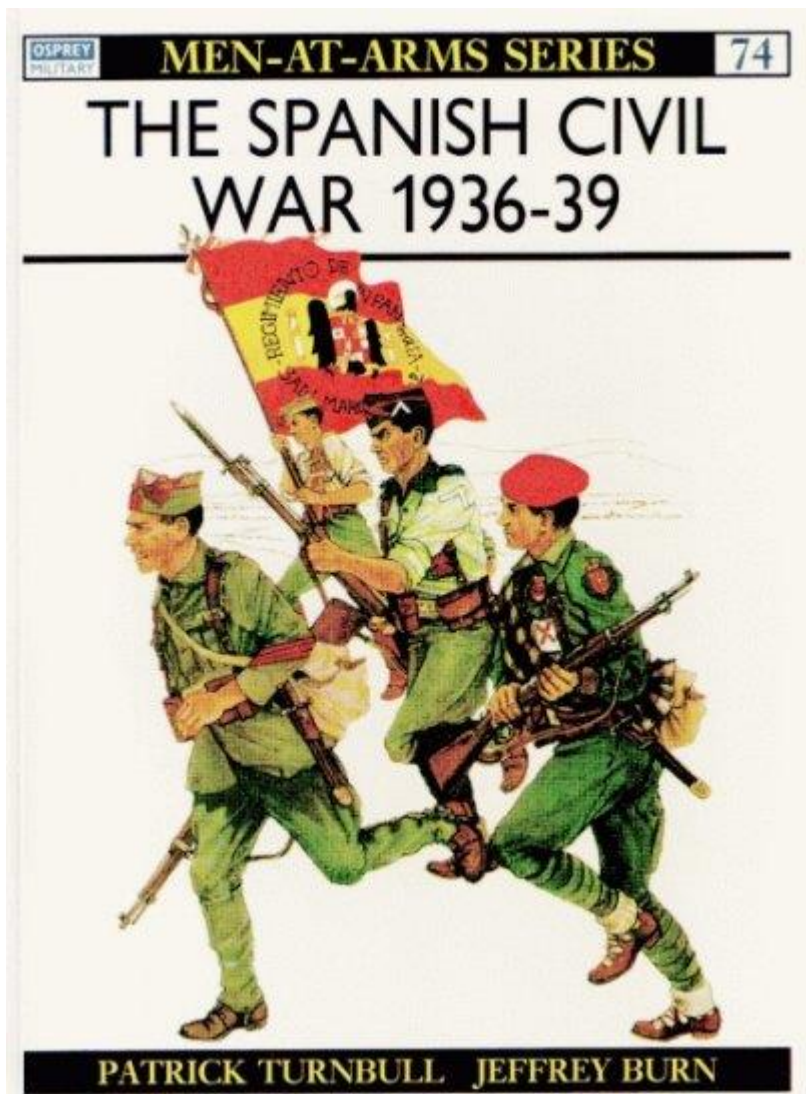


The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939
Osprey Men-At-Arms series No. 74 (1978)
Text by Patrick Turnbull; colour plates by Jeffrey Burn

Review by Rob Morgan

The first substantial volume on 'The Spanish Civil War' by Hugh Thomas was a landmark when I was a student over 40 years ago. It opened up an intriguing war to us, and so to describe this very early Osprey title as 'long-awaited' would be an understatement. It was actually published in 1978 and my copy has no number! It's really a good introductory volume.



The complex political and military background to the war is explained, and there's a substantial note on the armies of the Republic and the Nationalists. Thereafter, Patrick Turnbull examines the struggle on a chronological basis, while throwing into the pot details of the International Brigades, of the Nazi and Italian Fascist interventions, and peppering the text with enough uniform and other detail to whet many an appetite. The black-and-white photographs these days would be considered less than exciting, but back then they were very valuable images indeed!

The colour plates, too, gave a great deal of inspiration. Both sides were a mixed bag of troops and uniforms, so there's only one colour plate of a Falangist militiaman, one of a Republican Assault Guard, one of a Moroccan *soldado* and so on. However, they are still delightful examples of the uniforms

and insignia of the hard-fought war. These days, it might be described as an old-fashioned example of the series, but in reality it's a good example of what Osprey was originally about! An excellent volume.

Of course, there are now a handful of relevant titles which need to be considered alongside the original Turnbull and Burn work. The Osprey Essential History No. 77 with the same title's not bad, of course. But for my money the hefty and fairly recent Anthony Beevor volume on the war leaves every other book standing, by today's standards. He even deals with the decades-long guerrilla struggle waged by handful of the last-ditch Republicans and Basques against the *Guardia Civil* and the military until the '60s. While the other SCW titles, New Vanguard 170, on the tanks of the war (very good indeed), and Campaign 60 on 'The Ebro 1938' are valuable too.

There are two Elite titles that any wargamer worth his salt needs to consider - No. 31 on 'The Condor Legion' and No. 33 on the 'International Brigades,' both well put together. I haven't read and probably wouldn't buy the 'Air Aces' titles, on the Fiat 32 biplanes (huh?) and the Condor Legion but, of course, a fair number of other World War II and pre-war Ospreys do cross the line and deal with SCW matters, so it's still worth looking around on the rack.

As far as figures are concerned, for my money it's either the small-scale Irregular Miniatures 1/300ths which are hefty little things, or the Peter Pig 15mm range with a few add-ons from other ranges. The Irregular mob makes a 42mm series of SCW figures which would do for small skirmishes, and at one time Rolfe Hedges, who edited *Abanderado*, the old SCW research journal, produced a large range called 'Bandera' in 20/25mm, but he seems to have disappeared in recent years. Another company venturing into the Sierras is Pendraken, but in 10mm which is a scale I have never considered seriously. There are a few other small groups of figures in some ranges, but nothing to match the Peter Pig stuff, with tanks, tankettes etc.

Of course, for the die-hards, you could always turn to the splendid 1984 and 1985 long series of *Military Modelling* articles by Robin Hunt on the SCW, making and converting Airfix 20mm figures to meet the needs of the Republic and Franco. Hunt covered just about everything! If you are on holiday on the Costa del Sol, by the way, keep an eye out for the splendid, glossy *Quiron Ediciones* titles on the war. They are really sumptuous - 'super Ospreys' in more ways than one, they list a host of titles on battles, the Jarama, the Ebro, and plenty on the air forces.

Late update:

The venerable Osprey No. 74 on the war in Spain is about to be superseded, if the Osprey 2014 list is correct. In May 2014, Men-at-Arms No. 495, 'The Spanish Civil War 1936-39 (1) Nationalist Troops.' Is scheduled to be issued. The writer this time is Alejandro de Quesada and illustrations will be by Stephen Walsh. The price will be £9.99 in the UK, and \$17.95 in the USA. Presumably, there will be a second volume on the troops of the

Republic. However, this title may not include some of the more unusual troops to fight for Franco. It remains to be seen!

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Finally, the photos below are of the SCW Re-enactment group 'La Columna,' based in the UK. They portray the Spanish Republicans, especially the International Brigades and the militias. They're very active in terms of events in the UK and in Spain.



