



The Volunteer

JOURNAL OF 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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March 2005



San Francisco Mime Troupe musicians perform *The Lives and Times of the Lincoln Battalion*, written by Bruce Barthol, directed by Peter Glazer, at the Bay Area Reunion. The show will be performed May 1 in New York. Photo of vet Chuck Hall appears behind the performance. See page 3.

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Milt Wolff eyes a sculpture of himself by Jo Davidson at an exhibit in Atlanta about the Spanish Civil War. See page 4. Photo by Scott Chester.



Utah Phillips with the Radical Cheerleaders. See p. 3.

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The Soviet Union and Stalin himself rallied early to the Republic's cause, devoted huge resources to it, and stayed till the end. This was an unprecedented act of internationalism, of the same kind as that shown by the International Brigades.

It is long past time that champions of the Republic's battle against international fascism stopped this hypocritical sniping at the Republic's major ally, the Soviet Union, and at Joseph Stalin, without whose support the invaluable Soviet aid would never have been given.

Sincerely,
Grover Furr
Montclair State University

Gabriel Jackson replies:

Professor Furr's letter treats of one of the most painful and controversial aspects of the Spanish tragedy.

Personally I have long believed, as expressed in writings of Marcelino Pascua, Republican ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1937, that Stalin's rule combined several utterly different strands: great intelligence and success in starting the construction of a socialist society in one country, essential aid (partially paid for and partially donated) to the defense of the Spanish Republic, and extreme paranoia in regard to his "enemies," especially so-called Trotskyites. I say "so-called" because in 1937, when Nin

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Letters

To the Editor:

Gabriel Jackson's otherwise fine article on Juan Negrín (*The Volunteer*, Dec. 2004) contains one seriously inaccurate statement. Jackson states: "The kidnapping and torture death of Andres Nin, and of numerous less famous Trotskyites, anarchists, and dissident communists, became an international scandal." This is untrue.

There is strong, but not conclusive, evidence to tie the Soviets, through Alexander Orlov, to the death of Nin. But there is no evidence at all that the Soviets were involved in any other assassinations whatsoever. Neither Costello & Tsarev, Skoutelsky, Kowalsky, nor Radosh et al. found any such evidence, and all scoured the primary sources. However, recent studies have revealed that significant fascist spy rings did exist in the Spanish Republic and were smashed with the help of the Soviet NKVD. These actions unquestionably aided the defense of the Republic.

Some may reply: "But the Soviets may have engaged in murders but left no evidence." Historians should base their conclusions upon evidence, not upon opinion unsupported by evidence, which is just another name for prejudice—anti-communist prejudice, in this case.

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Bay Area Honors Vets, Singer “Utah” Phillips



Vets (l-r) Coleman Persily, Nate Thornton, Hank Rubin, Milton Wolff, Ted Veltfort, Clifton Amsbury, Mark Billings, and David Smith (above) face a cheering audience (photo upper right). Photos by Richard Bermack.

When vet David Smith summoned the Lincoln veterans to the stage at the 68th annual reunion in Oakland, California, on February 27, the audience thundered its approval for lifetimes of activism and commitment to social justice. The cheering and applause reached even greater intensity as it became obvious that just eight wiry men would answer the call.

Each of them—Clifton Amsbury, Nate Thornton, Milton Wolff, Hank Rubin, Mark Billings, Coleman Persily, Ted Veltfort, and David Smith—took a turn as a hand-held microphone passed down the line. Each exhorted the enthusiastic audience to stay with the Good Fight. Ted Veltfort suggested he might be back in ten years, but most settled for the

hopeful thought that they would be around to celebrate again next year.

The strength of seven decades' political commitment was the theme of this year's musical review, *The Lives and Times of the Lincoln Battalion*, written by Bruce Barthol, directed by Peter Glazer, and performed with love and conviction by members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe. The stirred crowd reacted throughout with laughter, tears, and spontaneous applause as



the program depicted in word and song the travails of being forever activists through years of political controversy.

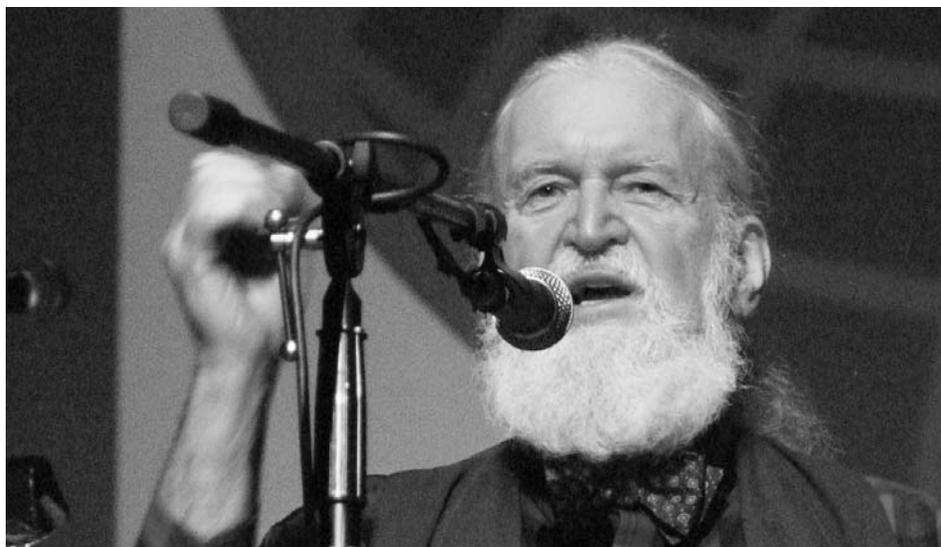
David Smith began the day's festivities with an earnest speech of gratitude for the work of ALBA in keeping alive the history and traditions of the Lincoln Brigade.

The vets also paid tribute to singer-storyteller Bruce “Utah” Phillips, whose music and informal stage style has long captivated audiences with the stories of radical America.

The day also saw the debut of Richard Bermack's new photo book, *The Front Lines of Social Change: Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*. Images from the book formed part of the slideshow that accompanied the musical performance.

ALBA will be bringing *The Lives and Times of the Lincoln Brigade*, along with Pete Seeger, to the New York reunion on May 1, 2005.

—Peter N. Carroll



Folk singer and activist Utah Phillips roused the audience with his songs and stories. His colleagues, the Oakland faction of the Radical Cheerleaders, entertained the crowd at the reception (photo left).

Atlanta's High Museum Shows SCW Sculpture

On the Side of Freedom
Jo Davidson and the Spanish Civil War



Milt Wolff, Lou Gordon, Jack Shafran, Sylvia Thompson, and Matti Mattson pose with sculpture of Milt Wolff. Photo by Scott Chester.

Trisha Renaud

An important art collection, "On the Side of Freedom: Jo Davidson and the Spanish Civil War," opened at Atlanta's High Museum of Art in December, bringing the Lincoln Brigade's last commander, Milton Wolff, face-to-face with a bust of himself made in the midst of the fighting in 1938.

Wolff, along with Brigade veterans Jack Shafran, Matti Mattson and Lou Gordon and the late veteran Bob Thompson's widow Sylvia Thompson attended a reception on December 12 as guests of honor and previewed the exhibit of sculptures recently donated to the city's largest museum.

The new collection contains nine bronze busts of figures associated with the Spanish Republican struggle, including a bust of Wolff and Dolores Ibarruri, known as La Pasionaria. American sculptor Jo Davidson created the busts when he traveled to Spain in 1938.

Wolff, speaking to guests at last month's reception, said he remem-

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MILTON WOLFF: Papa's Portrait from the Original Davidson Catalogue by Ernest Hemingway

NINE MEN COMMANDED the Lincoln and Lincoln-Washington Battalions. There is no space to tell about them here but four are dead and four are wounded and this is the head of the ninth and last commander, Milton Wolff, 23 years old, tall as Lincoln, gaunt as Lincoln and as brave and as good a soldier as any that commanded battalions at Gettysburg. He is alive and unhit by the same hazard that leaves one tall palm tree standing where a hurricane has passed.

Milt Wolff arrived in Spain March 7, 1937, trained with the Washington Battalion and after reserve service at Jarama fought through the July heat and thirst of the blood bath that was called Brunete as a machine gunner. In September in the blowing dust of Aragon at the taking of Quinto and the storming of Belchite he was leading a section. In the Fifteenth Brigade's Passchendaele at Fuentes de Ebro he commanded a machine gun company. In the defence of Teruel fighting in the cold and the snow he was captain and

adjutant. When Dave Reiss was killed at Belchite he took over the battalion and through the March retreat led it wisely and heroically. When finally it was surrounded and cut to pieces through no fault of his, outside Gandesa he swam the Ebro with its remnants.

When what was left of the Fifteenth Brigade held at Mora del Ebro Wolff trained and reorganized his battalion and led it in the great offensive across the Ebro that changed the course of the war and saved Valencia. In the high mountains of Sierra Pandols, attacked repeatedly under the heaviest artillery and aviation bombardments of the war, they held their gains and turned them over intact to the Spaniards when the Internationals were withdrawn. He is a retired major now at twenty-three and still alive and pretty soon he will be coming home as other men his age and rank came home after the peace at Appomattox courthouse long ago. Except the peace was made at Munich now and no good men will be at home for long. ♣

Atlanta SCW Sculpture

Continued from page 4

bered sitting for Davidson after writer Ernest Hemingway suggested that Davidson include a representative of the International Brigades in his line of sculptures.

Davidson, Wolff joked, "had clay left over and I was the only one around." Work on his bust took two days, Wolff said, and then he thought nothing more about it.

But the plaster models Davidson created were sent to Paris for bronze casting and then shipped to New York, where they were exhibited later that year at the Arden Gallery. The opening of Davidson's exhibit in 1938 was a fundraiser for the Spanish Children's Milk Fund, chaired by writer Dorothy Parker. Other writers, including Hemingway, contributed to the event by writing profiles of the figures depicted in the busts for a catalog that accompanied the exhibit.

