

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 2002

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Dear Editor,

Just re-reading Paul Preston's comments in the September 2001 *Volunteer*, some items need comment. For one thing, without knowing the exact words to which he was referring, I can assure him that scholarly "debate" is no stranger to "such" words as he received, especially when political or theological implications are involved. Here, they are both.

Second, research may well be expected to enable one to understand various sides of various arguments, but not to "see," to accept, all of them. For many, the years of research (or "study") are simply used to reinforce the initial bias.

"They were first in the field in a war which would not end until 1945." Wrong. It did not end in 1945. It is still going on. The dismemberment and occupation of Yugoslavia is one obvious evidence. The U.S. military brass, along with those of Britain and France, was rooting for Hitler. They kept it up until Pearl Harbor Day, and the history of the world since 1944 is evidence that they haven't changed since.

Clifton Amsbury
Richmond, California

Dear Volunteer:

I am a Spanish photographer working since 5 years ago in a project about the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. In 1998 I assisted in NY to the annual convention. There I took a picture of a woman (ALB veteran) called Marion Seborer (Celia). I am trying to get some information about her. If you can help me please contact me at:

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Dear Editor:

I am starting a little project on Paul Patrick Rogers, a U.S. Hispanist who taught Spanish literature at Oberlin College from 1929 to 1966, and who spent about a month in Spain in the summer of 1937. He kept a notebook/diary of his experiences in Spain, which is currently held with most of his other papers at the University of Texas in Austin. After the war, Rogers kept in close contact with several SCW exiles in Mexico (Max Aub, among others). In the 1970s he organized an exhibit on the SCW at UT Austin, where he moved after retiring from Oberlin. Rogers donated most of his SCW material to UT, though he left some 40 SCW pam-

Correction

In the photo captions of the School of the Americas Watch protests in the last issue, Bay Area Associate Ray McGrath was given a different first name. Sorry.

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DEAR READERS:

Rising costs of publication oblige us to reduce the number of complimentary subscriptions to *The Volunteer*. Starting with the Summer 2002 issue, ALBA Associates, Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and their immediate families, and contributors to ALBA and VALB will continue to receive their subscriptions. Others readers, together with libraries and other organizations, should become ALBA Associates. For \$25, you will receive an annual subscription to *The Volunteer*, as well as discounts on books and videos, plus the satisfaction of supporting our diverse non-profit activities. Send your check to ALBA, Room 227, 799 Broadway, New York, NY 10003.

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phlets here at Oberlin, too. If anyone has ever come across P.P. Rogers in other sources on the SCW, ALB, or anything related, I'd be very grateful if you could let me know.

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Bay Area Post Commander Dave Smith addresses an enthusiastic crowd at the Bay Area Reunion.

Bay Area Honors Vets & “What They Stood For”

Sixty-five years, almost to the day, after David Smith first heard the whizz of bullets in the Jarama Valley, he summoned the surviving west coast vets to the stage at the annual reunion to receive a thunderous applause from their friends, families, and supporters. Only a dozen were present at the Calvin Simmons Theater in Oakland, California, on February 24 to answer the call. They ranged in age from young 86-year-olds like Hank Rubin and Milt Wolff to the oldest, 91-year-old Marion Noble. The contingent included two women volunteers, Hilda Roberts, a nurse, and Virginia Malbin, a social worker who assisted Spanish refugee children.

Asked to speak individually to the cheering audience, the vets made up for their diminishing numbers with the power of their principles. Nearly all of them warned of the importance of remaining vigilant against fascist

tendencies in our government. Some spoke critically of current Washington policies in the so-called war against terrorism, and all expressed great pride in having volunteered to serve in Spain during their youth.

The day's featured speaker was Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of the School of the Americas Watch, an organization that protests the U.S. Army's training center for Latin American soldiers at Fort Benning, Georgia. Expressing gratitude for the support of the Lincoln vets, he described the terrorist results of the center's teachings and vowed to increase pressure during this year to win the closing of the school. His indictment of government terrorism resonated with the earlier words of the vets.

Martha Olson Jarocki, a member of the local executive committee, brought news of the campaign to erect a monument honoring the volunteers of the

Lincoln Brigade at the Embarcadero in San Francisco, just across from the Ferry Building, a site literally at the city's front door. With approval by municipal and port agencies already given, the monument is now awaiting completion of a design competition among three west coast artists. After formal approval of a specific design,

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Charlotte Corbin, widow of vet Rudy Corbin, and Vet Hilda Roberts

SF Reunion

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which is expected to occur this spring, construction may begin later this year.

Finally, performers from the San Francisco Mime Troupe presented another powerful musical program, written by ALBA's Peter Glazer and the troupe's musical director, Bruce Barthol, titled "What They Stood For." As in past years, the audience cheered, sang, and wept, sometimes all three at once. The consensus: "The best program ever!" The same production will highlight the vets' reunion in New York on April 28. ■



Vet Anthony Toney with cousin Albert and daughter Anita.



