

# The Volunteer

FOUNDED BY THE VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

"...and that government of the people,  
by the people, and for the people,  
shall not perish from the earth."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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Lincoln Brigade vets and their families attend events commemorating 70th anniversary of Despedida (International Brigades' departure from Spain) in Barcelona. Clockwise from left, vets George Sossenکو, Jack Shafran, and Matti Mattson, and Josie Yurek, daughter of vet Steve Nelson. Photos by Jeannette Ferrary. See page 1

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# ALBA's New Executive Director

Jeanne Houck, an experienced public historian, has been appointed ALBA's Executive Director, becoming the organization's chief administrative officer.

A native of Maryland, Houck earned her bachelor's

degree from George Washington University and a PhD in history at New York University. She was founder and president of History Works, a New York City-based public history consulting and production company. Most recently, she served as development associate at the Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum. She is also executive producer of the NEH-sponsored film project No Job for a Woman: The Women Who Fought to Report World War II. She can be reached at [jhouck@alba-valb.org](mailto:jhouck@alba-valb.org); (212) 674-5398.



## Teaching Teachers: Update

ALBA's key education initiative, which began last summer with a summer institute for New York area teachers at New York University, will continue next year in New York and in other parts of the country. It's too early to announce the details, but new programs are in the planning stages for New York City and Tampa, Florida.

In Tampa, ALBA is cooperating with the Department of History and the Department of Social Foundations at the University of South Florida to create a program for June 2009. Titled "La Retaguardia de Tampa: The Spanish Civil War and Its Impact on Florida and U.S. History," this summer institute will focus on the strong support for the Spanish Republic among the city's Cuban, Spanish and Italian communities. A selected group of high school teachers will work with original documents drawn from the ALBA archives and from the Spanish Civil War collection at the University of South Florida, which contains information on the 26 Tampeños who volunteered to fight in Spain. Other documents, including original documentaries, focus on pro-loyalist activities in the city's working-class enclave of Ybor City.

On the west coast, a key curriculum office is expressing interest in developing similar programs. In November,

ALBA Chair Peter Carroll participated in a roundtable discussion at the California World History Association conference in San Francisco focusing on how the subject of the Spanish Civil War (which can be taught in 10th grade social studies) can be related to U.S. history courses (taught in 11th grade) by examining the role of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. In this way, U.S. history directly connects to world history.

We hope to make further announcements after the New Year.

## Vets Can Be Spanish Citizens

A recent revision of Spanish law provides that veterans of the International Brigades can receive full Spanish citizenship without renouncing their existing citizenship and without traveling to Spain to obtain it. According to Spanish officials who addressed the Brigadistas at the 70th anniversary ceremonies in Barcelona in October, veterans should make formal inquiries at the nearest Spanish consulate.

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799 Broadway, Suite 341  
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(212) 674-5398

### Editorial Board

Peter N. Carroll • Gina Herrmann  
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# Barcelona, 1938-2008



**By Peter N. Carroll**  
**Photos by Jeannette Ferrary**

**T**he great speech by Dolores Ibarruri—"La Pasionaria of the Spanish Republic"—at the farewell parade of the International Brigades in 1938 was quoted repeatedly in Barcelona during the 70th anniversary commemoration of the Farewell to the International Brigadistas last October.

Ibarruri's vibrant words spoke of the past and prophesized the present moment. On October 28, 1938, as tens of thousands of Barcelonans crowded the Gran Via to bid farewell to the International survivors who were going home or, in some cases, into exile because their home countries would not allow them to return, she said:

We shall not forget you;  
and, when the olive tree of  
peace is in flower, entwined  
with the victory laurels of the  
Republic of Spain—come  
back!

Come back to our side  
for here you will find a home-  
land—those who have no  
country or friends, who must  
live deprived of friendship—all,  
all will have the affection and

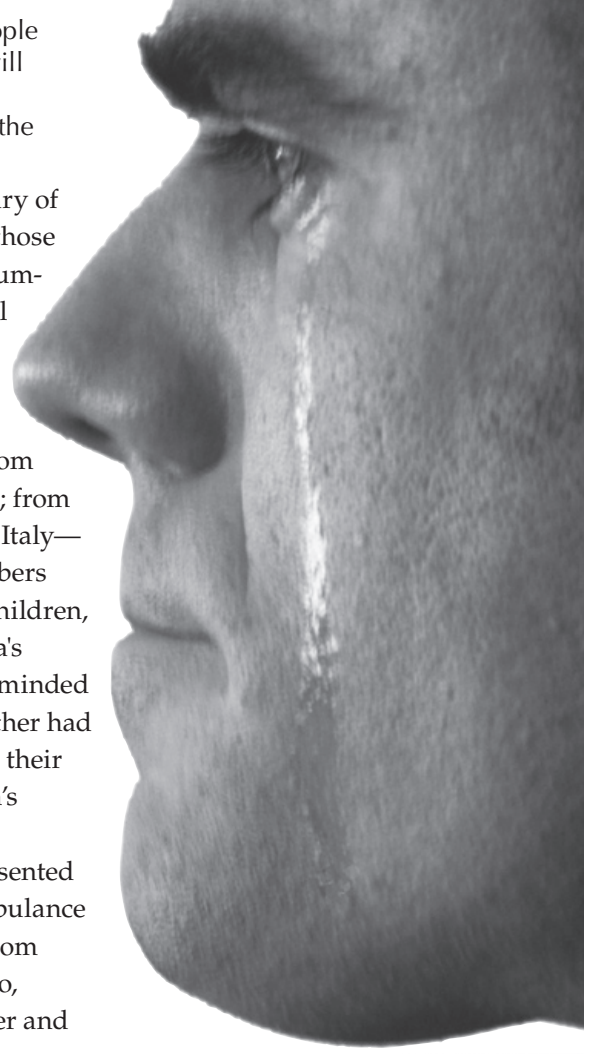
gratitude of the Spanish people  
who today and tomorrow will  
shout with enthusiasm—

Long live the heroes of the  
International Brigades!

This year, on the anniversary of that historic moment, some of those heroes did come back, but in numbers that showed the steady toll of time and the softening of public memory of their heroism. They came from Mexico, Cuba, and the United States; from Russia, Bulgaria, and Rumania; from Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Italy—and many of their family members came as well: children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Pasionaria's daughter was there, and she reminded the Internationals how her mother had long praised their heroism and their sacrifices for the cause of Spain's freedom.

The Americans were represented by Matti Mattson, onetime ambulance driver; Jack Shafran, soldado from Brooklyn; and George Sossenkeno, French-born anarchist volunteer and resident of Atlanta.

There were many speeches and ceremonial tributes, laying of wreaths,



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# Barcelona

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hoisted glasses of wine and cava to honor both those who were present and those who are long gone.

On Friday, October 25, at the small beachside town of Sitges, half an hour south of Barcelona, where most of the visitors were hosted, the city inaugurated "New York and the Spanish Civil War." The exhibit, originally created by ALBA and the Museum of the City of New York, funded by the Puffin Foundation and the Cervantes Institute, is now traveling to various sites in Spain. This was the first version of the exhibition that was translated into Catalan, and more towns are on its itinerary in the north-east province of Spain.



Ana Perez, head of the Association of Amigos of the International Brigades

A small brass band led a column of Brigadistas and their friends through the winding streets of Sitges to the City Hall. The crowd, too large for the accommodations, spilled into the hallway, but an official delegation of government officers welcomed the group. The mayor and various cultural officials, including Salvador Clotas, head of the Fundacion Pablo Iglesias, spoke with sincerity about the opportunity to thank the surviving



Historian Paul Preston

volunteers. Indeed, as one official spoke about his grandfather's memory of fighting beside the Internationals, the translator wept openly.

