

photographs reproduced in the book — and discussed throughout the text — match the tone and mood of the narrative.

Tarara covers considerable ground. Part One traces the shape of identity politics in colonial New Zealand. Here Božić-Vrbanić offers a Foucauldian perspective on the operation of power relations, outlining the disciplinary and regulatory techniques to which Māori were subjected and, in turn, the ways that the identity of Croat migrants was conditioned by the ways they were positioned in colonial society. Part Two is a veritable tour de force that begins with an elegant and powerful introduction. The chapters which follow are brilliantly executed and do full justice to the rich personal testimony collected in the field and the archive. Božić-Vrbanić explores narratives of the gumfields as home, the nature of Croat–Māori relations in the Far North, the complexity of identity formation among Māori–Croatian descendants, depictions of the kauri gum industry in museums and the nation’s bicultural discourses, using the examples of Te Papa’s *Passports* exhibition and the film *Broken English*. The life stories included in the second part of the book — like those of Miri Simich and Mira Szaszy — are quite extraordinary. For this reviewer, however, the sections on intermarriage and picture brides (Chapter Four) are a revelation and will make a deep impression on readers. The detailed treatment of memory throughout the final chapters will also interest many historians.

Senka Božić-Vrbanić’s research sits nicely alongside recent work by Manying Ip, Patrick McAllister, Angela Wanhalla and various contributors to the *New Oxford History of New Zealand*. It addresses key questions about identities, space, memory, biculturalism and so on that concern so many of us teaching across related fields such as history, anthropology, museum and indigenous studies. *Tarara* is a very rewarding read. It shows what can be achieved when historical enquiry and ethnographic fieldwork are combined in innovative and exciting ways. And it demonstrates that there is still much historians can learn from the practices of anthropologists.

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Kiwi Compañeros: New Zealand and the Spanish Civil War. Edited by Mark Derby. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2009. 304pp. NZ price: \$45.00. ISBN 978-1-877257-71-1.

WHEN I WAS A BOY one of the more exciting books we had at home was entitled *Britons in Spain*. It was published in 1939 and was a glowing account of the exploits of the British battalion in the International Brigades that had recently fought for the Republican government in the Spanish Civil War. The cover featured a photograph of a suntanned young brigader on parade. The cover of *Kiwi Compañeros* also features a member of the International Brigades, a New Zealander, Douglas Jolly, and a lot of the book is written in a similarly partisan mode. However, much to his credit, Mark Derby allows a more balanced picture to emerge. For example, he reproduces an interview with Pedro de Treend, an international volunteer who experienced the Republican version of ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, in which the Communists and their allies frequently eliminated those who did not toe their line, and now regrets his choice to fight for it. It would be sad if the current determination, covered in the chapter by Judith Keene, to explore the murders carried out by Nationalists in the civil war and the slaughter on an industrial scale that followed the Francoist victory in turn overlooked the massacres and ‘executions’ on the other side.¹ In particular, leftists ‘disappeared’ by the Communists and their allies risk being overlooked. Nor does the editor restrict his subjects to the side that, as Antony Beevor has remarked, lost the war but won the propaganda battle.² There is, for example, a section on Philip Cross, who fought for the Nationalists, though his statements are treated with a scepticism not

deployed for the claims of those on the other side.

It becomes clear that remarkably few people brought up in New Zealand fought in Spain. Physical and cultural distance was undoubtedly influential — though the practice of working a passage to Britain was well-established and the existence of the British battalion promised familiar companionship. Those few who did go included some very unusual characters — such as the man who had held up a bank in Palmerston North (even in the 1930s there were easier ways of getting out of Palmy) and a mercenary who had flown for Chinese warlords. Whichever side they favoured, New Zealanders overwhelmingly do not seem to have seen the Spanish Civil War as their fight. Many were prepared to donate to humanitarian causes associated with it, often through trade unions. Even then, as Peter Clayworth notes (p.213), the trade union contributions were minute in comparison with those given to support strikes in Australia or the United Kingdom. Nor did the fact that the New Zealand Communist Party took the lead in advocating for the Republic do the latter's cause any favours. Identification with the disciples of Stalin at the time of the show trials and the Great Purge hardly assisted the Spanish government's attempts to portray itself as the defender of democracy. As John Shennan (p.188) and Peter Clayworth (p.205) recognize, the leadership of the ruling Labour Party wanted nothing to do with the Communist Party and its devious works. It was understandably contemptuous of anything to do with a movement that had so recently attacked it as 'social fascist'. While the apparent absence of Catholic idealists from New Zealand joining the Nationalist side is surprising, what was in large measure a crusade in support of the Spanish church could expect little other backing in an overwhelmingly protestant country where even those who personally eschewed religion had been brought up to link Spain's economic backwardness to the influence of catholicism.