Hemingway described Wolff, 23 at the time he sat in front of Davidson, as being "tall as Lincoln, gaunt as Lincoln, and as brave and as good a soldier as any that commanded battalions at Gettysburg." (See page 4.)

Speaking at the Atlanta reception, ALBA chair Peter Carroll recognized the veterans who were present for their physical and moral courage.

The Davidson collection, which will become part of the museum's permanent collection, was donated by Jesse and Sherri Crawford of Atlanta. Jesse Crawford is an ALBA board member. One sculpture in the collection, that of an unnamed Spanish peasant, was donated by the family of the late Mary Noreen Skillman, whose son Jim Skillman is another ALBA board member. The bust of La Pasionaria was donated in honor of Sylvia Thompson, a longtime activist and volunteer for VALB.

Sylvia Yount, curator of American art at the museum, was instrumental in arranging the acquisition of the collection and the opening of the exhibit

■

Trisha Renaud is an Atlanta journalist.



Monument to the International Brigades in Rivas Vaciamadrid

Rivas, Spain: "It is our duty to remember"

By Mary Kay McCoy

The city of Rivas Vaciamadrid, located 10 miles outside Spain's capital, is determined to recover the silenced history of the Civil War. According to its mayor, José Masa, "It is our historic duty to remember, to keep alive through memory, not to forget all those who, more than 70 years ago, gave the best of themselves and their lives to try and save the first democracy in our country."

Last June, Rivas held a multitudinous concert to pay tribute to the men and women who fought alongside the Republic in the struggle to save Spanish democracy. The event was organized by the Association for the Recovery of Historic Memory, directed by Emilio Silva, and the Foundation Contamíname, in collaboration with the municipal government. Nearly 15,000 people gathered to honor the 741 "oldsters" who came from all parts of Spain and abroad for the unprecedented occasion. The manifesto of the tribute closed with the following words: "We want to say thank you. We want you to know we admire and respect you. And that with the strength of your memory we are going to work together to construct the society which you fought for; one of peace, liberty and social justice."

As noted in *The Volunteer* (Dec. 2004), another series of events took place in November in Rivas to commemorate the 67th anniversary of the Battle of Jarama and to honor the role of the International Brigades. The activities, which again enjoyed the generous cooperation of the city government, were organized by the Asociación de Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales (AABI), directed by Ana Pérez. They included a visit to the nearby battlefields; the inauguration of the exhibit "Volunteers for Liberty," put together by the AABI; and a roundtable with talks by historians Peter Carroll and Jesús González de Miguel, writer Jorge Reverte, and the Lincoln volunteer, Milton Wolff. Wolff was joined by camaradas Theo Francos (France), Giovanni Pesce (Italy), Simon Radwanski (Belgium), and Bob Doyle (Ireland).

Carmen Barahona, councilwoman for culture, emphasized that "the international volunteers should serve as a constant reference point for the younger generations. Our youth must never forget that the democracy they enjoy today had its precursors; all those who fought to defend the Spanish Republic." ■

Mary Kay McCoy is a translator living in Madrid.



Aviators, from left to right: Ángel Sanz Vallecas, Francisco López Granje, the Mayor of El Molar, Josep Grau, Francesc Viñals, Simó Fiestas, José Soler, Francisco García, Antoni Vilella, Pedro Carrasco, Francesc Pararols, and Antonio Ramírez. Photos by Angela Jackson.

Catalonia Honors Aviators

By Angela Jackson

The Association of Aviators of the Republic (ADAR) unveiled a new memorial dedicated to two Spanish Republican fighter pilots, Manuel Vega Gomez and Josep Torras Pujol, on November 1, 2004. The pilots had been killed near the small village of El Molar in the Priorat, Catalonia, during the civil war. I had been invited to attend the ceremony by ADAR, one of the many groups in contact with our association in Marçà, No Jubilem La Memòria.

As people gathered within the walls of the cemetery at El Molar, I learned that about 500 Republican soldiers were also buried there in an unmarked common grave. Opposite the cemetery gates, amongst the pines, was the building that had been used as a hospital during the Battle of the Ebro. It was on the site of an old lead mine, now abandoned.

The short ceremony, hosted by veteran flyers, included speeches by the Mayor of El Molar, the President of ADAR, Squadron Leader Francesc Viñals, and the Secretary, Simó Fiestas, formerly a fighter pilot.

As we walked into the center of the village after the ceremony, I was introduced to one of the local villagers, Conrado Escoda Salvador. A small group gathered to listen to the story he was telling one of the veteran

pilots, Ángel Sanz Vallecas. As a youth in 1938, Conrado had been working in the countryside near the village and had seen a plane crash. He



Simó Fiestas looks at the memorial.

had found Manuel Vega badly wounded, caught up in a tree. He was cut down and taken immediately to the hospital but his injuries were too severe and nothing could be done to save him.

We all then went to the Town Hall for refreshments and to renew old friendships. Antoni Vilella, a former airplane mechanic, spoke with emotion about the International Brigaders and asked me to send his greetings to Milton Wolff. Antoni had sent him a

reproduction of a medal that was originally designed to be given to all Brigaders as they left Spain. (See *The Volunteer*, June 2004, p. 10).

The local historical organization No Jubilem la Memòria will be carrying out more research about the hospital and cemetery in El Molar in their ongoing project to recover and preserve the history of the civil war in the Priorat region of Catalonia. ■

Angela Jackson, author of *British Women & the Spanish Civil War*, is active in local research projects in Catalonia.



Conrado Escoda Salvador from El Molar with former pilot of "Moscas," Ángel Sanz Vallecas (right).

Keeping History Alive

A Report from Catalonia

By Shirley Mangini

In the tiny mountain village of Marçà (Tarragona) in the Priorat region of Spain, today known for its exquisite wines, British historian Angela Jackson is making an impression. Jackson is the author of *British Women and the Spanish Civil War* (2002). She is also the author of *Més allà del camp de batalla (Beyond the Battlefield)* (Valls: Cossetània Edicions, 2004), about the cave hospital that was set up in nearby Bisbal De Falset during the battle at the Ebro River. It was in July 1938, at the start of the definitive battle that raged at the

edly, Jackson began to stoke the fires of the memory of the civil war, founding the association “No Jubilem la Memòria” (“Don’t Retire the Memory”) in January 2003. The organization now has some 250 registered supporters. Like other regional organizations that have been established to recover their history of the war, the group’s goals are to research and record interviews with people in the Priorat and with International Brigaders who can contribute to knowledge of the war, to have exhibitions of photographs and other materials that can shed light on the



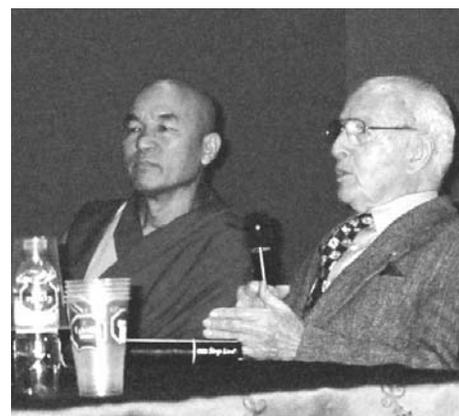
Volunteers from Marçà prepare the supper in the village school.

Ebro—when the Republic was attempting to unite the two Loyalist zones that had been cut in half by the Franco forces—that Dr. Reginald Saxton took his mobile transfusion unit to an emergency hospital to care for the wounded in a hillside cave, Santa Lucía, near La Bisbal de Falset.

After doing extensive research in the area, inspired by the beauty of the Priorat and the vast possibilities for further research on the war in the region, Jackson decided to settle there with her husband, Roger, in 2002. Shortly thereafter, almost single hand-

edly, Jackson began to stoke the fires of the memory of the civil war, founding the association “No Jubilem la Memòria” (“Don’t Retire the Memory”) in January 2003. The organization now has some 250 registered supporters. Like other regional organizations that have been established to recover their history of the war, the group’s goals are to research and record interviews with people in the Priorat and with International Brigaders who can contribute to knowledge of the war, to have exhibitions of photographs and other materials that can shed light on the

history of the war in the Priorat, and to bring speakers to the area. Not only has Dr. Jackson gained the enthusiasm of her neighbors, but she has reached out to hundreds in nearby towns and villages to encourage them to attend various conferences and lectures she has organized in the past two years. What is astounding is that Jackson has been able to bring major scholars, such as Paul Preston, and protagonists from the civil war, like AL Brigadier Milt Wolff, to give lectures in the village. Attendance at these events has sometimes reached 500.



The Venerable Thubten Wangchen (left) and Fernando de La Torre discussing the experience of exile.

Jackson’s latest feat was a bilingual conference (Spanish and Catalan) entitled “Children, War and Exile,” held on November 6. Participating in the mini-conference were the author of several books on the civil war, Professor Joan Maria Thomàs, Albert Sabaté Rull, Jackson, and myself. Also, Fernando de la Torre and Josep Sanguis spoke of their lives since childhood in exile in, respectively, Great Britain and France. The Buddhist monk, Venerable Thubten Wangchen, the director of the Casa del Tibet Foundation in Barcelona, was an invited guest. He spoke of Tibetan children in exile and the oppression of the Chinese, and the conference proceeds were designated to help the Tibetan children now living in India.

In addition to the conference and a photographic exhibition on the theme of exile, a moving documentary entitled *The Lost Children of the Franco Period* was screened. The film consists of a series of emotionally charged interviews with women who were imprisoned during and after the war who told of the children who were in prison with them. At the end of the evening, there was a celebration of music, regional food and wine. Civil war songs were interpreted by the energetic and entertaining group La Trinxera. ▀

Shirley Mangini, an ALBA board member, is author of *Memories of Resistance: Women’s Voices From the Spanish Civil War*.

Dispatch from Madrid

Separatism in Today's Spain

By Miguel Ángel Nieto
Translated by Tony Geist

The Historical Archive of Salamanca is being dispersed. This is how the year 2005 began in Spain. Hundreds of thousands of original documents that have been held for decades in the most complete internal history of the Spanish Civil War will be moved to Catalonia, where they were stolen in their day by Franco's troops. One of the few centralized archives in Spain will be split in two; in three, really, because the Basque Country is also demanding the transfer of documents from Salamanca that in their day were stolen from Bilbao.

