

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 311

“We Shall Not Forget You”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

By 1938, it was clear that the Nationalists and their fascist allies had the upper hand in the Spanish Civil War. The Republican side’s last hope was that Western opposition to Nazi Germany would one day translate into aid for their cause.

Then came the Munich Agreement.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 311. We Shall Not Forget You.

I want to return to the war in Spain today. When we last looked at Spain in episode 299, I talked about developments through the end of 1937. I’ll pick up from there today, but before we move forward with the narrative of the war, I want to consider political developments on both sides of the front lines during 1937.

When the civil war began, on the Nationalist side, they had an army, but not a government, and on the Republican side, they had a government, but not an army. We saw in episode 299 how as commander of the units from Morocco, the best of the Spanish Army, Francisco Franco had been a prominent leader from the beginning. Since then, and especially after the deaths of some of the other highest-ranking military leaders on the Nationalist side, Francisco Franco remained as the obvious choice to be overall commander of the Nationalists.

But Franco was a soldier, not a politician. The generals had declared martial law within the area of Spain they controlled, which meant that civilian political activity was more or less banned. Political parties which opposed the military were explicitly banned by military decree, as were labor unions, which left two main civilian political parties who were supporting the generals’ war against the Republic: the Carlists and the Falange.

I've talked about the Carlist movement before. It dates back to a rather obscure 19th-century disagreement over the royal succession. The Carlists represented the more conservative, traditionalist side of the argument, and by 1937, the Carlists were more about conservative traditionalism than they were about who should inherit the crown, or indeed, whether there should be a crown at all. The Carlists were the group most closely aligned with the politics of the generals, which is to say they were conservative, aristocratic, Catholic traditionalists who hated the Republic as much as the generals did, so their cooperation with the Nationalists was effectively a given. Tens of thousands of Carlist supporters took up arms and fought alongside the Army and participated enthusiastically in violent repression of leftists, Republicans, and other civilian opponents of the Nationalists behind the front lines.

And then there was the Falange, officially the *Falange Española*, which translates as the "Spanish Phalanx." The Falange was founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, and if there's something about that name that rings a bell, it's because his father was Miguel Primo de Rivera, who served as King Alfonso XIII's prime minister, effectively a dictator, during the 1920s. We met him in episode 253. The elder Primo de Rivera died in 1930; his son began the Falange in 1933.

The Falange was also conservative and traditionalist, though less interested in preserving the prerogatives of the aristocracy and the Church and more interested in Spanish nationalism, a strong centralized state, and a fierce anti-Communism and anti-liberalism. In short, the Falange was essentially a Spanish fascist movement. They adopted blue shirts as their version of Italian black shirts or German brown shirts. In 1936, the Falange participated in the general election, but attracted only a miniscule portion of the vote.

Shortly after the new Popular Front government took power, José Antonio was arrested on a charge of illegal possession of firearms, which was technically true, although if the Spanish government had locked up every Spaniard who illegally possessed firearms, there would be no country left to govern. Anyway, José Antonio managed to maintain contact with the military plotters through the weeks leading up to the July coup. Afterward, the Republican government prosecuted him for treason and he was executed in November 1936.

And so it was said, by the German ambassador, reporting back to the Foreign Office in Berlin, that Franco was a leader without a party and the Falange was a party without a leader. Both the German and Italian governments recognized in the Falange ideological fellow travelers, but also recognized that Franco was the figure most likely to lead the Nationalists to victory, so he got their support. While they supported the Army, the Falangists also made some effort to form a political coalition with the Carlists, then became divided themselves between those with more left-leaning working-class sympathies versus those with more authoritarian tendencies.

By early 1937, Franco, now the undisputed leader of the military, was able to leverage his position to force a merger of the Carlist and Falange groups into a party with the unwieldy name

of “The Traditional Spanish Falanx of the Juntas of the National Syndicalist Offensive,” although most people just call it “The Falange.” But don’t mistake it for the earlier Falange. This one, as the word “traditional” in the name implies, is more in the traditional, conservative, pro-Church line.

The new Falange would be the only political party allowed during and after the Civil War, but although it retained some of the trappings of fascism, like the blue shirts, it was not ideologically fascist, just very, very right wing.