Many of the contributions explore much wider questions. Malcolm McKinnon uses the approach of the first Labour Government to the civil war as a means of further extending the complex debate about 'independence' and makes the point that Labour's 'moral foreign policy' in the late 1930s consciously reflected that of the British Labour Party. Lawrence Jones has to dig surprisingly deep to find many traces of the civil war in New Zealand literature of the time. He attributes much of this relative paucity to the focus of the country's leading writers on creating a masculinist and nationalist 'anti-myth', and remarks how writing about the conflict, most famously in John Mulgan's *Man Alone*, became subordinated to this project. James McNeish contributes a fascinating glimpse into the life and thinking of Geoffrey Cox, who wrote such vibrant pro-Republican reports from Madrid and came close to joining the Communist Party of Great Britain, but latterly became an enthusiastic Thatcherite.

With the exception of the chapter by Nicholas Reid on Catholic reactions to the civil war, *Kiwi Compañeros* generally demonstrates surprisingly little engagement with recent academic debates (or indeed some that are now decades old) on the nature of the forces ranged on either side. One historian generally critical of 'revisionism' in this area has remarked that 'no serious historian takes such a narrow view any more' as to present it as 'an epic conflict between reactionary elites and revolutionary people'.³ Yet that is how the conflict is portrayed here. Furthermore, rightists are indiscriminately labelled 'fascist', ignoring the consensus amongst historians that Franco and most of those fighting for him had little time for the social revolutionary doctrines of those they mocked as 'our Reds'. The leaders of the Republican government are portrayed as democrats despite most of them having preferred to launch an armed uprising in 1934 rather than have democratically elected rightists in government. Interestingly, the foreword by the Spanish Ambassador to New Zealand, Marcos Gomez, neatly avoids portraying the conflict as one over democracy, but understandably celebrates Spain's success in establishing truly democratic government over the past four decades. In 1936 neither side was offering such a happy outcome.⁴ Nor was Franco's victory ever going to hasten the outbreak of the Second World War, a conventional view echoed here. The Spanish Civil War was a useful testing ground

during German rearmament, but it was irrelevant to the trajectory that Hitler envisaged for Germany. It might have become relevant if the much-maligned policy of non-intervention had been abandoned by the Popular Front government in Paris and civil war had ensued in France, which was already fiercely divided, not least on the issue of Spain. In 1937 Hitler speculated that he might bring forward aggressive moves in that event, recognizing how disastrous it would be to the position of the democracies.

Both the editor and many contributors acknowledge their debt to other New Zealand historians, notably Susan Skudder for her 1986 doctoral thesis, which remains the definitive work on New Zealand and the Spanish Civil War, and Michael O'Shaughnessy for his ongoing international exploration of the subject. This volume is very valuable in bringing the fruits of their research to public attention. While it does relatively little to enlighten readers about the complexities of the Spanish tragedy, *Kiwi Compañeros* provides some worthwhile insights into the politics and culture of some New Zealanders in the late 1930s.

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NOTES

1 A measure of the disagreement regarding the scale of the Francoist repression is that here it is stated that 'In the years from 1939 to 1945 between 100,000 and 200,000 Spaniards were executed by firing squads' (p.258), while Chris Ealham, a positively savage critic of 'revisionism' in Spanish Civil War historiography, declares that '50,000 were shot and 4000 died of hunger'. Chris Ealham, 'Review Article: "Myths" and the Spanish Civil War: Some Old, Some Exploded, Some Clearly Borrowed and Some Almost "Blue"', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42, 2 (2007), p.374.

2 *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 March 2005, p.3.

3 Xose-Manoel Nunez, 'New Interpretations of the Spanish Civil War', *Contemporary European History*, 13, 4 (2004), pp.517–27.

4 For a detailed recent study of the suppression of electoral opposition and of vote-rigging by the Republicans in power before the outbreak of the civil war, see Roberto Villa Garcia, 'The Failure of Electoral Modernization: The Elections of May 1936 in Granada', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 44, 3 (2009), pp.401–29.

Beyond the Battlefield: New Zealand and its Allies, 1939–45. By Gerald Hensley. Viking, Auckland, 2009. 415pp. NZ price: \$65.00. ISBN 978-0-67-007404-7.

THE BRITISH DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST GERMANY in September 1939 placed Australia and New Zealand in a quandary. While they were committed to supporting the 'mother country' in the European war, they could not ignore the fact that they could not defend themselves if the war spread to the Pacific. Nevertheless, the two dominions both committed the bulk of their limited forces to the war in Europe. New Zealand's predicament provides the central theme of Gerald Hensley's authoritative and very readable study of a distant dominion struggling to survive, economically and militarily, at the farthest reach of empire.

The leaders of both dominions took some comfort from the British naval base at Singapore and the British commitment to send a fleet to defend the dominions in the event of Japan entering the war. They were also reassured by vague but supportive statements from Washington. More fundamentally, neither dominion could envisage a world without the British Empire, and both were convinced that their own survival depended upon Britain surviving.

By 1941, Australia had sent four divisions of troops to the Middle East and Singapore, and dispatched ships and airmen across the world to fight alongside British forces. Despite