(seated l-r) VALB associates Robbie Newman and Peter Glazer, producer of "What They Stood For," Bobby Hall, wife of Vet Chuck Hall, and their granddaughter (standing)

NY 66th Anniversary Reunion Caps Weekend to Honor the Vets

The 66th anniversary weekend in New York starts with a special guided tour through *Ralph Fasanella's America*, a new traveling art exhibit at the New York Historical Society on Friday, April 26, at 2:30 p.m. Paul D'Ambrosio, curator of the show and author of the illustrated book that accompanies it, will lead visitors through Lincoln vet Fasanella's vividly colorful artist's view of the world. There's a special reduced admission price (\$3) for ALBA guests.

ALBA is co-sponsoring, on Friday, April 26, at 5:30 p.m., a mini-conference on "Women in the Spanish Civil War" with NYU's King Juan Carlos Center. Julia Newman, producer/director of *Into the Fire; American Women in the Spanish Civil War*, a new hour-long documentary, will preview her new film. Afterward, two scholars, Shirley Mangini (ALBA board member from California State University, Long Beach) and Gina Herrmann (Spanish professor at Colby College) will discuss Spanish women and their role in the war. A wine and cheese reception will follow.

The 66th Annual Reunion, titled "New York and the World," will be held at the Fashion Institute of Technology's Haft Auditorium, on Sunday, April 28, at 1:30 p.m. The program features Juan Gonzalez, columnist for *The New York Daily News*, and author of *Harvest of Empire*. The San Francisco Mime Troupe will perform a show newly created by Peter Glazer and Bruce Barthol, featuring songs and quotes from the time. Henry Foner will host the affair. Refreshments will follow the show.

FOR TICKET INFORMATION: 212-674-5552

Vets Celebrate 65th Anniversary in Madrid

By Robert Coale

Five years after the unforgettable “homenaje” of 1996, the Asociación de Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales again summoned volunteers from around the globe. From October 26 to 29, more than 50 brigadistas and 250 friends from 20 countries were reunited in Madrid for a 65th anniversary celebration.

The program of events included official receptions and visits to places of historic interest. The first day began with a local choral concert in the shade of the original IB headquarters at Arganda, followed by a trip to overlook the Jarama Valley, with stops at the Arganda bridge and the IB monument in Rivas. It ended with a wonderful roast lamb dinner in Morata de Tajuña, not too far, in fact, from the front line trenches of 1937. Veterans who saw action there were pleased to learn of the project to turn a portion of the battlefield into a historical park. Other commemorative excursions on succeeding days included a guided tour of Picasso’s “Guernica” and a wreath laying at the Fuencarral cemetery, where some of the first IB casualties were buried in 1936.

The schedule was not, however, exclusively for solemnities. On the lighter side, the international visitors were hosted in locales around Madrid, including the headquarters of the Spanish Socialist Party, a luncheon at the Comisiones Obreras, and a reception with the UGT to see the Amigos’ traveling exhibit on the history and legacy of the brigades. The most formal affair was the visit on October 29 to the Regional Assembly of Madrid, during which the speaker of the majority party, none other than the conservative Partido Popular, officially thanked the brigadistas for their generous example in the defense of freedom. In addition, Ana Perez, president of the Amigos, was offered a token of appreciation for having organized the events. After the reception in the regional parliament, veterans and friends were taken to the last official event of the long weekend, a



VALB’s Lou Gordon, center, stands with Austrian vet and his daughter at the Madrid reunion.

luncheon hosted by the Spanish Communist Party. During the several courses and many bottles of Spanish wine, speakers, including the secretary general of the Spanish CP, honored the veterans and toasted their exploits.

On Sunday evening, the Monumental Theater in downtown Madrid was the site of a concert in honor of the brigadistas. Several singer-songwriters, actors, a local choir and even sons and friends of the Irish contingent performed. The evening ended with all Internationals on stage to the applause of an enthusiastic crowd. Students of the Spanish Civil War know how fitting a location this was for a concert, as many a “homenaje” to the Volunteers for Liberty were held within those very walls during the war.

Friends of the Lincolns and veterans alike know that the official program is only part of the enjoyment. Over the weekend, after the events of each day, two of the liveliest places were the hotel lobby and the restaurant, where vets enjoyed catching up with acquaintances from other countries, rehashing old stories and learning new ones. After dinner or

lunch, there were many special reunions.

Veteran Lou Gordon made the most emotional discovery. During World War II, Lou’s unit liberated the Nazi death camp of Dachau. Little did he suspect upon heading to Madrid that he would meet two family members of Internationals who were liberated that day. An Austrian woman, born two years following her father’s liberation, enthusiastically told everyone that were it not for Lou, she never would have been born. Spanish IB veteran Matias Arranz told of surviving the infamous camp of Mauthausen, where many inmates were Spanish republicans. These examples illustrate that the struggle of Internationals and Spaniards alike did not end in 1939, but continued until fascism was defeated.

