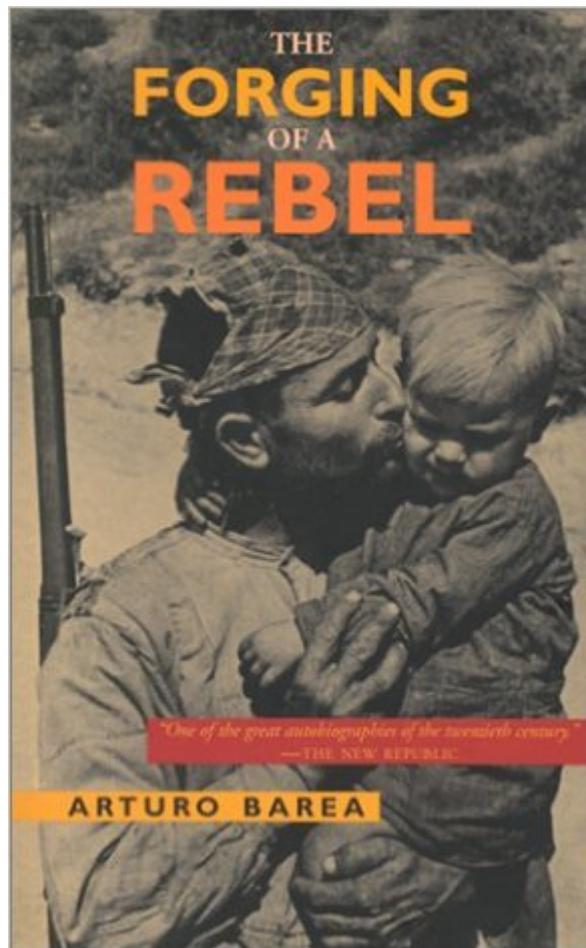


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The Forging Of A Rebel



Synopsis

Originally published in the late 1940s, and never before available in paperback in the United States, Arturo Barea's astonishing Spanish trilogy is both the autobiography of a man and the biography of a nation during the first four decades of the twentieth century, one of the most crucial periods in Spain's long history. Arturo Barea was born into a poor family in Madrid in 1897 and spent his early years moving between the social and economic worlds of his beloved and widowed mother and a well-to-do aunt. Spain had just lost the last of its rich colonial possessions and was burdened by a sick and corrupt monarchy, and Barea's description of Madrid in *The Forge*—its slums and boulevards, beggars and children, and conflicting economic and political currents, is as gripping as it is fascinating. As with many of his generation, he developed bourgeois yearnings and became a prosperous businessman; yet he also became deeply concerned about the greed, corruption, and injustice he saw around him. His experience in the Spanish Army in Morocco during the bloody Riff War of the early 1920s, chronicled in *The Track*, affected him deeply and brought him back to Spain with a new perspective. *The Clash* jumps ahead a decade to chronicle the events in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War, from 1935 to 1939, when Barea and his wife, Ilsa, left Spain for good. His descriptions of people rising up to resist their aggressors are unforgettable, and brings home more poignantly and insightfully than any history the underlying conflicts, tensions, and complexities of the Civil War. Individually, each of Barea's books is unforgettable; together they form a literary and historical masterpiece.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I first read Barea's long book in 1965 and enjoyed it immensely, as it captured a time and events with compelling immediacy. Remembering how engaged I was, I reread *The Forging of a Rebel* (skimming the section dealing with Barea's early childhood to get to the more exciting stuff) and found, having completely forgotten the book, that I was every bit as involved as when I read it almost four decades ago. It's a very personal account of Barea's life as it braids with the events of the time, from his work in a bank (and, later, at a patent office), through his stint in the Spanish army with duty in battle-torn Morocco, to the prelude and raging turmoil of the Spanish Civil War. His journalistic style makes for quick reading. It's hard to imagine any reader not be pulled through to the end.

This book gives you a real idea of what life was like in early 20th century Spain. Barea is ruthless and unromantic in his descriptions, letting you know exactly how things worked in this dirty, gritty, cruel place and time. Don't doubt it, life really is better now than one hundred years ago. It's not a hollywood story, but you'll learn a lot, and the imagery is strong. One of my favourite books.

Originally three books, "The Forge", "The Track", and "The Clash," Barea's memoirs combined become a more sweeping and complete account of the politically legendary Spanish Civil War. It is first though, an autobiography; a personal account of Spain through the eyes of a child who comes of age as a soldier, an intellectual, a worker, and a man. The writer also tells a story that is both beautiful and informative, poetically weaving the sights, sounds and smells of the lands he was raised, amid the customs and culture of the Spanish people. Beginning in the early 1900's, through the second Moroccan War, to the inevitability of the Republic, with a finale of the Civil War, *Forging a Rebel* paints an unforgettable account of a country that inspired thousands of women and men from around the world, of all races, to rally for its cause for freedom, equality, and opportunity. But what is most extraordinary about this brilliant memoir is the passion in which it is written. It is a book that the reader can relate to, despite its being written half a century ago. Timeless tales of the tyrannies of hierarchy, abuses of labor, innocence of childhood, struggles for freedom, and the corruption of power, are woven throughout this trilogy, enabling the reader connect to his story and the stories of his people. When you read Barea's book you feel as though you are in Madrid and Morocco, drinking the wine, eating the food, and hanging out the endless mosaic of people that make up Spain. While it has been recommended by Orwell, has been compared to Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and made into a television mini-series in Spain, this remarkable book has been largely neglected. For anyone interested in Spain, the Spanish Civil War or just brilliant literature, buy this

book, it deserves to be read.

Barea's trilogy of autobiographical novels makes compelling reading for anyone interested in Spanish life and history in the early decades of the twentieth century. The first book--The Forge--traces Barea's youthful experiences in the working-class world of his mother, a Madrid laundress, and with his much more prosperous aunt and uncle. The modernizing city and the hardscrabble life of the New Castilian countryside form paired settings for an exploration of family, faith and its loss, youthful aspiration, harsh working life, and political awakening. In the second book--The Tack--Barea offers an account of military service (and endemic corruption and incompetence) in the Spanish campaigns in Morocco, where disastrous defeat in 1921 led to the overthrow of Spanish parliamentary monarchy in 1923. The final book--The Clash--is the longest, and a bit of a letdown, more propagandistic and predictable in its account of the civil war years in Madrid, but still worth reading.

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