It is a sad metaphor for the still open wounds of the war. Researchers from throughout the world who have strained their eyes working through this archive will regret its sundering. Although it is also true that today all or almost all the facsimiles in the world can be consulted in that magnificent and enormous virtual library know as the internet.

The dispersal of the Salamanca Museum of the Civil War, the result of the nationalist persistence of a handful of Catalan politicians, is nothing more than a symbol of what is taking place in Spanish politics today. The surge toward separatism of the nationalist political parties, calling with greater urgency than ever for political independence from Spain, once again hovers over a country that is constitutionally bound to remain united.

Even more important, and less symbolic, than what has happened with the Salamanca archive is what is going on in the Basque Country and Catalonia. Local cortes (parliaments) in the Basque Country have just passed, by majority, a separatist scheme known as the Plan Ibarretxe, named after the Basque political leader who proposed it. It calls for establishment of a calendar of political

measures aimed at turning the Basque Country into an independent nation in the not distant future.

The Socialist Party in power in Madrid has so far been unable to do anything to head off the passing of the plan, nor apparently will it be able to. The evaluation of the Basque situation by Catalan separatists of Esquerra

disturbing voice in this delicate and decisive debate is raised by none other than Manuel Fraga Iribarne, a political animal who held several ministries under Franco, who survived the Transition, who survived democracy, and who today is the President of the Cortes of Galicia. Without a moment's hesitation he announced that the solu-

What is really in question, when it comes down to it, is the future legal status of Spain: Will it continue to be a state composed of autonomous territories? Will it become a federal state? Or will it fragment, break up into independent countries, integrated and united under the overarching umbrella that is membership in the European Union?

Republicana de Catalunya has been drastic: "This is just a tiny taste of what will happen in Catalonia," they say.

What is really in question, when it comes down to it, is the future legal status of Spain: Will it continue to be a state composed of autonomous territories? Will it become a federal state? Or will it fragment, break up into independent countries, integrated and united under the overarching umbrella that is membership in the European Union?

The Spanish Constitution needs a facelift, that is for sure, after 25 years service. But the authors of our magna carta refuse to let Spain, like the Salamanca archive, dissolve. The most

tion to the Plan Ibarretxe is to suspend Basque autonomy. To back up his argument, he turned to history: "During the Second Republic," he said, "Alejandro Lerroux, who was no authoritarian, in fact he was an old-time radical, undid Catalan autonomy with the stroke of a pen."

It is as though time does not pass for Fraga. Before the perplexed eyes of hundreds of journalists, he continued, "He undid Catalan autonomy and nothing happened." He only omitted one minor detail: in fact, nothing happened ... that day. ▀

Miguel Ángel Nieto is a distinguished Madrid journalist.

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TALES OF FRANCO

By Paul Preston

In mid-July 1939, Count Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law and the Foreign Minister of Fascist Italy, arrived in Barcelona. He was returning the official visit made to Italy one month earlier by Ramón Serrano Suñer, Franco's brother-in-law. Having been an enthusiastic advocate of Franco's cause during the Civil War, he was assured of a warm welcome. However, he was not impressed. Among the entertainments provided for such an illustrious guest was a tour of battle grounds. Near one of them, he was shown a group of Republican prisoners working. Their condition provoked the bitter commentary, "They are not prisoners of war, they are slaves of war." Later, he was received by Franco in the Palace of Ayete in San Sebastián. On his return to Rome, he described Franco to one of his cronies: "That queer fish of a Caudillo, there in his Ayete palace, in the midst of his Moorish Guard, surrounded by mountains of files of prisoners condemned to death. With his work timetable, he will see about three a day, because that fellow enjoys his siestas."

It certainly seems to be the case that Franco's sleep was never interrupted by any concern for his prisoners, nor by any sense of guilt as he signed death sentences. In this regard, he was happy to believe his own propaganda. Following the example of Josef Goebbels, Franco's propagandists presented the repression, the executions, the overflowing prisons, the concentration camps, the slave labor battalions, as the scrupulous yet compassionate justice administered by a wise and benevolent Caudillo. One after another, they lined up to sing the praises of the Caudillo's lofty and noble impartiali-

Paul Preston, author of *Franco and Juan Carlos*, is a professor of international history at the London School of Economics.

ty. Typical of them was the repentant leftist Joaquín Pérez Madrigal, who intoned: "Franco, Franco, Franco, is the liberator of the Fatherland, the restorer of Law, the distributor of Justice, he who weighs out wealth, love and all things good. Franco, Franco, Franco, has reconquered Spain, he is the saviour of all Spaniards. Of all Spaniards! Franco is the Victor, the Founder, the bringer of Justice and the Magnanimous one. Franco, who harvests, who weighs and measures, is the State, the Law, Moderation."

Altogether more specific was the greatest sycophant of them all, Franco's one-time commander and, by the time of the Civil War, propaganda chief, General Millán Astray. Under the title "To Bring Justice is the most august mission of the Head of State (Franco, the Bringer of Justice)" [Ejercer la justicia es la más augusta misión del Jefe del Estado (Franco, el Justiciero)], Millán Astray wrote reverently, "Bursting with emotion, I write these lines, proud to be Spanish and proud to be a soldier at the orders of Franco. I have had the high honor of being present during the solemn act in which the Head of State dispensed justice. The legal counsellor gave a detailed account of each case presented for the supreme sentence. That worthy man (Lieutenant Colonel Lorenzo Martínez Fuset of the Juridical Corps) gave no hint, in his gesture, his voice or his facial expression, of his own opinion, leaving to the Chief alone the august mission of judgment. The General, despite the immense complexity of the problems of the war and of the state with which he constantly has to deal, listened attentively and immobile. After brief meditation, he pronounced his judgment. I held my breath and, after hearing the Chief's decision, our eyes met and not once did I see a sign of doubt. What my conscience had indicated was what the Chief ruled. Twice when our eyes met, they were damp with tears, not because the sentence

had been death, but because the magnanimity of Franco's heart had imposed itself and, in the interests of a justice free of hatred, he had blocked out anything that might stand in the way of serene justice and had commuted the sentence. In all the many cases that the courts had suggested commutation of the death sentence, he agreed. In those cases where he approved the death sentences, the evidence of horrendous crimes against the Fatherland and against fellow man had been so overwhelming that his duty of defending the very existence of the Fatherland and the safety of peaceful citizens meant that there was no possibility of clemency. In all other cases, generosity was the order of the day. No one, other than those who had committed murder and their crime had been fully proven, had been condemned to death. If there was the slightest doubt, the sentence was commuted or had been sent for further consultation by the High Military Court. After the two most intense hours of my life, I allowed myself, with all the respect that I have for the Head of State, to say: 'General, forgive my daring, but as a Spaniard and as a soldier, I must express my admiration on contemplating how you administer justice and how it reveals such a generous, such a Christian and such a Spanish heart.'

For his biographer, the newspaper editor Luis de Galinsoga, Franco, "as well as being the Generalísimo of the forces, Head of State, and, for every grief-stricken Spaniard, the distributor of help, the guardian and the shoulder to cry on, is also the supreme administrator of justice. And how much justice had to be distributed at that time! He took advantage of the few hours left him by his many important tasks of all kinds and, even in his car, with his legal counsellor, Major Martínez Fuset, he would look into the cases of those sentenced to death. He never dealt with one of these cases

Continued on page 10

lightly, fully informing himself, demanding that such a defense or such an accusation be read out to him again, finally pronouncing the sacramental words 'sentence commuted' or 'sentence approved.'"

The administration of justice to which the awe-struck Millán Astray and Galinsoga referred was based on Franco's examination of the files on those Republican prisoners not summarily executed as they were captured or murdered behind the lines by Falangist terror squads but subjected to cursory courts martial. Usually, large numbers of defendants would have been tried in large batches, accused of generalised crimes—most often "military rebellion," that is to say, having failed to support the uprising of July 1936—and given little or no opportunity to defend themselves. The death sentences passed merely needed the signature under the word *enterado* (acknowledged) of the general commanding the province. As a result of the Italian protests, from March 1937 death sentences had to be sent to the Generalísimo's headquarters for confirmation or pardon. The last word on death sentences lay with Franco, not as Head of State, but as commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces. The fact that pleas for clemency were usually examined by Franco after the condemned had already been executed led to the joke by Franco's chaplain that the Generalísimo wrote *enterrado* (buried).

In this area, his close confidant was Major, later Lieutenant Colonel, Lorenzo Martínez Fuset of the military juridical corps, who was auditor del Cuartel General del Generalísimo (legal adviser to headquarters). The tiny, balding Martínez Fuset was an amiable individual with a child-like smile, much liked by his fellow-officers. He was utterly devoted to Franco, to the point of adulation.

Contrary to the sycophantic myth of a tireless and merciful Caudillo agonizing late into the night over death sentences, the reality was more pro-

saically brutal. In Salamanca or in Burgos, after lunch or over coffee, or even in a car speeding to the battle front, the Caudillo would flick through and then sign sheaves of them, often without reading the details but nonetheless specifying the most savage form of execution, strangulation by garrote. Occasionally, he would make a point of decreeing *garrote y prensa* (garrote reported in the press).

Franco did insist on seeing the death sentences personally, although he reached his decisions in the most cursory manner. On various occasions that Ramón Serrano Suñer was present when Martínez Fuset arrived with folders of death sentences, he would offer to leave. Franco usually told him to stay, saying, "It's just routine stuff, Ramón." While the Caudillo and his brother-in-law continued to work, Martínez Fuset would read out the name, age and profession of the condemned. Occasionally, without raising his head from the papers that he was examining with Serrano Suñer, Franco would ask, "Political party?" and then state the manner in which the death sentence was to be implemented, garrote or firing squad. Another witness claimed that Martínez Fuset derived a macabre pleasure from blackening the case of various individuals. In contrast, Franco's faithful cousin Pacón often accompanied Franco and Martínez Fuset in the car as they went through the files. He remembered Franco asking for details to be repeated and also claimed that Martínez Fuset, if asked, would recommend benevolence.