When we looked at the accession of the Fascist Party in Italy and the Nazi Party in Germany, you’ll recall how traditional conservatives were an essential partner to the fascists in their struggle to secure power, but once that power was secure, the fascists dispensed with their conservative partners. In Nationalist Spain, you see an example of the reverse process: Franco and the generals used the Falange to help them secure power, then purged it of its fascist elements and molded it into a more traditional right-wing authoritarian movement. So it seems it is possible for traditional conservatives to partner with fascists without simply being used and discarded, although in this case, you’ll notice it took a civil war and the decapitation of the fascist movement to bring this outcome about.

That’s just the drama on the Nationalist side. On the Republican side, there was even more intrigue going on. You already know that the Soviet Union was the only major foreign power supporting the Republic. The Soviet government strove at first to keep its support of the Republicans secret. This was partly because the USSR had signed the Non-Intervention Agreement, but then, so had Germany and Italy. More important, in the early months of the Civil War, the Republicans and their Soviet allies were hoping to persuade the British and the French to lend their aid, and it was feared that too close a relationship between the Republic and the Soviets would discourage any Western support.

The Republican government shipped most of Spain’s substantial gold reserves to Moscow for safekeeping, lest they fall into the hands of the generals. This gold paid for the military support the Soviets sent, but it also left the Spanish Republic dependent on Soviet goodwill.

Since the Republic was basically a government with no army, it needed to recruit one, and fast. But armies require a structure for command and control, and they require a central government capable of deploying and directing forces under its command. This may seem obvious to you, and to me. It seemed obvious to the more centrist socialists in the Republican government. And it seemed obvious to the Soviet military and civilian advisors who were now assisting the Republicans. I mean, these are people sent by Stalin, from the Soviet Union of 1937, which automatically makes them the world’s leading experts on a highly centralized government exerting tight control over a nation and its military. I mean, in 1937 not even Adolf Hitler controlled the German military as fully as Stalin controlled his.

But that's the view of the central government and its Soviet allies. To the militias who were out on the front lines, those fighting and dying to defend the Republic, it all looked quite different. These militias were leftist anarchists, from trade unions and agricultural cooperatives. To them, the Civil War wasn't only about who runs Spain, it was also about what kind of country and society Spain was to be. The centralists argued, hey, we all want a kinder, gentler government, and your ideas on how we can build a utopian anarcho-syndicalist society are fascinating, but we happen to be in the middle of a war here against a tough and ruthless foe, so maybe let's win the war first, and then have that conversation?

But no, said the anarchist side. The war and the anarchist revolution were not separate issues; they were inextricably intertwined. Take away the revolution, and the civil war becomes nothing bigger than a question of whether our lives are going to be directed by a bunch of right-wing generals or a bunch of left-wing lawyers and bureaucrats. Big whoop.

And while this debate was going on, the Soviets and their allies in Spain were doing their best to prove the anarchists' point, by not only pushing for a more centralized government and military to push back the generals, but also by bringing in the NKVD, the *Naródnyy komissariát vnútreñnikh del*, which translates as the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. The old Russian Empire had its secret police, post-Revolutionary Russia had its Cheka, and now, after a couple of other rebrandings I won't trouble you with, that was reorganized in 1934 as the NKVD, which was the Soviet interior ministry. Like interior ministries everywhere, it was responsible for directing police and prisons, but also and most famously, for operating the secret police.

In Spain, Soviet NKVD agents worked alongside Spanish Communists to build a centralized Republican military and increase Communist influence in the Republican government. These efforts were intended to help the Republic win the war, as well as to insure a post-Civil War government that was Communist, or at least closely aligned with the Soviet Union. Was Moscow more interested in the first goal, or the second? Happily, they didn't have to decide, because helping the Republicans win the war was good for Communism, and vice versa.

The Spanish government had no choice but to listen to the Soviets and the Communists and try to keep them happy, since it was so dependent on Soviet goodwill. The Communists harshly criticized anyone on the Republican side who opposed centralized control, calling them dupes and traitors and fifth columnists, if not outright fascists themselves, which put them at odds with the anarchists and also with the anti-Stalinist, Trotskyite leftists, who feared that the Stalinists would take advantage of the Republic's desperate position to purge Stalin's enemies from the Republic.

