



# **Juan Negrín: Spanish Republican War Leader (Canada Blanch/Sussex Academic Studies on Contemporary Spain)**

*Gabriel Jackson*

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Dr. Juan Negrín Lopez (1892–1956) was a man of immense talent, energy, and socialist convictions who served the Spanish people in several widely differing capacities: as a physiologist of international reputation and as chairman of the medical faculty of the Complutense University in Madrid during the 1920s; as an active member of the Parliamentary wing of the Socialist Party during the years 1931–1936; then during the Civil War as Minister of Finance in the Popular Front government led by Francisco Largo Caballero (September 1936–May 1937); and as Prime Minister from late May until the bitter end in March 1939. ... In all these roles he was highly competent: improving the laboratories and experimental methods in physiology, obtaining foreign scholarships for the best students, suggesting worthwhile subjects for doctoral theses, encouraging his students to learn foreign languages and read scientific literature in the language of the author, and also to think of public health as a national, public responsibility. As Minister of Finance he conceived of Spain's relatively large gold reserve as the only means by which the Republic could buy the quality of modern arms that were being supplied to General Franco by Hitler and Mussolini. In European politics of the mid-1930s he understood much better than did the English, French, and United States political classes that Nazism and Fascism were a much greater threat to European democracy than was Soviet Communism. But the "appeasement" policy culminating in the Munich Pact of September 29, 1938 sealed the fate of the Spanish Republic as well as that of the Republic of Czechoslovakia. ... From 1940 onward Negrín was reviled in Franco Spain for having supposedly delivered the Republic into the hands of the Communists; many republican and socialist exiles also rejected him for continuing his Numantian policy of resistance when, after Munich, the military possibilities of the Republic were truly hopeless. In this award-winning biography (originally published in Spanish), Gabriel Jackson sets out to understand the moral and political thinking of Dr. Negrín – of those who supported him to the end and of those who felt that the last months of the war merely prolonged the useless suffering of the general population.

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