Specifying press coverage was not just a way of intensifying the pain of the families of the condemned men but also had the wider objective of demoralizing the enemy with evidence of inexorable might and implacable terror. That was one of the lessons of war learnt by Franco in Morocco. At one lunch in the winter of 1936-37, the case of four captured Republican militiamen was discussed. Johannes Bernhardt, who was

present, was taken aback by the casual way Franco passed judgment, in the same tone that he would use to discuss the weather: "There is nothing else to be done. Shoot them."

On visiting him in Salamanca, Pedro Sainz Rodríguez, a friend of Franco's from his days in Oviedo in 1917 and later his first Minister of Education, was astonished by the cold indifference with which Franco dealt with the death sentences. Franco was breakfasting on hot chocolate and fingers of fried bread (*picatostes*). He had a pile of expedientes on the table and a chair on either side. While calmly continuing to dip his bread in the chocolate, and thoroughly enjoying his breakfast, he flicked through the files, placing them on one chair or the other. Those on the right were to be executed, those on the left to have their sentences commuted.

It does not seem that Carmen Polo ever used her influence with Franco to limit the scale or the intensity of the wider repression. It is impossible for her not to have known about what was happening. On most days, after lunch and often in her presence, Lorenzo Martínez Fuset, now head of Franco's juridical office, would bring sheaves of death sentences for him to sign. It was common for the wives, sisters and mothers of condemned men to appeal to Doña Carmen in the hope that she would intercede with her husband. However, her already stony heart had been hardened by the death of her beloved aunt, Isabel Polo Flórez de Vereterra. She had died in the village of Infanzón in the province of Gijón in the early days of the war, after being brusquely interrogated by anarchist militiamen. Isabel had been to a large extent a mother substitute to Carmen. Her death, perceived to be at the hands of the "Reds," intensified Carmen's hatred of the Republic. Ramón Serrano Suñer claimed that Doña Carmen rarely if ever interceded on behalf of anyone.

One appalling case that revealed Doña Carmen's reluctance to inter-

cede was that taken to her by a cousin from Astorga in León, Doña Máxima Torbado de Panero, whose son Leopoldo was a minor poet. Leopoldo Panero and a friend, Ángel Giménez, who was shortly to be married to Leopoldo's sister Asunción, had been arrested. According to sources close to the Panero family, Doña Máxima went with Asunción to the prison of San Marcos in León to visit the two boys. When they reached San Marcos and asked to see them, a prison guard told them that Ángel was no longer there. They assumed at first that he had been transferred to another prison. However, the guards brought out a wild-eyed and deranged Leopoldo who managed to stammer out that, on the previous day, Ángel had been shot and, before facing the firing squad, had entrusted him with his watch to give to Asunción. Máxima immediately bundled Asunción into her car and set off for Salamanca. On reaching the Palacio Episcopal, she was received by Doña Carmen. She begged Doña Carmen to get a letter from Franco to save her son. Carmen Polo calmly replied that her husband was in a meeting and could not be disturbed. After waiting for several hours in a mood of mounting anxiety, thinking only that her son might be shot at any moment, Doña Máxima finally lost her composure. She began to scream and shout to such an extent that the Caudillo's wife reluctantly went into Franco's office and asked him for the letter. Without hesitation, Franco acceded to his wife's request. Armed with the letter, Doña Máxima returned to León, where the document secured the immediate release of Leopoldo Panero.

It is an interesting comment on the popular view of Carmen Polo that the following version of events was widely accepted in Astorga. In local myth, on her knees, Doña Máxima begged Carmen Polo, as a cousin, to intercede with the Generalísimo. Carmen replied haughtily, "I can't be bothering Paco all the time. He has far

weightier things on his plate." Before Doña Máxima's ever more frantic pleas, she relented and said, "Very well, but I can't bother him about two of them. You choose one." In this oft-related version, Doña Máxima chose her son, and her daughter's fiancé was shot. In fact, the real story is, at one level, even more spine-chilling since it suggests that Franco was open to pleas for clemency emanating from his wife and that she chose not to exercise her power in this regard.

It is possible that Doña Carmen used this power on other occasions, but there is no evidence that she did so. In another case, that of her close friend Dolores Roda, Carmen's failure to act was striking. Dolores Roda's husband, General Campins, a close friend of Franco, had been shot in August for failing to join the uprising. Dolores wrote a heart-rending letter to Franco begging to be told why Campins had been shot. It was answered by his cousin, Pacón. At the time of this correspondence, Carmen was still in France. However, it has been alleged by Carmen's brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Suñer, that Dolores Roda later wrote her an even more harrowing letter repeating the question. Carmen, he said, simply did not deign to reply.

On May 19, 1939, the day on which he had presided over the spectacular Victory Parade, Franco was anything but magnanimous in victory. "Let us not deceive ourselves: the Jewish spirit, which permitted the alliance of big capital with Marxism and which was behind so many pacts with the anti-Spanish revolution, cannot be extirpated in a day and still beats in the hearts of many. Too much blood has been spilt and our Holy Crusade has cost Spanish mothers too high a price for our victory to be squandered by foreign agents infiltrated into Spain."

In his end of year message on December 31, 1939, Franco used his admiration for the 15th Century Catholic kings to express his approval

of German anti-semitic legislation, declaring that the policy of Ferdinand and Isabel towards the Jews had shown the Nazis the way: "Now you will understand the reasons which have led other countries to persecute and isolate those races marked by the stigma of their greed and self-interest. The domination of such races within society is disturbing and dangerous for the destiny of the nation. We, who were freed of this heavy burden centuries ago by the grace of God and the clear vision of Ferdinand and Isabel, cannot remain indifferent before the modern flourishing of avaricious and selfish spirits who are so attached to their own earthly goods that they would sacrifice the lives of their children more readily than their own base interests."

In the same speech, he made it clear that he rejected any thought of amnesty or reconciliation with the defeated. "We need a united Spain, an aware Spain. It is necessary to put an end to the hatreds and passions of our recent war but not in the manner of liberals, with their monstrous and suicidal amnesties, which are more of a fraud than a pardon, but rather with the redemption of sentences through labor, with repentance and penance. Anyone who thinks otherwise is guilty of irresponsibility or treason. So much damage has been done to the Patria and so much havoc wreaked on families and on morality, so many victims crying out for justice that no honorable Spaniard, no conscious being even, could stand aside from the painful duty of punishment."

Franco's speeches revealed more of the truth about his vengeful intentions than the fanciful inventions of his propagandists. On October 1, 1975, the 39th anniversary of his elevation to the Headship of State, Franco made his last major public appearance on the balcony of Madrid's Palacio de Oriente. Before a huge crowd, he denounced "a masonic left-wing con-

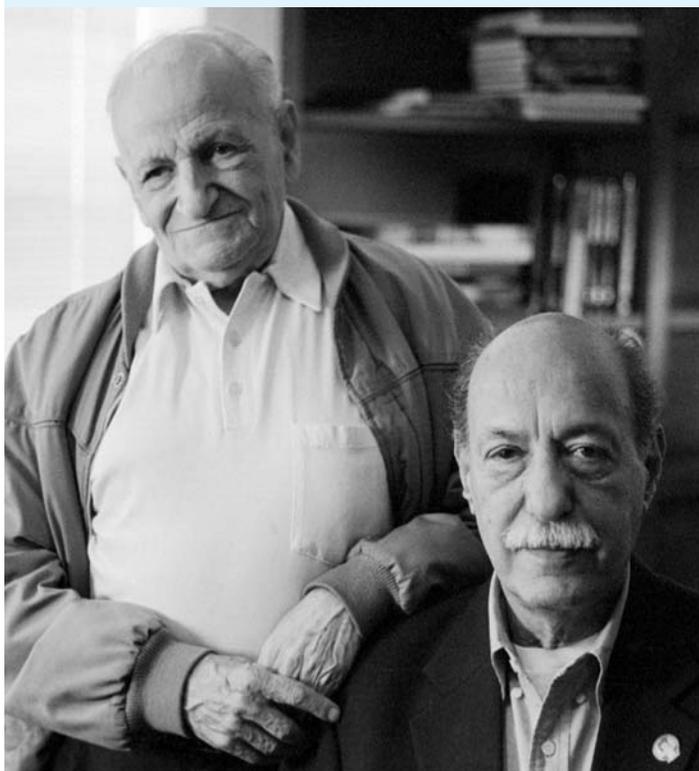
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The Front Lines of Social Change:

a book and exhibit by Richard Bermack



Milt Wolff, Clifton Amsbury (in back), Al Tanz, Ted Veltfort, and Lenore Veltfort march against the first Gulf War.