This fear proved well founded. The Communists took the lead in training military commanders and civilian police, and then used their position as trainers to promote those who supported the Communists and discharge Communist opponents. Now it has to be said that to some extent, the

best leaders, the ones who understood the importance of centralized command, also supported the Communists simply because the Communists were the loudest voices calling for centralization, but even so, the Communists and their Soviet advisers were clearly angling for power. Remember too, that the Republic's gold was sitting in a vault in Moscow, limiting its ability to say no. The Soviet ambassador to the Republic, Marcel Rosenberg, has been accused of acting like a Russian viceroy, for example in instructing the Spanish government on which military officers to promote.

These quarrels within the factions supporting the Republic came to a head in Barcelona in May of 1937. Barcelona was the center of Trotskyite socialism and of trade union anarchism. To give you an idea, on May 2, a government minister in Valencia, the temporary capital, telephoned Barcelona to speak to someone in authority there; the telephone operator told him that Barcelona didn't have a government. That same day, President Azaña called to talk to a member of the committee that was theoretically running Barcelona. After a certain point, a telephone operator disconnected the call, after telling him that other people needed the phone lines and presidents weren't entitled to any special consideration.

You can imagine how this went over in Valencia. Had all of Barcelona gone insane, or was it just the telephone service? Apparently, the government decided the latter and sent troops to secure the Barcelona telephone exchange, but they had underestimated how many Barcelonans were fully committed to anarchism, and the move led to a week of bloodshed as Republicans and Communists faced off in the streets against Trotskyites and anarchists. The forces of government prevailed in the end and conventional law and order was restored, but at the cost of a thousand lives. The Trotskyite Worker's Party was outlawed, its leaders arrested and charged with collaborating with the Nationalists, which was nonsense. Party leader Andreu Nin Pérez was brutally tortured by the NKVD over a period of several days, as they tried to wring a confession out of him. They couldn't, and he was executed.

Afterward, the Communists gained increasing control over eastern Spain and the Republican government, while anarchist influence dwindled. In the fall of 1937, the Republic's security services were combined into the SIM, the Servicio de Investigación Militar, or the Military Investigation Service, which was soon run by and for the Communists, and was more likely to target those who criticized the government, the Communists, or the conduct of the war than those who were actually aiding and abetting the Nationalists.

The Communists worked to increase and consolidate their power even on the front lines. Fighters who joined the Communist Party got promotions and praise; those who didn't might be denied ammunition or rations. Wounded Communists got preferential medical treatment. Accusations were made that those who refused to join the Communist Party risked being shot as deserters.

This dictatorship of those who were leading a war against dictatorship might have been easier to swallow if the Republican side was actually getting anywhere in the fight against Franco and the

generals. But it wasn't. You'll recall that in 1937, Franco initially tried to take Madrid, was unsuccessful, then turned his attention to the isolated Republican-controlled lands on the Spanish north coast.

The Republican military, with the enthusiastic support of its Communist leaders, then attempted offensives of their own to push the Nationalist lines back, away from Madrid. These offensives were bloody failures that cost the Republican side some of its best units and many of its precious Russian tanks.

The combination of repressive politics internally coupled with failure on the front lines also alienated the foreign fighters defending the Republic in the International Brigades. Most of these fighters were idealistic young Communists or leftists who had volunteered to oppose fascism and liberate the working class, but soon found themselves sent into futile attacks against superior Nationalist forces or, even worse, ordered to shoot deserters.

Complicating things was the fact that most of these foreign volunteers had never specifically agreed to defined terms of service. Most assumed they were free to leave when they wished, but as their morale plunged and their disenchantment grew, many discovered this was far from true. Some foreign fighters had their passports confiscated, so they couldn't leave Spain. Some of these confiscated passports found their way back to Moscow for use by NKVD spies. Foreign fighters who took leave time were shot for desertion when they returned. Criticism of the military or Party leadership could also get you killed. Letters home were read by the NKVD and heavily censored.

Some disgruntled foreigners went so far as to defect to the Nationalist side. Others went the time-honored route of shooting themselves in the foot and claiming to be wounded. They were executed, too.

As word got out, the numbers of new foreign recruits plummeted. Those who did come, fresh-faced and idealistic, were mocked by the long-timers for their naiveté.

[music: Ravel, *Rhapsodie espagnole*.]