The next day, the veterans journeyed by bus to Barcelona for a ceremonial event at the monument to the International Brigades made by U.S. sculptor Roy Shiffrin on the Rambla del Carmel. An exuberant crowd applauded speeches by public officials and by Brigadistas, including George Sossenکو. Then the contingent moved to the haunting cemetery on Montjuic, where several memorials honor the victims of Franco's



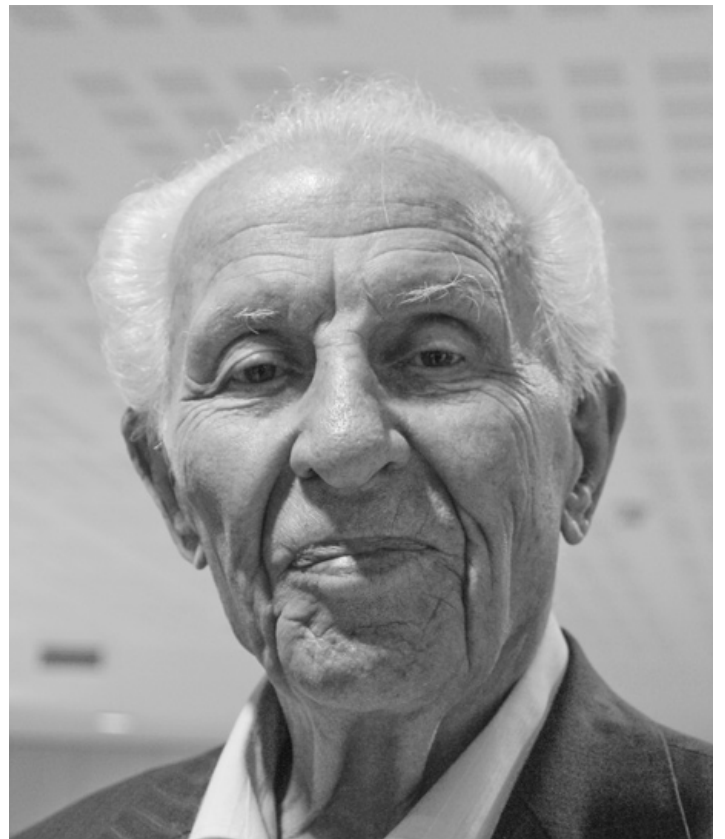
Amaya Ibarruri, daughter of Dolores Ibarruri

executions as well as the dead of World War II. After a ceremonial laying of a wreath, the guests were treated to a sumptuous dinner at the Pedralbes Palace, sponsored by the Catalan Ministry of Home Affairs. Historian Paul Preston presented the keynote speech, and a lively outdoor musical presentation was performed by the Brossa Quartet.



Gloria Bodelón Alonso, from Ministry of Justice, speaking to crowd about Spain's offer of citizenship to IB vets.

The official events, both solemn and emotionally moving, reflected the growing importance in contemporary Spain of overcoming the "pact of silence" about the Spanish Civil War and protecting the historical memory of those who lost the war. On a private scale, these feelings seemed even more intense, as the old men and women who came from around the world embraced each other, signaling the passing of the generations and the inevitable sense of loss. For three full days, the warm Spanish sun mellowed those darker thoughts. ■



Clockwise from upper left corner: Universo Lipiz (Cuba); Victor Lovsky; daughter of Russian volunteer holding photo of father; Yury Turzhanskiy (Russia).

# Sidewalk Views of the Monument



## By Teresa Huhle

**O**n a sunny Sunday afternoon in August I spent four hours beside the Abraham Lincoln Brigade monument in San Francisco. I wanted to talk to everyone who stopped and looked at the monument. When they were about to leave, I introduced myself and asked, “Why did you stop? What is the monument about? Do you like it?” Of course four hours isn’t enough time to take a statistical survey. It’s a snap-shot. Ten voices.

The Justin Herman Plaza was quiet that Sunday. People who came by came with time. Only one couple was from San Francisco. Others came from Switzerland, Canada, Spain, New York, Seattle, San Diego, Marin County and the Bay Area. Some I missed while talking to others. To some I spoke a minute, to others 10. Some only answered my questions and continued on their way. Others

Teresa Huhle is writing her thesis, about the San Francisco monument, at the University of Cologne.

started interviewing me after I interviewed them.

I want to share with readers of *The Volunteer* what I was told.

### Two young tourists from Switzerland

*“We were just trying to figure out what dictator this is about. Franco, right? But if that’s Franco, wasn’t there also a dictator in ’73?”* They told me they had figured it was about Spain, but they had never heard of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. So I asked who they thought the monument was for. *“Well, we thought probably some Americans helped to fight against Franco. It wouldn’t make sense if it was for Spanish freedom fighters.”*

### Canadian tourist with his 10-year-old son

He knew about the war and the Lincoln Brigade. He said the monument is one *“that makes you think,”* and he had stopped because it was *“something to share with my son, sort of explain a little bit more about politics and fascism and so forth.”*

### Two 20-year-old men from Seattle

I saw them reading the Pablo Neruda poems very carefully. They told me they didn’t know what the monument was for—*“didn’t really pay attention to it”*—but they were studying Spanish and liked Neruda. *“We were trying to translate and didn’t notice the translation was right next to it,”* they said laughing.

### Young woman from San Diego

I saw her taking pictures of Dolores Ibarruri and Harry Bridges quotes. But when I asked her about it, she didn’t know what the monument was for and didn’t want to know. She just said, *“I liked the words.”*

### Two women from San Francisco

I could tell it had a strong impact on them. They had finished shopping, and for them the monument was a reminder to *“wait a minute, pay attention, think about why we go to war. Who are we fighting if not our brothers. Just to have a conversation with somebody is better than shooting him.”*

Continued next page

# Despedida Celebrations



The anniversary of the Despedida was celebrated in San Francisco and New York with dramatic readings of veterans' letters describing the 1938 parade and the screening of rare footage of the event. The program was written and arranged by Bruce Barthol, with visuals by Richard Bermack, Judy Montell, and Peter Glazer. Clockwise, from upper left: Tessa Koning-Martínez (SF); Lisa Asher and Peter Glazer (NY); Linda Lustig (SF); Elizabeth Martínez (SF); Arthur Holden, Bruce Barthol, and Heather Bridger (SF).



## Tourist from San Diego

"I am half through with *For Whom the Bell Tolls*." She didn't know about Americans in the Spanish Civil War before she started the book. But she knew Paul Robeson and admired Langston Hughes. It seemed as if a puzzle started to make sense to her. She was touched by Robert Colodny's words: "The Vietnam War, that's the war that has shaped me."

## Photographer from the Bay Area

"My neighbor, who is a history buff and a history teacher, told me that if I come to the Ferry Building I should come see it." And she was happy she had

come. "I really think this is beautiful art work. This really improves the city's beauty."

## 23-year-old exchange student from Madrid

He was the only one who didn't talk of a monument about "Spain," but said, "It's really interesting that they have a monument about the Republic." He knew about the International Brigades, but not about the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. His family hadn't fought in the war, he said. "In Spain there are no monuments of the Civil War. It's really good to see it here." An American friend who was with him thought he knew of the war, but said, "I hadn't realized we'd sent a brigade."

## History student from New York

"I think this history is pretty well known." I could tell he knew lots about it. "I'm not a very good judge of architecture and monuments. I think I would have liked it better if there actually was like a statue of Abraham Lincoln."

## Older man from Marin County

"I'm well aware how the people who fought against Franco have not been treated very well by many people, especially in this country. I firmly believe in the things that are written here. People who fought against fascism deserve our thanks. It's very touching to see this." He had tears in his eyes. ■

# 1938: Milton Robertson Writes Home

*Editor's Note: This newly found letter was read at commemorative events held in San Francisco and New York last November.*

Oct. 29 1938

Hospital 101S

Dear Lil and Bernie,

Yesterday I was witness and participant in a demonstration that I am determined never to forget.

It was the day when the people of Spain went to say good-bye to the internationals.

At the hospital there was tremendous excitement about going to Barcelona. All wanted to be included in the small delegation to be chosen. There couldn't have been more eagerness and enthusiasm had it been known that a boat lay at wait for us in the harbor to take us home. At one o'clock the group chosen (thank heavens it included me, I don't know why) was finally placed in a large open ambulance. I sat there nervously chewing the remnants of my nails and hoping we would leave quickly. I was sure that my being chosen was some kind of an error and they would discover and rectify it before I could get safely away. However my doubts were eased as the motor roared and we drew away from the hospital and the envious looks of the "not-going."

The day was the first taste of a coming winter. The sun, warm when you stood still in its shine became a useless glare as the truck pressed against a cold mountain wind. Along the shores of the Med[iterranean] were isolated fishermen or boys casting lines into the frothing sea. The sun lit deep into the water glaring back with a deep blue light.

We passed small towns some empty of people, others with small

groups lined at a corner waiting for a bus, or perhaps food rations.