Unlike scores of vets from around the globe who have attended events in democratic Spain for some 20 years, Lincoln vet Max Shufer returned for the first time since leaving the Francoist prisoner of war camp at San Pedro in 1939. Max was glad to see

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Canada Unveils Mon

**By Jules Paivio, R.L. Louto,
Sharon Skup**

On a sunny, mild morning, October 20, 2001, over 300 people gathered in Canada's national capital in Ottawa to honor the Canadian veterans of the International Brigades and to unveil a memorial monument to the Canadian volunteers of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion of the International Brigades of the Republican Army of Spain.

The day's ceremonies were introduced by Raymonde Falco, member of parliament for Laval West in Montréal, whose father was a brigadista in the Polish Battalion and then went to fight in the Resistance in France. Canada's Governor General, Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, spoke at length without notes, expressing a genuine affection and admiration for the first Canadians to fight fascism. She had met the Mac-Paps when there were 100 alive. Now there are only 14, and only three were able to attend. Spain's ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Jose Cuenca Ayana, saluted the Mac-Paps in three languages.

Jules Paivio, Mac-Pap veteran and President of the Association of Veterans and Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, spoke eloquently, telling about the history of the Mac-Paps and their motives in going to war in a far-off land. Especially poignant was his good-bye as a 19-year-old lad to his parents. Jules' father, Aku Paivio, a well-known Finnish Canadian poet, wrote a poem to "My Son in Spain." Here is an excerpt:

A hard firm handshake, yet
You disappear into the wintry darkness
I slowly into the cabin stagger,
Such contradictory emotion seethe
through me
Now depressing me, then again
such elation.
Pride in a son, who does not fear
Who wants to fight for right.
That feeling strengthens, inspires me.
A son's loss, a life so young...

Jules received a thunderous standing ovation. Then, in this United Nations' Year of the Volunteer, he officially donated the monument to Marcel Beaudry, Chairman of the National Capital Commission, who accepted the donation. The NCC will maintain the monument in perpetuity for the people of Canada. Jules and the Governor General proceeded to lay a wreath on the monument and then families and friends placed flowers at the site. Everyone was invited to the reception program at the nearby Canada and the World Pavilion, where greetings were read or spoken by other organizations and individuals across Canada, Spain, and Britain, including Moe Fishman of VALB, the National Democratic Party of Canada, the National Association of Ukrainian Canadians, the Finnish Canadians of Canada, the Workers Benevolent Fund, the Communist Party of Canada, and others.

The monument was designed by Oryst Sawchuk, a Sudbury architect and artist. It contains a five-meter-high sheet of corten steel out of which has been cut a silhouetted figure of a

young man, or Prometheus, raising his clenched fist toward a cut-out Spanish sun. It is mounted on a concrete pedestal bearing a memorial plaque, which reads:

"The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (The Mac-Paps) Canadian Volunteers of the International Brigades, Spain, 1936-1939 From 1936 to 1939, 1,546 Canadians left families, jobs and country to help the Spanish people defend democracy against the rise of fascism. As part of the legendary International Brigades, a world-wide volunteer force from fifty-three countries, the Canadians were organized into the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. It was named after the leaders of the 1837 rebellions against injustice in Upper and Lower Canada. Despite suffering heavy losses, many of the survivors went on to continue the fight by serving in the Canadian armed forces in WWII."

In their Promethean struggle for liberty, democracy and social justice, the Mac-Paps fought courageously for their ideals without thought of reward or fame.

Canadian Vets Back Monument

The dedication of the Spanish Civil War Monument in Ottawa on October 21 ignored the legal prohibition against the 1,500 soldiers who made their way to Europe to fight on the Government side in the Spanish Civil War. In 1937, Prime Minister Mackenzie King had forced passage of the Foreign Enlistment Act that made it a criminal offense for any Canadian to fight for a country "unfriendly" to Canada. More than half of these brave volunteers never returned to Canada. Those that did were not prosecuted because Justice Minister Ernest Lapointe stated that it was impossible to determine which side was "unfriendly" to Canadians.

As Chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations (39 organizations) I was proud to stand beside Governor General Adrienne Clarkson at the unveiling Saturday. There were no Government officials on hand, except National Capital Commission Chairman Marcel Beaudry, who authorized permanent use of the Green Island Park Site. The important point is that the Mac-Paps (who never received a penny in pension or allowances) now have their recognition. Many did re-enlist in the Canadian Forces in the Second World War.

Sincerely,
Cliff Chadderton, CC, O.Ont., OStJ, CLJ, CAE, DCL, LLD
Chairman, National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada

ument to Mac-Paps

This monument was made possible by the generous donations of the Canadian people through the Association of Veterans and Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.

The corten steel, shaped like the jagged Pyrenees and with cut-out figures, will take on a permanent red patina symbolizing the blood that was spilled in the conflict and the red soil of Spain. Sunlight or lamppost light shines through the cut-out figure and attracts attention. The use of laurel bushes and olive trees in the landscaping of the site continues the connection with Spain, where so many of the volunteers lie buried, as well as providing a sheltered spot with two rock benches for contemplation and remembrance.