You already know that 1937 was a bad year for the Republican side on the battlefield. The Republic lost control of Spain's northern industrial regions and hundreds of thousands of militia fighters were killed or captured. Many of these former militia fighters were forcibly conscripted into the Nationalist Army or into labor gangs.

By early 1938, with the northern forces crushed, Franco's Army turned its attention back to Madrid and points south and east. The Nationalist forces now had numerical parity with the Republican Army, about 700,000 soldiers on each side, while maintaining their qualitative superiority. And their numbers continued to grow, while Republican numbers shrank.

The handwriting was on the wall.

The smart move might have been to organize guerilla forces behind the Nationalist front and harry their supply lines. Recall that it was the Spanish who invented guerilla warfare—or at least gave it its name—during the Napoleonic wars.

Regrettably, the Republican military leadership and their Soviet advisers refused to give up on large-scale conventional offensive operations, long after it was clear these were doing more harm than good to the Republican cause.

The Nationalists held the Spanish town of Teruel, a part of a salient in the front lines that stuck out like a dagger thrust into Republican-controlled Spain, the tip of a knife threatening to slice it in half. Teruel was close enough to Valencia, the Mediterranean port city that was hosting the Republican government since it had withdrawn from Madrid, that the government decided to relocate again, this time to Barcelona.

In December 1937, during a snowstorm, Republican forces began an offensive aimed at retaking Teruel. It caught the garrison by surprise, and the bad weather negated the Nationalist advantage in air power. On the 21st, the first Republican Army units marched into town, accompanied by American journalist Ernest Hemingway. The capture of Teruel boosted the spirits of the Republican government and its supporters, although the Nationalist garrison still held some key buildings. Bitter fighting continued through the Christmas and New Year holidays, house by house, building by building.

Francisco Franco was all too aware what the fall of Teruel to the Republicans meant in morale terms, both to the Republic and to his own Army. Franco was at that time preparing yet another offensive aimed at isolating Madrid, the city which had hung before him like a ripe fruit just out of reach since the early days of the war, more than a year ago now.

So he cancelled the Madrid offensive and ordered his units redeployed to Teruel, against the advice of the Germans and Italians, who hoped the capture of Madrid would end the war and saw the Republican attack on Teruel as a minor distraction.

Franco ordered the defenders in Teruel to hold out at all costs as Nationalist reinforcements rushed to the town. The first of them arrived on December 29 and began a counterattack, assisted by air support from the German Condor Legion. On New Year's Eve, the Nationalists entered the town, but were driven back. Then a snowstorm struck, dropping more than a meter of snow. Temperatures fell to -18 Celsius, which was at the time the lowest temperature ever recorded in Teruel.

The storms and cold froze the engines of Nationalist tanks and aircraft and stalled out the counterattack, but this respite lasted only as long as the bad weather. Three weeks later, with the weather improving, the Nationalists resumed the offensive.

Now, there were International Brigades nearby, held in reserve. Paul Robeson came to sing “Ol’ Man River” to them on Christmas Eve, and British Labour Party politicians dropped by, including Party Leader Clement Atlee, but the Republican commanders kept the International Brigades away from the battle for Teruel. They wanted this to be a purely Spanish operation, but once the weather cleared, it quickly became clear that Republican control of the town was in serious jeopardy, so they sent the International Brigades into the fight.

It made no difference. By the end of January, the Nationalists seized the Republican position on the heights to the west of the town, capturing thousands of prisoners and thousands of tons of ammunition and supplies.

By late February, Nationalist forces were encircling the town. The Republican commander ordered a withdrawal. The Nationalist side suffered about 25,000 killed and substantially more wounded or captured. Republican losses were much higher.

The morale boost the capture of the town had given the Republicans was more than negated by the subsequent loss. The Republican military also lost irreplaceable supplies, ammunition, and airplanes. The Nationalists suffered losses as well, but they were now able to draw upon the industrial production of the recently captured northern regions. The Republicans held the factories in Catalonia, but those factories were controlled by anarchist labor unions, who were, you know, anarchists, and could not match the crack-the-whip discipline behind the Nationalist lines.

