



## Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War (Studies in Canadian Military History)

By Michael Petrou

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Between 1936 and 1939, almost 1,700 Canadians defied their government and volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War. They chose to leave behind punishing lives in Canadian relief camps, mines, and urban flophouses to confront fascism in a country few knew much about. Four hundred died there.

Michael Petrou has drawn on recently declassified archival material, interviewed surviving Canadian veterans, and visited the battlefields of Spain to write the definitive account of Canadians in the Spanish Civil War. It reveals who these men and women were, why they volunteered, how they lived and died in Spain, and how the Canadian government and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reacted to their decision to illegally join another country's war.

*Renegades* is an intimate and unflinching story of idealism and courage, duplicity and defeat. It will appeal to anyone interested in the history of Canada, the Spanish Civil War, and the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism in the 1930s.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

A fascinating account of a little understood conflict, packed with information never before published ... For anyone interested in the history of Canada and the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism, Petrou's masterful account is required reading. (Paula Adamick *Canada Post UK* 2008-07-01)

*Renegades* is the fullest and most authoritative account yet written of Canadian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and a valuable contribution to the history of the International Brigades. Michael Petrou draws on many new archival sources to present a vivid, rounded, and illuminating account of the almost 1,700 Canadians who served in Spain. While essentially a group biography, there are also some fascinating vignettes of individual volunteers, notably Dr Norman Bethune. (Tom Buchanan, Kellogg College, University of Oxford, author of *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*)

You will find a painstaking account of the courageous band who chose to fight fascism before it was politically fashionable and the tough battles they fought with little training, lousy equipment and military leadership that was haphazard at best ... Adventurers, idealists, people looking for work and a cause, they deserve our respect. Petrou's often dry, detailed account allows us to understand that they may have been renegades but they were also soldiers, not of fortune but of commitment and dreams. (Bob Rae *Literary Review of Canada*, Vol. 16, No. 5 2008-06-01)

Michael Petrou's *Renegades* isn't the first account of the Canadians who fought in Spain's uncivil war, but it does feel like we now have the whole story in hand – as much of it, anyway, as we're ever going to see emerge from the fog of that war. Painstaking and clear-eyed, what lends it heft is the volume and rigour of the research that Petrou, a senior writer at Maclean's, has marshalled. There's a good deal that's new, too, thanks to Petrou's access to the archives of Moscow's Communist International, as well as the mining he's done of Canadian archives, including newly declassified RCMP files. (Stephen Smith *The Globe and Mail* 2008-08-02)

All the good components of a war history are present here: statistical analysis of who the soldiers were, why they fought, and how their ideals were tested; incompetent officers sacrificing their men for the sake of appearances; and much demonstration of the absurdity of war, both in situ and in retrospect. Petrou does a fantastic job of continuously relating everything back to the *why* of the war, and how common wartime situations became a fight in the struggle of communism versus fascism. (Megan Moore Burns *Quill & Quire* 2008-05-01)

*Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War*, by veteran journalist Michael Petrou, tells the story of the 1,681 Canadians who, between 1936 and 1939, defied Canadian law to fight fascism in the Spanish Civil war. The war pitted a left leaning, democratically elected Spanish government against a military uprising led by Francisco Franco and supported, with weapons and tens of thousands of troops, by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. By the time it was over, fascism had triumphed in Spain, and more than 400 Canadians were dead.

Until now, little was known about these men and women, and about those who survived. Petrou has changed this. He has drawn on recently declassified material, interviewed veterans, and visited the battlefields of Spain to write the definitive history of Canadians in the war. Jack Granatstein, one of Canada's leading

military historians, concludes: "Based on massive research, this is the best and most complete account of Canadians in the Spanish Civil War we are ever likely to get."

*Renegades* reveals that Spanish Civil War veterans were pressured to become police informers, with the cooperation of the federal government; that a 1970 application by a veterans' group for non-profit status was opposed by the federal government out of fear that approving the application might offend Spain's fascist dictator, Francisco Franco; and that the RCMP spied on Canadian veterans at least until 1980, when one police report noted that the veterans' "political motivations are more in keeping with the NDP philosophies."

Other highlights include:

- Detailed and vivid descriptions of the battles the Canadians fought, and their lives in Spain between action. The stories of Canadian prisoners of war are also told – as are accounts of Canadians who were imprisoned and otherwise punished, sometimes severely, by their own commanders.
- New and sensational information about Dr. Norman Bethune, whom Spanish authorities accused of espionage and of having a secretly fascist lover.
- The story of a young University Toronto student who was jailed as a suspected spy and was lucky to leave Spain alive. After reading recently declassified documents from Soviet archives about this man, Petrou tracked him down and interviewed him at the age of 90.

#### Review

More than 1,600 Canadian men and women fought to save Spain's republic from its fascist opponents; over 400 died in the struggle. Not until the Cold War was over could Michael Petrou get us the fascinating details of who and what and why so many Canadians struggled and died in a war the democracies made it easy for General Francisco Franco to win. (Desmond Morton, author of *A Military History of Canada*)

#### From the Back Cover

"*Renegades* is the fullest and most authoritative account yet written of Canadian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and a valuable contribution to the history of the International Brigades. Michael Petrou draws on many new archival sources to present a vivid, rounded, and illuminating account of the almost 1,700 Canadians who served in Spain. While essentially a group biography, there are also some fascinating vignettes of individual volunteers -- notably Dr. Norman Bethune."

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**J.L. Granatstein**, author of *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*

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**Michael Petrou**, a senior writer at Maclean's magazine, has covered wars and conflicts across Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. He holds a doctorate in modern history from the University of Oxford.

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**David Shetler:**

This *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Studies in Canadian Military History) are usually reliable for you who want to become a successful person, why. The key reason why of this *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Studies in Canadian Military History) can be one of many great books you must have is actually giving you more than just simple studying food but feed a person with information that possibly will shock your preceding knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it everywhere you go and whenever your conditions in the e-book and printed versions. Beside that this *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Studies in Canadian Military History) giving you an enormous of experience including rich vocabulary, giving you test of critical thinking that we all know it useful in your day pastime. So , let's have it and revel in reading.

**Sheila Robinson:**

The book untitled *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Studies in Canadian Military History)

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**Kevin Vickers:**

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