Soon we had hit the outskirts of Barcelona. Already, we were being picked out as Int[ernationals] and salutes and vivas greeted us as we tore down the avenues. As we drove deeper into the heart of town, festival signs became more apparent. Here a huge banner flapping madly in the wind, here a group of blue clad sailors, marching along with that certain Spanish swing as their drums rolled a fast rhythm. Then we tore down the long drive. People lined the curb, waiting for the parade to deluge down upon them. Here group[s] of soldiers correctly uniformed waited impatiently on the ride.

Motorcycles tore up and down with their usual appearance of tremendous urgency. We finally arrived at a point at the end of the avenue. As our ambulance stopped a roar burst out overhead. Six Spanish fighting planes, choteaus [chatos] they're called, burst out from somewhere and were suddenly roaring across the tops of trees, close enough for us to distinguish the helmeted pilots. High above them larger bi-planes circled, a stream of glittering paper, confetti or leaflets flowing from their wake.

Then we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of the Internationals. Here the Garibaldi [sic] Brigade in their usual red scarfs, hung around their necks. The Franco Gelge group all wearing stiff black leather jackets and khaki pants. Ahead, the Mac-Paps dressed the same as they had been at the front. Pants torn or dirty, shirts a mixture of earth and little remaining original color. All had their blankets over their necks and their mess kits and kanteens hanging from their belt.

Somewhere ahead were the boys of the Lin[coln]-Wash[ington].

We waited there, exchanging excited comments with friends thought dead, asking about all those who weren't present.

Perhaps an hour passed, perhaps more as we waited for the parade to begin. While we stood there the little flying planes continued to dart in and out of the sky passing quickly by with their throttling roars.

Far ahead I could see a long black car speeding down the cleared lane. As it drew nearer I could make out its occupants. Seated in the back with hand raised in salute was Dr. Negrin. We raised our hands in answer and an excited whisper ran about as his car disappeared.

The signal came for the lines to begin their forward movement. The troops quickly formed ranks and exclaiming the orders of their leaders were soon pouring down the avenue.

Seated on the top of the ambulance, directly over the motor I could see all about me.

The soldiers marching ahead, the little whippet tanks, batteries of anti aircraft and motor squads behind. The huge lines of people on either side waiting for us to come by.

And as we came by they went mad. Vivas and salutes burst in upon us like rifle fire. Flowers hurtled out of the crowd to fall amongst, women with tears streaming down their faces rushed to embrace the passing men. Girls dressed in long overalls hysterically danced about and finally conquering inhibitions rushed to kiss the marching internationals. The roar of cheering was continuous. It was like a wave that never broke, but poured on with our progression. Our voices

# Describing the Despedida

grew hoarse and broke with our answering vivas and our arms grew tired and aching from long upheld salutes. But the pain of an arm, the weakness of a voice didn't matter, nothing mattered. It was a goodbye of goodbyes. A never to be forgotten sight. Then we passed the reviewing

waiting lines, reaching up to touch our hands, hurling kisses to us from the curb, lifting babies up to see us. One moment more supreme to me than the whole combination of wild enthusiasm. A little boy, nine or ten years old, stood on the corner. Tears streaked a dirty line down his face.



stand. We grew still, proud and erect as our hand rose in salute. There stood Dr Negrin and by his side President Azaña of Spain. Then onward again to the continued cheers of the Barcelonians. Oh it was mad but wonderfully so. They rushed out of their

He saw our truck bearing down, saw the bandages flash about. He dashed out, met the truck and clambered up the side. Tears still streaming down his face, he thrust his arms about me and kissed me on both cheeks. I kissed him tasting his tears on his

face. He rushed down to the street again, his hand raised in salute, tears still coursing. For perhaps another hour we passed along in parade, always wild, always cheering.

At last we reached the end of the line. It was all over now. We were wrung out. Nothing remained but senses battered by the import of the tremendous goodbye we had been given. Our truck rushed us back to the hospital. We huddled together, cold, silent but burning inside with a never to be forgotten memory.

Now as I write to you I thrill again to the experience. I feel a newer, more valuable person. I have gained something worth more than just a visual experience. I have seen a brave people, how brave you'll never understand until you have felt bombs, shaking your homes, heard explosions tearing against your eardrums, seen your loved ones lying torn in pieces. I have seen these people saying goodbye to us and in their goodbye the promise of a fight continued to a victory. A victory over fascism in Spain and the world over.

To begin to write about myself now seems kind of silly.

I couldn't tell you anything important or worthwhile.

Haven't heard from you in some time. But I suppose it doesn't matter at this late stage. Marie of course is completely silent. It hurts like the very devil, but I suppose it's a justified devil.

So goodbye until my next letter or until maybe you see me. Give hellos around.

Love to you both  
Milton ■

# War is Beautiful: Early Praise

*The prestigious Library Journal editors picked James Neugass's book for special attention in pre-publication reviews this fall. Officially published in November 2008, War is Beautiful is featured this fall in bookstores in Palo Alto, San Francisco, and Berkeley, California; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington. Encouraged by this early praise, The New Press upped the print run to 7,500 copies. Below are extracts from some other early reviews.*

*Library Journal*  
*Pick of the Month*  
*September 1, 2008*  
"Real Heroics"

"If it were not for my eyes, I might be in the infantry," wrote James Neugass in the journal that became *War Is Beautiful: An American Ambulance Driver in the Spanish Civil War*. In late 1937, Neugass began serving in Spain with the American Medical Bureau, which operated light maneuverable hospital units built to serve the International Brigade's forces supporting the Loyalist cause against Franco's fascist Nationalist rebels. "I'm still ashamed of driving an ambulance," he continued. "I don't like the literary, intellectual, here-to-be-revolted-by-the-horror-of-war, later-to-write-a-book...mock heroism tradition that lies behind my job."

The 32-year-old native of New Orleans had led a privileged life, followed, after the stock market crash, by work that included selling shoes, union organizing, and teaching fencing, as well as some early success as a poet. In Spain he soon came to recognize his value as a driver. He called his car "my sweetheart." It accepted olive oil for its motor and dirt for camouflage, with only a foot diameter of

the windshield left clear. For men like Neugass, road conditions delivered the pulse of the war better than any bulletin.

In his journal, Neugass explained grim realities—"No sense sewing up a guy's chest if there's a hole in the liver. Since livers will hold no stitches, almost all boys nicked in this organ die"—and memorialized the dead. Of a former Child's Restaurant counter-man he wrote, "Some of him lies buried in the grave dug free of charge by a fascist bomb." Within a mere five months, he ceased referring to "the World War" that was behind and wondered about the one to come. Ever a self-conscious writer, he repeatedly asked himself "Why did I come to Spain?"

Neugass returned home in April 1938, the leather journal with him. He married, had two sons, and lived in New York, working chiefly as a cabinetmaker (though he had declared in his diary, "When I get back...I'm going to drive a taxi or a carriage. I'll wait... in front of the Metropolitan Opera House and drive society couples slowly through Central Park on spring nights"). He wrote some short stories and spent years on his first novel, *Rain of Ashes*, published in 1949. That year he suffered a heart attack and died.

Over 50 years later, Neugass's typescript was discovered among what were likely the papers of socialist critic Max Eastman—evidently Neugass's submission to consider for publication. Save for a couple of excerpts that appeared in a 1938 pamphlet on the Spanish Civil War, Neugass's journal is now published for the first time.

Since the Spanish conflict included relatively few Americans, we

now pay it little mind compared with the larger one that followed. But the pulse of war delivered by Spain's roads to Neugass is here delivered to us. His narrative conveys the awful alchemy of war—as he put it, "something big and something terribly human. Pity and terror, mercy and pain, all between drawn lips"—yet also speaks of the writer himself and his own powers of alchemy. There was no "mock heroism" in his work in aid of the anti-Fascist cause, nor in his faith in himself as a writer.