Even worse for the Republicans, now that the best units of the Nationalist Army had been deployed to take Teruel, Franco decided, “Why not?” and, just two weeks later, launched a new offensive from that town southeast, toward the Mediterranean coast. The demoralized and disorganized Republican forces were unable to mount an effective resistance, while the open terrain of the region made them easy targets for Franco’s aircraft. In six weeks, Franco’s forces covered the roughly 120 kilometers to the coast, slicing Republican-controlled Spain in two.

The horrified French government reacted to this news by opening the border to allow arms shipments into eastern Spain, where most of the Republic’s remaining military were left. Some of Franco’s commanders urged him to turn the offensive to the east and attempt a rapid advance into Catalonia before the Republic could reorganize its defenses. But Franco demurred. He feared that an aggressive move to the east might trigger French intervention in the war. He chose instead to turn west, toward the other, more lightly defended, region of Republican control, beginning with the important port city of Valencia.

In hindsight, it seems Franco had little to worry about. The Nationalist drive to the sea coincided with the *Anschluss*, the merger of Austria into Germany. The French did nothing about that, because the British refused to do anything about it. The French government judged that it could only confront Germany with British support, which they did not have. During this period, some in France said that French foreign policy was being made in Whitehall.

In London, the policy of the new Chamberlain government was to yield to the *Anschluss*, which was seen as inevitable, and focus on keeping Italy in the Allied camp. Italy, of course, had made a substantial military commitment to Franco's side in the Civil War, a bigger commitment in numbers of soldiers and airplanes than Hitler had made. You'll recall from episode 292 that after getting bullied by Mussolini over Ethiopia, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden returned to London and declared Mussolini the Anti-Christ. In early 1938, the Chamberlain government began negotiating a series of agreements with Italy meant to keep the Italians from allying with Germany. These agreements were signed on April 16, 1938, and because that was the day before Easter, or Holy Saturday, as Christians call it, these Anglo-Italian accords are often called the Easter Accords.

Foreign Secretary Eden, although he had no problem with Britain's easygoing attitude toward Germany, opposed the move to improve relations with Italy. He wanted the British government, at minimum, to insist on Italy's honoring the Non-Intervention Agreement and withdrawing from Spain before signing any new agreement with Britain, but he was overruled. Eden resigned in protest. He would be replaced by the man we've known as Lord Irwin during our episodes on India. In 1934 he became Lord Halifax, and it is by that title that he will be known during his tenure as Foreign Secretary.

Even as these Anglo-Italian agreements were being announced, the British government was warning the French government against any intervention in Spain. The French were advised that if their assistance to Spain provoked a military response from Germany, Britain would not come to their aid. In response to this British pressure, the French closed the border again in May, just weeks after opening it, and cut off the arms shipments.

In Spain, the announcement of the Anglo-Italian Agreements was a huge blow to the Republican cause, as prospects of French or British aid became increasingly remote. The prime minister of the Republic, Juan Negrín López issued what was called his "Thirteen Points." Basically, it was a peace offer, under which Negrín would appoint a caretaker Cabinet with amnesty for all and elections to follow. Franco rejected the offer and demanded unconditional surrender.

The front lines of the conflict changed little for the next eight months. Republican defenders were able to retain control of Valencia. At the same time, in Catalonia, the Republican forces regrouped and reinforced, taking advantage of the arms and equipment they had been able to obtain during the interval when the French border was open. The Republican Army began its own offensive, its last offensive, in July, pushing west from Catalonia in the hope of retaking the corridor between the two pieces of Republican Spain. This offensive lasted until November, but was a costly failure.

In September, Prime Minister Negrín spoke before the League of Nations and made what he hoped was a dramatic unilateral peace gesture. The Republic would send the International

Brigades home, and he called upon the Nationalists to do the same with their German and Italian fighters.

The International Brigades were getting a disproportionate share of attention in the foreign press, and they continue to get a disproportionate share of attention in histories of the Civil War, even in our time, perhaps because their stories are romantic, or maybe because we who are not Spanish take a greater interest in the involvement of our own fellow citizens than we do on the travails of the Spaniards. To be honest, by September 1938, the numbers of the International Brigades were down significantly from their peak, to something under 10,000, so this was not a huge sacrifice on Negrín's part. Casualties were high, and the stories had gotten out, of rigidly enforced Communist orthodoxy and the harsh treatment of volunteers who wanted to leave, and these stories had reduced the influx of new recruits to a trickle.

