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Review of: Michael Seidman, *The Victorious Counterrevolution: The Nationalist Effort in the Spanish Civil War*

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Michael Seidman. *The Victorious Counterrevolution: The Nationalist Effort in the Spanish Civil War*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011. 258pp.

Drawing extensively from exhaustive and painstaking primary research, this book examines how Francisco Franco managed state finance, economic production, propaganda, and various social groups during the Spanish Civil War. According to author Michael Seidman, such largely overlooked material and economic issues largely explain Franco's victory. His book thus offers an alternative to explanations for the war's outcome that emphasize traditional politics, military affairs, foreign intervention, or cultural factors.

The book follows the author's longstanding tendency to question traditional interpretations and open up fascinating and valuable avenues of discussion. His *Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002) touched on many of the same themes, although it focused more on the Republican side in the civil war, emphasizing "individualisms" in wartime Republican Spain. This emphasis on "individualisms" was an earlier manifestation of his critique of the kind of studies that dominated labor history, especially those built around frameworks of class and gender. Seidman's book drew attention to largely ignored perspectives of the war and of social conflict in general. In concrete terms, it found an explanation for the victory of Franco's forces by concentrating on such fundamental but previously overlooked factors as price controls in Republican-controlled areas, looting by the Republican army, and logistics.

In many ways, *Victorious Revolution* continues in the same vein, including some comparative discussion of other civil wars. But the Spanish case receives the overwhelming amount of Seidman's attention, though throughout the book Seidman compares the policies and actions of the Francoists with the Russian Whites and with the Chinese Nationalists, seeking to explain why the Spanish *Nacionales* emerged victorious while their counterrevolutionary counterparts in Russia and China did not. It devotes particular attention to issues of food policies, ideological programs, mobilization, and troop morale.

Divided into four parts, *The Victorious Counterrevolution* begins with a fine overview and analysis of the military history of the civil war, painting a convincing picture of the operational and strategic strengths and weaknesses of

each side. It also covers issues of manpower (including Moroccan troops and the International Brigades) and repression behind the lines. The next section examines what Seidman calls the “authoritarian political economy” of the Francoists, analyzing in depth such issues as agriculture, food pricing, currency, taxes, transportation, public health, and productivity. He shows that, in contrast to the Russian Whites and the Chinese Nationalists but like the French counterrevolutionaries after 1848 and 1871, the Francoist leadership made very effective policy decisions in the realms of economy and government administration (although it would fail to do so after winning the war). Here he makes a very strong case for the superiority of Nationalist endeavors in these areas over those of their Republican opponents, with significant ramifications for events on the battlefield. He also shows that hitherto unnoticed aspects of military leadership, exemplified in the “fiefdom” of Nationalist general Quiapo de Llano, can lead us to view their wartime leadership capabilities in an entirely new light. Today Quiapo remains best known for his propaganda efforts and his policies of terror, along with his resentment of Franco for not allocating more resources to the military theater he controlled. But Seidman shows that Quiapo’s biggest impact on the war may well have been in his effective—albeit harsh—management of taxation and state revenue, food policies, industrial production, and other aspects of the Nationalist economy and society. Indeed, Quiapo surfaces frequently throughout the book. Its third section investigates Catholic neotraditionalist social and ideological programs, arguing that they were effective as a unifying force. Yet, as the final section of the book, entitled “Defiance of the State,” shows, even on the Nationalist side there was resistance, corruption, and disobedience within the ranks of the armed forces and in society in general, although arguably not as extensively as among the Republicans.

As intended, Seidman’s book builds upon his earlier efforts to cast the course and outcome of the Spanish Civil War in a new light; future scholars of the conflict will have no choice but to address the findings, interpretations, and conclusions of this important book.

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