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Franco's Enemies Come Back, With Canes and Memories

By MARLISE SIMONS

MADRID, Nov. 10 — Irving Gold came in a wheelchair. Others used canes or just walked slowly into the Madrid Sports Palace. Old soldiers all, they proudly wore their berets and insignias.

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Soon they were showered with Spain's best: the laments of flamenco, poems of García Lorca, folk music and battle songs. Before long, the old men cried and saluted, raising clenched fists. Some of those fists trembled with age, but they went up anyway before a roaring audience estimated at 10,000.

It is 60 years since the Spanish Civil War began and young men came here from all over Europe and North America to fight fascism. Veterans of those International Brigades returned to Spain over the last few days for what may be their last big reunion. Forgotten and at times reviled in their own countries, they have been much applauded and honored here, two decades after the death of the right-wing dictator against whom they fought and lost.

Parliament made them honorary Spanish citizens, a tribute that deeply touched the 380 veterans here from 29 nations, including the United States, Russia, Britain, France, Poland and Cuba.

"This is very moving, very uplifting," said Irving Rappoport, 86, who worked in a New York grocery store in 1937 when he offered to risk his life in a country of which he knew little. "We came to fight fascism and Nazism and I'm still proud of it."

More than 40,000 youthful foreigners with little or no fighting experience came to Spain, recruited by Communist groups and trade unions. Most were workers and students, among them Communists, Socialists and liberals. A few were women, who worked as nurses. Almost 3,000 were Americans, grouped in what became known as the Lincoln Brigade, of whom some 900 died in action.

Charles Hall, one of the 68 American veterans here this week, heard about the war in Spain on his factory floor in Chicago. "The slogan was,"

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Foreign volunteers who fought in the Spanish Civil War gathered in Madrid for a reunion marking the 60th anniversary of the war's start. Most of the veterans are now in their 80s.