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Christopher Othen, *Franco's International Brigades: Adventurers, Fascists, and Christian Crusaders in the Spanish Civil War*. Rev. ed. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2013. Pp. viii, 337. ISBN 978-0-231-70425-0.

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Historians of the Spanish Civil War have focused disproportionately on the International Brigades, leftist volunteers who fought on the side of Republican forces (communists, socialists, republicans, regional separatists, and anarchists), but were rarely militarily significant. This is true in part because authors like George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway wrote such powerful and influential accounts of the war from the leftist perspective. Of greater military (and far less literary) impact were the international volunteers who sided with the Nationalists (monarchists, militarists, Catholics, Carlists, and fascist Falangists); apart from the Nazi German and Fascist Italian forces who aided Francisco Franco's insurgents, these have received much less attention from historians.

Some ninety thousand non-Spaniards fought on behalf of the rebellion that began in July 1936 and ended with Franco's victory in April 1939. Since his Nationalist regime was, at its most basic level, claiming legitimacy as the defender of traditional Spanish nationalism, he did not want to admit any debt to foreign forces. Rather, he and his allies preferred to contrast their own national roots with the multinational and international character of their Republican enemies. After the war, the identification of the Franco regime with its nefarious counterparts in Germany and Italy was an embarrassment to pro-Nationalist foreign volunteers who had fought for the Generalísimo.

In *Franco's International Brigades*, Christopher Othen offers a serious and timely corrective to the historiography of Europe's last major conflict before the Second World War. The book contains twenty-two chapters arranged in two chronological parts: first, "Mola's Coup d'État: 17 July 1936–31 March 1937," and second, "Franco's Civil War: 1 April 1937–1 April 1939." During both periods, a curious array of adventurers, expeditionary forces, and anti-communist crusaders inserted themselves into the war in the Iberian Peninsula.

The much written about German and Italian interventions in the Spanish Civil War are well known. The Nazis' Condor Legion, in particular, provided airlift of supplies and made tactical air strikes on behalf of the Nationalists—the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica being the most infamous example, immortalized by Pablo Picasso. Germany also provided tank units, communications assistance, and logistical support to both Emilio Mola and Franco. Though fewer than five thousand Germans served in Spain at any one time, they were indispensable to the Nationalist victory. More numerically significant, but of less benefit to the Nationalists, were the ca. thirty-five thousand Fascist "volunteers" from Italy. Large, organized contingents of Moroccans, often serving as shock troops in the Spanish army, as well as Portuguese units deployed along the border regions by their right-wing government, also significantly abetted the Nationalist cause.

Othen does not neglect other nationalities represented in the rebel camp: Romanian, Polish, French, Irish, English, and Russian émigré volunteers, who had come to Spain to fight communism, defend Christianity (especially Catholicism), or support authoritarianism. Though their numbers (about three thousand) paled next to those of the communist-affiliated International Brigades, Othen argues persuasively that their contributions must be recognized in any history of the Spanish Civil War.

Although this is an engaging book to read, it is sometimes blemished by overly dramatic prose. Othen writes, for example, of the Berber and Arab troops in Franco's army that "the soldiers at the sharpest edge of the Nationalist scimitar were descendants of Islamic warriors driven from the country centuries before" (224). Of the personal frustrations of some pro-Nationalist volunteers, he states that "Other European right-

ists in search of a fascist Shangri-La would find only disappointment” (195). Though such stylistic flourishes do not detract significantly from the book’s solid content, they are needlessly distracting.

A more substantive flaw is Othen’s pronounced over-reliance on autobiographical sources. Even when supplemented by excellent secondary sources, memoirs too often tempt historians away from their broader narrative line into anecdotal excursions—in Othen’s case, stories of heavy drinking Englishmen, the unpleasant experiences of Romanian volunteers, and the abuses committed by Moroccan troops against civilian populations. The use of archival sources, including military records, as well as contemporary newspaper accounts from both sides could have augmented and strengthened Othen’s account of the war. In particular, diplomatic archives of engaged and observer nations would have provided a stronger framework for the project as a whole. And, to judge by his bibliography, Othen seems unaware of much of the relevant secondary literature on his subject.

Given these various shortcomings, *Franco’s International Brigades* cannot be called a definitive work. It will, however, give the educated general reader a better appreciation for a neglected aspect of the Spanish Civil War. I recommend it for the libraries of colleges and universities, as well as of historians and other students of modern European political and military history.