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Review of David Wingeate Pike, *France Divided: The French and the Civil War in Spain*

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David Wingeate Pike, *France Divided: The French and the Civil War in Spain*. Eastbourne, UK and Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2011. 433 pp.

David Wingeate Pike, a prolific writer on the subject of France and the Spanish Civil War, Spaniards in World War II Europe, and the Spanish exile community, has produced here a focused study that is, nonetheless, a valuable addition to the literature. Pike narrows his study to the subject of French public opinion as seen in the editorial pages of numerous newspapers of the era. Moreover, he analyzes only those editorials that grapple specifically with interpreting the Spanish Civil War as an international conflict. Finally, in addition to considering the most important journals of the Left, Right and Center, he also provides insight into the nature of editorial debate in the French departments close to the Spanish border.

A great deal of emphasis is put on the first two months of the war and the French effort, however short in time, to obtain Anglo-French support for the Spanish Republican Government of José Giral. Once this effort failed, and non-intervention was adopted in its place, not only did the French Government try to keep its earlier efforts secret, but much of the press, from all ideological perspectives, did the same (38). Only the Communist press continued to argue for French intervention and an internationalization of the conflict. Yet, the press continued to focus on the international dimensions of the conflict, for as German and Italian support for Franco's rebellion continued, even the right-wing press in France worried about what sort of deals concerning Moroccan or Gibraltar territorial change were being negotiated by Franco and his international fascist backers, and what the implications might be for France to be distracted from its major aim of defending against Germany along the Rhine (53). While it was true that most right-wing commentators in France favored Franco, that did not mean that opinion was not impacted by the international consequences of Franco-Hitler and Franco-Mussolini alliances. This is an important and valuable contribution Pike makes with this study.

With an emphasis on the first six months of the conflict, Pike in the first half of the book works his way through press coverage of the USSR's departure from the Non-Intervention Committee in October 1936, the influx of foreign volunteers bound for Spain into France, the official Axis recognition of Franco's government in Burgos, and Anglo-French peace initiatives. Both the Radical-Socialist press and the more traditional right-wing organs came to support the strictest interpretation of non-intervention as possible, from the banning of all arms shipments and trade to the limitation of foreigners in the vicinity of the Franco-Spanish border (95). The backdrop to all these concerns was the intentions of Germany and, to a lesser extent, Italy.

The second part of the book focuses on the period from 1937 through to the end of hostilities in 1939. The bombing of Guernica in April 1937 resulted in a propaganda campaign from all elements of the press in France. While the castigation of fascism was to be expected from the left-wing press, it was the horror and shock expressed in the moderate press that led to a renewed focus on the implications of total war. The right-wing press could not deny the incident and instead focused on whether or not the Nationalists or the Germans were actually all that involved, and soon became involved in the general Francoist campaign to blame the “reds” for arson as they left the town. Most significant in France was the division of Catholic opinion, many supporting the Vatican which recognized Franco in a *de facto* way in August 1937, and others rallying to the cause of Basque Catholics that had been the victims of Guernica (126-7). This episode was characteristic of the nature of the debate in France, which moved from newspapers and the significance of the war to France’s international position in 1936, to a more overt and ideological debate with pamphlets, novels and short stories from all sides dominating the scene by 1937. Regionally, Pike’s description of the proliferation of border incidents in 1937 and Republican activism in Toulouse add to our comprehension of the differing dynamics that operated in the south of France compared to Paris. By 1938, as Franco’s victory became only a question of time, the right-wing and moderate press returned to analysis of France’s positions regarding Germany with a potentially well armed Spain south of it (178). The right-wing press, however, came to support Franco but sought to separate him from his fascist allies, especially as news of more atrocities that resulted from Italian bombings of Barcelona in the summer of 1938 surfaced (183-4). As the right of center Daladier government came into power in France, the foreign policy of France moved ever so slightly closer to Franco, resulting in formal recognition at the end of February 1939.

Pike concludes that the extreme ideological press, *L’Humanite* on the left and *Action Francaise* on the right, were full of fantasies. Other sources, however, weighed the impact of war if France got too involved. France could not defeat the fascist sides and yet, for many, it was debatable whether or not a fascist-backed Franco victory would change the balance of power in Europe. While the ideological frame was extremely strong in France, Pike reminds us in this study that seeing the conflict through the foreign policy lens led the French press to debate Spain in more than one way.

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