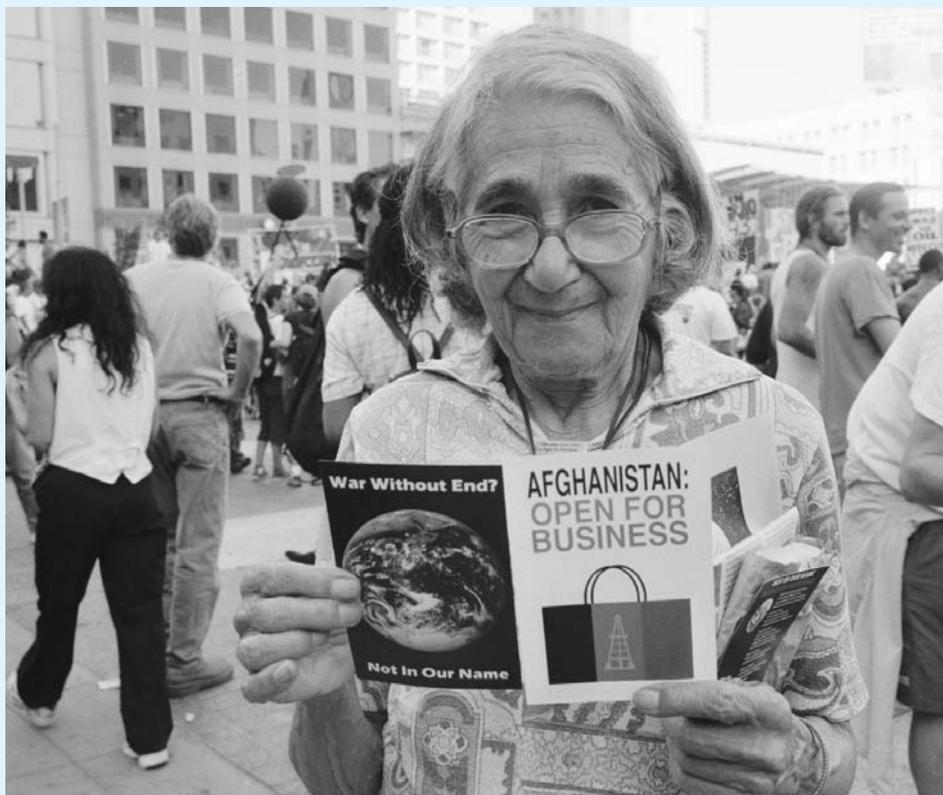


Abe Smorodin and Lou Gordon

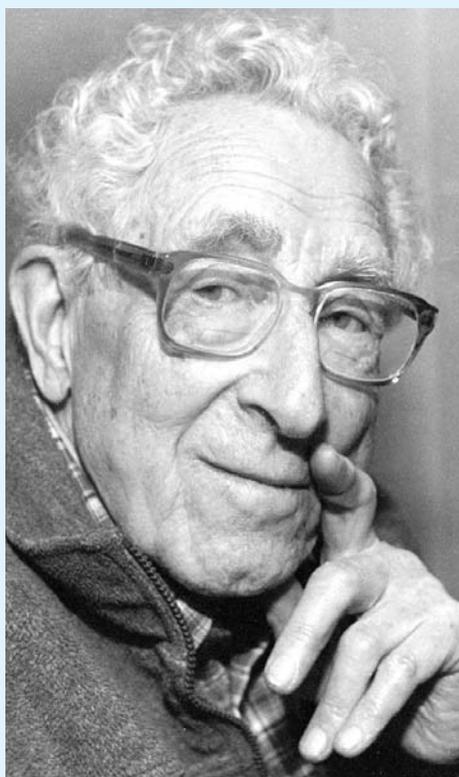
Staring out into the darkness as the boat made its way across the ocean to Spain in 1936, nurse Hilda Bell Roberts, barely twenty at the time, reflected on her life. “My plans were simple,” she later said. “Get married, have kids, lead an organized life. Then I realized I was giving it all up, and my life would never be the same. It felt good.” Nearly seventy years later, marching with a crowd of demonstrators protesting U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, she smiles and states with pride, “Going to Spain was the best decision I ever made, next to becoming a nurse.”

From the introduction to *The Front Lines of Social Change: Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*.

Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade



Hilda Roberts demonstrates against the second Gulf War.

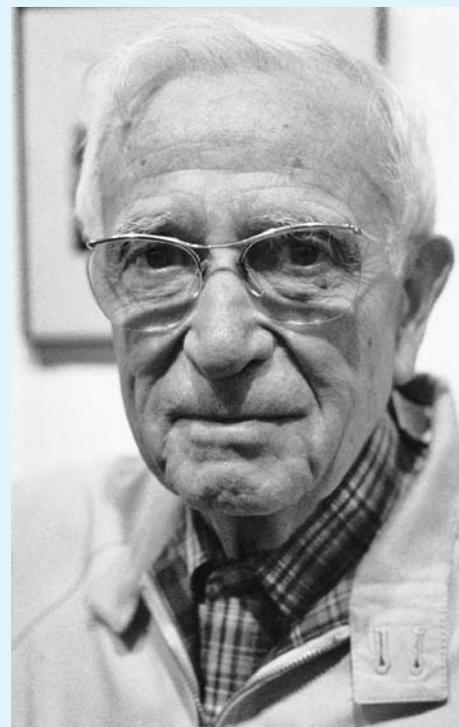


Clarence Kailin

Life-long activist Hilda Roberts is one of many vets featured in *The Front Lines of Social Change: Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, a recently released book of photography and text by Richard Bermack. Bermack is the art director and photographer for *The Volunteer*.

Front Lines contains contemporary portraits of nearly 80 vets, taken at annual VALB reunions and other events and demonstrations, with historical photos from the ALBA archives and text chronicling the vets' continuing struggle to fight for justice. The book includes an introduction by Peter Carroll and essays and poems by Ariel Dorfman, Edwin Rolfe, Martín Espada.

Signed copies of the book will be available at this year's reunion event in New York, May 1. Photos from the book will be displayed at the Juan Carlos Center, April 28-May 31, with a reception April 30 at 6 p.m. See back page for details.



Harry Fisher



Marion Merriman Wachtel

In Brief

Interviewers Flock to Vets

November and December were busy months of interviews. In just a few weeks, I was interviewed by 4 high school students and 2 Ph.D. candidates doing theses on Spain (one from Oxford University and the other from a Canadian university), as well as two filmmakers, one from Spain and the other living in Germany. The latter are gathering information about the vets and the Spanish Civil War. I



Members of the City College-23rd St. delegation to the Founding Convention of the American Student Union (ASU), held at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, in December 1937. The delegates are standing in front of a prototype of the ambulance they had just sent to Loyalist Spain with money raised from their student body. Standing at the right is Henry Foner, who has chaired the annual New York reunions of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade since 1975.

hope they complete their projects. One filmmaker sent the following: "The material I shot with my video camera is just what I needed for the continuation of my research."

During the holiday week, a high school junior, Teresa, and her father

arrived at my apartment for an interview about my activities during the Spanish Civil War. I was surprised when they entered carrying a basket of cookies, cakes, apple cider and a bottle of French champagne. As an introduction to Spain I played a 14-minute excerpt from TV journalist Eric Severeid's one-hour special about Spain and the VALB. We then spent two hours conversing and taping. I found it unusual for a parent to come along, but her father was quite interested in this part of Spain's history. Teresa will write her paper in Spanish. She is a student of Victoria Parraga, a local teacher and member of our Bay Area Post, whose mother, as a 16-year old, fought in Madrid. (She was and is a Spanish citizen.)

I was also intrigued with a home schooled San Francisco student who later wrote, "...it was really fun talking to a real veteran of the Spanish Civil War and it really helped me get a better idea of just what was going on." Also, he sent a copy of a full page article about the Spanish Civil War written for the student newspaper *Tomorrow's Birdcage Liner: News and Reviews for Progressive Youth*.

—David Smith

Luxembourg Honors IBs

The Friends of the International Brigades in Luxembourg (Les Amis des Brigades Internationales Luxembourg) held a commemorative meeting last October in front of the "No Pasaran" monument to honor the nation's volunteers in the Spanish Civil War.

"They departed when others were still asleep," said Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, one of the speakers. "They acted instead of waiting."

The group also hosted a commemorative lecture by Professor M. Antonio Ventura of the University of Lisbon titled "Portugal on Both Sides of the Spanish War."

For more information about the Friends group, contact henri.wehenkel@education.lu.

Ebro Memorial To Brits

The idea for a memorial to British Battalion volunteers who died at the

Battle of the Ebro was first suggested by Cornwall-based poet and writer Martin Green. His father, the classical musician George Green, was killed near Corbera.

Using the original British Battalion Roll of Honour, together with material from the Moscow Archives, researcher Jim Carmody drew up a list of some 90 men from Britain, Ireland, Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands who are known to have died at the Ebro from July to September 1938, or as a consequence of wounds or sickness in the months that followed.

Bob Lambourne, a graphic designer in London, has created an initial design for a steel memorial plaque that will bear the names of the fallen volunteers, their places of origin, and the following inscription:

*British Battalion Volunteers
They Died Fighting for Spain
Battle of the Ebro
July-September 1938*

The International Brigade Memorial Trust of Britain and Ireland applied for permission to install the plaque on a republican memorial wall near the existing Quinta Biberon memorial on Hill 705 in the Sierra Pandols.

The Town Hall of Pinell el Brai recently confirmed that the IBMT can unveil the plaque on Saturday, May 7, 2005. It is hoped that British veteran Jack Jones and Irish veteran Michael O'Riordan will attend.

—David Leach ■

TALES

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spiracy within the political class in indecent concubinage with Communist-terrorist subversion in society." In those 39 years, in the territories under his control, his serene justice had been manifested in concentration camps, forced labor battalions, overcrowded prisons, torture and judicial executions by the tens of thousands. ■

Benicassim: A Tempest Over Historical Plaques

By Robert Coale

The last few months have seen much debate in and around the cemetery of Benicassim on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. According to Guillermo Casañ, who has studied the International Brigade hospital of Benicassim in depth, between 1936 and 1938 over 30 brigadistas were laid to rest there, including one American. At the time, above ground vaults were considered more prestigious and all IBers were so buried. Some time after the war, however, the remains were removed to an ossuary.

This past July the town council accepted the petition of a local group dedicated to honoring the historic memory of republican Spain, the Association González Chermà. Their wish was to install a commemorative plaque next to the entrance to the cemetery in honor of the International Brigaders who died while hospitalized in the town. Shortly after the inauguration, a motion of censure forced out the socialist-led council and a conservative one took its place. A small group of active protestors pressured the new mayor, and the plaque was dismantled without discussion on the eve of All Saints' Day, November 1, the busiest day for cemetery visitation in Spain.

The conservative mayor Manuel Llorca most likely did not foresee the wave of protest that his actions would cause. Many associations and individuals wrote letters to defend the plaque, both to the authorities and to local and national newspapers. The three letters that follow are indicative of the intensity with which many uphold the idea of honoring the memory of the International Brigades since the removal of the plaque. The first, written by Susana Fortes, a local high school history teacher, is one of the more emotional.

The latest news from Benicassim is that the town is planning to partially backtrack and return the plaque to the cemetery wall, but not before erasing the mention of the town council as one of the sponsors. At first hesitant to accept this decision, the Association González Chermà has acquiesced, thinking it is better to have the disfigured plaque than none at all. Another result of this debate could be the inauguration of another plaque in honor of all the victims of the civil war in Benicassim. This is a tactic promoted by the political right in many towns and cities and used to counter initiatives to honor only republican victims. By honoring all victims, both sides of the conflict are put on an equal footing and the difference between defense of democracy or support of fascism and revolt against the legal government is lost in the haze. Consensus is made on the basis that war is evil: no winners and losers, no right or wrong.