Adjacent to the monument is a curving memorial wall containing 54 stainless steel panels on which have been inscribed the names of the 1,546 Canadian volunteers. They came from all walks of life, religions, political persuasions and ethnic groups, leaving their families, jobs, work camps and country. They fought courageously though suffering heavy losses.

The Mac-Pap Battalion was officially formed in 1937 when there were enough Canadians to form a battalion. Other Canadians served in other brigades and in the transportation, communication and medical corps, including Dr. Norman Bethune. Bethune contributed the new idea of treating the wounded near the front, using mobile blood transfusions, and then sending stabilized wounded back to hospitals, which enormously increased the survival rate. The battalion was named after William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis Joseph Papineau, leaders of the 1837 rebellion against autocratic government in Upper and Lower Canada. Many who returned to Canada would continue the fight into World War II by joining the Canadian armed forces, even though they were on a government blacklist.



Running in a band along the top of the memorial wall is an excerpt from the speech given by Dolores Ibarruri—La Pasionaria—to the assembled Brigadistas in Barcelona in October 1938 as the International Brigades were being disbanded: “You can go proudly. You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of democracy, solidarity and universality. We shall not forget you, and when the olive tree of peace puts forth its leaves again . . . come back!

And all of you will find the love and gratitude of the whole Spanish people who, now and in the future, will cry out with all their hearts: ‘Long live the heroes of the International Brigades.’....”

The Department of Defense/ Department of Veterans Affairs has not recognized the Mac-Pap volunteers with veterans’ status as the government of France has done. This

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Reunion

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that Spain had finally been given the opportunity to develop economically and politically.

Following the successful four days of events in Madrid, veterans and friends headed off in several directions. The main body of Lincoln veterans journeyed to Barcelona, where they were hosted by the newly established branch of the Amigos. A member of the Catalanian Parliament from the Left Republican Party greeted and addressed them. They participated in a ceremony at the David and Goliath statue dedicated to the IB and were welcomed by the trade unions. Hundreds of students attended a lecture at the University of Barcelona, where vets had a chance to answer their many questions and speak with them directly. Harry Fisher made a separate visit to Albacete at the invitation of the Spanish publisher of his book, *Comrades*. The book was presented to the public for the first time and some 200 were sold at this event. Others headed north to Burgos or to Asturias,

where the city of Gijon inaugurated a monument to the IB during their anniversary celebrations of the October revolution of 1934.

Another contingent of visitors, both brigadistas and scholars, went to Albacete to attend the 2nd International Forum on the Brigades organized by the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha and the Amigos. During the three-day conference, many subjects were discussed, including the omnipresent debates on the role of the Comintern, the fighting power of the Brigades, surveys of IB documentaries, the role of the Interbrigade press, and veterans' memoirs. The culminating point came on the last day of the conference, when Spanish MPs discussed the place of the IB in the current political debate. The event was originally planned to include all major parties, but the representatives from the largest opposition party, the Socialist Party, as well as the ruling Popular

Party, cancelled at the last minute. By contrast, the minority parties, United Left, Catalans and Basque Nationalists, were eager to pay tribute. In fact, the most articulate defense of democratic freedoms came when Iñaki Anasagasti, speaker of the Basque Nationalist Party, calmly answered neo-fascist provocateurs in the audience. Parallel to the forum, the municipal museum hosted a collection of rare IB photographs culled from the Amigos-sponsored archive and university holdings.

Articles about these various events appeared in many Spanish newspapers, including *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Razon*, *La Verdad*, *La Tribuna*, *Nueva España*, and *El Periodico de Catalonia*, as well as on TV and radio. ■

Robert Coale teaches Spanish at the University of Jacksonville in Florida. Moe Fishman contributed to this story.

Canada

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placing of a monument in the nation's capital is as far as it will go. (This is the first monument placed in a nation's capital.) There is also a plaque from Canada's Federal Ministry of Heritage on the Toronto monument.

This monument will help serve as an example to all that ordinary people can stand up for democracy, freedom, and social justice in the face of fascism. Our heartfelt thanks to all who supported this endeavor, whether as volunteers or through donations. All donations were from the people and non-governmental organizations and businesses.. ■

The authors are members of the Association of Veterans and Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion

N.H. Monument Fight Continues

Following last year's successful drive to disallow the mounting of a plaque honoring the New Hampshire volunteers who fought in the Spanish Civil War from the State House walls on grounds that members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade were un-American, a group of legislators has sponsored a bill that would prohibit the plaque from appearing on any piece of state property and has targeted any groups they missed from having a similar opportunity.

