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HISTORY BOOK OF THE YEAR

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THE SPANISH HOLOCAUST Inquisition and Extermination in 20th-Century Spain by **PAUL PRESTON**
HarperPress £30 ebook £14.99 Reviewers often like to describe books as "important", usually when they are not important at all. But Preston's staggeringly detailed, powerful and affecting chronicle of the savagery unleashed during the Spanish civil war genuinely deserves the label. In Spain the war remains enormously controversial; even today, rival politicians argue bitterly about excavating victims' graves. But as the world's most distinguished expert on the war, Preston brings a rare authority to this terrifying survey. Above all, he shows beyond dispute that the blame for civilian suffering lay largely with Franco's right-wing Nationalists, who deliberately imported the terror tactics they had used in colonial Morocco. At the end of the book Preston writes of the "emotional cost" of his "daily immersion in this chronicle of inhumanity". But the result is a history of rare moral and emotional power, which alters forever our view of one of the most symbolic conflicts of the last century.

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