One day, near the front at Teruel, Neugass was "filling in a shell hole [when] a small limousine came tearing down the road.... 'That's Hemingway,' said someone pointing at the vanishing cloud of dust.... 'He's a writer and I'm a writer,' I thought, and went back to work." Did Hemingway really leave James Neugass in the dust? Don't be so sure.—Margaret Heilbrun

*Kirkus Reviews*  
*September 15, 2008*

Fluent memoir by a veteran of a war that ended 70 years ago and is swiftly being forgotten. . . .Neugass writes carefully of the soldiers with whom he served, such as a Finnish driver who habitually called Francisco Franco a "shon of a bits" and another ambulance crew that kept the dried head of a dead enemy as a kind of mascot. He also has a sense of the bigger picture, of Spain as a proxy war fought between the Axis powers and the Soviet Union. Sometimes telegraphic ("Fascists have big feet. Killed three, five, eight of them. One with knife, others with bombs. At night. May have to kill more."), sometimes lyrical, Neugass depicts war from a worm's-eye view. It is most certainly



(l-r) Peter Carroll, Diane Wachtell, Peter Glazer, and the author's son Jim Neugass at the Cervantes Institute reading in NY. Photo by Anne Sullivan.

not pretty, but occasionally humorous. A complement to the memoirs of George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway, as well as Javier Cercas's novel *Soldiers of Salamis* (2004)—not quite in their league, but not far from it.

*Library Journal*  
September 1, 2008

Elegant prose, brutal description, and a wry sense of humor characterize this journal by a poet and aspiring fiction writer during his months as a Spanish civil war volunteer in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. . . . Neugass records his observations with prescience and an eye to posterity. After returning from Spain, he sought to have his journal published but failed to do so before his untimely death in 1949. The typescript, only recently found, has been edited and annotated by two board members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives. They fill in details about Neugass's comrades and add notes that put his remarks in context. . . . This valuable addition to Spanish civil war history also attests to the timelessness of a soldier's wartime emotions—the

boredom, excitement, fear, pain, and loss. Published in time for the 70th anniversary of the Great Retreats of the Republican forces, this work is highly recommended for academic libraries and libraries with Spanish civil war collections.—Maria C. Bagshaw

*Booklist*  
November 15, 2008

Tens of thousands fought in the International Brigades on the Republican side in Spain's tragedy of 1936-39. One of them was the writer of this newly discovered memoir, which had been, according to its editors, in the papers of Max Eastman, a leading American Trotskyite of the 1930s.

Readers can purchase *War is Beautiful* directly from ALBA for \$26.95 plus \$3.00 shipping by calling 212-674-5398.

The book can also be bought online through ALBA's website, [www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org).

Thank you for your support!

## Lincoln Vet Artists on Display

An exhibition of the art of Irving Norman (1906-1989), a veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, will be on display at the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York (24 West 57th Street, 7th floor opening) from October 30 to December 20.

As the exhibition catalogue explains, Norman is noted for large surrealist paintings that stand as detailed critiques of contemporary life, "a dark vision at once personal and prophetic. He believed that by pointing out the inequities, horrors, and foibles of human behavior he might somehow cause people to consider the consequences of their actions and ultimately, change."

For more information about the purchase of his work, go to [www.michaelrosenfeldart.com](http://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com).

The family of painter Anthony Toney, another Lincoln vet who painted a large number of canvases over eight decades, has created a website to display many of his works. His works can be found at [www.mesart.com/anthonytoney](http://www.mesart.com/anthonytoney).

Neugass' journal reveals the quotidian aspects of his military experience as a driver during the war's decisive campaign. . . . Perhaps literary aspirations vied with politics, but setting aside his reasons for going, Neugass produced a significant first-person account of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, in whose medical department he served. Continuing popular interest in the Lincoln Brigade supports the ordering of this vivid eyewitness. —Gilbert Taylor ■

# Border Crossings: The International Brigaders Before and After Spain

By Helen Graham

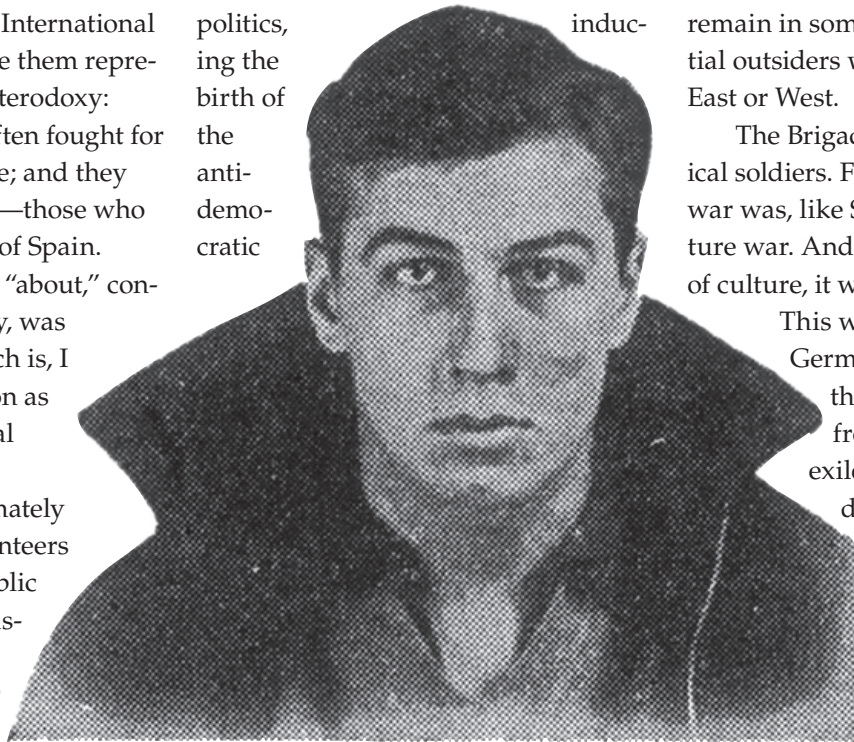
*Editor's Note: On October 10, 2008, the British historian Helen Graham presented the annual ALBA/Bill Susman Lecture at the King Juan Carlos I Center of New York University. What follows is an abridgment of that talk.*

I want to offer some thoughts about how we might frame the social and cultural history of the International Brigaders. Above all, I see them representing hybridity and heterodoxy: they embodied it; they often fought for it, in Spain and elsewhere; and they frequently suffered for it—those who survived the battlefields of Spain. What the Brigaders were “about,” consciously or unconsciously, was “crossing the lines,” which is, I think, as good a definition as one can find of how social change happens.

Among the approximately 35,000 international volunteers who fought for the Republic against Franco and his fascist backers, there were individuals from all over the world. But most, even in the two North American contingents, had their origins in Europe. A high proportion of these European migrants were already political exiles. Not only Germans, Italians and Austrians, but also those from other European countries dominated by right-wing nationalist dictatorships, autocratic monarchies, and the radical (fascist) right—including Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland and Finland. The brigaders were part of a mass migration of people, mainly from the urban working classes, who

had left their countries of birth just before or after World War I, either for economic reasons or to flee political repression—and frequently both.

In fighting fascism in Spain, these exiles and migrants were explicitly taking up unfinished business that went back at least as far as the 1914-18 war. Its dislocations had brutalized politics, inducing the birth of the anti-democratic



Bill Aalto

nationalisms that had physically displaced them. In a sense, here I'm identifying in the Brigades the border-crossing revolutionary spirit of an earlier age: the ghosts of 1848 if you like. After the failure of the 1848 revolution, the national idea in Europe was increasingly co-opted into outright conservative, state-building agendas. But the idea of travelling hopefully, of bearing change across borders, lived on into the Brigades. I think we can see this clearly if we explore the

“border” or “line-crossing” potential in terms of social change related to race, gender and sexuality. Politically, the Brigaders' own times (1918-45) were running against them. It was a world that, far from opening up to hybridity, was closing down ethnically, culturally and nationally—hence the reason the Brigaders would remain in some ways political/existential outsiders wherever they resided, East or West.

The Brigaders were not only political soldiers. For this European civil war was, like Spain's own, also a culture war. And as a European civil war of culture, it was also a race war.

This was not simply about German Nazism: so many of the European regimes from which brigader-exiles had fled after 1918 developed forms of politics/desired national order based on ethnic segregation and purification—aimed at both racial and other kinds of minorities. In the traditional, rural-dominated societies that

were still the norm in east Europe, these minorities included the urban lefts.