On February 5, the State-Federal Relations and Veterans Affairs Committee of the N.H. House of Representatives heard testimony on Rep. Russell Albert's House Bill 1444, which would prohibit "the commemoration on public property of any nation, group or individual who takes up arms against the United States' policies, unless such a commemoration is permitted by a two-thirds vote in the House and Senate." Although no vote was taken on the bill, it was assigned to a subcommittee for further study. Privately, Albert expressed doubts about the bill's chances once it became known that committee Democrats strongly oppose the bill and a number of Republicans do not see a need for the legislation.

Senator Burt Cohen, sponsor of the move to honor the Lincoln vets at the State House last year, noted, "This bill would prohibit us from honoring those who fought 'prematurely' against American slavery policy." During the plaque flap last year, Representative Albert said, "I think Cohen and his plaque should be flown over Russia and dropped from 20,000 feet without a parachute." The plaque, meanwhile, remains locked up in a State House vault.

The Comintern and the International Brigades

By Rémi Skoutelsky
Translated by Marie-Joèle Ingalls

In his movie about the West, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, John Ford has one of his characters, a journalist, say: "Out West, when the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Unfortunately, in presenting the history of the International Brigades, legend, whether heroic or sinister, has quite often been presented as fact.

On the communist side, legend has it that the Comintern did not take part in the creation of the International Brigades. For a long time, their birth was presented as spontaneous and autonomous.

On the Franco side, the first order of business was proving that the International Brigades had preceded intervention by Italy and Germany. This myth transformed the call for help to Hitler and Mussolini into an act of legitimate self defense, aimed at thwarting foreign communist intervention. Thus was born the legend of a meeting between the Comintern and the Profintern, supposedly held in Prague on July 26, 1936—a week after the generals' putsch!—when the decision to send 5,000 volunteers to assist the Spanish Republic was allegedly made. Plagiarizing from each other, historians have spread this tale, without bothering to check if such a decision was in line with the Comintern's policies at the time, or if a meeting of its leading organizations had indeed taken place on that date. (The answer to both questions is negative.)

Sixty years have passed since the Spanish Civil War. The communist regimes have collapsed, researchers have gained access to the archives of the Eastern bloc, and today a judgmental historiography is in bloom (again). Its goal is to denounce rather than to explain. An example of such scholarship is *The Black Book of Communism*, which sports a few pages on the subject of repression in the International Brigades, quickly

thrown together using secondary works that were already several decades old.

The Comintern's own archives, as well as other sources kept in Moscow, enable us today to know much more about the role played by the Comintern in the International Brigades. My use of the term "Comintern" includes not only the lead organizations and their envoys, but also the militants belonging to the various political parties. Thus, the term encompasses the whole communist sphere. One should note, however, two caveats. First, access to the original documents is not always granted according to usual archival rules. Second, the questions Paul Preston has raised in his *Volunteer* [December 2001] article on the collections of documents that have been recently published are quite pertinent: They target not only the quality of the editorial comments accompanying the documents, but more pointedly the

selection criteria used to choose these documents for publication in the first place. In spite of these two shadowy areas, however, we can still understand the essential points.

The Creation of the International Brigades

The first foreign fighters to join the Republican side were already in Spain on July 18, 1936. They were mostly political refugees fleeing fascist countries, most notably German and Italian anarchists. Having participated in the street warfare of the first days of the fascist insurrection, they then joined the various militias set up by political parties and labor organizations to try to reconquer the territory lost to the control of the rebels. A few athletes, who had come to participate in the "Workers' Olympics" held in Barcelona, also joined the fight. Finally, in the last days of the month,

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ALBA LAUNCHES WEBSITE LEARNING MODULES

Responding to a surge of interest in ALBA's website (www.alba-valb.org)—which received over 15,000 visits during January 2002—ALBA is launching a new series of multimedia internet learning packages to encourage students and teachers to bring the story of the Lincoln Brigade and the Spanish Civil War into the classroom. These modules make use of our unique archival material, such as video interviews, photographs, posters, and unpublished letters, as well as links around the internet, to create effective learning centers about significant historical, political, and moral issues for today's students.

The first program is titled "For Your Liberty and Ours: Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War." The module, written by Peter Carroll, Fraser Ottanelli, and Israeli scholar Rajel Sperber, explores issues of anti-Semitism, the presence of Jewish volunteers in the International Brigades, and the role of Spanish Civil War veterans during World War II and the Holocaust. The website package was designed and produced by Ben Skillman and Richard Bernardy. Funding for the project came from the Estate of Isabel Johnson Hiss.

Subsequent modules will examine such topics as African Americans during the Spanish Civil War, U.S. women and Spanish women in struggle against fascism, posters and art of the Spanish Civil War, poetry and literature, legal issues, and other related topics. ALBA expects to have the second module up and running this spring.

To see the module, go to www.alba-valb.org and click on <education>.

some militants crossed the Pyrenees, ready to play an active part in the revolution, and to take up arms to defend it, as had previously occurred in other revolutions. All in all, these volunteers totaled a few hundred men and women. This does not amount to a collective phenomenon. These first recruits joined various militias and sometimes created international groups within the militias: examples were the international group of the Durruti Column, the Lenin Column of POUM, and the Thälman Century of Hans Beimler, among others.

