

Martin Baumeister, Stefanie Schüler-Springorum. *"If You Tolerate This...": The Spanish Civil War in the Age of Total War.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2008. 300 S. \$52.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-593-38694-2.



Reviewed by Lisa Lines

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M. Baumeister (Hrsg.): "If You Tolerate This..."

Martin Baumeister and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum's *If You Tolerate This ... The Spanish Civil War in the Age of Total War* is an impressive compilation of contributions by thirteen authors spanning the four tumultuous years of the Spanish Civil War. The book constitutes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Civil War's role in the development of total war, in the context of the history of twentieth century warfare. This military and cultural history examines the issues of violence, combat experience and the culture of warfare.

Organised in five parts, the book begins with a comprehensive introduction comprised of a contribution by Baumeister and a second introductory article by Roger Chickering. Baumeister explains that much of the literature on the Spanish Civil War evidences the same binary logic that was so blatant during the war itself. He posits that this research serves to perpetuate the idea that it was the struggle between ideas, the contrast between irreconcilable world views and claims to hegemony, the intensification and accumulation of conflicts in the 1930s that caused the ferocious violence and horrific aftermath of the civil war. Attempting to avoid such po-

lar schemata, this book moves away from a focus on the much-discussed ideological battles of the Spanish Civil War and presents a new method for examining this important period in history.

Through the use of different methods and focussing on diverse themes, the articles in this book use the paradigm of total war as a frame of reference for the study of the Spanish Civil War. Using a dynamic field of approaches and questions developed in confrontation with the history of the two world wars (p. 21), *If You Tolerate This* is a new military history of the Civil War. In the past, researchers have examined the violence against civilians and the combat experiences of the soldiers separately. This book begins to bring these two thematic areas together, and examines them in connection to each other.

Chickering argues that the Spanish Civil War can be considered a total military conflict not as a result of modernity, but because it reached everywhere and touched the life of everyone (p. 21). He stresses that while it possessed many features of a total war, it was also limited in many ways. Later, Gabriele Ranzato's

contribution points to the Spanish Civil War as a *total war* largely due to the use of aerial warfare aimed at the civilian population. Various contributions, while using the framework of *total war* to examine the Civil War, also investigate the differences between this national experience and the two world wars.

In contrast to traditional military histories, this book also provides an examination of the violence that occurred behind the lines. The articles by Javier Rodrigo and Jos   Luis Ledesma examine evidence of the home front as a war zone, and investigate both the Nationalist and Republican use of repression and terror against the civilian population. This in itself opens up a new area of research, as in the past it was the Nationalist violence against civilians that received the most attention, while the terror carried out by the Republicans went unexamined. Rodrigo's article, *"Our Fatherland was Full of Weeds: Violence during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco Dictatorship"* argues that, in the past, examinations of rearguard violence and terror have led to the misunderstanding and *de-historicization*. Rodrigo aims to provide an analysis here that moves away from investigations distorted by *simplifications* and *martyrologies* promoted by mythification and propaganda (p. 136). Rodrigo's article serves to demonstrate that spontaneity and revolutionary fervour were not the main causes of this violence, and presents an examination of events with the view that the logic behind the rearguard terror during the Spanish Civil War was one of *annihilation* and *elimination of the enemy* (p. 137). His contribution serves as an *opening up* that will allow other historians to conduct a more detailed examination of violence behind the lines during the Spanish Civil War, using this useful new framework.

Rodrigo's overview of the violence on both sides is supplemented by Ledesma's more focussed chapter, *"Total War behind the Frontlines? An inquiry into the Violence on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War"*. Ledesma investigates to what extent violence on the home front defines the Spanish Civil War as a *total war* as a way towards finding its place within the larger context of war and violence of the twentieth century. Located within a historiography that seldom devotes concentrated and unbiased attention on Republican as opposed to Nationalist violence behind the lines, Ledesma's article, rather than making a solid contribu-

tion itself, highlights the need for further study. He explores the logic behind the initial *hot terror* in the first three months of the war and the ways it evolved as the conflict transformed into a more conventional war. The link between violence and the control of people and territories is explained. Significantly, however, Ledesma explains that an examination of these features of the violence is not enough to discover its true nature or effects. The political and cultural aspects of the violence, which he goes on to discuss, are vital determinants of its character. Ledesma inspires interest in a subject that he, due to limited space, is then unable to satisfy. However, his contribution certainly achieves its modest aim of providing a provisional analytical enquiry into Republican violence behind the lines. His work provides the beginnings of an explanation of the Republican logic behind the violence on the home front.

"If You Tolerate This" is not confined solely to an examination of military violence. The contribution of Mary Vincent views the Spanish Civil War as a *holy war*, and studies the role of religion in the conflict. Till K  ssler's article is an insightful examination of the experience of children in the Spanish Civil War, particularly in relation to their mobilisation for the war effort. Michael Seidman's article, *"The Soldiers' Experience of the Spanish Civil War"*, is an original contribution to our knowledge of the day-to-day experiences of those who fought on both sides. Seidman, in what Baumeister describes as a *decidedly revisionist interpretation* (p. 24), focuses his attention on the physical aspects of the war, including hunger, thirst, clothing and sexual relations. Sch  ler-Springorum also focuses on the everyday experiences of soldiers, but the focus of her study is the pilots of the Condor Legion.

In terms of the analysis of the violence of war, this book certainly achieves what it sets out to do, that is, to serve as an *opening up* and an introduction to a new way of researching the Spanish Civil War. Further, it does so in a way that is insightful, informative and interesting to read. The exciting research presented in this book, albeit focussed on the military history of the war, serves to deepen our overall understanding of the Civil War and how it was experienced by civilians and the military; Republicans and Nationalists; women and men; Catholics and atheists; and adults and children alike.

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