It is interesting to note that in 1996, during the homage to the IB which took place across the country, a plaque was unveiled in Benicassim in memory of the International Brigade hospital. The town was governed by the same conservative party that is now in power, but little protest was heard then. Unfortunately, over the intervening years several books with revisionist historical tendencies have been published in Spain. Some of them unabashedly circulate Francoist interpretations of the origins and outcome of the struggle and have sold hundreds of thousands of copies, much to the amazement of established historians. It is too early to conclude if the local uproar over a plaque is an offshoot of these dubious interpretations, but it does illustrate that the work of ALBA and similar organizations is far from superfluous.

"Benicassim," by Susana Fortes.
El País, 13 November 2004

In the center of the esplanade

where the Hotel Voramar is now located, there was a pearl gray and gold enameled grand piano which undoubtedly belonged to some rich vacationer scared off by the war. A tense audience crowded in the darkness immobilized in white dressings and stretchers of a field hospital. Hundreds of faces were fixed on the stage. Then, Paul Robeson, the black giant seated at the piano, stood up, revealing his colossal size, and suddenly his deep voice filled the auditorium of wounded with the purest note that hope can offer. At that moment the revolutionary song, the hymn of the world's forgotten, was echoed in unison in all languages. This occurred in Benicassim, one day in November of 1936.

At that time borders mattered not. We were alone. While the European democracies turned their backs on the legitimate government of the Republic, thousands of young men from all countries came here on their own because they understood that the best way to stop fascism was to fight for democracy in Spain. The Englishwoman Pati Edney arrived in our country at 18. She worked as a nurse on the Aragon front. She fell in love with this unclaimed land and crisscrossed it in an ambulance wearing her blue militia uniform. She faced the death of friends and defeat, but she managed to survive the tragedy. Years later, she decided to return in order to see for one last time the land that had been her chosen country. Then she died. A few days earlier Frida Knight had died in London at the age of 85. Her ashes were spread, per her last wishes, from the Frenchmen's Bridge where her companion had fallen in the terrible winter of 1937. For them Spain was the symbol of all countries because it represented the very idea of a ridiculed universe, in the words of

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Robert Coale teaches Spanish history and literature at the Sorbonne.

Simone Weil, the anarchist militia-woman who bewilderedly watched the cruelty of the war through the glasses of an intellectual. There were metal workers, students, Thames dockworkers and dreamers from all parts. In their peculiar geography Valencia was the capital of the loyalists. Over 15,000 volunteers of the International Brigades died in combat. Those who survived were promised we would never forget them.

Because of all this, the decision of the mayor of Benicassim, Manuel Llorca, to remove from the cemetery by decree a plaque in their honor shows a deeply shameful stinginess of soul. One has to be really miserly to refuse them remembrance.

They were the last romantics. They gave their all in the last war to be lost, painfully, desperately and with an unquestionable elegance of heart, like John Cornford, a youngster with a pilot's jacket and a child's smile who smoked filterless cigarettes and was an excellent poet. He was only 21 when a bullet burst his lungs to pieces in the hills of Cordoba at Christmas of 1936. Shortly before dying he wrote to his friend Margot Heinemann these verses of love, which seem directed to the heart of our country: "If luck ends my life in a poorly dug grave, remember our happiness... and don't forget that I loved you."

Brigadistas in Benicassim - Letter to editor of *El País* from Francesc Colomer, former mayor of Benicassim, spokesperson for the Socialist Party of Valencia and member of the regional parliament, 14 November 2004.

The article by Susana Fortes on the International Brigades and Benicassim in the Saturday, 13 November issue of *El País* has motivated me to write the present letter. Simply put, the article is an example of beauty and justice. The touching description of the enormous gesture of solidarity which were the International Brigades is inspired with what is best

in the human race. I doubt that in the history of nations there is another example of greater altruism and brotherhood. Benicassim, my town, was one of the defining scenes of the presence of these volunteers from around the world. We were a hospital for the wounded, a rearguard of health. We could not have been anything else as our ancestral vocation is just that: to protect, to offer refuge and hospitality. The emblematic Voramar Hotel, the villas of today's promenade, the very cemetery, an

They were the last romantics. They gave their all in the last war to be lost, painfully, desperately and with an unquestionable elegance of heart . . .

inescapable final resting place for some. All of this represents a scenery unquestionably linked to the brigadistas.

This fact is recognized in numerous theses, publications and even novels by universal authors. Benicassim treasures this legacy. We are entitled to this honor. Last summer, I was fortunate to be the mayor who offered the plaque in homage to the brigadistas. Petitioned by the honorable association González Chermà, our government accepted to dignify the memory of those who were condemned to the worst that can be done to a human being. They were erased from history. Following the war, fascism desecrated their graves and deposited their remains in an unregistered and anonymous ossuary.

This summer, we only hung a plaque to remember that there rest nameless human beings. People who came to die for our freedoms and for the constitutional legality of the moment. After the motion of censure of July 29, another memoricidal government withdrew the plaque while wielding spurious arguments about the two sides, the offended sensibilities, etc. They have understood nothing. We spoke of feelings and

peace, but the present government only saw ghosts and struck out unmercifully against the truth. They must return the dignity of the brigadistas. It continues to be our dignity of today.

Letter to editor of *El País* from Ana Perez, chair of the Association of Friends of the International Brigades, Madrid, December 12, 2004

The mayor of Benicassim, Manuel Llorca, has withdrawn a plaque in memory of the international brigade

members whose remains are buried there. Once again, there have been appeals to the often mentioned offended sensibilities in order to repeat the habitual practices of Francoism: the insensitive elimination of any sign of freedom and defense of democracy. It seems superfluous to point out that a democratic city government, of whatever political color, would seek its historical antecedents precisely in those who fought in favor of a constitutional mandate.

The volunteers for liberty were guided by an ideal: to defend freedom and the democratic legality of the Spanish people and to fight the fascism which threatened to spread over Europe and provoke a new world war. They risked their lives in this undertaking and many were lost. Through altruism and generosity they constituted a singular example of international solidarity in defense of the best values of humanity.

There are few brigadistas alive today. For each and every one of them, as for their comrades, Spain is a second homeland which they carry in their hearts. In turn, the memory of Spanish democracy, the grateful and

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Memory is Lazy: The Making of a Film

By Katie Halper

I first heard about the Valley of the Fallen (El Valle de los Caidos), Franco's monument to the Spanish Civil War, when I was in high school. A college friend, studying abroad in Madrid, sent me an e-mail describing a country house he had visited in the mountains, with a view of something called the Valley of the Fallen, which, my friend said, was a monument Franco had built using the labor of Republican prisoners after the Civil War. Three years later, a sophomore in college, I came to Madrid to study. A class in Comparative European Fascism taught by Professor Justin Byrne caught my attention; it included a class trip to the Valley.

We traveled like most visitors do, by bus—first an hour-long trip from Madrid to the Escorial, the 16th century palace monastery built by Felipe II, then a short ride through the countless cypress trees that flank the Guadarrama mountains. Then suddenly it appeared on top of a mountain—the cross of the Valley of the Fallen, towering 1,000 feet into the sky—and a few minutes later we were there. The funicular up to the base of the cross had been broken for years, so we skipped the trek to the cross and followed the many visitors up a small hill to the basilica. Spanning 100 feet, it is the longest basilica in the world. And it is the only basilica of its kind, an underground church in the bowels of the mountain. The guidebook said it had taken 18 years for the Valley to be built. It said nothing about prisoners or Franco, whose tomb we saw inside, across from that of the Falange founder, Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera.

Back in Madrid, when I told people where I had gone, I was shocked by their different responses. My local host said she was happy that I was able to see this grand symbol of reconciliation and peace, which she herself had visited many times. More political Spanish friends were upset that I had even gone to the ugly “facha” (fascist) monument, which they had boy-

cotted. I was intrigued and decided to write my senior thesis for Wesleyan University about the monument.

Back in the United States, I searched for anything I could find on the Valley, but the scholarship was nearly non-existent. Spanish interest in the Francoist past and in historical memory had grown in the last decade, and there was an emerging body of sociological, historical, and journalistic work on the politics of memory, prison labor under Franco, and concentration camps in Spain. Several of these mentioned the Valley, but only Daniel Sueiro's *El Valle de los Caidos: los secretos de la cripta franquista*, published in 1976, one year after Franco's death, focused on it exclusively.

I wanted to understand why, at the start of the 21st century, the Valley was still so shrouded in confusion. I had to go back to Spain. I wanted to see official documents and statistics, but more importantly I wanted to talk to the people involved in the Valley's construction. The ALBA list-serve proved invaluable. Through it, I made contact with many knowledgeable people and learned about former political prisoners Nicolas Sanchez Alborno and Manuel Lamana, who, with the help of Paco Benet, Barbara Mailer, and Barbara Probst Solomon, successfully escaped from the Valley. Solomon led me to Marisol Benet, Paco's sister, who lives in Madrid, and historian Paul Preston, whose Madrid lecture series on Spain in the 1940's provided essential background. From the ALBA list I found the address of Lorenzo Alberca, another former political prisoner who labored at the Valley. Once I arrived in Spain, I contacted the Madrid office of The Association of Political Prisoners, who connected me to three other political prisoners who had worked on the Valley—Tario Rubio, Francisco Vera, and Nicolas Sanchez Alborno, whom I'd heard so much about.

The archival materials I was getting to see, with the help of Professors Byrne and Paloma Aguilar, confirmed

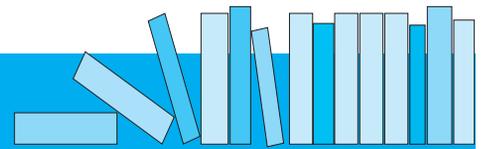
the interpretation of the Valley as a project designed to celebrate the war's victors and to punish the losers. More visits to the Valley showed me the brutal military imagery on the walls and ceiling, with a mosaic depicting not only Jesus and Mary, but also uniformed Falangistas, Carlistas, and militiamen in a trench.