The events in Spain had enormous repercussions on public opinion all over the world, but particularly in France. Non-intervention, even if it turned out to be relative, was resented by the partisans of the Republic as an absolute betrayal. A coalition of the Popular Front had been governing Spain for six months. A coup d'état against this legitimate form of government was all it took to identify its authors as fascists. Mussolini's intervention, as well Hitler's, which was smaller in scale but more effective, propelled the conflict into an international arena. The rebels' ideology was in the end secondary: what was really at hand here was a renewed example of Fascism's and Nazism's aggressive and expansionist objectives—following the invasion of Ethiopia and the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1935. Within the frontiers of Spain, in France, and to a lesser extent in Switzerland and in Belgium, thousands of refugees had a score to settle, some with Hitler's fanatic followers, some with Mussolini's. The events in Spain gave them a chance to fight back. A number of personal initiatives added up to a sizable collective movement; in a wave of political immigration, hundreds of militants decided to cross the Pyrenees.

In France, the MOI, or immigrants' section of the French Communist Party, applied pressure on its leaders to organize the flow of departures. Maurice Thorez, General

Secretary of the French Communist Party, obtained the Comintern's approval and authorized its militants to cross the Pyrenees. The first action of the Communist Party in regard to volunteer activity consisted in channeling and facilitating the departure of foreign militants and a few French citizens. We know today that the foreigners who fought in and around Irun were sent by the party. But at that date, we were still far away from the actual International Brigades, understood as specific fighting units organized on the spot in war, which were yet to be born.

The last step necessary for the birth of the International Brigades, as we understand them, was for the Soviet Union to recognize their usefulness. During the first weeks of the war, Stalin remained cautiously neutral. He was rather indifferent to Spanish affairs, as Antonio Elorza and Marta Bizcarrondo have clearly demonstrated in their work. His strategy at the time of "Socialism in one single country" did not include supporting a revolution in which Communists played second fiddle. Also, he did not want to damage relations with Great Britain and France, both of whom he was trying to befriend.

A crucial change occurred when the international dimension of the conflict could not be ignored any longer because of the behavior of the fascist powers. A victory for Franco would be seen as a victory for Hitler, at a time when the USSR was trying to protect itself against Hitler. Also, keeping Hitler busy in the west seemed like a good idea. Russia, as the "Motherland of Socialism," could not avoid much longer the growing movement to aid the Spanish Republic without running the risk of losing many supporters and causing serious harm to the Communist parties.

At the end of August, Stalin decided to help the Spanish Republic. It was obvious that just sending weapons and technical advisers

would not suffice. Yet the USSR did not want to appear as an *official* belligerent party in the conflict. Having the Comintern organize an army with recruits from other countries, given the ready availability of this human resource, seemed an ideal solution to Stalin.

On September 18, 1936, a meeting of the Comintern's presidium was held in Moscow. The leadership of its Executive Committee devoted one of the meetings of the presidium to the "Spanish Question." The seventh action item listed in the minutes of this meeting records the decision to "[p]roceed with the recruitment of volunteers having military experience among workers of all countries, with the purpose of sending them to Spain." *The founding act* of the International Brigades was cast at this meeting of September 18, 1936. Since by then the Comintern's Executive Committee had already been reduced to a mere ratification chamber, we can assume that the actual decision had been made earlier and higher up by leaders of the USSR's Communist Party. We know today that this decision was indeed made three weeks earlier.

After a month of negotiations with the Spanish government, about which we know very little, a base camp opened its doors at Albacete on October 14, 1936, to thousands of new arrivals. All the books report that a few days later, a delegation of volunteers met with Martínez Barrio, whose mission was to create the first Brigades of the Republican Army, in order to obtain his authorization to found the International Brigades. If this meeting actually took place, it was little more than a staging. The decision had already been made, against the advice of Largo Caballero, who wanted to see international forces dispersed among several Spanish units. Throughout the conflict, the Brigades carried, in the eyes of the

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high command of the Spanish Republican army, the stigma of being a communist force.

I do not subscribe, as must be clear by now, to the theory, however seductive it may be, according to which the International Brigades were created to “channel” the flow of volunteers already headed for Spain. No other political force in Spain had ever considered this type of structure (with the exception of the Catalan Generality, several months after the creation of the International Brigades). Also later, after the loss of momentum of the first wave of volunteers, well-orchestrated recruiting campaigns were to become necessary to provide the Brigades with fresh forces.

The Comintern Controls the International Brigades

All over the world, Communist

by the GPU, as asserted by Walter Krivitsky, and after him by César Vidal, both falling in step with other authors. After all, the GPU was a serious organization!