In Germany, the trade union movement that was the Nazis' first target cannot be described as a minority; it was a mass social force. But it's also true that the first German concentration camps set up in 1933 did incarcerate and persecute German outsiders, the different, the marginal, the hybrid, the heterodox (that culturally

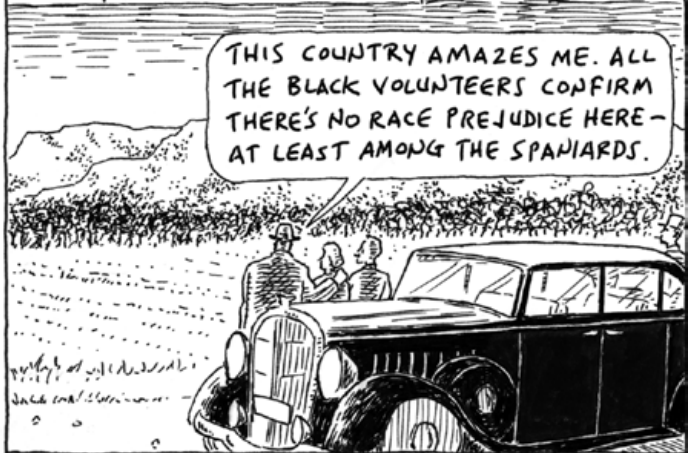
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# ROBESON IN SPAIN ~ CHAPTER FIVE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 1938-TARAZONA, INTERNATIONAL TRAINING HEADQUARTERS...



LATER, EN ROUTE TO MADRID...





SHE MARRIED ONE OF HER PATIENTS, A BRITISH VOLUNTEER.

AHH, A ROMANTIC FINALE. SOUNDS LIKE SALARIA'S WORTHY OF A FILM, TOO.

AND I KNOW JUST THE PERSON TO PLAY HER PART!

THE ROBESONS CONTINUED ON TO MADRID — BUT SALARIA KEA'S STORY WASN'T OVER...

THAT APRIL SALARIA WAS SENT TO THE FRONT NEAR TERUEL TO HELP SET UP A FIELD HOSPITAL.

THEY WERE SUBJECTED TO RELENTLESS BOMBING AND STRAFING.

SALARIA! ARE YOU HURT?

I'M... I'M OKAY. I MUST HELP THE OTHERS.

THE FASCISTS BROKE THROUGH THE LINES AND THE MEDICAL WORKERS HAD TO EVACUATE. ATTACKS CONTINUED AS THEY FLED. SOME OF THE MEDICAL STAFF SWAM THE EBRO RIVER TO SAFETY. CUT OFF FROM THE OTHERS, SALARIA MANAGED TO WALK AND HITCHHIKE HER WAY TO THE AMERICAN MEDICAL UNIT NEAR BARCELONA.

IT WAS NO SAFER THERE. THE BOMBS RAINED ON BARCELONA. SALARIA WAS ALWAYS ONE OF THE FIRST TO ARRIVE TO TRY TO SAVE SURVIVORS.

THE WORST WAS WHEN THE VICTIMS WERE CHILDREN.

FINALLY, SALARIA BECAME A VICTIM, HERSELF.

THANK GOD— SHE'S ALIVE!

SALARIA'S INJURIES WERE SEVERE. SHE WAS SENT HOME. BUT EVEN AS HER WOUNDS HEALED SHE WORKED TIRELESSLY TO SEND MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO SPAIN.

SHE LATER SERVED IN THE U.S. ARMY NURSE CORPS DURING WORLD WAR II.



# Border Crossings

Continued from page 10

hybrid Germany represented so magnificently, for example, in the photography of August Sander). And the German international brigaders took to Spain at least one song—Peat Bog Soldiers (*Moorsoldaten*)—written by inmates of the first Nazi camps.

And while these first Nazi camps inside Germany didn't target Jews as Jews, nevertheless many Jewish people were among the incarcerated, and once they were confined, then their treatment was always among the worst. That there were so many Jewish volunteers in the Brigades—around a quarter of the total—is unsurprising if one considers first the long history of anti-semitism in Europe and the way in which it was directly shaping the “purificatory” and social Darwinist politics of the European right after 1918—which by the 1930s was explicitly manifesting itself in Spain, too (in the Spanish right's resolutely anti-semitic discourse of the “judeo-masonic-bolshevik conspiracy against eternal Christian Spain”). And second, one has also to compute the longstanding and strong radical political tradition among Jewish migrant communities who had fled pogroms and endemic discrimination in Russia and east Europe—such as was the case of Bill Susman's own family, many members of which (including his father and mother) made the journey from Russia to Connecticut.

Among the Polish brigaders in Spain, too, a high proportion were Jewish, and a specifically Jewish company was formed within the Polish battalion, where it attracted an international membership, including Jews from various European countries and Palestine, but also others, including a

Greek, two Palestinian Arabs, and a German who, after deserting from the Nazi army, insisted on serving with this Jewish unit. Its members would later fight (along with so many other International Brigade veterans) in the French Resistance and in other partisan conflicts of World War II. Most Jewish brigaders in Spain, however, did not fight in this Jewish company, and many saw their antifascism as a

of the Brigades made them a living form of opposition to the principles of purification and brutal categorization espoused by fascism and, above all, by Nazism. Nor was this just about doing battle with European demons. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade, in which around 90 African Americans fought, was the first non-segregated American military unit to exist, the U.S. Army continuing to operate segregation



Rudolf Michaels

more important mark of personal identity than their Jewishness (which in a sense is anyway probably better defined as their Yiddish cultural identity, since it was inseparable from their secular internationalism, Zionism being too close to the other forms of nationalism they eschewed).

In racial and cultural as well as political terms, then, the heterogeneity

throughout World War II. Viewed through this optic, what the International Brigades symbolized is a spirit of future possibility.

This same story of hybridity and difference as a form of “social change in action” was also played out in resistance movements inside Europe. Indeed the French urban-based MOI (*Main d'oeuvre immigrée*, or migrant

labor front) traced its origins to International Brigade veterans—mainly escapees from the prison camp of Gurs. Along with French and Spanish Republican fighters, MOI included Italians, Rumanians, Armenians, Poles, Austrians, Czechs and Hungarians.

In the MOI perhaps more than half were Jewish. This profile put MOI under greater psychological pressure than any other resistance organization. A majority of its members were on the wanted list three times over: as leftists, foreigners, and Jews.

In February 1944 in Paris, the occupying forces executed 23 MOI fighters from a group led by the Armenian poet Missak Manouchian. (Among the executed were several IB vets and a Republican Spaniard.) The Nazis then plastered the walls of the city with the famous “Red poster.” It was an attempt to delegitimize the Resistance through an appeal to French chauvinism (which, of course, would certainly have found an approving resonance in France).

For the Nazis’ “war against hybridity” wasn’t waged against the European grain at all. Though Hitler certainly ran with it, ethnic homogeneity as political coherence (and psychological integrity) was an idea shared by many people in Europe, east, south, west and north. Indeed, the myth of the ethnically homogeneous European nation state had been most powerfully represented by the western peacemakers of 1918-19. For the message underlying all the elaborate and ultimately unworkable machinery of minority protection was that “normality” and assuring a conflict-free condition required ethnic

homogeneity. Certainly in 1944, the French Communist party understood the social and cultural currency of the Red poster and, in a bid to build a national coalition around the Resistance, played up its antifascism but played down its multi-ethnic composition.

Race also threads through the cultural border/line-crossing among North American Brigaders. Irv Goff, who fought in the Republican guerrilla, was in the late 1940s a freedom rider avant la lettre, when as CPUSA district organizer in New Orleans, in his work to encourage black voter registration, he jeopardized his life on more than one occasion by ignoring southern racial customs. Goff was a disciplined party operative, but that’s not the whole story of his line crossing/risk taking.

These things are intrinsically tied up with the experience of Spain, a perfect illustration of which comes in another episode/event involving both Goff and his comrade in the Republican guerrilla, Bill Aalto, a working-class Finnish-American from the Bronx, tough, intelligent, street-wise, who became a guerrilla captain and came out of Spain with the highest commendation of any awarded by the Comintern authorities to the Lincoln brigaders. One day, in the spring of 1940, while Goff and Aalto were on an agitprop tour of U.S. college campuses (speaking on behalf of Republican Spain/Republican prisoners and refugees), they were parked in a car near the campus of Ohio State, and, quite suddenly, Bill tells Goff he’s gay. That he should tell Goff, with whom he had a close bond from the war in Spain, perhaps doesn’t seem

too surprising to an audience in 2008. But remember, this is 1940 (nearly 30 years before Stonewall), and Bill was revealing something that made him vulnerable, not because of how he felt about being gay (which was basically OK), but because it made him illegal. So the revelation has to be a kind of dare or challenge: Bill refusing to play by the rules, refusing to accept the need to compartmentalize his life any more. And why this timing? It was, I think, pretty conclusively related to his experience of the war.