How could anyone view the Valley as a symbol of peace and reconciliation? To answer this, I interviewed those who held a gentler view of the monument: Juan de Avalos, a sculptor who built the cross and the pieta on top of the basilica; two falangistas/ franquistas, and a former Franco minister. I also interviewed a group of Spanish visitors to the monument in order to see what they believed about the Valley and its history and how they got their views.

Some answers began to emerge. The notoriously pragmatic and flexible Franco presented different faces to different people at different times. He depicted prison labor in general, and at the Valley in particular, as punitive or charitable, depending on his audience. The founding edicts clearly planned the Valley to glorify the Nationalist victory, but a language of reconciliation and peace increased over time as the population who had not lived through the war grew and as the Western bloc became increasingly accepting of Franco's regime. But Franco never abandoned the belligerent tone of his earlier rhetoric, so that the opposing messages were often simultaneous. And until now, the governments since Franco's death have entered into a “pact of silence,” a tacit agreement to leave the past alone for the sake of a stable democracy, depoliticizing and sanitizing the monument as much as possible.

Today is an especially important time to consider this monument's past, present, and future. Organizations such as the Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory have been

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The Case of the Stolen Archives

Comissió de la Dignitat. The archives Franco stole from Catalonia: The campaign for their return. Lleida: Editorial Milenio, 2004.

By Andrew Lee

This book is the story of the group of heroic Catalans who, in 2002, formed the “Dignity Commission” to work for the return of the materials taken from Catalonia by Franco’s troops during the Civil War as they captured territory, people, and property. It provides the historical background of the Salamanca Archive, the history of the demands for the return of materials beginning in the late 1970s, the contemporary work of the Dignity Commission, and the international support their campaign has gotten from such luminaries as Rigoberta Menchu, Noam Chomsky, and Peter Gabriel, as well as distinguished historians of Spain such as Paul Preston.

It isn’t uncommon for a national archive to house portions of its collections in storage or in some location perhaps distant from the capital, such as the parts of the French National Archives in Roubaix near Lille. Such archives contain all manner of material, which is a part of what contributes to their being such fascinating institutions. Readers of this publication have already seen numerous articles about the formerly “secret” archives held in Moscow. Many of you also know something about the controversy over the records of the CPUSA held by the Library of Congress. But none of this holds a candle to the issues surround-

Andrew Lee, a librarian at New York University, has worked in the Salamanca Archive.

ing Archivo General de la Guerra Civil de España housed in Salamanca, the Salamanca Archive for short.

In 1938 Serrano Suñer created the National Department for the Recovery of Documents (DERD), institutionalizing in this arena activities begun a year earlier. This was the capture and analysis of information that would lead to the identification and prosecution of those who were “contrary to the National Movement.” This information was then passed to the police and military. The obvious targets of such “research” were members of Republican and leftist parties, unions, and their associated cultural and other organizations. Masons, theosophists, and spiritualists were other targets. As Franco captured an area, the DERD would sweep up materials and begin to process them. Entire libraries,

artists’ studios, any place with records or items of possible interest, would be seized. Items belonging to those supporting Franco were returned, but all records of any suspect person or organization were retained—including those dating back to the previous century. The documents the DERD acquired became the archive housed in Salamanca, with an estimated 200 tons of documents seized from Catalonia alone.

One needs to remember that this is not an archive of both sides in the Civil War; it is really a collection created for the purposes of punishment and elimination, and hence was created by violence, seizure and destruction. Multiple copies of publications were destroyed, items were not kept in any apparent systematic order, and it is not quite like any other archive I have ever worked in, either in Europe or in the United States.

The Commission is asking that

Continued on page 19

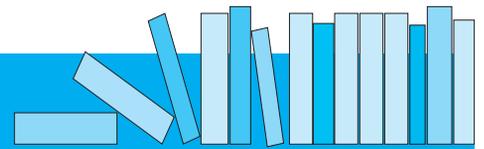
Spain’s Legacy Evaluated

“The Spanish Civil War: Ideologies, Experiences and Historical Recovery—Homage to Robert G. Colodny,” *Science & Society*, Volume 68, No. 3 (Fall 2004).

This special issue of the interdisciplinary Marxist quarterly, guest edited by Marvin Gettleman and Renate Bridenthal, begins with a lovely remembrance of Lincoln vet Robert Colodny (1915-1997), a scholar of the Spanish Civil War and an editorial board member of *Science and Society*. With a range of articles, essays, and reviews, the editors endeavor to follow in Colodny’s footsteps, emphasizing the importance of the Spanish conflict not only for its contemporaries, but also for its impact on later generations.

The scholars who contributed to this anthology include Gabriel Jackson (an abridged version of the 1999 ALBA/Bill Susman lecture), Paul Preston (“The Answer Lies in the Sewers: Captain Aguilera and the Mentality of the Francoist Officer Corps”), Helen Graham (writing on the return of Republican memory), and many U.S.-based writers whose work previously appeared in the pages of *The Volunteer*.

The variety of articles—“Asian Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War”; “Woody Guthrie’s Lost Song to Lincoln Vet Steve Nelson”; “The British Contribution to the Anti-Fascist Struggle in Spain”—speaks to the spreading interest in the war among diverse scholarly groups. ■



A Novel of Wartime Andalucía

Vedette or Conversations with the Flamenco Shadows. By Stephen Siciliano. iUniverse, 360 pp. \$21.95.

By Charles Oberndorf

Vedette or *Conversations with the Flamenco Shadows* is set in Andalucía, around Sevilla, during the days of the Second Republic and the Spanish Civil War. This self-published novel starts out strongly. “The first man I ever haunted was my father, which I suppose makes perfect sense.” Gloriella, a young girl born in a small town, has unfortunately attracted the lustful attentions of her father, who is haunted by her beauty. He calls her Vedette, a French word for star or accomplished performer, though when father says it to daughter, it has other implications. Both mother and a hypocritical priest try to wrest the girl away from the father’s possession. After a gypsy woman reads Vedette’s future, Vedette’s mother tries to save her by giving her into the care of people who might watch over her: revolutionaries.

Stolen Archives

Continued from page 18

these records be returned to their rightful owners. This book’s account of their many activities in their brief but eventful two years of existence is engaging, and at present in the news. We can all either wish them success or hope that their demands lead to improvements in the arrangement and functioning of the Archive in Salamanca.

(As *The Volunteer* prepares for publication, the Spanish government has approved the return of the Catalonia archives to the Catalan government. See page 8.) ■

Thus begins Vedette’s travels in a Bildungsroman with a touch of the picaresque. Vedette learns of the wider world and the limits of men while with revolutionaries. She lives near the Parque de María Luisa and learns to sing in Sevilla. Just after the fascist uprising in 1936, she helps start a utopian town, one that attempts to bring the benefits of free love and animal liberation (some of these utopian scenes are insufferable—imagine, for instance, rural Andalusian men giving up the hunting of rabbits). At the end of the war she copes with the terrible changes brought about by the new government.

According to the novel’s bibliography, Siciliano lived four years in Andalucía, and he clearly loves the region, the people, the culture. The novel is peppered with Spanish proverbs and flavored with descriptions that can only be written by a writer who has lived in the south of Spain. Especially in the first section, there is a pleasant charm in the writing.

Siciliano’s love of Andalucía and of his main character is both a blessing and a curse. As a writer, he’s eager to introduce us to culture and history. Apprentice writers are often advised to write of characters who are at the heart of things; there are great challenges to writing of a protagonist who is more witness than participant. Vedette often hears of major events or she is on the sidelines as a witness. Even when Vedette stands at the center of an event, the first-person narrator will explain more than she dramatizes. I found myself yearning for more shape to the story, for the writer to have a greater sense of how story is often built around how things go wrong, not about how things just happen.

If you go to www.iUniverse.com, you can read the opening of *Vedette*. If

the writing charms you, if you enjoy a novel with a leisurely pace, if you yearn for a trip to southern Spain but can’t afford the ticket (or don’t want to deal with all the tourists), then *Vedette*, which you can order at your local bookstore or on the internet, might be the remedy. ■

Charles Oberndorf is a novelist and English teacher who lives in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Benicassim

Continued from page 16

emotional memory of the internationals has remained alive through the difficult years of dictatorship. This was manifest when in 1995 the Parliament unanimously conferred Spanish nationality on the international brigade veterans and also during the impressive homage which was held in all of Spain in 1996 at the 60th anniversary of their arrival in our country. The city government of Benicassim joined in this celebration. Since then, brigadistas have continued to return to Spain as often as possible, for other anniversaries or simply driven by a desire to revisit this land which they love and which is theirs.

The withdrawal of the plaque from the cemetery of Benicassim is an act which produces dishonor and shame because in the memory of the brigadistas, Benicassim, and its hospital, is a place of recovery, of health and of refuge in the midst of the horror of war. Now, some want to eliminate the plaque, an external sign of their presence.

We wish to manifest our rejection of this miserly act, but also our profound conviction that the International Brigades will continue to be an indelible part of the democratic memory of the Spanish people. Our association will continue to labor for that goal. ■

Added to Memory's Roster



**Bob Reed
(1915-2005)**

On January 29, Bob Reed lost his last battle. Generally quiet, painfully modest, he was known and respected for years of devoted work on behalf of the poor and voiceless of Seattle. He won an "official" recognition from the mayor of Seattle on "Bob Reed Day." Among his many achievements one stood out, his key role in organizing solidarity work for beleaguered Nicaragua. Tens of thousands of people were touched and drawn in, and two fully equipped ambulances made their highly publicized way from Seattle to Managua.

No doubt, Bob became an icon in the Seattle Movement. His loss affects me personally. We first met on the "City of Barcelona" and were baptized in the Mediterranean by a fascist torpedo.

Farewell, beloved comrade.

