

The Spanish Civil War in “World History” Textbooks: Limitations and Possibilities

For those of us who switched from teaching Western Civilization to World History, there inevitably have been significant topics that we eliminated as we embraced the broader curriculum. When I taught Western Civ in the late 1980s, I had students discuss the Gracchus brothers in ancient Rome, but when I started teaching World History, I just mentioned their proto-socialist message—and soon dropped them altogether. Jean-Paul Marat’s role (and gruesome death) in the French Revolution, Chartism in Britain, and the theological differences between Martin Luther and John Calvin all followed the same trajectory. Another topic which temporarily dropped off my World History syllabus, but which I brought back as too important to ignore, is the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39.

My teaching experience regarding the Spanish Civil War parallels, to an extent, that of major textbooks. Especially in contrast to Western Civ texts, an intensive analysis of a large selection of world history textbooks published in the past four decades finds that there is often a paucity of information about this devastating conflict. Moreover, some of the information about it that these world history textbooks present might be confusing to many students in introductory college-level survey courses and in high school classes. Fortunately, a range of resources is available that can compensate in classroom use for these deficits in many of our textbooks.

This essay begins by highlighting the insights of several Western Civ textbooks and an early world history text that accord this event the importance it merits. It proceeds with a close reading of prominent recent world history textbooks designed for introductory college and Advanced Placement high school courses, noting their positive features, problematic aspects, and omissions with regard to the Spanish Civil War. The second part of the essay, which incorporates, too, some specialized studies about Spain in the 1930s, explores important world history themes that the conflict embodied: the nature of revolutions; the role of the Catholic Church; the concept of “internationalism”; the Soviet role in world

affairs; the increasingly destructive nature of warfare due to mechanization and ideology; the integration of Latin America into global developments in the 1930s; and ramifications of colonialism. (Additional themes, such as the rise of fascism, are discussed in the context of their inclusion in or omission from textbooks.) I argue for including in world history courses Spain’s relevance to these topics, even in the face of the numerous topics competing for time and space in our already overcrowded curriculum, and I conclude by describing specific resources available for classroom use at both the secondary and college levels.¹

I also hope to illuminate, through this comparative survey of this specific topic in world history textbooks, the need for greater clarity by many authors and editors in the presentation of material for students who most likely lack background knowledge, and even familiarity with terminology, on such events. Such a need undoubtedly extends beyond this topic, and so perhaps this study will encourage others to analyze, critique, and make constructive suggestions for textbook revisions on other topics as well.

I am not a specialist on the Spanish Civil War; professors teaching survey courses must cover topics outside of our research specialization. However, my interest does derive from a personal connection and from longstanding political concerns. My mother’s first cousin served as a member of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, as one of the 40,000 or so volunteers from around the world in the International Brigades (IB’s) who fought in Spain, unsuccessfully, against the forces of fascism.² Moreover, the struggle on behalf of the Spanish Republic in the late 1930s serves as an important historical marker of the attempted defense of democracy by left-wing forces from around the world.

In my case, the change from teaching Western Civ to world history occurred as I traded my high school social studies job in the late 1980s and early 1990s for a university position. Both courses were mandatory, for 10th graders and first-year students, respectively. While one could expect college students to handle more sophisticated concepts, there are, of course, fewer contact hours with such students than in high school, along with a higher student to teacher ratio. Moreover, as one strives to reach the present in the second half of any Western Civ or world history survey course, there are simply more issues to cover today than when I began teaching. So, in addition to the broader world history curriculum, there are other reasons material must be cut or presented more quickly.

Historians have long regarded the fall of the Spanish Republic in 1939 as a key link in the chain of aggressive actions by Axis powers which culminated in the outbreak of World War II. For example, the sub-sections in the chapter on “Drift to War, 1919–1939,” in L.S. Stavrianos’ *The World Since 1500*, are typical among textbooks published from the 1960s to the 1980s: “Japan Invades Manchuria; Diplomatic Reactions to Hitler; Italy Conquers Ethiopia; Rome-Berlin Axis; Spanish Civil War; End of Austria and Czechoslovakia; Coming of War.”³ Indeed, with Mussolini’s Italy deploying its re-built army on behalf of Spain’s insurgent general, Francisco Franco, and Hitler’s Germany testing its modern airplanes

in aerial bombardment techniques, also aiding Franco, many textbooks have called the Spanish Civil War a “rehearsal” or “dress rehearsal” for World War II.⁴

The Spanish Civil War in Older Textbooks

The best of the older textbooks, Western Civ and world history alike, both at secondary and college levels, illuminate for students key issues in the Spanish Civil War. These textbooks remain worthwhile background reading for teachers and professors, as recently-published world history textbooks too often give cursory and imprecise treatments of the conflict.

In what is still among the best textbook treatments of the Spanish Civil War, first published in 1950, R.R. Palmer, the eminent scholar of eighteenth century revolutions, not surprisingly examines what occurred beginning with the 1931 proclamation of the second Spanish Republic through its revolutionary goals: elimination of the monarchy; separation of church and state; confiscation of extensive religious property holdings; redistribution of land from large estate owners to the peasantry. Palmer, joined in the 1965 and subsequent editions of *A History of the Modern World* by co-author Joel Colton, characterized this revolution as “rather mild,” although emphasizing that its break with the Catholic Church dissolved the powerful Jesuit order and removed education from “clerical control.” As in prior revolutions in France and Mexico, for example, difficulties in accomplishing these goals led to instability and to exacerbation of differences between radicals and moderates. The tenuous alliance of the revolution’s supporters—liberals, socialists, communists, and anarchists—led to a narrow victory for this Popular Front in the February 1936 elections, which Franco’s insurrection five months later sought to overturn. In the ensuing war the formal Nonintervention Agreement of Britain, France, the United States, and others “proved a fiasco,” as Germany and Italy poured in equipment, planes, and troops to support Franco. While “geographical reasons” prevented the Soviet Union from sending troops to help the Republic, it did send war materiel and advisers, and “thousands” of leftist volunteers “from the United States and Europe” fought alongside the Loyalists. Thus, “Spain became the battlefield of contending ideologies.”⁵

Palmer and Colton identify several consequences of the civil war which elevate its importance in world history. Not only was it “the most devastating war in all Spanish history,” with over 600,000 lives lost and “accompanied by extreme cruelties on both sides,” but military innovations, especially by German and Italian planes, prefigured “the greater struggle soon to come” in World War II. “The fascist bombings of Guernica, Madrid, and Barcelona horrified the democratic world,” they write. Moreover, the war in Spain was key to the “Rome-Berlin Axis” and the German-Italian-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact, both of which were consummated after Hitler and Mussolini intervened in Spain. Indeed, these authors point out, whereas the Italian dictator had prevented Germany’s absorption



Image 1: Republican-held territory in blue, Nationalist-held territory in pink, in October 1937, in the midst of the civil war. Note that Republicans held the two largest cities, Madrid and Barcelona. Source: In the Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Spanish_Civil_War_in_October_1937.png

of Austria in 1934, by 1938, when he was Hitler’s ally in Spain, Mussolini allowed the Anschluss to proceed.

There are, nevertheless, four areas in which Palmer and Colton could be more precise. They only imply that German and Italian military intervention was key to Franco’s military victory; they should be more explicit. While they conclude that Franco after March 1939 “established an authoritarian, fascist-type rule over the exhausted country,” the re-impoposition of Catholic control over education and the end of the short-lived period of religious freedom should be noted, as one consequence of counterrevolutionary reaction. The home countries of international volunteers fighting for the Republic extended beyond the United States and Europe, as we will see. Finally, given that Palmer and Colton—correctly—highlight the “fiasco” of the Western democracies’ nonintervention, their conclusion that “[t]he Spanish Civil War split the world into fascist and antifascist camps” could be puzzling to students.

For a textbook account, by contrast, that does *not* consider Spain's revolution to be "rather mild," see the biting analysis, first published in 1961, by H. Stuart Hughes, an iconoclastic non-Communist but left-leaning historian. Hughes highlights the radical goals and actions of the anarchists, based in Catalonia, and the Communists' "pragmatic and even cynical policy" of forestalling revolution in favor of "military efficiency and international respectability," which led to "terror against leftist dissidents." Franco's Nationalists, meanwhile, "murdered wherever they went" and "slaughtered more than the Republicans," such that the war, in the end, was "a class struggle in which the rich defeated the poor."⁶

In a standard Western Civ text first published in the 1970s, Mortimer Chambers and his co-authors remedy some of Palmer and Colton's deficiencies, while giving short shrift to the nature of the social revolution embodied by the Republic.⁷ Although Chambers et al. had earlier described at length the reform efforts of France's contemporaneous Popular Front, they present the contending forces in Spain without explanation of what its Republican government tried to accomplish. Nevertheless, *The Western Experience* in its two full pages on the conflict includes key insights that help students understand its significance. First, it emphasizes that weapons and advisers from Hitler's Germany and troops from Mussolini's Italy were decisive in Franco's victory. Second, given the scale of German and Italian intervention, British and French "neutrality" (the United States is not mentioned here) represented merely a legal fiction: it "starved the republic, honoring international law while undermining it." Third, while the Soviets provided some aid to the Republicans from 1936 to 1938, and Spanish Communists became increasingly influential in the Loyalist government and army as a result, the Soviet cutoff of such aid in 1938 contributed to the government's defeat just months later. Fourth, the details in the single sentence on the IB's humanize their participants and allude to an Italian anti-fascist resistance: "thousands of idealistic young men . . . went to Spain to fight as volunteers in national units like the Lincoln Brigade and the Garibaldi Brigade (which had its greatest moment when it defeated troops of the regular Italian army sent by Mussolini)." Fifth, *The Western Experience* notes that Franco, in power, "restored the power of the Church over education."

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Chambers et al. also emphasize more fully than did Palmer and Colton the war's destructiveness, which they calculate as having taken "more than a million Spanish lives, many at the hands of firing squads and mobs." To be sure, accounts of "atrocities on both sides" polarized Europe and the U.S. "between left and right," but these authors note especially that the "bombing of the town of Guernica by German aircraft in 1937 made people shudder before the vision of what war meant now for civilians." As do many other textbooks, Chambers et al. drive that point home with a reproduction of Pablo Picasso's part-Cubist *Guernica* (1937). A long caption describes the painting, accurately and even passionately, as a protest against the German bombing of the town; as "a political act in



Image 2: Luigi Longo, left, and Pietro Nenni, Italian anti-fascist leaders in exile, in Spain in 1936 serving with the Garibaldi Brigade, part of the International Brigades. Source: In the Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luigi_Longo_and_Pietro_Nenni.jpg

opposition to Franco”; and a warning about “modern warfare’s brutal impact on civilian life.”

