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Written with passion and intelligence, the letters of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in World War II express the raw idealism of anti-fascist soldiers who experienced the war in boot camps, cockpits, and foxholes, but never lost sight of the great global issues at stake. When the United States entered World War II on December 7, 1941, only one group of American soldiers had already confronted the fascist enemy on the battlefield: the U.S. veterans of the Lincoln Brigade, a volunteer army of about 2,800 men and women who had enlisted to defend the Spanish Republic from military rebels during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). They fought on the losing side. After Pearl Harbor, Lincoln Brigade veterans enthusiastically joined the U.S. Army, welcoming this second chance to fight against fascism. However, the Lincoln recruits soon encountered suspicious military leaders who questioned their patriotism and denied them promotions and overseas assignments, foreshadowing the political persecution of the postwar Red Scare. African American veterans who fought in fully integrated units in Spain, faced second-class treatment in America's Jim Crow army. Nevertheless, the Lincolns served with distinction in every theater of the war and won a disproportionate number of medals for courage, dedication, and sacrifice. The 154 letters in this volume, selected from thousands held in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives at NYU's Tamiment Library, provide a new and unique perspective on aspects of World War II.
