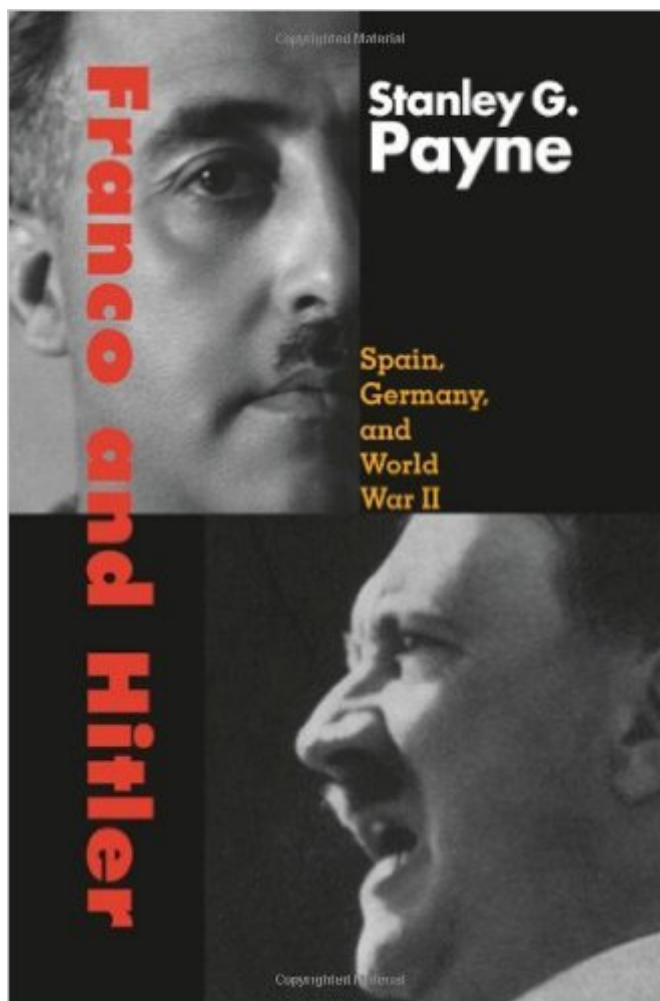


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Franco And Hitler: Spain, Germany, And World War II



Synopsis

Was Franco sympathetic to Nazi Germany? Why didn't Spain enter World War II? In what ways did Spain collaborate with the Third Reich? How much did Spain assist Jewish refugees? This is the first book in any language to answer these intriguing questions. Stanley Payne, a leading historian of modern Spain, explores the full range of Franco's relationship with Hitler, from 1936 to the fall of the Reich in 1945. But as Payne brilliantly shows, relations between these two dictators were not only a matter of realpolitik. These two titanic egos engaged in an extraordinary tragicomic drama often verging on the dark absurdity of a Beckett or Ionesco play. Whereas Payne investigates the evolving relationship of the two regimes up to the conclusion of World War II, his principal concern is the enigma of Spain's unique position during the war, as a semi-fascist country struggling to maintain a tortured neutrality. Why Spain did not enter the war as a German ally, joining with Hitler to seize Gibraltar and close the Mediterranean to the British navy, is at the center of Payne's narrative. Franco's only personal meeting with Hitler, in 1940 to discuss precisely this, is recounted here in groundbreaking detail that also sheds significant new light on the Spanish government's vacillating policy toward Jewish refugees, on the Holocaust, and on Spain's German connection throughout the duration of the war.

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Customer Reviews

Among the many controversies which still exist about WW2, the relations between Hitler and Franco have not, so far, been analyzed in depth. The book authored by Stanley Payne has one purpose: to

address this question. Indeed, many articles and books touched this topic but there has not been any synthesis in this respect. Payne concludes that Hitler's attitude toward Spain was ambivalent. Despite the fact that he had a high respect for Spanish valor, he was generally ignorant of the country, pontificating that "in the Spanish people there is a mixture of Gothic, Frankish and Moorish blood", the native Celtic-Iberian population being presumably nonexistent. Isabella, the Catholic queen was, in his view, the greatest harlot in history and opined that had Islam conquered Spain forever, humanity would have gained only benefits from this fact. One must also remember that Hitler regarded the Spaniards as the only Latins "willing to fight". The special relationship between Hitler and Franco and their countries developed as a result of the Spanish Civil War. Spanish public figures hoped that Germany would be the source which would help modernize and industrialize Spain. This relationship sagged somewhat between the end of the Civil War and the fall of France. Franco thought, after France's defeat, that Hitler had actually won the war, however he constantly refused to make any concessions to the Nazi dictator. The famous and only meeting between the two in October, 1940 produced a commitment by Spain to enter the war as Hitler's ally, but this never happened mainly because Franco was always suspicious of Hitler. Another reason was that Churchill played an important role in making sure that Spain remain neutral. This he had achieved by successfully bribing officers in Spain through a notorious Mallorcan dealer, Juan March.

What the average American knows about the Second World War as fought in Europe wouldn't fill a chapter in a Dr Seuss book. What most know is that we beat big, bad Hitler and his evil Nazis and made the world safe for??? Well, that's a good question as most could not tell you what the world was made safe for. We're told that it was for "democracy", but subsequent events have put the lie to that. Since WWII ended, the world has seen mass murder on a scale that makes Hitler's efforts in that regard seem pitifully half-hearted. That doesn't minimize what Hitler did of course, but the slogan "never again" has rung fairly hollow in the last 65 years. The story of the relationship between Hitler and the putatively fascist Spanish leader, Francisco Franco, is one that is not well known but needs to be studied in order to help give people a more complete picture of events that shaped the war's outcome. In this rather slim volume, author Stanley G. Payne paints a picture of a Spain that is economically prostrate after its civil war and of a Franco, despite being sympathetic to the Nazi cause, who artfully manages to resist Nazi blandishments to join the Axis powers in carving up Europe and the African colonies of Britain and France. I am not going to recount the story, but it is very interesting to see how Franco was able to maintain a delicate balance between domestic political considerations and the demands of a foreign policy that was officially non-belligerent, but

tilted heavily toward the Axis. Franco, if anything, proved to be a canny survivor as he ever so gradually began a tilt toward the Allies as it became increasingly clear that Germany was going to lose the war. There are a lot of "what ifs" mulled in the book that are interesting and even sobering to consider.

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