Another early sweeping historical survey, although a reference book more than a classroom-oriented textbook, is *The Columbia History of the World*, edited by John Garraty and Peter Gay, published in 1972, whose single paragraph on the Spanish Civil War provides a less satisfactory account than did Palmer and Colton, Hughes, or Chambers et al. Nevertheless, René Albrecht-Carrié’s chapter on “Europe Between the Wars” adds one crucial insight: that the war was of great “moral and psychological importance,” as it “convinced a number of pacifists on the left that some causes might be worth fighting for, thus helping to build the acceptability of war against Hitler.” While lacking historical background, this sentence underscores the point that events in Spain jolted many in Europe and the U.S., who after World War I had determined to stay out of all future wars, to conclude that war against aggressive fascism would be justified.⁸

The well-regarded 1975 secondary school textbook *Men and Nations*, by Stanford’s Anatole Mazour and high school teacher John Peoples—the textbook I used with my 10th graders—closely parallels the best elements of the Palmer/Colton and Chambers et al. texts.⁹ It includes a full page on the background to the Republic’s formation in 1931, especially on Catholic power, and on initial reform efforts: universal suffrage, freedom of religion, secular education, land redistribution from the Church and the nobility to peasants, and better pay and union rights for workers. The portrayal evokes unstated comparisons to the French Revolution and to Franklin Roosevelt’s contemporaneous New Deal. Internal

conflict in Spain which precipitated Franco’s insurrection is also explained, with conservative admiration dating from the 1920s for Mussolini’s fascism, alongside agitation for “even more drastic changes” by “the most extreme radicals.”

Mazour and Peoples emphasize that German and Italian weapons and troops on behalf of the Nationalists far outweighed Soviet assistance to the Republic, and they clearly blame British and French nonintervention policy for accentuating this imbalance. In one paragraph they respectfully recount how “anti-fascist volunteers” from “France, Britain, the United States, and other nations” fought alongside the Republicans, but they also provide context, noting that the IB “numbered only about 40,000, while Italy alone sent more than 50,000 trained troops.” Mazour and Peoples point out that disunity among Republicans weakened their cause, especially as the influence of Soviet-backed Spanish Communists increased. Unlike some textbooks, *Men and Nations* unambiguously categorizes Franco’s government as a “fascist dictatorship,” modeled after Mussolini’s, restoring to power “the old ruling groups—the army, landowners, and the Roman Catholic Church.” This classic example of counterrevolution also assumed global importance, in Mazour and Peoples’ account, as a step towards World War II, as the lesson Hitler and Mussolini learned from



Image 3: Dictators Benito Mussolini, left, and Adolf Hitler solidified their “Axis” after both aided Francisco Franco’s war against democratic Spain. Source: Public Domain, from the Brazilian National Archives at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benito_Mussolini_e_Adolf_Hitler,_sem_data.tif

Spain was that “Britain and France would do nothing to stop aggression unless it involved their own territory.”

The four-page coverage in *Men and Nations* includes additional features worthy of comment. First, end-of-section questions for students—long a feature of secondary school textbooks and in recent decades increasingly incorporated into college-level texts—reinforce the authors’ sympathy for the Republic, as in: “1. Why was much Spanish radical activity in the early 1900’s directed against the Catholic Church? 2. State some of the democratic features of the Spanish Republic.” Second, a paragraph explains the origins of the term “fifth column,” a nice example of “cultural literacy.” Finally, *Men and Nations* includes a page of four images—including two by celebrated pro-Republican photographer Robert Capa (who remains, however, unnamed here)—which would clearly elicit sympathy for the Loyalists. It also includes a half-page reproduction of *Guernica*, with a caption noting Picasso’s Republican allegiances and his “outrage”—expressed through “distorted human and animal figures writhing in agony”—“over the needless German bombing of the town . . . , which had no strategic value.” That last phrase might not be clear to students, but it indicates that Franco and his German allies engaged in what would become known as terror bombing, to intimidate a populace and exemplifies the authors’ earlier assertion that this war “became a testing ground for new weapons and tactics.”

Perhaps the earliest example of a true world history textbook in the United States was Stavrianos’ *The World Since 1500*, first published in 1966.¹⁰ Even with this wider canvas to cover, Stavrianos describes the Spanish Civil War as “of more than ordinary significance because it was essentially two wars in one”: a revolution in Spain and “a dress rehearsal for World War II.” The detailed two-and-a-half page narrative which follows is similar to those by Palmer and Colton, and Mazour and Peoples, but with noteworthy additions. Stavrianos calls attention to the centuries-long struggle between the Catholic Church and anti-clericalism, such that “the attacks on priests, nuns, and Church property during the Civil War were by no means unique in Spanish history,” and the war, when it came, was fought with “a savagery reminiscent of the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion.” He emphasizes the Republic’s setbacks from 1933 to 1935, before the war itself: “the ‘black’ two years of clerical reaction,” when secularization and land reform all but halted, in part because the Republic’s anti-clericalism alienated some Spaniards. Regarding the “antifascist émigrés from Italy and Germany” and the “young idealists from Britain, France, and the United States” who made up the IB’s, Stavrianos claims that most “were not Communists when they enlisted,” but soon gravitated towards the CP due to Soviet support for their cause and “indoctrination by their political commissars.” (To be sure, it was the Communist International, or Comintern, which played the key role in recruiting and organizing the IB’s.) Like Chambers et al., Stavrianos notes that the Soviet decision to “cut its losses” in 1938, ending aid to the Republic, precipitated Franco’s victory, but concludes that Stalin’s

new policy resulted from “the continued refusal of the Western democracies to end the nonintervention farce.”

A Newer European History Textbook

Palmer (born 1909), Hughes (1916), Albrecht-Carrié (1904), Mazour (1900), and Stavrianos (1913) were all adults by the time the Spanish Civil War erupted, and their first-hand recollections may have played some role in the intensity with which they described these events. More recent generations of textbook authors would not have had such personal connections to it. Nevertheless, John Merriman’s recent 1300-page textbook on modern Europe devotes a full six pages to it.¹¹ Merriman adds worthwhile detail to the previous accounts discussed, especially on numbers of wartime casualties and on internal conflict among Republicans, and he also provides information and analysis helpful to those teaching world history courses.

Merriman gives a baseline estimate of 580,000 deaths in the war, with only a sixth of those killed in battle. Nationalists executed 200,000 prisoners during the war and thousands more after it ended, while perhaps another 200,000 died in Loyalist prisons, either by execution or from disease. Aerial bombardment—almost all by Franco’s forces and his allies—killed another 10,000, including over 100 deaths in Guernica. (Many earlier sources,



Image 4: A mass grave, unearthed in 2014, of Republicans executed by Nationalist forces in 1936. Photograph by Mario Modesto Mata. Source: Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spanish_Civil_War_-_Mass_grave_-_Est%C3%A9par,_Burgos.jpg

such as Hugh Thomas’s classic *The Spanish Civil War*, put the death toll at Guernica at over 1,600, but recent work by Paul Preston revised it downward to 200, roughly in line with Merriman’s estimate.¹²) Pro-Franco voices in Spain and abroad publicized to their advantage, says Merriman, the deaths of over 1,000 priests and nuns in Catalonia, at the hands of Republican partisans, when war broke out. This gruesome recounting substantiates Merriman’s conclusion, nearly echoing Stavrianos, that this civil war unleashed “a savagery unseen in Western Europe since the seventeenth-century wars of religion.” Deaths also rose so high, says Merriman, because Franco assigned to anti-clerical Freemasons the blame for his nation’s problems that Hitler assigned to Jews: “Franco considered himself a warrior king struggling against infidels who deserved no mercy.”

Many accounts note that much of the Spanish army that participated in the insurrection was stationed in Spanish Morocco, across the Strait of Gibraltar, and that it was ferried into Spain proper on Italian and German planes. Merriman shows the importance of this point, noting debates between republicans and the monarchy in the 1920s over Spanish conduct in its North African colony, the Spanish military’s use of poison gas against an indigenous uprising in the colony, and its desire for vengeance—against whomever it might be directed—for troop losses in Africa. In other words, Spain’s status as a struggling colonial power contributed to social tensions at home which culminated in war, a factor that adds another global dimension to what is often seen as a European war.

Merriman is harsher in judging British “neutrality” than most textbook authors. Many leading British politicians in 1936 “admired Franco,” he writes, and Britain—along with the new French government which followed that nation’s short-lived Popular Front—“quickly recognized the Franco regime” at war’s end. Merriman appropriately compares Franco’s alliance with the Church to the similar dictatorship in Portugal, where the “cult of Fátima” was intertwined with anti-communism. While noting that Franco, in power, did not engage in territorial aggression, unlike his German and Italian counterparts, and that Franco’s boost to Catholicism “would have been unthinkable in Nazi Germany and was less significant in Italy,” Merriman shows similarities between these three states in their focus on an individual leader: Caudillo, Duce, and Führer. And Merriman’s text, first published in the 1990s, nods towards women’s history with a sentence about and photograph of Spanish Communist leader Dolores Ibárruri, known as “La Pasionaria,” arguably the most effective orator in rallying troops to the Loyalist cause.

