

The Spanish Civil War

Outline

I. Background

- A. Technically this was a war of military rebels versus the legitimate government
 - a. In actuality there were over some 20 different groups fighting for their own agendas.
 - b. There were wars within wars, and a full scale left wing revolution in addition to a right wing rebellion.
 - c. In other words we are going to study a very complex war.
- B. Understanding this war requires some familiarity with Spanish history.

II. Spanish History (A primer)

- A. All modern Spanish history starts in 1492 – The Reconquista
- B. Spanish society is controlled by three groups
 - a. The Army
 - b. The Church
 - c. The Landowners (Royalty at first; eventually the wealthy)
- C. Spain builds the first modern world-wide empire
 - a. New world resources
 - b. The world's best army (The Tercios)
 - c. Reaches it's peak under Charles V and Phillip II
- D. 17th & 18th Centuries
 - a. Wars, poor finances, rotten rulers, and bad luck combine to place the empire in a downward spiral.
 - b. The War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714)
 - c. The War of Spanish Independence (1808-1814)
 - d. Spain is now a poor second rate nation
 - e. It is still being run by arch-conservative army, church, and land-owners.
- E. 19th century
 - a. Governance is disaster after disaster.
 - b. Some effort at industrialization

- c. A political (urban) left wing starts to develop (to the horror of the army, church, and land-owners).

F. 20th century

- a. Spanish American War (1898)
- b. DeRivera and some recovery (1923-1931)
- c. The elections of 1931
 - i. Alfonso XIII flees the country
 - ii. 2d Republic is declared

III. The Slide to War

- A. 2d Republic reforms cause conservative heartburn
- B. Politics becomes poisonously polarized
- C. CEDA wins power in 1933
 - a. The “Black Two Years”
- D. Election of February 1936
 - a. Popular front wins back power
 - b. Army decides to “save” Spain
 - c. Plans a country wide rebellion for July 1936.
- E. The rebellion fails but divides the country and makes a civil war inevitable.

IV. The War

- A. Outside interference
 - a. Germany & Italy help the Nationalists
 - b. Soviet Union helps the Republicans
 - c. Britain, France, et al (27 countries), attempt non-intervention.
- B. The Naval War
 - a. The government retains more ships but the Nationalists retain better organization.
 - b. Blockades by both side (Nationalists do better)
- C. The War in 1936 (Nationalists do not do well)
 - a. Madrid was the key strategic goal
 - b. The Nationalist Northern Offensive
 - c. The drive on Madrid/The Siege of Madrid
- D. The War in 1937 (Nationalists start to establish dominance)
 - a. Malaga (Obtain a southern port) Feb ‘37
 - b. Jamara (Another attempt at Madrid) Feb ‘37

- c. Guadalajara (Last major Republican success) Mar '37
- d. The war in the north (April – October)
- e. The “Barcelona May Days” (revolution on the left)
- f. The Nationalist start to dominate
 - i. Brunete (July '37)
 - ii. Belchite (Aug-Sept '37)
 - iii. Teruel (Dec '37 – Feb '38)
- E. The War in 1938 (The Nationalists take charge)
 - a. Aragon Offensive (Mar-Apr '38)
 - b. Levant Offensive (Mar-July '38)
 - c. Ebro (July-Nov '38)
- F. The War ends
 - a. The Catalonia Offensive (Dec '37 – Feb '38)
 - b. Revolution in Madrid (Casado's Coup – early March)
 - c. The Final Offensive (March 26 – April 1)
 - i. Complete collapse of the Republican Army
 - ii. Franco declares the end of the war.
- G. Spain in the Second World War
 - a. Non-belligerent
 - b. Hendaye Conference
 - c. Strong support for Germany
- H. Results
 - a. Franco in complete charge (Military dictatorship)
 - b. Guerrilla War into the 1950's
 - c. Juan Carlos declared king in 1975 (After Franco's death)
 - d. Elections and a return to democracy in 1977.
 - e. Total loses \approx 800,000 people & \$4 trillion
 - f. Civil War at its worse
 - i. Red & White terror
 - ii. Nationalist retribution after the war
- I. Lessons.

Bibliography

1. The Battle for Spain, The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939; Anthony Beevor (1982): Probably the best single volume in English of this conflict. Very readable and well researched.
2. The Spanish Civil War; Hugh Thomas: First published in 1961 but extensively revised in 1999 this is longer and denser than Beevor's book with much more detail (1000 pages versus 500). It is an excellent study however if you want to plow through it.
3. The Passionate War, The Narrative History of the Spanish Civil War; Peter Wyden (1983): This is a more personal account based largely on interviews and personal recollections. Highly readable.
4. Empire, How Spain became a world power 1492-1763; Henry Kamen (2003): Easily the best book on the rise of the Spanish empire available in English. It is particularly good on the reign of Phillip II.
5. A Concise History of Spain; William Phillips and Carla Phillips (2016): While the whole book is an excellent treatment of Spain's complex history, chapters 4 through 7 are directly applicable to this course.
5. Europe, A History; Norman Davies (1996): Professor Davies (University of London) has written a huge and comprehensive history of Europe (1300 pages). Although Chapters 7 & 8 cover all of Europe from 1450 to 1789, he does a wonderful job of showing how Spain rose to dominance and then fell to a second-rate power.
6. The Cypresses Believe in God; Jose Maria Gironella (1953): This is a **novel** and I am therefore breaking my own rules. However it is wonderful. It is the story of a Spanish family on the eve of the war and does a brilliant job of showing how the Spanish people stumbled into this disastrous war. A copy was given to me by a professor of Spanish Literature (it was translated in 1955) and it is widely considered the greatest novel of the war (apologies to Hemmingway).

© 2003 Map-of-Spain.co.uk





Players

- Republicans

- Popular Front (left wing government party)
- Elements of the Spanish Army
- CNT/FAI (Anarchist)
- UGT(Socialist)
- ERC/EC (Catalonists)
- EG (Basques)
- PG (Galicians)
- POUM ("Pure" Communists)
- Stalinist Communist
- International Brigades
 - ≈ 53 countries
- Soviet Union
- Mexico

- Nationalists

- CEDA (Right wing party)*
- UME (Military Union)*
- Falange (Spanish Fascists)*
- Carlists (Bourbon Monarchists)*
- Elements of the Spanish Army
- Alfonsists (Monarchists)*
- Army of Africa
- Italy
- Germany
- Portugal
- Foreign Volunteers

* Combined into one party under Franco in 1937 (Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS)