un buen conocedor de esa etapa de la historia española, pero el libro a mi entender comete dos errores: el primero es que, para tratarse de una crónica de una guerra, Preston pasa olímpicamente de los acontecimientos militares, centrandose fundamentalmente en el tema político (que por otro lado, es su punto fuerte) El segundo es que elabora poco, se salta meses enteros de acontecimientos y, aunque se agradece la concisión y el "ir al grano", creo que en este caso se ha pasado de de frenada. Por otro lado es bien conocido hacia dónde se inclinan las simpatías de Preston, así que abstenerse revisionistas, pro-nacionales, nostálgicos del franquismo y etc... mejor os leéis un libro de Pío Moa.

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### **AC says**

Fascinating, intelligent, compulsively readable, up-to-date (get the third, revised edition; 2006), a marvelous introduction to the Spanish Civil War. I had read Hugh Thomas' book many, many years ago, while Franco was still alive. But I had no idea how utterly sordid an affair this was.

Some of the most frightful aspects of the Argentine Dirty War find their antecedent in Franco's determination to eliminate all of his ideological opponents.

On this deathbed, Franco said that he forgives all those who thought of themselves as his enemies. He had no remorse.

One particularly interesting aspect of this book is Preston's quite plausible explanation for the Communist opposition to POUM and the Anarchists. According to Preston, the debate was over which should take precedence -- the War or the Revolution. Moscow joined with the moderate socialists (PSOE) and with the Left (bourgeois) Republicans (against the romantic anarchists) in realizing that the War had first to be won, or else there would be no Revolution. Moreover, the hostility of the French and British Right to a Revolutionary Spain meant that Moscow didn't dare allow the Civil War to radicalize, lest England and France join with the

Axis powers -- a very real possibility in 1936 to prevent it.

Of course, this does seem like something of a whitewash of Stalin and the NKVD.

At any rate, a fascinating book. It includes a long bibliographical essay (25 pages of small print) at the end.

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### **Neal says**

A quick read. Preston's focus is on the holocaust carried out by Franco's forces against the Left in Spain. But the book also does a good job of highlighting the role that the Catholic Church and the British ruling class played in supporting the fascists and in explaining Franco's military strategy. Rather than seek a quick win, which at certain points was within his grasp, Franco chose a methodical conquest of the country and gave his forces plenty of time to "purge" captured territory of the reds. The constant descriptions of mass executions and torture carried out by the nationalists is overwhelming.

The main drawback of the book from the perspective of a red reader is an insufficient attention to the political drama inside the Republic. Preston does an ok job of laying out the main debate, between the Communists, liberals, and right socialists on the one side and the anarchists, POUM, and left socialists on the other, over whether Spain needed to lead a conventional war effort that preserved the capitalist system (the position of the former) or a revolutionary war that would mobilize workers and peasants to fight (the position of the latter). However there's not enough here to assess the two sides. There is also very little discussion of why a guerrilla war did not occur behind Franco's lines.

In general the Communists come off as scum, which seems pretty accurate. The anarchists as incompetents, which also seems pretty accurate considering they had no coordinated strategy. I'm POUM-curious by the end of the book but again, not enough material to really know what was going on.

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### **Silas Engler Barcelos says**

Brutal, imprescindible. Debería ser obligatorio leer libros como este.

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### **Luke says**

A decent starting point, but there's far more to read after this.

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### **Jane Massy says**

Considered the best historian of the Spanish Civil war, Preston is thorough readable and passionate about his subject. The story is shocking and a reminder that the elites will do anything to maintain their status. Preston places Franco - justifiably- with the leading monsters of the 20th century, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin etc

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## **Morris Flaum says**

### **Detailed history of the Spanish Civil War**

This book provided a very detailed description of the Civil War. It notably described the roles of the Spanish but also that of Italy and Germany. The atrocities described were shocking given that both sides were countrymen.

One criticism is that one could easily get bogged down in some of the detail.

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## **Stevie says**

Far too short on detail for me. Plus I find Preston too much of an apologist for the Spanish Communist Party in regard to its actions during the Spanish Civil War. I really did not agree with his generalised opinions on the Anarchists and other Leftist factions either but then again I am extremely biased in that regard. I agree with the author that thanks to the Spanish Communist Party Madrid held out for so long but there was no excuse for their later conduct against the other Leftist factions in the Republic. Still an interesting read though and I agree with him that the farce of non-intervention by the Western 'democracies' cost the Republic dear. I also found the author very insightful on the characteristics of the cold, calculating and mediocre General Franco and one of the positive's of the book is Preston's passionate Anti-Fascism.

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## **Jack says**

Preston is extremely sympathetic to the Communists, and it shows in this book. Perhaps that sympathy comes more from his antipathy towards Franco and his regime, which is entirely understandable - I'm no fan of what Franco did during and after the war. Preston seems to let that color his entire understanding of the war, however, to the point that he makes flimsy rationalizations for Communist plots to eradicate their socialist, anarchist, and revolutionary communist opposition at the expense of fighting the actual enemy.

Yes, the Communists were organized and, from the Republic's point of view, represented the best chance of defeating Franco, since the Communists also guaranteed aid from the Soviet Union (as much as that could occur, at least). That doesn't excuse their obsession with consolidating power, to the point of sabotaging the overall war effort. Preston, however, disagrees.

If you're looking for a balanced account of the war, this isn't the book to read. If Stalinist apologetics suit your fancy, though, you're in for a treat.

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## **Ronald B. Felts says**

### **Might make a decent textbook**

I waded through the first 150 pages of this book and finally gave up. It was well researched but for something to enjoy while relaxing it missed the target.

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## **Diego says**

Hay que ver lo poco que cuesta enterarse de las cosas. En poco más de una semana y con un mínimo esfuerzo he aprendido más acerca de nuestra historia reciente que en los últimos 10 años. Soy consciente de que eso no dice mucho en favor de mis conocimientos previos, pero es que no podía seguir debatiendo sobre república, monarquía, comunismo, fascismo, nacionalismo y todos los demás 'ismos' con los que se llenan la boca hasta las pescaderas, sin tener una mínima base sobre la que asentar mis ideas. Llegados a este punto parece que el periódico ya no basta.

El libro es corto y directo al grano, si bien es cierto que, como nos aclara el autor en el prólogo, la imparcialidad brilla por su ausencia. De todos modos aún no me considero lo suficientemente leído como para juzgar la magnitud de ese sesgo, de modo que no me queda más remedio que leer alguna obra de Pío Moa o Stanley Payne para equilibrar la balanza. César Vidal queda descartado directamente por pertenecer al género de ficción.

Pues eso, una lectura fácil y de mucho provecho!

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