Merriman’s is also one of only three textbooks surveyed to mention *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), Ernest Hemingway’s influential novel of American volunteers fighting for the Loyalists,¹³ and one of two to discuss George Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).¹⁴ He characterizes these as among “the most remarkable and surprisingly objective literature about war written in the twentieth century,” and summarizes, in particular, Orwell’s account, highlighting, “above all, the damaging role of the communists” in relation to other radicals. These references are especially noteworthy because even twenty-first century



Image 5: Ernest Hemingway, center, with Russian writer Ilya Ehrenburg, left, and anti-Nazi German IB leader Gustav Regler, in Spain in 1937. Photograph by Cassowary Colorizations. Source: In the Public Domain at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ernest_Hemingway_with_Soviet_and_German_intellectuals_Ilya_Ehrenburg_and_Gustav_Regler,_possibly_working_on_the_propaganda_film_The_Spanish_Earth,_Spain,_1937._\(25888498228\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ernest_Hemingway_with_Soviet_and_German_intellectuals_Ilya_Ehrenburg_and_Gustav_Regler,_possibly_working_on_the_propaganda_film_The_Spanish_Earth,_Spain,_1937._(25888498228).jpg)

American and other English-speaking students are likely to have read works by Hemingway and Orwell, so mentioning their names should help connect textbook accounts with readers’ background knowledge. Merriman stumbles, however, in his discussion of the IB’s: he appears to inflate the number of British and Irish volunteers to 20,000, versus the standard estimates of 2,000–2,500, and leaves unmentioned the largest single contingent, from France.¹⁵

World History Textbooks with Little or No Coverage

This summary so far of textbook coverage of the Spanish Civil War establishes its importance in Western Civ and early world history historiography. Its apparent demotion in recent world history textbooks can be seen most dramatically in comparing two textbooks with the same lead author. In *Europe and the Contemporary World* (2007), Bonnie Smith provides an account of the war in line with those discussed above. Smith even includes a tantalizingly brief allusion to women’s participation in the Republic: “citizens supporting democracy—male and female alike—took up arms and formed volunteer units of fighters.” (One may quibble with her misstatement that Spain’s Popular Front formed after the July 1936 army uprising, and her infelicitous phrasing of the IB’s as “a few thousand volunteers from a

variety of countries—including many students, journalists, and artists, and the so-called Lincoln Brigade from the United States—[who] flocked to Spain to fight for the republic and democracy.”)¹⁶ Smith et al.’s *Crossroads and Cultures*, however, a world history textbook published five years later, includes not a word on the Spanish Civil War. There is, however, in a later chapter, a passing reference to “the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975” after “more than three decades of authoritarian rule,” which might puzzle students who thought they missed something earlier.¹⁷ Smith and her co-authors, in a revised 2019 edition with a new title and publisher, eliminate this reference to Franco’s death rather than add anything about Spain’s importance in the 1930s.¹⁸

Several world history textbooks devote less than a paragraph to this war. Richard Bulliet et al.’s *The Earth and Its Peoples*, which has gone through multiple editions since 1997, does not mention it at all.¹⁹ Robert Strayer and Eric Nelson’s *Ways of the World* reduced the one sentence in its first edition to one word in the fourth. Thus, in the 2011 edition, in the section on “The Fascist Alternative in Europe,” primarily devoted to Italy, students read: “In Spain, the rise of a fascist movement led to a bitter civil war (1936–1939) and a dictatorial regime that lasted into the 1970s.” There is no indication here of the social forces on each side or of international involvement, but it is more complete than the vague reference in 2019: “Fascist or other highly authoritarian movements appeared in many European countries, such as Spain, Romania, and Hungary . . .”²⁰

Several textbooks discuss the Spanish Civil War in one phrase in a larger sentence, generally to show its importance to German or Italian military aggression leading to World War II. Kevin Reilly writes: “The impunity with which the Axis powers (Japan, Germany, Italy) were able to conquer was underscored by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the German assistance to the Spanish fascists in the Spanish Civil War in 1936, and the German annexation of Austria in 1938 and Czechoslovakia in 1939.”²¹ This aspect of the war is important, but fails to identify Spain’s significance with regard to patterns of revolution, the Soviet role in the 1930s, or the internationalism of volunteers from abroad who aided the Republic. In their 2012 textbook, Peter von Sivers et al. similarly state, after a paragraph on German rearmament: “This first step of German military assertion was followed with the unofficial air force support of General Francisco Franco (1892–1975) who rose against the legitimate Republican government in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and incorporation of Austria in 1938.”²² Even this sentence, with its long and confusing dependent clause mixing Spain and Austria, disappears from the 2015 edition, where the Spanish Civil War appears only in a timeline, with no explanation whatsoever!²³

Traditions and Encounters, long a best-selling textbook for high school Advanced Placement and college survey courses, at least notes this foreign intervention in two sentences, one on Italy and one on Germany. After a sentence on the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, Jerry Bentley and Herbert Ziegler add: “Italy also intervened in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) on the side of General Francisco Franco (1892–1975), whose militarists overthrew the



Image 6: The Messerschmidt BF 109, a mainstay of Germany’s World War II air force, first saw combat in the Spanish Civil War, shown here with Nationalist insignia. Source: In the Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bf_109A_from_the_Condor_Legion_with_Nationalist_Spain_markings.jpg

Republican government, and annexed Albania in 1939.” Two paragraphs later, they note: “Germany joined with Italy in the Spanish Civil War, during which Hitler’s troops, especially the air force, honed their skills”—a rather anodyne reference to the development of terror bombing.²⁴

William Duiker and Jackson Spielvogel also discuss the Spanish Civil War only in relation to German and Italian aggression. In the single sentence on this war in the 2016 edition of *World History*, Duiker and Spielvogel echo Palmer and Colton in pointing out that joint intervention in Spain brought the two established fascist powers closer, helping inaugurate the Rome-Berlin Axis in November 1936. To their credit, Duiker and Spielvogel add a second sentence in the 2019 edition, stating that Hitler used the war in Spain to test his new weaponry, especially dive bomber planes—though with no reference to Guernica or to Spanish casualties.²⁵

World History Textbooks: A Paragraph or More

Two textbooks that each devote a paragraph to this war achieve only moderate success. Felipe Fernández-Armesto puzzlingly denies that the war in Spain pitted “Left against Right,” emphasizing instead alliances of convenience within both Nationalist and Republican coalitions. Fernández-Armesto refers dismissively to socialists, communists, and anarchists among the Loyalists simply as “mutually warring sects of the left,” and by adding a category he calls “liberal anticlericals” he understates the significance for all Republican factions of dismantling centuries of Church privilege. Conversely, the alliance of “traditional Catholics,” monarchists, and “worshippers of ‘the sacred unity of Spain’” with overt fascists does not appear “awkward” to me. In his laudable but tendentious effort to show

the “domestic Spanish agendas” which underlay the civil war, Fernández-Armesto ignores altogether its international implications.²⁶

Craig Lockard presents a clearer picture, epitomized by a common-sense lead sentence: “Civil war in Spain heightened European tensions by drawing in foreign intervention.” While he does not specify the “reforms” which the Republicans tried to implement, Lockard delineates each side’s main forces: “liberals, socialists, and communists,” versus “conservatives, monarchists, and staunch Catholics” in league with “fascist military forces.” The USSR “aided” the Loyalists, as did “several thousand volunteers from North America and European nations”—reasonable statements which nevertheless underplay the IB’s numbers and geographic diversity. On the other side, “Germany and Italy helped the Spanish fascists with weapons and advice”—a confounding statement, considering that Italy sent at least 50,000 troops and that this support was decisive to Franco’s victory. Lockard attributes the refusal of “the Western Allies” (the U.S., Britain, and France) to aid the Republic to their perception that it was “too radical,” which is partly true; at least as important were fears of provoking Mussolini and Hitler and a general reaction against foreign intervention based on the “lessons” of World War I. Moreover, describing the U.S., Britain, and France in 1936 as “the Allies” is anachronistic; there was no formal alliance for another five years—and even then, the French “ally” was a weak, self-proclaimed government-in-exile.²⁷

Two recent world history textbooks include a sub-heading on the Spanish Civil War, signaling its importance, followed by two or three accompanying paragraphs. Results vary, however. Albert Craig et al.’s *The Heritage of World Civilizations* to its credit notes the Republic’s establishment in 1931, the left’s 1936 electoral victory, the army uprising in league with Spanish fascists, and the three-year civil war, with Germany and Italy aiding Franco “with troops and supplies,” the Soviets sending “equipment and advisers” to the Republic, and “Leftists from Europe and America” volunteering “to fight against fascism.” The war, Craig et al. write, “brought Germany and Italy closer together,” while “the appeasement mentality reigned” western Europe. Fair enough, although there is no hint of this war’s brutality. Most problematic, however, is this opening sentence: “The new European alignment that found the Western democracies on one side and the Fascist states on the other was made clearer by the Spanish Civil War, which broke out in July 1936.” Given that Britain, France, and the U.S., frozen by that “appeasement mentality,” sat on the sidelines, while the Soviets aided the elected Spanish government, this framing distorts the actual historical “alignment” during this war.²⁸

Robert Tignor and co-authors offer the useful sub-heading, “Dictatorships in Spain and Portugal,” and they emphasize that “[t]he Spanish civil war was, from the start, an international war.” In two economical paragraphs Tignor et al. explain that the army uprising came in response to “reforms to break the hold of the church and landlords on the state,” that German and Italian weapons (“above all, airplanes”) gave Franco the military advantage in a “brutal civil war . . . which left 250,000 dead,” and that “only Stalin’s Russia

supported the republican government.” This death toll is on the low side, but more puzzling is the assertion that “all of Europe’s major powers got involved” in the war.²⁹ I suppose that “nonintervention” is, in a philosophical sense, a form of action, but for undergraduates this statement will be confusing.

Most good textbooks tie the Spanish Civil War to Italy’s conquest of Ethiopia, both as chronological markers of the path towards World War II and as examples of Mussolini’s militarism. James Carter and Richard Warren, in *Forging the Modern World*, nicely connect these two wars through the contemporary reportage of English journalist George Steer, who covered both and who pointed to the deployment by fascist forces of what we today call weapons of mass destruction: outlawed chemical weapons in Ethiopia and aerial bombardment in Spain. Carter and Warren’s thoughtful explication of the Guernica bombing and Picasso’s painting emphasizes that the initial German denial of responsibility for the raid demonstrates “just how far this attack on nonmilitary targets strayed from accepted morality.” Carter and Warren, who footnote three recent historical studies of the episode, note “that the actual death toll was lower than the first published reports, like those of Steer, suggested,” and that the bombing was not simply a wanton attack on civilians. In evocative language that other authors might emulate, Carter and Warren conclude not only that outside aid “helped the Nationalists secure another victory for a fascist movement,” but that the German military “turn[ed] Spain into a living laboratory for experiments in new military tactics like carpet-bombing.” This 1937 Spanish incident, then, according to *Forging the Modern World*, should prompt students to address “an increasingly common question in modern, industrial warfare: what are the moral and ethical implications of aerial bombing?”³⁰

Picasso’s *Guernica*

Many textbooks, to their credit, reproduce *Guernica*—“probably the most famous work of art of the 20th century,” one calls it³¹—to help explain this war’s significance. To be sure, students are more likely to remember textual information when it is accompanied by a compelling image, and teachers and professors can reinforce the association by showing and discussing the image in class. Peter Stearns et al.’s popular *World Civilizations* has a substantive three-paragraph narrative on the war, characterizing the two sides within Spanish society as the reform-oriented republic, backed by workers, peasants, Communists, and anarchists, against “military forces” supported by outright fascists “as well as more conventionally conservative landowners and Catholic leaders.” German and Italian bombing prefigured the bombing of civilians in World War II, while France, Britain, and the U.S., “fearful of provoking a wider conflict and paralyzed by internal disagreements about foreign policy,” gave no “concrete aid” to the republic. There is a too-vague phrase about support for the Loyalists “from volunteers from the United States and western Europe, and from the

Soviet Union,” but a pointed concluding sentence explains that Franco’s victorious regime, while “not fully fascist, . . . maintained authoritarian controls and catered to landlords, church, and army for the next 25 years.” (Franco’s regime lasted 35 years—a minor error.) Stearns et al. devote a half-page to Picasso’s painting, which they describe as a “protest against the bombing of the village of Guernica . . . [by] German and Italian planes,” and which they say (using the older, overly high estimate) killed “more than 1500 people.” The questions accompanying the painting and the caption are thought-provoking, but the first one—“What was Picasso trying to say through the painting?”—will be difficult for most students without additional exposition of its symbolism. Subsequent questions—whether “a more traditional artistic representation” would have been more effective, and whether other artworks or photographs “have helped capture the notion of modern war”—could generate productive discussion or writing assignments.³²

Howard Spodek takes a similar approach, with a two-page feature on “Icons of War” which discusses three images: Guernica; a photograph of an atomic “mushroom cloud”; and a Vietnam War photograph of children maimed by napalm. Spodek describes the context of Picasso’s painting more fully than Stearns et al., explaining how the Republican government displayed it at Paris’s 1938 International Exhibition in a bid to gain international support.



Image 7: A reproduction of Pablo Picasso’s Guernica has been erected in the town of Guernica, which suffered German aerial bombardment in April 1937. Photograph by Tony Hisgett. Source: In the Public Domain at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ad/Guernica_%283820712635%29.jpg

Acknowledging that *Guernica's* “symbolism is not entirely clear even today,” Spodek points out elements of its “vision of terror”: “a despairing woman carrying a wounded child . . . , and a horse writhing in agony.” In conjunction with the two other images presented, he makes clear that the bombing of civilians in Guernica formed part of the increasingly lethal technology deployed in twentieth-century wars. The one question posed to students in this feature, however—“How can an artist desiring peace focus world attention on the destructiveness of these weapons?”—seems more rhetorical than designed to stimulate thought or discussion, especially because the two other images are by news photographers, not artists. Narrative coverage of the Spanish Civil War in this textbook is part of a paragraph on the failure of the League of Nations in the 1930s to stop war and aggression, which ties Spain clearly to events in Manchuria and Ethiopia. One long—almost overwhelming—sentence makes the international lineup in Spain clear: “Germany and Italy sent tens of thousands of troops in support of Franco; the USSR sent military equipment, technicians, and advisers in support of the government; the liberal democracies refused to intervene and sent no assistance, although thousands of volunteers, the International Brigade immortalized in Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, came to fight for the government.” One problem for students in Spodek’s account is that this paragraph’s topic sentence—“Second, the League did nothing about colonialism in Asia and Africa”—does not encompass Spain within its parameters.³³

Perhaps the most successful use of *Guernica* in a survey textbook is by Marc Anthony Meyer in his document-based *Landmarks of World Civilizations*. Following textual documents on fascism, Meyer devotes a page to the painting and a thoughtful explanation of internal and external forces supporting Franco, the overall destructiveness of the Spanish Civil War, and the significance of this painting by “the most famous and successful artist of the twentieth century.” Meyer only briefly describes some of the painting’s symbols—the bull symbolizes “fascism, brutality, and darkness,” e.g.—but he also provides the work’s immense dimensions: 25 feet by 11 feet. Knowing *Guernica's* scale really is necessary for students to appreciate its power. (3 inches by 7 inches in a textbook gives only a pale substitute. In today’s classrooms a PowerPoint image can come closer to approximating the painting’s scale.) Meyer’s account is not complete—he says nothing about Soviet aid, the IB’s, or the Western democracies’ hands-off policies—but he expertly illuminates an element of fascism through this anti-fascist artwork.³⁴

One would like to include Valerie Hansen and Kenneth Curtis’s excellent use of *Guernica* with these other examples, but their two-page spread on Picasso’s painting in the 2010 *Voyages in World History* disappeared from subsequent editions. Indeed, not only does *Guernica* vanish, but the narrative paragraph on the Spanish Civil War becomes progressively smaller. There were both textual and visual innovations in Hansen and Curtis’s first edition, nevertheless. They describe Picasso’s technique in the context of other interwar

artists, and then quote him at length on his goals for this painting: “I clearly express my abhorrence of the military caste which has sunk Spain in an ocean of pain and death.” Next, they describe the bombing, explaining that Hitler sent airplanes to Spain both to help Franco and to test their capabilities. In addition to the standard one-third page reproduction of *Guernica*, Hansen and Curtis compensate by devoting a page to three enlarged details, with explanations. The authors’ “Question for Analysis” is cleverly stated: “Over seven decades after it was painted, does the symbolism and visual impact of Picasso’s work still have the power to communicate the horrors of total war?” The question takes for granted that most viewers in the late 1930s, familiar with news reports of the bombing, appreciated Picasso’s goals, and it asks students, in essence, to analyze whether such an artwork retains meaning outside of its immediate context. The wording slyly reinforces for students the historians’ judgment that “total war” is, indeed, horrific.³⁵

The narrative paragraph on the Spanish Civil War in the 2010 edition of *Voyages* is good, considering its brevity, although it overlooks the conflict’s religious dimension. Hansen and Curtis note that Spanish conservatives rebelled against an elected government pursuing “socialist policies to deal with the crisis of the Great Depression,” and that Germany and Italy supported Franco, while the Soviets and “courageous young people” from various nations, including the U.S., supported the Republic. France, Britain, and the U.S., however, “missed the chance to support democracy against fascism” in Spain, which in turn increased Stalin’s skepticism about these nations’ willingness to confront Hitler’s and Mussolini’s aggression. In the Brief 2nd edition, however, Soviet aid and the Lincoln Brigade are gone, and the 3rd edition eliminates the comments about Stalin’s growing doubts about French, British, and American conduct.³⁶

Merry Weisner-Hanks et al. also include an image in their “concise” edition of *A History of World Societies*, alongside a long and informative caption, but it is a mundane photograph of Franco reviewing his troops. The caption does mention both the “Socialist and liberal volunteers from around the world” who fought against Franco, “as recounted in” *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and Picasso’s “famous painting *Guernica*”—but images relating to Hemingway’s novel or Picasso’s painting would be more memorable to students than the one chosen. Weisner-Hanks et al. had also noted four pages earlier—before any discussion of the Spanish Civil War—that France’s unstable Popular Front lost some support at home because it failed to aid the Spanish Republic, and they include a brief paragraph thirteen pages later about German, Italian, and Soviet intervention in this civil war.³⁷ Given this disjointed presentation, the photo and caption are helpful, despite the image’s limitations, especially in comparison to the “full” textbook on which it is based: John McKay et al.’s *Understanding World Societies* refers to war in Spain solely in the comment on France’s Popular Front and that paragraph on foreign intervention.³⁸

Specialized Textbooks: Twentieth-Century World; Document Readers

Textbooks devoted to twentieth-century world history should be able to go into more depth on such events than survey textbooks beginning with 1500. Three such textbooks, nevertheless, show wide variations in coverage and approach. Edward Ross Dickinson devotes only a half-sentence to the war which “brought the fascist dictator Francisco Franco to power”—part of a sentence on the rise of dictatorships in the 1930s in Portugal, Hungary, Poland, and Turkey.³⁹ Carter Findlay and John Rothney discuss Franco and the Spanish Civil War in a sophisticated chapter on the varieties of fascism which arose after World War I. They offer important insights, but seek especially to demonstrate—unsuccessfully, in my view—dissimilarities between Franco and Mussolini, i.e., between a traditional right-wing dictatorship and the more eclectic fascist ideology and movement, respectively.⁴⁰ Pamela Kyle Crossley et al. focus more productively on the rise of “authoritarianism” in interwar Europe, thus emphasizing similarities, not differences, between Franco’s and Mussolini’s movements and motives, especially their common backlash against socialism and communism. (Crossley et al., like some others, ahistorically state that the European “pattern of alliances” in Spain’s civil war “foreshadowed the pattern of the Second World War.”)⁴¹

None of the standard recent source-based readers in world history include written accounts of the Spanish Civil War.⁴² The only reader I have seen with such a selection is over fifty years old. Sydney Eisen and Maurice Filler’s *The Human Adventure* (1964), produced for the high school market, featured an excerpt from a retrospective 1957 book by Herbert Matthews, a *New York Times* correspondent who covered both the Ethiopian and Spanish wars. The excerpt, which clearly betrays its time of writing, would likely be unintelligible to most college students today, let alone high school students. Matthews, pushing against 1950s Cold War dichotomies, reminded readers that the war in Spain was primarily between fascists and anti-fascists, and that most of those who supported the Loyalists were not Communists. At a time when the U.S. attorney-general had declared the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to be a “Communist front” group, Matthews maintained that “the men who came from all over the world to fight” on behalf of the Republic were not “mere robots obeying orders (except for the few Russian leaders involved).” Spain’s Popular Front, he continued, was predominantly Socialist and Republican, and had it been victorious “would not have gone Communist.” Referring to the Republic as “democratic Spain in our sense of the word,” Matthews thus challenged the emerging American post-World War II alliance with Franco’s anti-communist dictatorship.⁴³

World History Themes: Revolution, Religion, and Internationalism

Some textbooks, as we have seen, link the Spanish Civil War to important world history themes. Stavrianos discusses it as an intersection of national and international factors: as a revolution in one nation, and as a “dress rehearsal” for World War II through outside

intervention. (Such an analysis seems tailor-made for textbooks with such titles as *Worlds Together*, *Worlds Apart* and *Traditions and Encounters*.) Albrecht-Carrié points to the war as a turning point for some in forsaking the categorically antiwar reaction against the failures of World War I, thus complicating the idea of learning “the lessons of history.”⁴⁴ Many textbooks, in describing Guernica and *Guernica*, use this war to exemplify the increasingly impersonal mechanization of modern warfare, with its complex moral dimensions. Chambers et al. and Merriman are among the best in showing that many casualties also derived from brutal, personalized mistreatment of “enemy” forces—a feature of war extending far back in human history.

Stavrianos, and Palmer and Colton, among others, frame the Spanish Civil War as an outcome of revolution, and others could employ this insight through judicious comparative comments. In particular, as in Spain, revolutions in France, Russia, and Mexico, for example, had among their goals an end to privileges of an established church. Similarly, demands of peasants for land redistribution characterized revolutions in France, Haiti, Russia, Mexico, China, Cuba, and Vietnam, as well as Spain. There are many reasons why revolutions face difficulties in accomplishing their goals, but certainly among them is foreign military backing for counter-revolutionary forces. Italian and German aid to Franco thus follows a pattern previously seen in France and Russia, and later, say, in Vietnam, Guatemala, Cuba, and Chile. If textbooks were to highlight more systematically thematic links, rather than proceeding primarily as narratives, the Spanish revolution and Civil War could help students grasp larger truths about what Crane Brinton decades ago called “the anatomy of revolution.” (Less dramatic than “revolution,” perhaps, would be a consideration of the Republic’s efforts as part of a global New Deal, which some textbooks now include as a subheading. Obviously violent backlash to economic reforms in Spain led to very different results than in the U.S. or Scandinavia.⁴⁵)

The Spanish Civil War illustrates the extremely conservative political role of the Catholic Church well into the twentieth century. American students likely think of Catholic involvement in politics as focused around opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage. Some might know about Pope Francis’s decidedly liberal views on war and income inequality, and a handful, in my experience, are familiar with “liberation theology.” But despite the pro-worker sentiments of papal encyclical “*Rerum Novarum*” (1891) and the actions of maverick priests and bishops over the centuries, the Catholic hierarchy until the Vatican II Council of 1962–1965 played a decidedly reactionary role politically, with the Concordat with Mussolini simply the most glaring recent example. In the current era, when religious domination of governments is most associated with Islam, world history courses can show that Catholicism played a similar role not only in the distant past, but even after World War II. It jealously guarded its privileges under Franco in controlling education, using state funds to pay its clergy, and preventing the free exercise of religion by other denominations and faiths.⁴⁶ To be sure, Catholic anti-Communism led it to work



Image 8: Members of the women’s militia defending the Spanish Republic, 1936. Source: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. In the Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Women_Soldiers_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

for some freedoms in Soviet-dominated eastern Europe, but it also underlay support for anti-democratic regimes not only in Spain but in South Vietnam, Cuba, and Guatemala.

The brief references to Spanish Republican women in Merriman’s and Smith’s European history texts remind us of women’s involvement in other revolutions and of—sometimes tentative—steps towards women’s rights won through revolution. The Spanish Republic granted women’s suffrage and the right to divorce in 1931, for example. (Palmer and Colton’s *A History of the Modern World*, along with most other earlier textbooks, had ignored these important reforms, though Stavrianos mentioned women’s voting rights.) On the other hand, the Spanish experience belies any simple equation of revolution and feminist upsurge, as some leftist elected women in parliament opposed universal suffrage; they believed women were too much in thrall to the Catholic Church. Indeed, scholars identify the women’s vote as one factor in conservative success in the 1933 elections.⁴⁷

Many textbooks, to their credit, mention the aid that volunteers from the IB’s, including those Americans from “the Lincolns,” rendered to the Republic. These young men (and there were women who served as nurses, drivers, and in other capacities) were idealistic and left-leaning, as textbooks describe them. But the larger significance of this manifestation of “internationalism” could also be explored. First, if students today come to a high school

or college introductory course knowing anything about American attitudes toward the rest of the world in the 1930s, it is likely to be that they were “isolationist.” There is much truth in that generalization, and the same can be said of Britain and France. But the IB’s, even with numbers limited to around 40,000 from around the world, challenge that stereotype. Acting outside of nation-state approval, and certainly not motivated by money (unlike mercenaries and “soldiers of fortune”), these individuals showed that global identity could be powerful, based on a range of values, whether communism, socialism, anti-fascism, or democracy. Transnational identification could and should be an important component of world history courses, especially with ever-increasing globalization. In that sense, the IB’s can take their place in world history courses alongside missionaries and Marxists, cosmopolitan artists and intellectuals, and they can help students conceptualize ways that identity goes beyond nationalism today.

To make even the idea of “nationalism” more nuanced, we see in Spain that fascism, based on extreme nationalism, manifested an internationalist component, as Hitler and Mussolini—for reasons of self-interest, to be sure—aided Franco. Moreover, as some textbooks note the importance of Italian and German anti-fascist refugees among the IB’s—and more should do so—students can better appreciate indigenous resistance against Mussolini’s and Hitler’s regimes—even if that resistance had to occur elsewhere. Moreover, as Giles Tremlett observes, many IB veterans went on to lead partisan armies against the Axis during World War II, in France, Yugoslavia, and Italy, with one veteran being among the three Italians who executed Mussolini. While most IB members were from Europe, with



Image 9: The last known surviving member of the International Brigades, French-born Josep Almudéver Mateu, shown here in 2016, died in 2021 at age 101. Photograph by Taronja Satsuma—Francesc Fort, CC BY-SA 4.0. Source: In the Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Josep_Almud%C3%A9ver_Mateu.jpg

about 3,000 also from the U.S., world history textbooks should mention that they came from eighty countries in all, including about 100 from China, some from India and the Middle East, many from Latin America—and some even from Ethiopia, continuing their anti-Mussolini resistance.⁴⁸

The Soviet Union and the United States in the World

Foreign intervention also heightens students’ understanding of the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Textbooks appropriately focus on that nation’s industrialization and on Stalin’s ever-tightening Communist dictatorship, marked by famine, purges, assassinations, and labor camps. But in Spain, although there were no Communists in the Popular Front government at the time of Franco’s uprising,⁴⁹ and regardless of its undeniable and heavy-handed interference in factional disputes among the Loyalists, it was the Soviet Union, alone among the big powers, which aided the Republic. Moreover, as Hughes noted, Stalin’s intervention in some ways sought to prevent grass-roots radicalism in Spain, prioritizing winning the war over social revolution.⁵⁰ (While probably too complex for introductory courses, the persistence in Spain into the late 1930s of a powerful revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist movement, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo [National Confederation of Labor], reveals yet another historical strain of working-class radicalism, besides Leninist Communism and the often more reformist Socialist Parties.) Recognizing Soviet anti-fascism in Spain, including its seemingly contradictory role, helps students understand the appeal of Communism to many around the world during the Great Depression and in anti-Axis World War II resistance movements. It also helps in developing a larger historical framework in which the Soviets, while crushing freedom at home and in eastern Europe, played an important role elsewhere in the mid-twentieth century in sustaining anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles.⁵¹

Moreover, if textbooks considered Franco’s uprising as the beginning of a thirty-five dictatorship, not simply a three-year civil war, students could recognize more clearly contradictions within the U.S. post-World War II self-conception as leader of the “free world.” To be sure, most recent textbooks squarely address U.S. support from the 1950s to the 1980s for repressive regimes and opposition to popular revolutions, in Guatemala, Cuba, Chile, and elsewhere.⁵² But textbooks might mention as another such example the growing alliance in the 1950s between U.S. leaders and Franco, institutionalized especially through the siting of American military bases in a country whose ruler had been installed, to a large extent, by its World War II enemies.⁵³ The apotheosis of American Cold War affinity for Franco came, perhaps, in Ronald Reagan’s 1984 assertion that Lincoln Brigade members “were, in the opinion of most Americans, fighting on the wrong side” of that civil war, a comment that sparked outrage in Spain during the President’s trip to that newly democratic nation.⁵⁴ A *Christian Science Monitor* columnist commented pointedly, “No one with any

clear knowledge either of the Spanish Civil War, or of the World War II experience, could have said that.”⁵⁵

Latin America and the Spanish Civil War

Perhaps most disappointing in world history textbook treatments of the Spanish Civil War is their uniform omission of ways it drew in Latin American nations and people, an important aspect of this war’s global ramifications. While the Soviet Union was the largest outside source of weapons for the Republic, Mexico under President Lázaro Cárdenas openly sold to the elected government a range of military supplies, generally estimated as worth \$2 million.⁵⁶ Cárdenas’ government, which had earlier urged the League of Nations to protect Ethiopia from Italy’s invasion, also called on the League to assist Spain in resisting fascist aggression. Mexico later urged fellow Latin American nations to admit some of the hundreds of thousands of Loyalists who had fled to France as Franco’s victory approached, and itself gave asylum to about 30,000 such refugees.⁵⁷ Many world history textbooks already devote attention to Cárdenas’ reforms: Strayer and Nelson, e.g., describe him as reviving the ideals of the Mexican Revolution in the face of the Great Depression, with his focus on land reform and nationalization of foreign-owned oil companies. Thus, pointing out his deep-seated identification with Spain’s Popular Front would heighten his administration’s global importance.⁵⁸



Image 10: Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas, whose government aided the Spanish Republic. Painting by Victor Federico Mendoza Limon, CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pintura_en_puntillismo_de_L%C3%A1zaro_C%C3%A1rdenas.jpg

To be sure, Mexico stood virtually alone in Latin America in supporting the Republic, and the region’s influential Catholic Church and conservative political parties supported Franco. Nevertheless, modernist Latin American intellectuals and leftists also supported the Republic, as soldiers and writers, identifying with this new Spain that appeared to have cast off the conservative mentality against which earlier Latin Americans had rebelled. A Chilean newspaper declared, “For us, the Spanish Republic is something our own. Never have we felt more sons of Spain,” and a 1938 Chilean Popular Front campaign consciously emulated its Spanish counterpart.⁵⁹ Over 300 Mexicans, roughly the same number of Argentines, at least twice as many Cubans, perhaps 50 Chileans, and smaller numbers from other South American nations fought for the Republic. Many, as native Spanish speakers, served directly in Spain’s army and not in the IB’s.⁶⁰ Probably the best-known such soldier was David Alfaro Siqueiros, one of the “Big Three” Mexican muralists (along with Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco) whose artistic impact extended far beyond their country, and whose works many textbooks already examine.⁶¹ (Siqueiros was a rigidly doctrinaire Communist; he later attempted to assassinate Leon Trotsky, whom Cárdenas had also granted asylum.)⁶²

While more world history textbook authors should discuss Hemingway’s and Orwell’s Spanish Civil War books, they might also heed one scholar’s complaint that “the civil war’s literary impact in Spanish America . . . has been unjustly neglected” by Anglophone critics, and “that arguably the greatest literature to be written on the civil war by foreigners was the poetry of Chilean Pablo Neruda and Peruvian César Vallejo.” Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, too, “related the Republican struggle to his own concern with the Black renaissance in Cuba.”⁶³ Vallejo, a Communist avant-garde poet living in Europe when the war began, co-founded the Committees for the Defense of the Spanish Republic. (He died in Spain, of disease, in 1938.) His many poems about the war include “Spain, take this cup from me”—which one commentator compares to *Guernica* as an “artistic masterpiece of the war”—and “Hymn to the Volunteers of the Republic.”⁶⁴

Neruda’s path was different, in that it was his wartime experience in Spain as a Chilean diplomat—including his shock at the Nationalist execution of Federico García Lorca, the influential Spanish poet and playwright—that moved this lyrical and romantic writer towards political poetry and activism, becoming a Communist by 1940. Indeed, Neruda’s 1937 collection, *Spain in the Heart: Hymn to the Glories of the People at War*, impelled his government to bring him home, where he continued his work on behalf of the Republic. As the war ended, Neruda organized relief efforts for Republican refugees, including passage for several thousand to Chile. Neruda, the 1971 Nobel Laureate for Literature, remained a central figure among Chilean radicals for decades, helping to cement the 1970 Popular Unity alliance of Socialists and Communists led by Salvador Allende, and serving that government as ambassador to France. In a macabre historical echo of Spain’s experience



Image 11: Pablo Neruda, in 1956.
Source: In the Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Moniz_Bandeira_e_Pablo_Neruda_new.JPG

four decades earlier, a military coup overthrew Allende’s legally elected government on September 11, 1973. Neruda died just two weeks later under suspicious circumstances.⁶⁵

Thus, Neruda’s life and work bridged two seminal efforts, on different continents, at revolution through the ballot box whose brutal suppression in both cases led to decades of dictatorship. His story, therefore, would be perfect in conveying to students important world history themes of the goals, appeal, and difficulties of revolution, and of continuing transnational Hispanic ties.⁶⁶ (Isabel Allende, Salvador’s younger cousin, has memorialized these connections, including Neruda’s engagement, in her 2020 historical novel, *A Long Petal of the Sea*.) Neruda’s Spanish Civil War poetry is more accessible than Vallejo’s, and several poems from *Spain in the Heart* should work well in the classroom. “I Explain a Few Things” is both a sobering picture of Spain at war and a declaration of Neruda’s shift from love poetry to politically engaged writing. “Arrival in Madrid of the International Brigades” proclaims that vision of international solidarity—unsuccessful though it turned out to be—represented by volunteers from abroad.⁶⁷

Colonialism and the Spanish Civil War

A further aspect which elevates the Spanish Civil War from a national conflict to one embodying world history themes is the impact of colonialism. Spain, which lost its last American colonies and the Philippines in its 1898 war with the U.S., came late to Europe’s

“scramble for Africa.” Through an agreement with France, it managed to grasp, in 1912, a portion of Morocco directly across the Strait of Gibraltar, which became a power center for Spain’s army, especially as it ruthlessly suppressed from 1921 to 1926 an indigenous upheaval. Several textbooks, to be sure, note that Franco had been posted to Morocco and that his insurgency relied on troops from that colony being airlifted to Spain in German and Italian planes.⁶⁸ The implications of these facts should be explored more fully in world history textbooks, as Merriman does in his European history text. Colonial control over Morocco provided a rationale for the bloated Spanish officer corps which the Republic sought to reduce, causing violent resentment among these officers. Morocco became, in effect, a recent training ground for the no-holds-barred fighting which the army brought to the civil war. But these Spanish troops stationed in Morocco who participated in Franco’s uprising were joined by 60,000–70,000 indigenous Moroccan soldiers—the “Regulares,” often referred to as “Moors”—under Spanish officers. Added to the 50,000-plus Italians, then, perhaps one-third of Franco’s troops in this “civil war” were not Spanish at all.⁶⁹ The larger “world history” point is that Spanish colonialism proved an impediment to democratization at home, loosely exemplifying what today we call “blowback.”

The influence of Moroccan troops went beyond numbers. Contemporary observers reported that Spanish officers gave them free rein to loot conquered towns, rape Spanish women, torture and execute Republican prisoners, and mutilate corpses. Journalist John Whitaker, who traveled with these Nationalist troops, wrote in 1942:

The men who ordered the Moors to do it never denied killing the wounded in the Republican hospital in Toledo. They blew up more than 200 screaming and panicked men with hand grenades and they boasted about it. These “regenerators” of Spain rarely denied, too, that they deliberately gave white women to the Moors. On the contrary, they circulated over the whole front the warning that any woman found with Red troops would meet that fate.⁷⁰

Historian María Rosa de Madariaga adds: “The Moroccan troops’ behavior suited perfectly the purposes of Franco’s military commanders, most of whom, their attitudes having been formed in the colonial war in Morocco, considered the struggle against the ‘Red’ in the Peninsula to be an extension of the colonial war.” Moreover, she continues, Spanish Nationalists, defending centuries-old Catholic privileges from what they deemed to be godless Communists, encouraged Muslim Moroccans to think of the fight as a religious war against “unbelievers.”⁷¹ (Nationalist officers also justified their violence as anti-Jewish, anti-secular, and anti-Bolshevik, melding Spain’s own Inquisition tradition with then-current Hitlerian thinking.⁷² One general declared in 1936, “Our war is not a Spanish Civil War; it is a war of western civilization against the Jews of the entire world.”⁷³

Supporters of the Republic vociferously condemned Moroccan troop conduct. Neruda, it must be stated, invoked “African jackals” and “the bestial death rattle that howls from



Image 12: Langston Hughes reported on the Spanish Civil War for the *Baltimore Afro-American*. Photograph by Jack Delano, 1942. Source: In the Public Domain at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Langston_Hughes_cph.3a43849.jpg

Africa its foul license,” poetic metaphors that perpetuated racist tropes.⁷⁴ Hemingway alluded to rapes by “Moors” in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, as does Isabel Allende.⁷⁵ Spanish Falangists also routinely raped Republican civilian women, to be sure.⁷⁶ Many textbooks, of course, describe the contemporaneous “Rape of Nanjing,” and some refer to the long history of rape as accompanying warfare and conquest, so a brief comparative account of these horrific events in Spain would reinforce for students the breadth of this sad historical pattern.⁷⁷

Langston Hughes, in Spain as a correspondent for the *Baltimore Afro-American*, in contrast, portrayed Moroccan soldiers as tragic figures in his 1937 poem, “Letter from Spain”—exploited, manipulated, and sent to their deaths by Spanish colonialists.⁷⁸ While true, there was much wishful thinking here, as the death of the “captured . . . , wounded Moor” would enable Republican victory, which would in turn inaugurate independence for African colonies. In reality, the Republican government, despite demands from its more radical factions, did not—perhaps could not—pursue anti-colonialist policies.⁷⁹

Connections in the Classroom

World history textbooks could do more to point out thematic interconnections between events that they narrate. While awaiting such changes, teachers and professors must highlight such connections for our students, with this analysis of the Spanish Civil War offering

one path to do so. Given the crush of material to be covered in a world history survey course, it is unlikely that many teachers will devote more than a few minutes to the Spanish Civil War. Nevertheless, we can also insert this landmark event into our lectures and discussions about earlier years—as we cover separation of church and state, land reform, foreign intervention, and women’s roles in the French and Russian Revolutions, say—and about near-contemporaneous events—global responses to the Great Depression, the renewed assertion of Mexican radicalism under Cárdenas, and the horrific interpersonal violence of the Rape of Nanjing. References to the Spanish Civil War should be part of our discussions of the popularity of Communism in Europe and Asia during and after World War II, as well as in our interrogation of the U.S.’s mixed record in supporting democracy around the world. It should serve (along with Mussolini’s Concordat) as a base line for consideration of the social and political roles of the twentieth-century Catholic Church, and it could become part of an evaluation of the “costs” of colonialism. The example of the IB’s can enter any discussions of transnational ideologies and movements, and of responsibilities of nations in the face of injustices elsewhere.

Documentary sources abound for those who can devote more class time to the Spanish Civil War. When teaching high school, I used a *New York Times* article, published just after the Socialists became Spain’s governing party, which featured interviews with seven Lincoln Brigade veterans. (The author noted that 400 Lincoln vets were still alive; today there are none.) I focused in class on two quotations. Moe Fishman declared: “I went to Spain because as a Jew and as a radical of my time I hated fascism. This was a chance to do something about it.” Carl Geiser asserted: “We still think if we could have stopped Hitler and Mussolini in Spain, we might have avoided World War II.” The article squarely confronted the “Communist” issue, noting that some veterans suffered during the McCarthy era, and in that sense—and with its subtitle, “A Cause Redeemed”—it updated reporter Matthews’ 1957 repudiation of the Cold War suspicion that fell upon the Spanish Republic and its supporters.⁸⁰

A decade ago, when I brought the Spanish Civil War back into my college world history courses, I assigned a 1937 letter to his mother from a Jewish New Yorker in the Lincoln Brigade. Hyman Katz connected his Jewishness to his anti-fascism, and he commented presciently about the trajectory of world affairs, including what he saw as looming attacks on Jews even beyond Hitler’s Germany. Katz also wrote poignantly, in a passage that connects with students feeling a tug between family and autonomy, that he went to Spain without telling his mother because “this is a case where sons must go against their mothers’ wishes for the sake of their mothers themselves.” In a similar letter from a Jamaica-born African American, Canute Frankson explained how he linked struggles against lynching in the U.S. with his “fight for the preservation of democracy” in Spain.⁸¹ Excerpts from these and other letters are now available on the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives website, along with suggested questions and lessons plans.⁸²

More recently I used Neruda’s “Arrival in Madrid of the International Brigade,”⁸³ because it evokes more fully than Katz’s or Frankson’s letters the devastation of war in Spain, and because it underlines Latin American connections to the Spanish war and Latin Americans, and with Chileans in particular. Neruda’s triumphalist tone, however, has to be tempered with the reality that the IB’s did not save democratic Spain. Another way to acknowledge that defeat, even while recognizing the singular nature of the foreign volunteers’ sacrifices and contributions, would be with the November 1938 “Farewell Address” to “the heroes of the International Brigades” by La Pasionaria, the Communist leader. Having students read La Pasionaria also highlights women’s importance in Spanish radicalism, balancing, to an extent, the emphasis on men through discussion of the IB’s.⁸⁴ (Visual images of pro-Republican women’s militias, which can accompany lectures, are also available on the internet.)⁸⁵ Langston Hughes’ “Letter from Spain,” about that fictional Moroccan prisoner of war, raises issues of race and colonialism in relation to the war, and it also introduces the perspective of another American writer, besides Hemingway, with whom most students should be familiar. While likely too difficult for a high school or introductory college course, Orwell’s useful categorization of Republican factionalism in Catalonia is another option, raising additional questions for students.⁸⁶

There is, to be sure, too much to cover in any world history textbook or course, and any argument for more attention to this topic will be met with legitimate objections that it would require cuts elsewhere. Nevertheless, this case for bringing the Spanish Civil War back into world history textbooks and courses rests above all on the fact that it helps illuminate broader themes that are already in that curriculum, especially regarding revolution, warfare, religion and society, and global interconnections. This survey of recent world history textbooks also makes the case that authors and editors need to consider students’ background knowledge—or lack thereof—in presenting material even about the relatively recent past, and that teachers and professors may need to explain references and concepts in textbooks that are likely to be unfamiliar or even confusing to today’s students. Such pedagogical concerns for both textbook authors and classroom teachers—that is, how to connect with twenty-first century students—are of broader relevance than the significance of the Spanish Civil War, of course, and should spur similar comparative analyses of world history textbook coverage of specific topics.

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NOTES

¹ I have published an analogous examination of college-level U.S. history textbooks: Robert Shaffer, “The Abraham Lincoln Brigade and the Spanish Civil War in U.S. History Textbooks,” *The Volunteer* (Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives), March 2021, 8–11, <https://albavolunteer.org/2021/02/the-abraham-lincoln-brigade-and-the-spanish-civil-war-in-u-s-history-textbooks/>

² See his memoir: Milt Felsen, *The Anti-Warrior* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989). Technically “the Lincolns” formed a battalion within the International Brigades, though it is popularly labeled “the Lincoln Brigade.”

³ L.S. Stavrianos, *The World Since 1500: A Global History*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988), 661–675. The first edition appeared in 1966)

⁴ On the Spanish Civil War as a “rehearsal” or “dress rehearsal” for World War II, see: R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 823; Stavrianos, *The World Since 1500*, 669; Howard Spodek, *The World’s History*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2001), 606; Bonnie Smith, *Europe in the Contemporary World, 1900 to the Present: A Narrative History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2007), 291; Peter Stearns, Michael Adas, Stuart Schwartz, Marc Jason Gilbert, *World Civilizations: The Global Experience*, 5th ed. (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2007), 804..

⁵ Palmer and Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 3rd ed., 821–823. The wording in the 6th edition (1984), at 799–800, is almost identical. Despite the title, it is primarily a Western Civ text.

⁶ H. Stuart Hughes, *Contemporary Europe: A History*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966), 302–311. On Hughes’ politics, see Wolfgang Saxon, “H. Stuart Hughes, 83, Historian Defeated by Kennedy for Senate,” *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1999, 45.

⁷ Mortimer Chambers, Raymond Grew, David Herlihy, et al., *The Western Experience*, 1st ed., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Chambers, Barbara Hanawalt, Theodore Rabb, et al., *The Western Experience*, 7th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1999), 1031–1033. Quotations and paraphrases here are to the 1999 edition.

⁸ *The Columbia History of the World*, John Garraty and Peter Gay, eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 1056.

⁹ Anatole Mazour and John Peoples, *Men and Nations: A World History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 707–711. As with the Palmer/Colton text, *Men and Nations* skewed heavily Eurocentric. It first appeared in 1961, and its language and coverage became somewhat more inclusive with its 1983 re-branding as *People and Nations*.

¹⁰ Quotations and paraphrases here are Stavrianos, *The World Since 1500*, 5th edition (1988), 669–671. On Stavrianos as a “world history” pioneer, see Gary Nash, Ross Dunn, and Charlotte Crabtree, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 73, 90, 94.

¹¹ John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe: From the Renaissance to the Present*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 1141–1147, and 1104, 1111. Quotations in the next four paragraphs from Merriman’s text are from these pages.

¹² Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 419; Ronald Fraser, *Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), 398–401; Paul Preston, *The Destruction of Guernica* (London: Harper, 2012), e-book, not paginated, cited in Adam Hochschild, *Spain in our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 176.

[13](#) See Spodek, *The World’s History*, 606, and Merry Weisner-Hanks, Patricia Ebrey, Roger Beck, et al., *A History of World Societies: Concise Edition*, 11th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2018), 937.

[14](#) See Hughes, *Contemporary Europe*, 309.

[15](#) Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 637; Andy Durgan, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 72.

[16](#) Smith, *Europe in the Contemporary World*, 289–292, quotation at 290.

[17](#) Bonnie Smith, Marc van de Mieroop, Richard von Glahn, et al. *Crossroads and Cultures: A History of the World’s Peoples* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2012), 940 and 1006.

[18](#) Smith et al., *World in the Making: A Global History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[19](#) Richard Bulliet, Pamela Crossley, Daniel Headrick et al., *The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History*, 7th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage, 2018). (See also the 2010 5th edition.)

[20](#) Robert Strayer and Eric Nelson, *Ways of the World: A Brief Global History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2011), 989; Strayer and Nelson, *Ways of the World*, 4th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2019), 889.

[21](#) Kevin Reilly, *The West and the World: A History of Civilization*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 297.

[22](#) Peter von Sivers, Charles Desnoyers, and George Stow, *Patterns of World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1008.

[23](#) Von Sivers, Desnoyers, and Stow, *Patterns of World History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 859.

[24](#) Jerry Bentley and Herbert Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 838–839. Despite this criticism, I must note that few people have done as much as Bentley to further world history as a research and teaching field.

[25](#) William Duiker and Jackson Spielvogel, *World History*, 8th ed. (Boston: Cengage, 2016), 734, and 9th ed. (Boston: Cengage, 2019), 733. An earlier reference to Franco, 8th ed., 671, in a World War I sidebar, noted that the dictator later banned in Spain Stanley Kubrick’s 1957 antiwar film, *Paths of Glory*. This textbook’s brief edition, *The Essential World History*, 8th ed. (Boston, Cengage, 2017), makes no mention of this war.

[26](#) Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *The World: A History* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall/Pearson, 2011), 858. This textbook might confuse students in other ways, too. For example, the Holocaust is not discussed in the pages devoted to World War II (859–861), but in a chapter on post-1945 atrocities (889). Fernández-Armesto, at 876, does include Spain, alongside Portugal and Greece, as transitioning to democracy in the 1970s.

[27](#) Craig Lockard, *Societies, Networks, and Transitions: A Global History*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2011), 677.

[28](#) Albert Craig, William Graham, Donald Kagan, et al., *The Heritage of World Civilizations: Teaching and Learning Classroom Edition* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007), 776.

[29](#) Robert Tignor, Jeremy Adelman, Stephen Aron, et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the World*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 727–728.

[30](#) James Carter and Richard Warren, *Forging the Modern World: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 299–301.

[31](#) Stearns et al., *World Civilizations*, 805.

[32](#) Stearns et al., *World Civilizations*, 804–805. The authors refer again to the Spanish Civil War in their explanation, at 819, of the actual origins of World War II. Stearns’ individually authored *World History in Brief: Major Patterns of Change and Continuity*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2002), omits the Spanish Civil War.

- [33](#) Spodek, *The World's History*, 606, 618–619.
- [34](#) Marc Anthony Meyer, *Landmarks of World Civilizations*, vol. 2 (Guilford, Conn.: Dushkin Publishing, 1994), 367.
- [35](#) Valerie Hansen and Kenneth Curtis, *Voyages in World History* (Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010), 838–839; cf. 2nd brief edition (Cengage, 2016), and 3rd edition (Cengage, 2016).
- [36](#) Hansen and Curtis, *Voyages in World History* (2010), 837; 2nd brief edition, 657; 3rd edition, 867.
- [37](#) Weisner-Hanks, et al., *A History of World Societies*, 937, 933, 950.
- [38](#) John McKay, Patricia Ebrey, Roger Beck, et al., *Understanding World Societies*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015), 920, 937. This textbook is a reworked version of McKay, Bennett Hill, John Buckler, et al., *A History of World Societies*, 9th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012); see p. 924 on the Spanish Civil War.
- [39](#) Edward Ross Dickinson, *The World in the Long Twentieth Century: An Interpretative History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 177–290.
- [40](#) Carter Findlay and John Rothney, *Twentieth-Century World*, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 123, 128–129, 141–143. A sarcastic aside, at 123, that Salazar's regime in Portugal lasted “long enough to become an accredited part of the ‘free world’ through its membership” in NATO is likely to go over the heads of student readers.
- [41](#) Pamela Kyle Crossley, Lynn Hollen Lees, and John Servos, *Global Society: The World Since 1900*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 241–242. Crossley et al., at 252, provide approximate—and appalling—death tolls of the three major regional conflicts which helped lead to World War II: 300,000 in Manchuria; 500,000 in Spain; 200,000 in Ethiopia.
- [42](#) Bonnie Smith, Marc van de Mieroop, Richard von Glahn, et al., eds., *Sources for World in the Making*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), chap. 26. See also, e.g.: Alfred Andrea and James Overfield, eds., *The Human Record: Sources of Global History*, vol. 2, 7th ed. (Boston: Cengage, 2012); Kevin Reilly, ed., *Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader*, 5th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013); Robert Strayer and Eric Nelson, eds., *Thinking through Sources*, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016); Philip Riley, Frank Gerome, Henry Myers, et al., *The Global Experience: Readings in World History Since 1500*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002); James Overfield, ed., *Sources of Twentieth-Century Global History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002). One reader features an account of Spain in 1931, but marginalizes the new Republic's significance and, of course, predates the civil war; see Haruko Ichikawa, “Japanese Lady in Europe,” in Roger Schlesinger, Fritz Blackwell, Kathryn Meyer, et al., *Global Passages: Sources in World History, vol. II, since 1500* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 417–420.
- [43](#) Herbert Matthews, “The Significance of the Spanish Civil War,” in Sydney Eisen and Maurice Filler, *The Human Adventure: Readings in World History*, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 150–153. This essay was from Matthews, *The Yoke and the Arrows: A Report on Spain* (New York: George Braziller, 1957). On Matthews' wartime sympathies for the Loyalists, cf. Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts*, 152–155, 262.
- [44](#) Crossley et al., *Global Society*, 242, could tie the Spanish Civil War more clearly to their similar observations about the difficulty in learning lessons from World War I.
- [45](#) Findley and Rothney, *Twentieth-Century World*, “The New Deal in Global Perspective,” 116–120; Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016).