—Abe Osheroff

**Charles A. Hall
(1914 - 2005)**

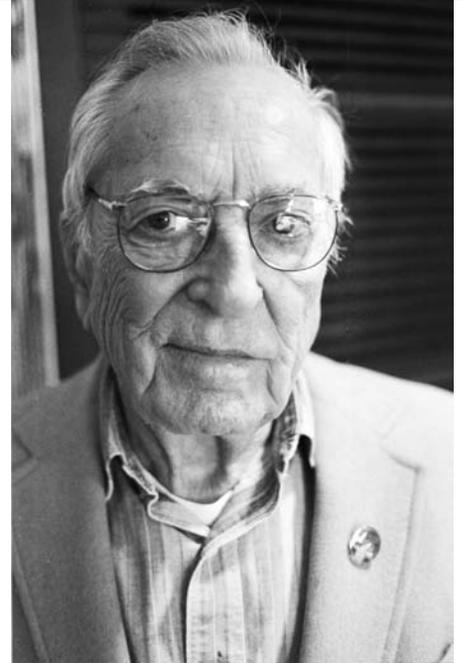
Chuck Hall, Lincoln Brigade veteran and longtime progressive activist, died in Forest Park, Illinois, on January 6, of pneumonia, following a fall that broke his pelvis. He was 90.

After a boyhood in South Dakota, Hall moved with his parents to Chicago's north side. He attended the University of Chicago, but the pressures of the Depression pushed him out of school and toward radicalism. He joined the Brigades in late 1937, sailed from New York to France, hiked across the Pyrenees into Spain, and trained at Tarazona de la Mancha. He saw his first action near Belchite in early 1938, but was captured soon after. For 13 months he was held as a P.O.W. in a converted monastery at San Pedro de Cardenas.

He returned to the U.S. following a prisoner exchange in April 1939. He met Yolanda (Bobby) Farkas at Camp Lincoln, a progressive labor resort; they married in 1940. After Pearl Harbor, Hall volunteered for the U.S. Army to "finish the job" against the spread of fascism. He fought for four years in the Pacific Theater, attaining the rank of captain. After World War II, Hall worked for International Harvester, in Chicago, where he was a leader of his union. Attending the Illinois Institute of Technology by night—for seven years—he earned a degree and subsequently worked as an engineer for several Chicago companies. He remained very active politically during this period, in behalf of civil rights and peace, as well as labor.

Upon retiring in 1986, Hall devoted himself more fully to causes of social justice. He founded and chaired the Chicago Friends of the Lincoln Brigade and spoke frequently at schools and community events. Last year he worked with Curie High School students who wrote and staged a dramatic presentation about the Spanish Civil War that won first place at the Illinois History Fair. (See *The Volunteer*, December 2004.)

In a 1997 interview with ALBA board member Peter Glazer, Hall addressed the question of whether he was always sure he was doing the right thing while in Spain. He



answered, "Oh always yes, I had no second thoughts ever, not even when I was in prison....It takes a tremendous amount of failure and torture and so on to make anybody change their minds, anybody who's really convinced that what they're doing is right. You have contempt for your enemy, total contempt. I never felt any kind of compassion...because I felt that they had to know what they were doing." To those who knew him, it was a striking comment from a humble, gentle man.

"Chuck Hall was part of an important era," said noted Chicago author Studs Terkel. "Now when we are suffering from a national lobotomy, he remains an example to a new generation about a commitment to democracy."

Hall leaves his wife, three children, four grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.

A celebration of the life of Charles A. Hall will be held on Sunday, April 3 at 2 p.m. in the Veterans Room, 2nd floor of the Oak Park Public Library, 834 Lake St., Oak Park, Illinois.

—Jeff Balch, Peter Glazer, and the Hall family

Memory's Roster

Clarence Forester (1915-2004)

Clarence Forester, a Finnish American who went to Spain with his brother Kenneth to defend the Republic in 1937, died in Minneapolis on December 1, 2004. He was 89.

Born in Alfred, Nebraska, Forester served with the Regiment de Tren (transportation) and at the Albacete Auto Parc unit. He later joined the U.S. Army and saw action with an artillery group from Normandy to Germany.

After World War II, Forester

worked in the machine industry. He also experienced the perils of the anti-communist Red Scare. "This is still the only country that hasn't acknowledged that it was the correct thing to do to fight fascism in Spain," he said just a few years ago.

Forester shared the pleasure of visiting Spain in 1996, when the Spanish government offered citizenship to the veterans of the International Brigades.

He donated his war mementos to the Minnesota Historical Society's Radicalism Project.

He was buried at the Finnish Cemetery in Cokato, Minnesota.

Letters

Continued from page 2

was kidnapped from a Barcelona jail, and later tortured and killed by order of Stalin, neither he nor Trotsky considered him a "Trotskyite." But he was the main theoretician of the anti-Stalinist POUM and he had been, until December 1936, the Justice Minister in the autonomous Popular Front Catalan government.

After his death, and the false claims that he had been a fascist, collaborated with the Nazis, etc., the British Labor Party, the French Socialists, and numerous left labor organizations in Europe sent delegations to Barcelona to ask the Negrín government what had happened to Nin. The persons they met with were forced to admit that they could not show the delegations the privately controlled communist prisons. Simeon Vidarte, moderate socialist and a frequent Spanish delegate to international labor conferences, tells in his memoirs how, after the Nin affair and the similar disappearance of a young journalist, Marc Rein, whose father had been a prominent Menshevik, he quietly advised European friends not to send to Spain persons who might be thought of as enemies of Stalin. Somehow I thought

that the combination of parliamentary and trade union delegations, the ashamed embarrassment of the Republican government, and the intense press controversy (later analyzed by George Orwell in the most widely-read single work concerning the Civil War) deserved the term "international scandal."

Gabriel Jackson
Barcelona, Spain

Dear Editor:

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has memories or information of any sort about Lisa Gavric (born Elisabeth Bechmann), who was a nurse at Hospital Casa Roja, Murcia. She was a very good friend of my father, Dr. Sidney Vogel, who worked at the same hospital. I have learned the outline of Lisa Gavric's life (Austrian, 1907-1974; Spain, 1936-39; active in France after Spain; in the Ravensbruck concentration camp; in Yugoslavia after the war). But I would very much appreciate more detailed information and especially any personal recollections.

Thank you.
Lise Vogel
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Brooklyn, NY 11215
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Lazy memory

Continued from page 17

videotaping interviews with people who suffered under Franco. They have recovered from mass graves 300 of the estimated 30,000 "disappeared." The Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), in a sharp departure from the conservative Partido Popular it replaced, has decided to take an active role in confronting the symbols and legacy of the Franco regime. The PSOE, led by Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, has created a commission to determine how to compensate the victims of Franco. Zapatero has approved plans to remove from public places all remaining symbols of Franco and his regime. The present

La Memoria Vaga (Memory is Lazy) will be screened April 19 at NYU's King Juan Carlos I Center, 53 Washington Square South.

government has also agreed to consider proposals to turn the Valley of the Fallen into a place "that serves to denounce Francoism rather than praise it."

My senior thesis allowed me to formulate a perspective on the monument, and ALBA's generous award of the George Watt Prize for the thesis helped me to make a documentary film on the Valley. With additional support from Wesleyan University's Davenport Study Grant and the William Lankford Memorial Fund, *La Memoria es Vaga (Memory is Lazy)* is now completed and screening at festivals. In my film, the builders of the monument tell the story that few know—of political prisoners from the losing side forced to build a monument celebrating their defeat—as they break a silence that has hidden the truth for too long. For more information on *La Memoria es Vaga*, contact Katie Halper at khalper@gmail.com.





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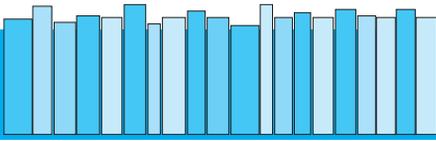
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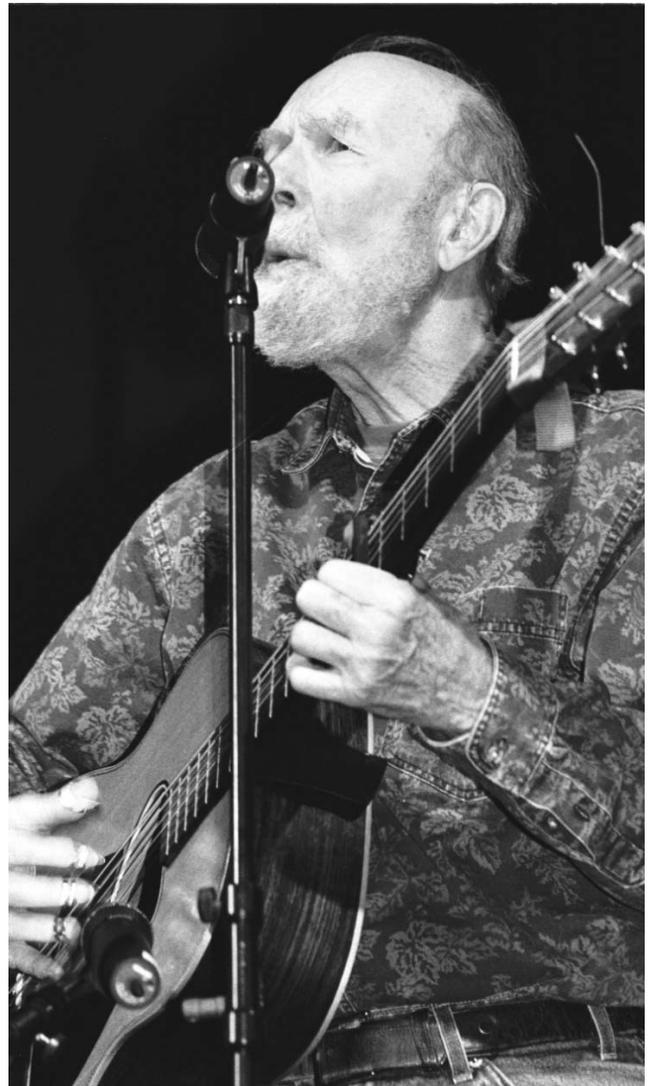
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Pete Seeger. Photo by Richard Bermack.

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