About half of the volunteers, the ones who came from countries like Germany, Austria, Hungary, or Italy—places where they faced prosecution for their service in Spain—they were offered Spanish citizenship and invited to continue to serve in the Republican Army. The others would be sent home. The Spanish Communist politician and member of the Cortes, Isidora Dolores Ibárruri Gómez, gave them their farewell speech. Ibárruri was noted for her inspirational speeches on behalf of the Republican cause during the war, both in person and over the radio. It was she who popularized the Republican slogan *¡No pasarán!* that is, *They shall not pass!* in the early days of the conflict when Franco was threatening Madrid. Now she told the departing international fighters:

You can go proudly. You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of democracy's solidarity and universality. We shall not forget you, and when the olive tree of peace puts forth its leaves again, mingled with the laurels of the Spanish Republic's victory—come back!

As you know, autumn of 1938 was also the time of the Sudetenland Crisis. While the rest of Europe was living under a cloud of dread, the prospect of war was actually boosting spirits in Republican Spain. If Britain and France went to war against Germany, then, at last, they would have to intervene in the civil war. Wouldn't they? Or at least, the Germans would have to withdraw the Condor Legion.

Then came the Munich Agreement, which fell like the final, fateful blow against the Republic's hopes, as much so in Barcelona as in Prague. Neville Chamberlain had not only sacrificed Czechoslovakian sovereignty for the sake of peace; he had sacrificed the Spanish Republic.

The winter of 1938-9 was bleak in Catalonia. Factories shut down for lack of raw materials. Basic consumer goods like soap were impossible to find. The Republican Army still numbered a quarter of a million, and the Republican government was calling up waves of new conscripts, but there was little point. There weren't enough rifles to go around, and the Army had only about 100 artillery guns, fifty working tanks, and a similar number of working aircraft.

By December, Franco was preparing the final offensive against Catalonia. His only real problem was the winter weather. When it cleared, on December 23, he disregarded calls from the Vatican for a Christmas truce and began the attack. Nationalists brushed the Republican forces aside with little difficulty and advanced on Barcelona. Republicans called for the formation of a militia to defend the city, as had been done for Madrid in 1936, but it was no longer 1936, and Barcelona was not Madrid. Barcelonan civilians instead fled the city by the hundreds of thousands, hoping to make it to the French border before the Nationalist Army caught up to them. Half a million refugees crossed the border into a France reluctant to receive them.

After the Nationalist Army marched into Barcelona, the looting and killing began. An estimated 10,000 were killed; reportedly even their Italian advisors were shocked by the behavior of the Spanish Nationalist soldiers. Posters were put up around the city warning everyone to speak Castilian Spanish, not Catalán, which was banned. Books were burned in bonfires in the streets.

The Republican government escaped to France, then relocated to the remaining region of Republican control in February 1939, except for President Azaña, who remained in France and resigned his office, an act which was denounced as desertion. On February 28, Britain and France opened diplomatic relations with Franco's government, recognizing it as the government of Spain.

Within Republican-controlled territory, there was still an army with a nominal strength of 500,000, and Prime Minister Negrín wanted to fight on, and so did his Communist supporters. But the military disagreed. They had no equipment, no prospect of getting any, and all of Spain's important industrial regions were now in enemy hands. They saw the situation as hopeless, and as for the Communists, now that aid from the Soviet Union was cut off, what the Communists had to say no longer counted for much.

Negrín tried to dismiss his disgruntled senior Army officers, which triggered a coup by the Republican military on March 4. He fled the country, but Communists in Madrid rose up against the coup leaders, leading to a civil war within a civil war, which feels like a metaphor for the failings of the Republic. The Communist uprising was put down, and the Republican military again offered to negotiate, but Franco continued to insist on unconditional surrender.

On March 26, the Nationalists launched their final offensive. Two days later, Madrid fell. On April 1, Franco declared victory, although guerilla resistance against his rule would continue for decades to come.

Shortly before the end, the Nationalists promulgated the Law of Political Responsibility. It said that any person "guilty of subversive activities" since 1934, or who had resisted the Nationalists actively or through passivity would be prosecuted. Tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of supporters of the Republic were executed, and similar numbers were sentenced to forced labor in the rebuilding of Spain.