⁴⁶ Robert Shaffer, “Religion and International Relations: *The Christian Century’s* Protestant Critique of the U.S. Embrace of Fascist Spain,” *Journal of Church and State* 59, no. 4 (Autumn 2017): 588–607.

⁴⁷ For accounts of three different groups of women in 1930s Spain, see: Temma Kaplan, “Spanish Anarchism and Women’s Liberation,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 2 (1971): 101–110; Shirley Mangini, *Memories of Resistance: Women’s Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Samuel Pierce, “The Political Mobilization of Catholic Women in Spain’s Second Republic, The CEDA, 1931–6,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 1 (2010): 74–94. Women could be elected to parliament in 1931 (and three were) even before women could vote.

⁴⁸ Giles Tremlett, “The Afterlives of the International Brigades,” *History Today*, Oct. 15, 2020, t <https://www.historytoday.com/miscellanies/afterlives-international-brigades>. Tremlett’s, *The International Brigades: Fascism, Freedom, and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), which will likely become the standard account of the IB’s, became available in the U.S. as this article was in press. See also, e.g., Nancy Tsou and Len Tsou, “The Asian Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War: A Report,” *Science & Society* 68, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 342–350; Gary Jones, “The Chinese volunteers who fought in the Spanish Civil War,” *South China Morning Post*, July 15, 2016, at <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/1989792/chinese-volunteers-who-fought-spanish-civil-war>; Charu Sudan Kasturi, “Why These Indians Fought for Spanish Democracy,” June 4, 2017, at <https://www.ozy.com/true-and-stories/why-these-indians-fought-for-spanish-democracy/78676/>. For estimated numbers of Europeans and North Americans in the IB’s: Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 637.

⁴⁹ John Whitaker, “Prelude to World War: A Witness from Spain,” *Foreign Affairs* 21, no. 1 (Oct. 1942): 103–119, at 111–112.

⁵⁰ Hughes, *Contemporary Europe*, 308.

⁵¹ Soviet aid to Spain’s Republic was in part an effort to forestall Hitler’s aggression eastward. While there can be no defense of Stalin’s negotiation of a “non-aggression” pact with Hitler in mid-1939, which—as world history textbooks generally point out—directly precipitated World War II in Europe, Stalin’s exasperation with the Western democracies’ appeasement of Hitler in Spain as well as at Munich helped lead to the disastrous about-face of Communists with regard to Hitler and fascism, which lasted until the June 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union.

⁵² See, e.g.: Bentley and Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters*, 885–886; Strayer and Nelson, *Ways of the World*, 933; Tignor et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart*, 778–781. One notes, however, that Smith et al.’s forthright statement, in their 2012 *Crossroads and Cultures*, that the Truman Doctrine propped up an “antidemocratic Greece” (963–964) has been eliminated in these authors’ 2019 reissue, as *World in the Making* (996–997).

⁵³ See, e.g., Boris Liedtke, *Embracing a Dictatorship: U.S. Relations with Spain, 1945–53* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998), and, for a capsule summary, Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 417. This aspect of post-World War II U.S. military policy is left out of almost all U.S. history and world history survey textbooks.

⁵⁴ “Remark by Reagan on Lincoln Brigade Prompts Ire in Spain,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1985, 11.

⁵⁵ Joseph Harsch, “Historical Distortion,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 14, 1985, at <https://www.csmonitor.com/1985/0514/ehist-f.html>

⁵⁶ Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 637; T.G. Powell, “Mexico,” in Mark Falcoff and Fredrick Pike, eds., *The Spanish Civil War, 1936–39: American Hemispheric Perspectives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 49–99, at 63. Mexico canceled planned sales of U.S.-made airplanes to Spain in deference to a protest by Franklin Roosevelt.

⁵⁷ Powell, “Mexico,” 63–64, 81–85.

⁵⁸ Strayer and Nelson, *Ways of the World*, 887; Bentley and Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters*, 829–830, 884; Andrea and Overfield, *The Human Record*, 456–459, Stearns et al., *World Civilizations*, 806.

⁵⁹ Paul Drake, “Chile,” in Falcoff and Pike, *The Spanish Civil War*, 245–290, at 267, 271.

⁶⁰ Estimates are scattered among the essays in Falcoff and Pike, *The Spanish Civil War*, at 72, 132, 272, 318. These essays detail support for Franco as well as for the Republic throughout Latin America.

⁶¹ On Rivera, e.g., see: Smith et al., *World in the Making*, 914–915, 961; Bentley and Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters*, 826–827; Tignor et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart*, 453, 687, 397.

⁶² Philip Stein, *Siqueiros: His Life and Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1994), for a favorable portrait; for a more accessible and balanced account, see Jim Tuck, “The artist as activist: David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974),” *MexConnect*, May 1, 2000, at <https://www.mexconnect.com/articles/309-the-artist-as-activist-david-alfaro-siqueiros-1896-1974/>.

⁶³ Alistair Hennesy, “Cuba,” in Falcoff and Pike, *The Spanish Civil War*, 101–158, at 102–103.

⁶⁴ Thomas Davies, Jr., “Peru,” in Falcoff and Pike, *The Spanish Civil War*, 203–243, at 230–231; Roberto González-Echevarría, “Revolutionary Devotion,” *The Nation*, May 21, 2007, 25–30, quotation at 28; “The Poetry of César Vallejo,” <https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv17n2/poetry.htm>.

⁶⁵ Drake, “Chile,” 269, 281–282; “Pablo Neruda, 1904–1973,” <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/pablo-neruda>; Pascale Bonnefoy, “Cancer Didn’t Kill Pablo Neruda, Panel Finds.” *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 2017, C3.

⁶⁶ Few world history textbooks mention Neruda, and none in conjunction with the Spanish Civil War or Allende’s government. Those which respectfully describe his anti-colonial and anti-imperialist poetry are Lockard, *Societies, Networks, and Transitions*, 3rd ed. (Stamford, Conn.: Cengage, 2015), 624, 748, and Stearns et al., *World Civilizations*, 887.

⁶⁷ Pablo Neruda, *Spain in the Heart: Hymn to the Glories of the People at War*, Richard Schaaf, trans. (n.p.: Azul Editions, 2006 [1937]), 18–25, 38–43.

⁶⁸ See, e.g.: Chambers et al., *The Western Experience*, 1031; Mazour and Peoples, *Men and Nations*, 709; Stavrianos, *The World Since 1500*, 670.

⁶⁹ See, esp., María Rosa de Madariaga, “The Intervention of Moroccan Troops in the Spanish Civil War: A Reconsideration,” *European History Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (Jan. 1992): 67–97, esp. 80 for estimates of Moroccan troops. For a contemporary (1937) account highlighting the importance of Spanish colonialism and Moroccan troops in the war, see Frank Ryan, “Revolt in Spain,” x–xv, in John Tisa, *Recalling the Good Fight: An Autobiography of the Spanish Civil War* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey, 1985). Ryan was an Irish IB volunteer, and Tisa a Lincoln Brigade member.

⁷⁰ Whitaker, “Prelude to World War,” 106. For references to Whitaker and to rape, see: Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), xix, 331–334; Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts*, 37–40, 72, 155; Herbert Matthews, *Half of Spain Died: A Reappraisal of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973), 58, 114–117.

⁷¹ Madariaga, “The Intervention of Moroccan Troops in the Spanish Civil War,” quotations at 88, 79–80; cf. Durgan, *The Spanish Civil War*, 33. Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, xiii, writes that army officers long stationed in Morocco considered the Spanish proletariat, too, as “an inferior race that had to be subjugated” through terrorist violence.

⁷² Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, 48–49.

⁷³ Gen. Quiapo de Llano, quoted in Hochschild, *Spain in our Hearts*, 72.

⁷⁴ Neruda, *Spain in the Heart*, 31, 39.

⁷⁵ Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (New York: Scribner’s, 2019 [1940]), 121; Isabel Allende, *A Long Petal of the Sea*, Nick Caistor and Amanda Hopkinson, trans. (New York: Ballantine, 2020), 29.

⁷⁶ Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, 511.

⁷⁷ For prominent coverage of the Rape of Nanjing, see, e.g.: Stearns et al., *World Civilizations*, 820, 822; Bentley and Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters*, 837. On ancient Greek and Roman warfare in which victors “massacred all the men and enslaved all the women”—i.e., in which enslavement encompassed rape—see Smith et al., *Crossroads and Cultures*, 156, 165, 207.

⁷⁸ Langston Hughes, “Letter from Spain,” accessed September 10, 2021, <https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/letter-spain>; cf. Cary Nelson, “On ‘Letter from Spain,’” <http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/poem/letter-spain>.

⁷⁹ On impediments to Republican anti-colonialism, see Madariaga, “The Intervention of Moroccan Troops in the Spanish Civil War.”

⁸⁰ Ari Goldman, “Spanish Civil War Veterans: A Cause Redeemed,” *New York Times*, Nov. 4, 1982, A2.

⁸¹ Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks, eds., *Madrid 1937: Letters of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade from the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 31–35.

⁸² See resources at <https://alba-valb.org/lesson/lesson-plan-jewish-volunteers-in-the-international-brigades-during-the-spanish-civil-war/>; <https://alba-valb.org/resource/letter-from-canute-frankson/>. There are many teaching resources at www.alba-valb.org, but navigating between them is cumbersome.

⁸³ Neruda, *Spain in the Heart*, 38–43 (Spanish and English). For a version, translated by Jodey Bateman, which erases an anti-Moorish reference, see https://motherbird.com/arrival_brigades.html.

⁸⁴ An English version is at <http://spanishsky.dk/la-pasionaria-farewell-address/>. For excerpts: see “Spanish Civil War: Political Speech, Dolores Ibárruri,” Women in World History, Center for History and New Media (CHNM), accessed September 10, 2021, <https://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/p/247.html>.

⁸⁵ The CHNM website, while difficult to navigate, has many relevant primary sources (posters, photographs, songs, etc.), some of which highlight women’s activism. See <https://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/sources.php?function=find&area=eur>.

⁸⁶ Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (excerpt), accessed September 10, 2021, <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/three-parties-that-mattered-extract-from-homage-to-catalonia/>.