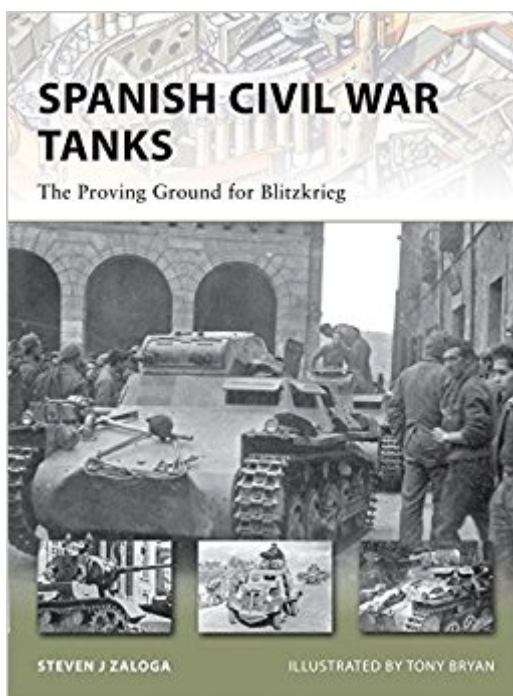


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Spanish Civil War Tanks: The Proving Ground For Blitzkrieg (New Vanguard)



Synopsis

The tanks used during the Spanish Civil War are not often examined in any great detail, and are often labeled as little more than test vehicles in a convenient proving ground before World War II. But, with groundbreaking research, armor expert Steven J Zaloga has taken a fresh look at the tanks deployed in Spain, examining how future tanks and armored tactics were shaped and honed by the crews' experiences, and how Germany was able to benefit from these lessons while their Soviet opponents were not. Based on recently uncovered records of Soviet tankers in Spain and rare archival accounts, this book describes the various tanks deployed in Spain, including the PzKpfw I and the T-26.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

• A very readable little book which challenges some of the myth that goes with the subject...• ideal if you just want to find out a bit about the armour used in the Spanish Civil War, and good ideas for modellers as well. • Robin Buckland, militarymodelling.com

Steven J. Zaloga received his BA in history from Union College and his MA from Columbia University. He has worked as an analyst in the aerospace industry for over two decades, covering missile systems and the international arms trade, and has served with the Institute for Defense Analyses, a federal think-tank. He is the author of numerous books on military technology and military history, with an accent on the US Army in World War II as well as Russia and the former

Soviet Union.

Steven Zaloga's "Spanish Civil War Tanks" is a great introduction to the history of tanks and armored cars used by both Republican and Nationalist forces in the conflict. Zaloga excels at crafting a historical narrative that makes good use of the limited space provided by the Osprey New Vanguard series format, and Tony Bryan's illustrations are crisp and well executed. The photos are well chosen and well reproduced with useful captions that strengthen the text. Modelers should find both the vehicle photos and illustrations with markings and color schemes useful. While there are no battlefield maps or super detailed blow by blow accounts of individual battles, the book does provide coverage of all the major operations where tanks were used and it should provide wargamers and anyone interested in interwar armored history with some interesting insights and analysis of the technology and tactics used during the war. For me the coverage of T-26 tank and development of the Soviet 20-K 45mm tank gun was worth the price of admission because it helped clarify my hazy understanding of the interwar evolutionary offshoots of the Vickers 6-ton tank and provided me with a little better grasp of the evolution of AFV armor and firepower in the 30s. It would have been nice to read more about the Soviet BT-5s in both Republican and Nationalist hands, but these vehicles made up only 50 of the 331 tanks the Soviets sent to Spain and Zaloga has a great deal of ground to cover in 48 pages. Examples of Republican ad-hoc and series production armored trucks are provided by the author, as well as interesting field modifications by the Nationalist forces of several German Panzer Is and Italian CV 3/35 tankettes with items like Breda 20mm M35 cannons and flame throwers. The Breda 20mm M35 cannon field modifications were a desperate attempt to counter the threat posed by Republican T-26s. There is not much in the book regarding the performance of the modified flame tanks, but the author includes the less than glowing reviews of the German crews of the 4 20mm cannon up-gunned Panzer Is. For the Nationalists the better answer to the threat posed by the Republican T-26 tanks was the addition of German supplied 37mm PaK 36s anti-tank guns and captured T-26s to Nationalist tank platoons. There are no detailed tables of organizations in the book, but Zaloga does provide details in the text on the structure of Italian, Nationalist (including Panzergruppe D), and Republican/Soviet armored formations describing how the size and nature of the units changed from 1936-39. In addition there are tables calling out the numbers of tanks available to each side at the start of the war, a table listing all the Soviet tank shipments to Spain, and even table with detailed break down of available T-26s for Republican operations from October 1936 to August 1937 which includes the number of destroyed and disabled T-26s on a campaign basis. The text includes the data on all the AFV

shipments (tanks + armored cars) to Spain during the war, including the smaller one off shipments like the FT tanks purchased by the Republicans from Poland. Data is also provided on the numbers of domestically manufactured armored cars like the Blindado BC and Spain's only domestic tank project the Trubia. The war was very much a trial and error affair when it came to the use of armored vehicles. The tactical lessons learned from the war are clouded by the limitations of the available technology and the unique operational difficulties of the conflict. A good deal of the text is spent addressing the operational problems faced by tank units during the war stemming from inadequate training, poor tactics, the poor mechanical endurance of period tanks, and harsh battle field conditions which tested the endurance of man and machine. All and all, its a well crafted little book.

The sub-title of this work is interesting as it is "The Proving Ground for Blitzkrieg". Which is odd given that the author Steven J Zaloga on page 40 states that the Spanish Civil War was pointedly not the proving ground for blitzkrieg. Then again I guess he didn't write the tag line under the main heading "Anyway, rant over." I'm not exactly sure that the world was crying out for one of Ospreys New Vanguard series on the tanks of the civil war given the historical backwater the war itself resides in. And the military backwater Spain had been for well centuries one could probably say. Never-the-less here it is. The usual Osprey quality is here "you get lots of photographs (many of which were new to me), very good illustrations, some line drawings and a good look at the subject in question. Normally one of these slim volumes has to cover a lot of ground but in this instance Zaloga is given a freer hand to actually look at tactics and the way the vehicles were deployed. He is able to look at the combat side of things more than he usually has room for. And some interest is generated by the vehicles themselves. The smaller Italian tankettes, the Panzer 1 and the ubiquitous Soviet T-26 are all given a look as are the way the vehicles often changed hands. The armour/armament issues are well explored here and the conflict was very much a microcosm of the later guns and armour race so reminiscent of the Eastern Front. What was totally new to me was that Spain actually built a tank of its own. Only in small number but this was totally unknown to me. Not that it was a world beater mind|While the title mentions tanks of the war the work also covers some of the armoured cars and trucks that were in action, from Italian models to locally produced vehicles. As usual with one of these books if you want to delve deeper you can via the works mentioned in the bibliography. For lovers of obscure AFV stuff this is a good book. And also probably has a market for those who can't stomach building yet another model Tiger tank and hanker for something different.

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