The exact numbers are controversial, as indeed are any numbers related to the Spanish Civil War. Demographic data suggests that total excess deaths during the Civil War number around 350,000. This would include people killed in combat or executed for political reasons as well as people who died because of the degradation of the standard of living caused by the conflict. You can add to that number an additional 200,000 postwar excess deaths. There's no escaping it. The Spanish Civil War was a catastrophe for the Spanish nation.

The war and the collapse of the Republic sent shock waves around the world. The meaning of the conflict, especially including who was most to blame, was debated for decades to come. In democratic countries, people on the political left tended to see the conflict as a prelude to the Second World War, to see in the refusal of democratic nations to aid the Republic a deplorable unwillingness to confront fascism, and to see Franco's government as an unfortunate ember of fascism left to burn for years after the main fire was put out.

On the political right, Franco was often exalted as a hero, the man who saved Spain from what would have been a repressive Stalinist regime that meant to murder all the priests, burn down all the churches, and reduce Spain to barbarism. To the right, the Spanish Civil War was the precursor to the Cold War; Communism's first defeat.

All this ideological back and forth happened in democratic countries; in Spain, it was dangerous to talk much about the Civil War, and especially dangerous to ask any inconvenient questions about loved ones who had disappeared.

Franco would rule Spain until his death in 1975 as *Caudillo*, which means *leader* in Spanish. Or to put it another way, it means what *Duce* means in Italian or *Führer* in German. Every Spaniard was declared to be a Catholic. Divorce and civil marriage were outlawed. The Church resumed full control over education. The new Spanish government would declare that women were liberated from having to work and that the nation would only be strong if its women were "healthy, fecund, hard-working and happy."

Spaniards went to Mass regularly if they knew what was good for them, since a certificate of spiritual purity from your local parish priest was required to get a job. For comparison, 14% of the population of Spain attended Mass on Easter 1936, the last Easter before the war.

Nationalist officers and their relatives were given government jobs, saddling Spain with an expensive, inefficient, and corrupt government bureaucracy. Senior leaders were granted lucrative monopolies. Spanish olive oil and wool flowed to Italy; Germany got Spanish iron ore and tungsten, an element critical in the manufacture of modern weapons.

Perhaps the best way to think about the Spanish Civil War is not as a precursor to either the Second World War or the Cold War, but as a precursor to ideological proxy wars. Proxy wars are nothing new; the Romans dabbled in them. But outside powers intervening in a nation's internal conflicts to support factions with ideologies congenial to their own, that is a new development in

the very ideological twentieth century, and the Spanish Civil War is perhaps the first example. Later in the twentieth century, we will see similar ideological proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, to name just three obvious examples, and such conflicts are by no means unknown, even in our time.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Courtney for her kind donation, and thank you to Bill for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Courtney and Bill help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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Next week is a bye week for the podcast, but I hope you'll join me in two weeks' time, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as take a look at popular music in the Thirties. It Don't Mean a Thing, in two weeks' time, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. On April 1, 1940, the first anniversary of the date Franco declared victory in the civil war, he issued a decree ordering the construction of a massive war memorial at a site about 50 kilometers outside Madrid. The stated purpose of the monument, named *Valle de los Caídos*, or the Valley of the Fallen, was as an act of atonement and reconciliation following the war. Construction was completed in 1959.

The mammoth memorial includes a Benedictine abbey and an underground Catholic basilica and crypt, capped with a 150-meter tall granite cross on the hilltop above, said to be the largest cross in the world. The monument is the resting place of some 40,000 people who were killed during the war, Nationalists and Republicans alike, intended as a statement of reconciliation. Hundreds of thousands of people visit the site every year.

Like everything else associated with the Spanish Civil War, the Valley of the Fallen is controversial. Most of those buried in the crypt were Republicans, whose remains were in many cases interred there without the knowledge or consent of their families. Many of these families object on the grounds that the Valley of the Fallen, which is decorated with Catholic and Nationalist mottos and symbols, is in fact a Nationalist monument. In some cases families have taken legal action to remove the remains of their loved ones from the monument.

When Francisco Franco died in 1975, his remains were also interred at the monument, making the site all the more controversial. In 2019, Franco's remains were disinterred and reburied in a cemetery in Madrid. The status of the monument, the remains, and their place in Spanish society remain subjects of furious debate.

[music: Closing Theme]

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