Once the Brigades were created, militant Communists by the hundreds, residing in the USSR but non-Russians, departed for Spain. First in line was a group of Red Army officers who had carried out many missions in Weimar Germany and in China. Among them one finds the Austro-Hungarian Maté Zalka (General Lukas in Spain), Manfred Stern (General Kléber), Deszö Fried (Colonel Blanco), the German Wilhelm Zaisser (General Gomez), and the Pole Karol Swiercewski (General Walter). With them traveled other militants who fought as simple soldiers or remained in the rear or in the medical services.

United States, contributed a larger effort relative to their total membership and influence. Finally, the Communist parties in exile, such as the German and the Italian, form a third category: the center of their activities shifts literally to Spain and the International Brigades through the participation of their main leaders—Dalheim, Ulbricht, Luigi Longo, Giuseppe Di Vittorio, just to name a few. The German Communist Party even went as far as to start its own service of “intelligence service,” controlled by Ulbricht and serving as an antenna for the NKVD. This organization is charged with identifying left-wing opponents of the Communist opponents within and outside the Brigades.

The Comintern was therefore represented on the one hand by André Marty, and on the other hand by representatives of the various Communist parties. One must also add members of the Comintern who had important missions that were unofficial rather than official, such as the Bulgarian Bielov, who commanded the Base at one time, and the French Billoux. They operated alongside Soviet military advisers, whose role should not be overemphasized.

Palmiro Togliatti, the influential Comintern’s envoy to the Spanish Communist Party from 1937 on, kept a close watch on the Brigades. He sent extremely detailed reports to Moscow, notably about the crisis experienced by these units in the summer of 1937. It is probably as a follow-up to these reports that the decision was made to send Marty back to Spain. (He had been called “home” in April.) Back in the Iberian peninsula in December, Marty remained there under Togliatti’s command. Finally, a last expression of the power of the Comintern over the Brigades is to be found in the fact that directives on the Spanish question, concrete and precise even if never applied, were stated at

Once the Brigades were created, militant Communists by the hundreds, residing in the USSR but non-Russians, departed for Spain.

parties put in place the structures needed to organize the volunteers’ passage to Republican Spain. But a Communist Party card was not a requirement to enter the International Brigades. In the largest contingent, the French one, militant Communists made up only about 50 percent of the effective force. Among the Germans, the percentage was probably a little above 80 percent. Selection criteria were rather lax. In Paris, which served as a turntable for the volunteers coming from Europe and the United States, one did not worry about the political orthodoxy of the candidates, but rather about their physical health and their ability to use a gun. Yet even in this area, loose standards seem the rule rather than the exception. Waves of deserters among French and Belgian recruits at the end of 1936 and in early 1937 show clearly that these volunteers had not been handpicked

The Communist parties also sent their representatives. One must differentiate in this framework between three different types of parties. The French Communist Party, first section of the Comintern since the demise of the German CP, delegated a few military leaders such as Vital Gayman and André Heussler, political commissar to the Brigades and graduate of the Frounzé Academy in Moscow. With the exception of André Marty, head of the International Brigades and one of seven secretaries of the Internationale who enjoyed at the time a devoted following, the only other notable French leader was François Billoux, member of the Polit Bureau, who was sent to Spain to watch over Marty and to assist him. Others followed, but, it is worth noting, only after February 1937. The Communist parties that were weak in their own countries, such as Switzerland, Belgium, and the

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the conclusion of various leadership meetings in Moscow.

Naturally, the corps of political commissars, posts all held by Communists except among Italians, represents a key element of the structure in place. The commissars' mission was to permeate the rank and file with the views of the Comintern—under the guise of the Popular Front, the exaltation of the USSR and the hatred of the POUM. But one would be wrong to equate their role to that of their counterparts in the Red Army, whose corps was founded to keep an eye on officers who had served under the czars. In Spain, the officers were often as political as the commissars themselves (even if many non-communists were to be found among them). And the truth of the matter is that, when dealing with soldiers who knew why they fought and who had in some cases crossed several frontiers to be able to fight, one did not ask the “politico” to inflame the troops with rhetoric, but to watch over their morale. And good material conditions were key to good morale. Commissars were sometimes criticized for acting as spokespersons for the troops!

This role of political commissars should not mask the importation of Stalinist ways into the Brigades. As in the Lenin School in Moscow, the denunciation of comrades was a duty, to be understood within the framework of “the pedagogy of vigilance.” The Moscow archives abound in reports written by zealous militants about one another. Fifteen years later, in Prague, the torturers of Artur London would produce such reports during questioning. But in the history of the International Brigades, one does not find traces of the individuals being forced to join the Communist Party, as reported by Jesús Hernandez after his break with Moscow.

An Efficient Machine?

All this apparatus gives the impression of a well-oiled machine, where impulses given by Moscow or its representatives acting behind the

scenes follow through on the ground. This is a false impression—improvisation and empiricism ruled at all levels.

André Marty's personality—his bursts of anger, his obsession with uncovering “spies”—contributed assuredly to the disorganization. The committee, charged with selecting political and military leaders for the various units, turned out to be a total disaster. Officers were sent into the field by the Brigades' commandants as unknown entities. Trial by fire remained the key factor that made for promotions or demotions; at the front, political allegiance lost its importance.