Let me try to rehearse this, because it applies not only to Bill, but also more widely to the Brigaders. For the war they’d fought to have meaning, then life had to change. It had to go beyond the sterility, colorlessness, inauthenticity, not only of the political status quo, but also of social convention. Ohio State is a kind of crossover for Bill Aalto. For the rest of his life, his chiding refrain to friends would always be, “You see life steady, but you see it small.” After Spain, he was determined not to.

And this story also serves to remind us more generally that gender and sexuality was one variety of border crossing that the old left of the 1930s generally balked at: a frontier/line-crossing too far. Look at what happened when Evelyn Hutchins applied to be sent to Spain as an ambulance driver. She came up against entrenched prejudice. The political left, though keen to further racial equality, could conceive of recruiting women to Spain only as nurses or support staff. In the end Hutchins won. But hers was an isolated victory. And when Hutchins applied

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# Border Crossings

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during World War II to serve in the Office of Strategic Services, she was turned down flat. In the world order that emerged after 1945, the Brigaders found their heterodoxy/difference to be, once again, surplus to the requirements of the new Cold War political and social order, West and East.

In the West, the Spanish vets were viewed, either implicitly or explicitly, as restless subversives, politically untrustworthy/malcontent, unpatriotic, potentially traitorous—the antithesis of the authorities’ ideal of a settled, demobilized, compliant population from which they were silenced and excluded in various ways. In the Eastern bloc, too, despite the apparent differences, things were startlingly similar for many veterans. The fight against fascism became the foundational myth of the new socialist order by 1949. But it was a controlled and pared-down political narrative, rigorously policed by the state. So many Brigaders didn’t fit its requirements. Ironically, we get in East Germany the obsessive surveilling of the vets (the *Spanienkämpfer*), the very group which was supposedly the antifascist aristocracy of the DDR. They were closely observed as they wrote, and rewrote, to order, their official biographies, destined for public consumption/edification.

This death by editorialization, the bid to reduce every *Spanienkämpfer* to a two-dimensional Socialist Realist hero, was another means of silencing them. It led to half a lifetime of limbo for one prickly, difficult, and rather wonderful dissenting *Spanienkämpfer*, Rudolf Michaelis. An anarchist, whose original profession was as an archaeological restorer at the Berlin state

museum, Rudolf’s life was traduced by every state. First he was confined in Nazi preventive custody. He got out by the skin of his teeth and went into exile in Spain, where he later joined the anarchist columns to fight against Franco. Involved in the anti-state May Days rebellion of anarchists and dissident communists in Barcelona in 1937, he was imprisoned in a Spanish Republican state jail. Released from there, and having taken Spanish citizenship, Rudolf fought on in the Republican army until 1939, when he crossed the frontier to join the Resistance in France. Later he crossed back into Spain, where he was caught and imprisoned in a Francoist jail for over five years, suffering torture and finally being repatriated to Germany in 1946, where he ended up back with his family in Berlin.

Rudolf Michaelis made a peace of sorts with the new state order of the DDR. Where else could he have gone? Though in joining the DDR’s official state party, SED, he was cut dead by his anarchist comrades in the West. Later he was expelled from the SED in 1951 as just too politically heterodox. Nevertheless, the DDR still afforded Rudolf a liveable life, both in material terms, and, crucially, it still offered him a means of participating in a collective memory of what Spain had signified, which, while very reductive, was not a lie. Nor did he suffer trial or imprisonment in the DDR, though some East German dissident vets would do in the late 1950s.

But inevitably Rudolf was confined to the margins. His life could not be represented, indeed was literally unspeakable within either the state *Spanienkämpfer* script or the western

Cold war narrative of “eastern victims of Stalinism.” Rudolf’s memoirs were eventually published under a pseudonym in West Germany, but not until 1980. And in East Germany, it was only in the late 1970s and 1980s that he was able to begin speaking about his experiences of the multiplicity of anti-fascist traditions—albeit in private talks only—as non-official, semi-public spaces for debate began to appear.

Elsewhere in the Eastern bloc, the whiff of cosmopolitanism that adhered to “Spain” was a death sentence, very often literally. So many of those who were consumed in the trials and purges—above all in Hungary (1949) and Czechoslovakia (1952)—had been in Spain, and the very fact of having been there opened them up to charges of being, well, “restless subversives, politically untrustworthy/malcontent, unpatriotic, potentially traitorous...” In Czechoslovakia in November 1952, the Slansky trial focused on communists who had been Western emigrants, many of them International Brigaders. Artur London, the Spain vet who’d been through Mauthausen was, when arraigned, the Czech under-secretary for foreign affairs. In his account *On Trial*, what emerges with crystal clarity is the link between border-crossing and “contamination.” (The state authorities were obsessively concerned that exiled communists had been “turned”—by everyone, so it seemed, Gestapo, French and U.S. intelligence services.) Just what had they really been up to in the cities of western exile or in the camps of France and Africa? The MOI (Main d’oeuvre émigré) was uniformly seen as contaminated/compromised

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## Canadian Volunteers

***Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War.*** By Michael Petrou. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008.

By Shirley Mangini

**T**he title of Michael Petrou's ground-breaking book on the Canadian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War is telling. The underlying text of this book reveals why the men who went to Spain from Canada were truly "renegades," considered as such by their government, their countrymen, and even by some of their military superiors in Spain.

In *Renegades*, Petrou weaves human interest anecdotes gleaned from interviews with volunteers with excellent historical research. He reveals the volunteers' double source of inspiration to go to Spain to fight fascism. The volunteers, who came from every corner of Canada, were largely working class men, mostly poor and unemployed, yet politically aware of social injustice, given that they had suffered through the Depression. Some 80 percent of them were also immigrants, and many lived in relief camps, where they did public work for pennies a day.

Petrou brings to life the desperation that characterized Canada in the 1930s and how many of the volunteers saw the war in Spain as a way to retaliate against those who had oppressed them in Canada and in their countries of origin. The volunteers were encouraged and recruited by the Communist Party of Canada and, although the

Royal Canadian Mounted Police tried to prevent them from going to Spain, the men went anyway. The author also deftly illuminates the fact that when they returned from Spain, they were unfairly treated by the Canadian government.

When the independent-minded Canadians arrived in Spain, they were viewed as unstructured and unruly and, especially, politically ambivalent. Because of this, few were given positions of authority. At first many joined the Abraham Lincoln Battalion and the George Washington Battalion. However, in the summer of 1937, the Canadian Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion—named after the two leaders who led the Canadian rebellion against British imperialists in 1837—was formed at Albacete under the command of Edward Cecil-Smith, a journalist from Toronto.

The Mac-Paps fought bravely in the Fuentes del Ebro offensive, as well as in the ferocious battle at Teruel, but German and Italian intervention caused the retreat of the surviving Lincolns and Mac-Paps in the spring of 1938. When they tried to regroup at the Ebro River in the villages of Marçà and Falset, morale was deteriorating, and many of the volunteers wanted to return home. Their final brave attempt to reverse the grim reality, once the Franco forces had succeeded in dividing Spain in two, was disastrous, and by September 1938, the Republican government decided to send the International troops home. Some Canadians were accused of being

Troskyites and, in some cases, they were punished or imprisoned.

In the final chapters, Petrou discusses the activities of several volunteers. The most fascinating story is that of Dr. Norman Bethune, who is well known for setting up the first mobile blood transfusion unit in Spain. Petrou praises Bethune's work in Spain, while at the same time attempting to clarify the controversies surrounding him.

Petrou concludes his study with an analysis of the unfair treatment of the Canadian volunteers in their own country after the civil war. Not only were they considered subversives, but they were also seen as suspect when they tried to enlist for active duty in World War II. This treatment continued into the 1970s, when the remaining Mac-Pap vets tried to apply for non-profit status. The government refused their request, according to the author, because it was afraid to offend the enfeebled Generalísimo Franco. In fact, the Canadian government has never officially recognized the Mac-Paps for their war efforts.

The author poignantly ends his book with his visit to a dying vet, Maurice Constant. Constant struggles to describe the bitter-sweet reality of what the Canadian volunteers had attempted to do in Spain. Petrou's intention here, to describe the motivations of the volunteers and their ironic fate, is carried out masterfully, in spite of the fact that much of the history of those who perished—over 400 out of the 1,700 who fought—is still a mystery. ■

Shirley Mangini is author of *Memories of Resistance: Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War*.



