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Advanced History x-block
5/19/25

The Spanish Civil War Propaganda Poster

A conflict starting in 1936 and ending in 1939, the Spanish Civil War was fought by two divided factions within the country: the left leaning Republicans on one side and the conservative, military-led Nationalists on the other. On the side of the Republic were those who supported the existing Second Republic, democratic systems which provided rights for women, such as the ability to vote, opposite fascism and monarchy, as well as authoritarian rule. On the other hand, the Nationalists, led by General Francisco Franco, supported everything that had to do with the opposite of Republican beliefs: he rejected free elections, democracy, political pluralism, and socialism.

Starting with the creation of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931, tensions were at an all-time high between left-wing reformers and their right-wing counterparts. With the Republic implementing reforms such as land redistributions, weakening the church's power, and improving the conditions of workers, conservatives became upset with what seemed to be unjust actions by the government. Not just that, many conservatives feared the power of communism, and while not all factions of the Second Republic were communist, those like the Spanish Communist Party were part of the larger Republican coalition. This anger was further spurred by the national election of left-wing parties called the Popular Front in February 1936. Ultimately, led by Francisco Franco in July of 1936, launched a military uprising in Spanish Morocco, a movement that soon spread to mainland Spain.

The coup was successful in many places, but still, cities such as Madrid and Barcelona prevailed. The war bred violence from both sides in key events such as the Siege of Madrid and the Battle of Ebro, alongside the atrocious bombings characteristic of the Battle of Guernica. Franco's Nationalists won in 1939, establishing a dictatorship that would last another 36 years.

A tool that both sides of the war used was propaganda. To recruit soldiers, demonize their enemies, or to influence public opinion, propaganda was flooded in the newspapers, posters, radio, films, and other forms of media. Artists also became memorable during this time, with Picasso painting "Guernica", a depiction of the Guernica bombing that is still prevalent to this day. Alongside him were notable artists such as Joan Miró and David Alfaro Siquieros. On the side of the Republic, propaganda spanned a wide range of media and goals. To mention a few, many of their posters depict Franco as a puppet of Mussolini and Hitler, and call on global workers to fight against fascism. There were also messages of warning about what would happen to things such as education, women's rights, and liberty under Franco. The main goals were to inspire workers, peasants, and volunteers to mobilize and resist fascism in any way they could.

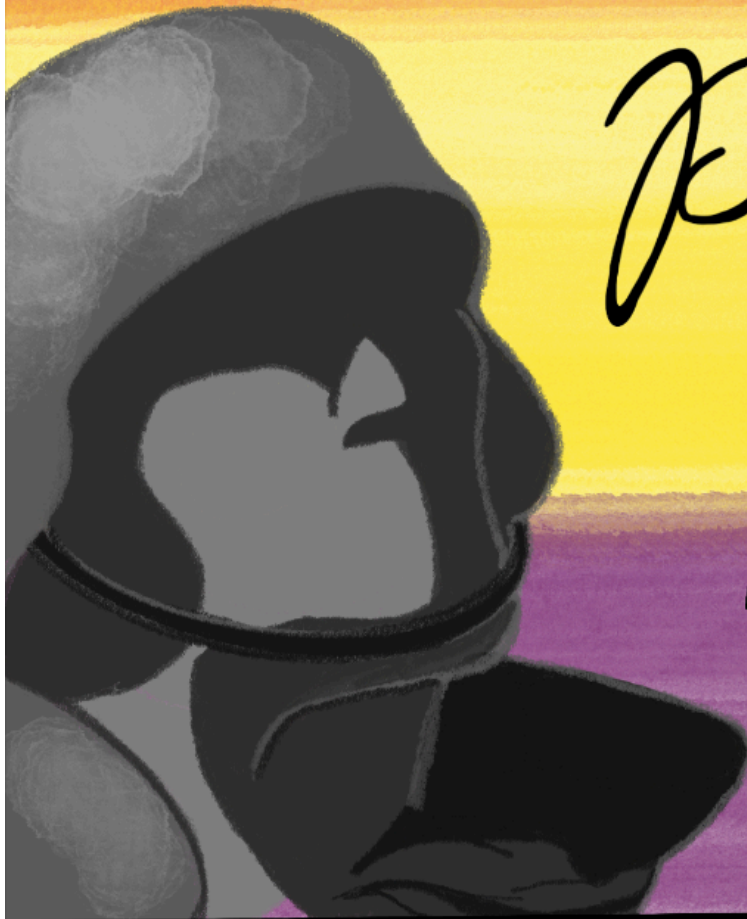
On the side of the Nationalists, there were many mentions of justification for the rebellion, calling it a cause against chaos and communism. They called for the revival of conservative ideas such as Catholicism, nationalism, and obedience. With a large focus on religion, many posters and radio shows would depict the civil war as a holy one, a war that would bring salvation against the demonic Second Republic. There were film reels and speeches cut perfectly to glorify Franco and paint him as the savior of Catholic values. There was also a large component of Nationalism, and a stronger emphasis on Spain as a whole, rejecting regional independence throughout the country. There was strong censorship of the press and education in

the Nationalist held zones, and languages such as Catalan and Basque were suppressed, believed to be a threat to national unity.

My poster is an example of Republican propaganda. Soldiers march to war against the background of the flag of the Spanish Second Republic. The three colors, red, yellow, and purple, represent the unification of Spain, with the purple representing Castile and Leon, and the territories of the former Crown of Aragon being represented in the yellow and purple. The words “¡Lucha por la República!” directly translate to “fight for the republic” and would be a piece of military propaganda urging the citizens of Spain to fight for the republic. The soldier on the left is grey and is meant to represent a solid, proud soldier overlooking those who march toward the victory of their republic. The intended audience would be young men who would potentially join the army, and the overall feeling is one of pride but also resilience, with a strong tone urging those who can to fight for their country.

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