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Hotel Florida: Truth, Love, and Death in the Spanish Civil War, by Amanda Vaill

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attempting to neutralize anti-Semitic agitation. All of this effort was shattered by the National Socialists after *Kristallnacht* (1938) and the anti-Semitism experienced during the First World War culminated in the anti-Semitic tragedies of the Second World War.

The present volume is Appelbaum's second book addressing the Jewish military experience of the era. The earlier work, *Loyalty Betrayed: Jewish Chaplains in the German Army during the First World War* (2013), received significant attention and acclaim and *Loyal Sons* is deserving of the same.

Appelbaum delves deeply into published and unpublished diaries, letters, and memoirs of those who served. For the first time, widespread personal and archival materials are gathered and analyzed in a single source. The work is meticulously researched, well written, and enjoyable to read. The author has produced a volume that bridges the chasm between studies for academic specialists and works for general readers. It is a welcome addition to the military history bookshelf that is lively, engaging, and thorough. The appendixes and numerous photographs are interesting and enhance the work. *Loyal Sons* deserves a wide readership and will not disappoint even the most casual reader.

TIMOTHY J. DEMY



Vaill, Amanda. *Hotel Florida: Truth, Love, and Death in the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2014. 436pp. \$30

Spain was the only nation to take up arms against fascism in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. England, France,

and the United States did not act against this impending threat. While the Spanish Civil War began as an internal domestic matter between the newly elected Spanish Republic and reactionary Nationalist forces led by General Franco, the conflict would draw in Germany and Italy in support of Franco, and the Soviet Union in support of the Republic. The conflict pitted forces of Europe's far left and right against each other, eventually overshadowing the Spanish Republic's attempt to maintain power. Against this backdrop, Amanda Vaill follows the lives and fates of three couples. She weaves their lives and fates into the larger fate of Spain as Europe's only stand against fascism collapses under the weight of Franco's forces in early 1939. In doing so, she provides the reader with an overview of the political and military events of the Spanish Civil War, as well as minibiographies of six eyewitnesses to the war in an eminently readable and gripping account of the savage war that ended with the fall of Madrid.

Vaill's characters are presented in pairs. They are couples, romantically and professionally. The first to appear is the chief of the Spanish government's foreign press office in Madrid, Arturo Barea, and his future wife, Ilsa Kulcsar, an Austrian radical who has come to Spain after the war begins. Spain's tragic fate is most explicitly illustrated through Barea's slow descent from moderately prominent government official to ordinary refugee, finally settling in France with Ilsa. His observations on the Spain of his youth contrast with the savagery of the conflict between Republican and Nationalist forces that takes place throughout the book. Following Barea and Kulcsar, Vaill presents the Hungarian-born André Friedmann, who would come to be known as Robert Capa,

one of the greatest war photographers of all time. His relationship with the similarly gifted and prominent photographer Gerda Taro (Gerta Pohorylle) forms much of the central narrative of the book. Finally, American novelists, journalists, and war correspondents Ernest Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn are the third couple, rounding out the book's six main characters.

Hotel Florida is much more than just an account of the Spanish Civil War—or the story of the six main characters during those years. It is as much a story about the nature of truth and reality in wartime as it is a gripping narrative of the seminal conflict of the interwar years in Europe. Vaill's characters become who they are through their interaction with the war, and they create themselves—and the meaning of their own lives—as much as they create accounts of the war's events, whether through the written word or the photograph. Their stories and pictures are in many cases used for propaganda purposes, and the characters know this. However, the fine line between truth and propaganda largely disappears, if it is ever distinguishable in the first place. With the exception of Barea and Kulcsar, the characters want to be close to the fighting, to see the troops and the refugees and the destruction caused by the war, so that they can capture its meaning and portray the tragedy to the world, which does not seem to understand the importance of defeating fascism. A host of minor characters appear, many of whom are fighters in the various International Brigades (to include the famous Abraham Lincoln Battalion of American volunteers). These characters might as well have walked right out of a Hemingway novel—tough whiskey drinkers hunting fascists and eating trout and vegetables

cooked over a fire. In fact *Hotel Florida* itself reads like a novel, and it is no irony that the book concludes with the first sentence of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as Hemingway begins to type the first page, transferring his Spanish experience into his greatest literary work.

This book offers something for not only the student of European history, military history, or literature. It is a first-rate account of the political and military events of the Spanish Civil War. It is also a deeply philosophical examination of the relationship among war, truth, and propaganda. It asks hard questions that are immediately relevant today even as the media landscape has changed dramatically; the fundamentals of human nature have remained such that any of the main characters of this book could sympathize with reporters, photographers, and journalists today. I highly recommend this brilliant book to scholars and general readers alike.

JEFFREY M. SHAW



Bayles, Martha. *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy, and America's Image Abroad*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2014. 336pp. \$30

This is a wonderful, wonderful book. It is very much more than even its title and subtitle suggest. And it's a great read even though it deals with subjects and policy debates about which most of us would rather not think because they're either upsetting, or too complicated, or both.

The first half of the book is devoted to the image of America that our low (and getting lower all the time) popular culture projects worldwide. When