## For Love of Spain

***Anglo-American Hispanists and the Spanish Civil War. Hispanophilia, Commitment, and Discipline.*** By Sebastiaan Faber. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

By Noël Valis

A clearly written and solidly documented book, *Anglo-American Hispanists and the Spanish Civil War* is of interest to both Hispanists and non-Hispanists. In a well-articulated, largely even-handed argument, Faber pursues a double goal: outlining, through the institutional history and individual case studies, the complicated relation between Anglo-American Hispanists and the Spanish Civil War, and explaining the role that relation played in the development of Hispanism in the English-speaking world. While the first goal will probably attract readers of *The Volunteer* more than the second, both parts of his argument are noteworthy for illustrating yet another ramification of the Spanish Civil War, the effect it had on literary critics and historians whose main focus of study was Spain. Thus, this book is as much about Hispanism as it is about the Hispanist relationship to the civil war. It is also about how hard it is at times to separate professionalized Hispanism from Hispanophilia, the love for things

Noël Valis, professor of Spanish at Yale University, is the editor of *Teaching Representations of the Spanish Civil War* (2007) and the author of the forthcoming book, *Sacred Realism. Religion and the Imagination in Modern Spanish Narrative*.

Spanish that first spilled over in the books of enthusiastic amateurs.

Faber argues that within the academic community, politics and scholarship tended to be compartmentalized in the 1930s and 40s. When the war erupted in July 1936, Hispanists were torn between an ideal of scholarly objectivity and moral-political convictions, intensified by the love that initially inspired them to dedicate their professional lives to Spain, its literature, culture and history.

Faber concentrates first on the institutional reaction of such organs as the American Association of Teachers of Spanish (Portuguese was added later), as seen in the pages of its journal, *Hispania*, though I missed seeing the same attention paid to the institutional case of historians. How did teachers of Spanish literature react to the war? They were pretty much divided within the organization, but remained by and large silent in public. In contrast, British Hispanists were more vocal.

The extent to which Hispanists spoke up depended in part on whether they were affiliated with an institution of higher learning. A freelance historian like Herbert Southworth dove head first into the political-ideological fray in books such as the groundbreaking *Guernica! Guernica! A Study of Journalism, Diplomacy, Propaganda, and History* (1977). The Anglo-Irish Gerald Brenan also went his own way with the classic *Spanish Labyrinth* (1943), which mostly steered clear of national and cultural stereotyping, focusing instead

on the historical, economic, political, and religious factors that shaped modern Spain.

Faber explores the affective and intellectual lives of four Hispanists to demonstrate the tensions between scholarly pursuit and political commitment: Herbert Southworth, Paul Patrick Rogers, E. Allison Peers, and Gerald Brenan. Their complicated life trajectories and relation to Spain make for stimulating reading. Southworth and Rogers leaned leftward, while Brenan was more moderate and Peers was a deeply religious (Church of England) conservative.

Both Brenan and Peers shifted ideologically after the war. As Faber notes, Peers, the premier Hispanist of British academia, was “never a fully-blown Francoist,” though many considered him one, and he became increasingly disillusioned with the Franco regime’s repressive policies and support of the Nazis. Brenan’s position towards Franco became more ambiguous after he returned to Spain in 1953.

Southworth remained constant to his political views and his devotion to Spain and the Republic.

Rogers, a professor of Spanish at Oberlin College, who wrote a diary of his short visit to Spain during the war and stumped for the Republic, grew silent in the aftermath of the Cold War era. We know he was trailed by the FBI between 1943 and the late 1960s, his travels to Mexico arousing suspicions. His later trajectory also points to the growing trend towards Pan Americanism and the study of Latin America within U.S. Hispanism.

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## Political Intrigue, Censorship, and Humanity

***We Saw Spain Die. Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War.*** By Paul Preston. London, Constable & Robinson, 2008.

**By Angela Jackson**

**P**aul Preston, highly regarded as the author of many outstanding books about the Spanish Civil War, now brings his encyclopedic knowledge to bear on a different aspect of the conflict: the foreign correspondents who risked their lives and sometimes damage to their professional careers to report on what they saw in Spain. With his customary skill, Preston weaves together the historical context, the work of the correspondents, and their human stories behind the news.

Determined detective work has unearthed new material that enriches the content in 12 wide-ranging chapters. The great tragedies of the war are conveyed through the wonderful writings of correspondents such as Jay Allen, who reported on the massacre at Badajoz, and George Steer, who shocked the world with his description of the bombing of Guernica. There is political intrigue aplenty as, for example, in chapters dedicated to evaluating the evidence in the case of the disappearance of José Robles and on the role of Mikhail Koltsov in Spain.

Especially moving are the accounts of the struggles the correspondents faced to get their stories

out. After overcoming the problems of censorship in Spain, they frequently had to convince their own newspaper editors that the reports on Nationalist bombings and reprisals were not wild exaggerations but unpalatable truths. The last communication from Louis Delaprée before he was killed on a flight from Spain to Paris was an indictment of the policy being implemented by his employer, *Paris-Soir*. Half of Delaprée's reports had not been published, thereby leaving room for extensive coverage on the love life of Edward VIII and the abdication crisis in England. "You have made me work for the wastepaper basket," he wrote. "I shall send nothing more... The massacre of a hundred Spanish children is less interesting than a sigh from Mrs. Simpson."

Preston's chapter on the rebel zone reveals the heavy restrictions imposed by Franco to prevent correspondents from seeing what was happening for themselves, leaving them feeling, as one journalist wrote, like "a bunch of schoolgirls under the guidance of a schoolmistress." Not only was censorship much more tightly enforced by the Nationalists than by the Loyalists, but the reporters also suffered a greater degree of mistreatment if they stepped out of line.

One of the great strengths inherent in Preston's writing is his ability to portray the characters in historic dramas with wit and vitality. Idiosyncratic personalities leap from the pages to engage the reader. Hugh Slater's white

Rolls Royce is "dreadfully noticeable on the battlefield." Ernest Hemingway treats all and sundry with "splurging magnificence" at the Hotel Florida. Thwarted in love, the dissolute Basil Murray acquires an ape. González Aguilera, a Nationalist press officer, believes the war was caused by the introduction of modern sewers for the masses.

But it is the humanity of the correspondents that gives the book its warmth. Most were deeply affected by their experiences in Spain, from Martha Gelhorn, who would have no truck with what she called "all that objectivity shit," to Arthur Koestler, who wrote, "Anyone who has lived through the hell of Madrid with his eyes, his nerves, his heart and his stomach—and then pretends to be objective, is a liar." However, as Paul Preston demonstrates, it was possible to combine high professional standards with a passionate belief in the Spanish Republic, though this belief brought much sadness in its wake. "We left our hearts there," wrote Herbert Matthews.

Paul Preston has written a book that will be valuable not only as a key work of reference, but also as a moving testimony to those who had the courage to bring Spain's story to the world. ▀

Angela Jackson, a British historian and author of several books on the civil war, lives in Catalonia, where she is president of the historical association "No Jubilem la Memòria" ([nojubilemlamemoria.cat](http://nojubilemlamemoria.cat)).

# Border Crossings

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(because of its contact with OSS), and thus its surviving veteran fighters were seen as suspect. While this was at some level about tangible fears born of a sense of political vulnerability, there is also something else here, an echo of social Darwinism; a fear of change/difference/complexity. Things which challenged the stability of the official state, by the challenge posed to social uniformity/homogeneity, all of which was expressed as a fear of contamination. As a crucial element of this we must also note the anti-semitism which inhabited much of the onslaught against communist exiles and Brigade veterans during the purges and trials—Jews being seen in the official Soviet optic as the epitome of untrustworthy, heterodox communists (i.e. untrustworthy because heterodox).

Thus state agendas sought to exclude/silence/pathologize the self-same progressive, questioning dynamic that inhabited the International Brigaders—the very thing that had taken them to Spain. As the German writer and former Brigade commander, Ludwig Renn, commented in utter perplexity in the DDR in 1952: It seems that “everything connected with [Spain] is cancelled. Supposedly this is happening because there were too many traitors there. I don’t understand such points of view.”

McCarthyism itself was not as deadly as the east European trials—though it did certainly cause deaths, including some suicides. But state repression always takes its form according to local political culture. And there are many ways of “killing” people without physically executing them or putting them in gulags. That is to say, you can kill someone’s spirit

without physically liquidating them, by making them totally unemployable, or else unemployable in anything remotely approaching what they feel called to do by virtue of their talents. Reducing people to poverty, making life unliveable, getting them thrown out of their homes and thus indirectly breaking up their families and their personal relationships, all of which did follow, as we know only too well, from McCarthyism’s legal repressive practices.

