

did not help these countries to break out of it. Land reform (except in the Baltic states) was inimical to agricultural productivity. It was in part the reaction to resentment before 1914 at aristocratic governments that had funded large (and economically valueless) public consumption out of onerous peasant taxation. Internal political fragmentation, often accentuated by the 'ethnic minority' problem of the new states, delayed monetary stabilization with adverse effects on real investment. It also produced military dictatorships in almost all of these countries, which perpetuated the misspending of tax revenues. Spain did not have land reform but did suffer from the other misfortunes, including educational backwardness; there was promising economic development in the 1920s that was arrested by the civil war. A rather *étatiste* system of economic modernization scored some successes in Turkey.

The book is a valuable, handy compendium of demographic and economic facts about the countries it comprehends, but the reader looking for a memorable explanation of their backwardness will be disappointed.

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The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936–1939. By Anthony Beevor. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 2006. xxxii + 526pp. £25.00.

The Battle for Spain is a seven-part study of the Spanish Civil War of 1936–9, which sets the conflict within the larger international context. Beevor states in his introduction that Spain's tragedy was greater than other fratricidal struggles because 'it had become enmeshed in the international civil war, which started in earnest with the Bolshevik revolution' (p. xxv). Indeed, thousands of volunteers from all over the world went to Spain to fight fascism as embodied by the nationalist insurgents and their Italian and German backers. A smaller number of foreigners volunteered to help the nationalists' crusade against the Masonic-Bolshevist conspiracy as represented by the Republic and her Soviet allies.

The questions of Italian and German assistance to the nationalist insurgents and of the Republic's increasing subservience to Stalin loom large in the book. Beevor brings together valuable findings from a variety of sources, including recently opened files in Russia and Germany, which shed light not only on German and Soviet policy in Spain but also on military details. He shows, for instance, that the Spanish conflict provided Germany with a testing ground for new weaponry and tactics. The Germans learnt important lessons, such as the power of carpet bombing, which helped them greatly over the next few years. On the other side, Anglo-French adoption of a policy of non-intervention threw the Republic into the arms of the only great power willing to help her: the Soviet Union. According to Beevor, the price paid for that aid was very high. Under Comintern orders, the communists established extensive control over the Republic's bureaucracy and military. Soviet advisers and Spanish communists attempted to export the show-trial mentality to Spain, carrying out a witch-hunt of anarchists and suspected Trotskyists. The communist direction of the war effort was destroying the Republican army with prestige operations it could not afford. Hence, as Beevor demonstrates, the battles of Brunete, Techel and Teruel were all disastrous repetitions, motivated exclusively by propaganda considerations.

Perhaps the one weakness of the book is Beevor's tendency to speculate. Thus, he claims, without any evidence, that the Republican navy's incompetence

meant that Franco's Army of Africa would have been able to cross the Straits of Gibraltar even if Hitler had not sent planes to get it to the mainland (p. 427). Another example of this tendency is the assertion that with a communist government Spain would probably have been left in a similar state to the people's republics of eastern Europe until after 1989 (p. 432). Nevertheless, this is a thoroughly researched, clearly written analysis, which provides much Soviet material for non-Russian readers and adds important insight into the history of the Spanish Civil War.

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***White Death: Russia's War on Finland.* By Robert Edwards.** Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 2006. 319pp. £20.00.

On 30 November 1939, just two months after conquering eastern Poland, Soviet troops invaded Finland, with the aim of subjugating it and turning it into a Soviet republic. On 13 March 1940, what was to become known as the Winter War came to a close, as Moscow showed itself to be willing, at least temporarily, to cut its losses and settle for less than it had originally intended. The Finns, worn out after nearly four months of defensive warfare against superior odds, were forced to make a worse settlement than they had been offered in October 1939, although the subsequent fate of the Baltic states shows what would likely have happened had the Finns decided to settle short of war. The short Winter War caught the imagination of millions of people around the world. Britain and France were currently engaged in a violence-free 'phoney' war with Germany, and the Soviet invasion, coming so soon after the conclusion of the Nazi–Soviet pact, led many to believe that the aggression against Finland was somehow tied up with Europe's other war. Even Mussolini, hardly sympathetic to the sentiments of the British and French governments and people, was sufficiently moved to send military hardware to aid the Finns, only to have its delivery blocked by Hitler. The Finns themselves desperately wanted western aid, but despite some false promises instigated by the French government, their realization that they would not receive help to the requisite degree forced them to come to terms with the Kremlin in March 1940.

Robert Edwards has written a popular history of the war, based on existing sources. His admiration for the bravery and courage of the Finnish people is clear as he chronicles what was certainly a life-or-death struggle for the Finnish nation. His distaste for the odious D. N. Pritt and the Coates and their travesties of contemporary reporting is equally obvious. The Soviet government is rightly shown in a poor light – it would be difficult to present it any other way. The lack of sympathy for the reactions of the western allies is less deserved. There was never a realistic prospect of aid being channelled to Finland in the amounts required, particularly when the cooperation of the Norwegian and Swedish governments was being withheld. Edwards holds the British and French in a certain amount of contempt for their inaction during the conflict, which is understandable, but an Allied expedition would almost certainly have ended in as much of a disaster as the Norwegian fiasco. It would also have had an influence on the future course of the war, which would probably not have been in Britain's favour, given that the Soviet Union would have become an open enemy. The book is readable and thorough, although there are some surprising omissions from the