Mexico, while it in some ways provided a refuge (though not a haven) for persecuted American radicals, also posed many fundamental existential problems, especially for the cultural workers who loomed large among this particular exile. The writer Howard Fast, son of a Russian migrant, and who himself served a prison term in 1947 as part of the Lincoln vets’ Spanish refugee relief committee that refused to reveal to the Un-American Activities Committee the names and addresses of its donors and supporters, wrote luminously about the significance of the Lincolns’ leave-taking of Spain in his exquisite short story “Departures,” which captures that central feeling that so many vets the world over shared—namely that feeling of being burned by Spain, or transfigured, but never being the same, for sure, and not being able to fit again, anywhere, ever—another kind of exile, to add to the territorial and political.

In Fast’s superb autobiography, *Being Red* (1990), he relates his encounter with his friend the screenwriter Albert Maltz, one of the Hollywood Ten (the film workers indicted for contempt during the late 1940s witch-hunt in Hollywood). Fast meets him in

Mexico where, in spite of deep feelings of cultural alienation, Maltz has resolved to remain, so terrified is he of the potential effects of the draconian Communist Control Act of 1954. “I have no roots here,” he tells Fast. “Our lives are our language.” But Maltz has been so seared by his experience of prison that he just can’t risk it again: “I have to live, I have to find love. I have books that I must write.”

Spain haunted Maltz and Fast, as it haunted them all, because it was a site of possibility, of becoming. And that’s why it haunts us still. For all the bleakness of its aftermath, it stands as a reminder of the possibility of becoming; of a “journey without maps”; of the great Spanish poet Antonio Machado’s reminder that the road does not exist, we make it by walking, by crossing borders—that doing so hurts, but that it’s also necessary. ■

Helen Graham’s most recent book is *A Very Short Introduction to the Spanish Civil War* (2005).

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## Faber

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Faber is acutely aware that the four individuals presented here, their outspokenness and willingness to take a public stand, are not necessarily representative of the larger community of Anglo-American Hispanists, if the silence he perceives as especially indicative of U.S. Hispanism overall is indeed the case. But their enduring passion for Spain is shared among the greater community of Hispanists.

This is an excellent study that is in itself Faber’s own labor of love. ■



## Added to Memory's Roster



### Aaron Hilkevitch (1912-2008)

Aaron Hilkevitch, who served as a medical doctor in the Spanish Republican Army during the civil war and was the last surviving Illinois member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, died in Chicago on October 4. He was 96.

Specializing in psychiatry, Aaron practiced in Chicago for over 50 years, merging his professional work with a distinctly left political point of view. "Dr. Hilkevitch saw psychoanalysis as a route to personal freedom and integrity," said a former colleague, Dr. Robert Galatzer-Levy. During the Vietnam War, he was sympathetic to draft-age men seeking deferments, provided free services for poor patients, and was arrested at a protest demonstration supporting a free local clinic.

Aaron was born in Odessa, Russia, but he left his homeland with his family when the Bolsheviks rose to power in the 1917 revolution. Eventually

settling in Chicago, he joined the Young Communist League and received a bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago and a medical degree from the University of Illinois.

In Spain, Aaron provided surgical services for wounded soldiers. During World War II, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and worked as a chief of psychiatry stateside.

Dr. Hilkevitch also taught and worked with residents at the University of Chicago Hospitals for many years. While his successful practice allowed him to lead a comfortable life, aversion to capitalism guided almost all of his actions. "Not a penny in the stock market," his daughter Victoria remembered.

He is survived by his wife, Joyce, three daughters and two step-children.



### Jack Shafran (1917-2008)

Jack Shafran, one of the youngest volunteers in the Lincoln Brigade, died on November 15 at a rehabilitation center in Connecticut. He had suffered a stroke shortly after returning

from the October reunion of the International Brigades in Catalonia.

He was born in New York on Christmas day, 1917. As a teenager, he became involved in union organizing during the Depression and was co-founder of Local 1250 of the Department Store Workers union. A dozen members of that local served in Spain, including Jack, who fought in 1937 and 1938 as a member of the 15th Brigade.

Jack enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1940, prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union. After the war he began a successful career in the construction industry.

During the postwar anti-communist campaign, Jack did not escape government harassment. Starting in the 1950s, the IRS invited him for an audit of his income tax return—for 23 years straight. "They never found a dime out of place," he said.

Jack was denied a passport for more than three decades. The government finally relented. In 1986 Jack traveled to Spain to fulfill a pledge he had made to himself while fighting in the Aragon.

One of Jack's first stops during that visit was at El Valle de los Caidos, the military monument near Madrid where fascist leader Francisco Franco is buried. Jack had bought a small vial at a pharmacy, and at his hotel that morning he had filled it with his own urine. As he stood atop El Caudillo's grave he opened the vial and emptied its contents.

A memorial service will be held on December 6 at the Douglaston Club in Douglaston, Long Island.

—Steve Dinnen

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# Added to Memory's Roster



## John Rujevcic Gerlach (1915-2008)



From Quentin Guerlain Collection

John R. Gerlach, former Intelligence Officer of the 15th Brigade, which included the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, died on August 12 at the age of 93 in Camarillo, California.

Born Ivan Rujevcic in Vurota, Croatia, where he lived until the age of 13, John came to the U.S. in 1928. In Detroit he reunited with his mother, Maritza Rujevcic, and his stepfather, Anthony Gerlach, then a labor union organizer and a national Croatian political leader as well as Secretary of the International Workers Order. Under the guidance of his stepfather, John became a union organizer himself at the age of 20, and he organized the restaurant workers on Greek Street in Detroit. Soon after, he traveled to Moscow with a scholarship

to study at Moscow's University of the National Minorities of the West in 1935 and 1936, where he gained skills in engineering and political science, encompassing Marxism and Leninism—skills that would permanently and dramatically inform and alter his life.

In December 1936, back in New York City, John R. Gerlach was recruited by his former Moscow professor, Mirko Markovic, to serve in the International Brigades defending the Spanish Republic. In Spain, John was immediately named Lieutenant and Intelligence Officer responsible for English-speaking and South-Slav-speaking Affairs, working at the International Brigade base in Albacete. Using the nom de guerre of "Ivan," he later served as 15th Brigade Staff Officer and Head of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence at the front, where he personally took Ernest Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn and Herbert Matthews to the front lines in his staff car.

John is listed and pictured in history books alongside prominent Lincoln Brigade officers Major Robert Merriman and Commissar Dave Doran. He is cited in many books for his heroic role in leading a column of some 100 top Americans out of a fascist encirclement toward the Ebro River, which many of them lived to cross. At that time, John also guided two Americans to the banks of the Ebro, where he spotted a canoe and rowed them across the swollen river at dawn, only to be greeted by foreign correspondents Hemingway and Vincent Sheean. Hemingway recorded John's account in the *New York Times*, citing the "Scout Officer Ivan" as his

source of information. John is also described as a Croatian Hero in a historical work by the Croatian historian Juro Gajdek. His war memoir, "Behind Enemy Lines," was published in the VALB anthology, *Our Fight*.

John leaves behind his wife, Sonya, of Oxnard Shores and four sons and their respective families. He is dearly remembered for his satirical wit, earthy charm, winning smile and zesty passion for friends and family, as well as for his wide love of world literature.

—Quentin Guerlain

## Max Gerchik (1911-2008)

Max Gerchik, who served in the medical units during the Spanish Civil War, died in southern California on September 21.

Max was born in Brooklyn, New York, on January 16, 1911. He attended schools in New York and enrolled in medical school at the University of Berne in Switzerland. When civil war began in Spain, he immediately dropped out of medical school (temporarily), and he had joined the Republican forces on the Zaragoza Front by day two of the war. The times he spent fighting Franco and the rise of fascism in Europe were among the proudest moments of his life, and times he talked about right until the end.

He is survived by his wife, Reca, and their children. ▀

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Hilda Roberts, one of the few surviving vets, at the San Francisco Bay Area Despedida event. See page 5. Photograph by Richard Bermack.



New York and the Spanish Civil War exhibition in Barcelona. Photograph by Jeannette Ferrary.

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