Vital Gayman, commandant of the

of the Albacete Base, was not even a party member.

A most interesting phenomenon in the International Brigades is the coexistence of envoys from different Communist parties. One is bound to note that they did not provide a great lesson in internationalism. Some of the directives originating in Moscow must be read between the lines: they do not reveal an infallible control of the Comintern over the functioning of the International Brigades. On the contrary, they reveal the lack of coordination and centralization that they try to remedy and overcome. For example, one year after the creation of

Trial by fire remained the key factor that made for promotions or demotions; at the front, political allegiance lost its importance.

Albacete Base, certainly does not fit the profile of the die-hard Stalinist. A functionary of the French Communist Party and former member of the Central Committee, he had twice expressed openly his opposition to the official party line and twice been demoted. A remarkable organizer, he neither put his hand in the till (a slanderous accusation still found in some works) nor spied for the benefit of the French Secret Services (an accusation thrown at him by the French Communist Party after his break with it).

Atypical as well is Comrade “Richard,” leader of the Estrémadure guerrilleros. Behind this “nom de guerre” we find the German national Arthur Illner, head of the M-Apparat, or military organization of the German Communist Party. Before joining the Brigades, “Richard” had led a group of foreign volunteers on the Aragón Front and collaborated with both the anarchists and the members of the POUM. This did not keep him from later becoming Minister of State Security in the German Democratic Republic.

“Jean Marie,” a veteran of the Foreign Legion and first commandant

the International Brigades, the Comintern's secretary was still clamoring for the leadership of the Albacete Base and the Communist Party representatives to collaborate with the Central Committee of the Spanish Communist Party. The representatives of the various Communist Parties developed a “party patriotism” and tended to harden rather than solve conflicts that arose between different national groups. In Albacete, the struggle for influence between the French and the Germans was a constant. Moreover, representatives of the Spanish Communist Party were completely absent from the organization.

In short, Comintern directives reveal the inefficiency of the committee, charged with the selection and supervision of the Brigades' political and military leaders, the heavy handedness of party representatives who yielded too much influence and played a nefarious role, and the total absence of the Spaniards. In order to remedy these problems, the main political organizations in Albacete

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were placed under the control of the Spanish Communist party (PCE). Representatives from the various Communist parties were eliminated and all foreign Communists had to join the PCE.

I did not address the issue of security services, because we have very little information about them. But at this date, nothing allows us to assert that they were more active in the International Brigades than in the rest of the army or that the NKVD had a tighter hold on them there.

In 1938, it was Moscow that decided on the withdrawal from Spain of the foreign volunteers of the International Brigades. In some quarters, this decision has been used to prove Stalin's abandoning of Spain. In truth, by this date the Brigades were little more than Spanish units led by foreign elements. And after the failure of the Ebro offensive, they were on their last legs. For example, just a quarter of the French volunteers were sent home in the fall of 1938. The other three quarters of the contingent had already been either killed or sent home for medical reasons or had deserted. In short, it was important to spare the cadres of the international Communist movement for fights yet to come.

The Comintern's Army

Do the International Brigades deserve to be called "the Comintern's Army," or "the armed forces of the NKVD," as claimed in 1996 by historian Annie Kriegel when she took a stand against granting war veteran's status to former French members of the Brigades? The leadership role of the Comintern in all the cogs and wheels of the International Brigades does not require further demonstration. But would a Comintern's army include hundreds of Italian socialists and republicans or the Spanish anarchists of the Domingo-Germinal battalion from Malaga? What about the 50 percent of the French volunteers who were not members of the Communist Party?

And if we were in presence of the "armed forces" of the NKVD, why not entrust it with the repression of Barcelona in May 1937? Or with the decollectivization in the Aragón? Finally, since Communists had total control over the provisioning of arms in Spain, why would they tolerate the systematic slaughter of their most faithful troops? In fact, the decrease in the influence of Communists in the Spanish high command and the way the International Brigades were systematically dispatched to the most dangerous parts of the front without being better equipped than the rest of the troops certainly raises questions: What was the Communists' real weight in the armed forces? How did the members of the high command, communists by conviction or by opportunism, consider the Brigades?

Stalin's tools in Spain were the Spanish Communist Party, arms sales, and the NKVD. After the battle of Madrid, the International Brigades, from a strictly Communist point of view, were important above all as an instrument of propaganda within the framework of the Popular Front strategy. In short, this is an army controlled by the Comintern and not the Comintern's army.

Let us go back to the time of the creation of the International Brigades in the fall of 1936. In the eyes of all observers, the city of Madrid was expected to fall in a matter of weeks, closely followed by the Republic. In all likelihood, preventing the fall of the Republic mattered to Stalin, but stressing the Comintern's help had to be more important to him. For this reason, the significance of the International Brigades is more symbolic than material.

Defying all expectations, Madrid resisted and held the University and at Jarama. The true organization of the International Brigades began only in 1937, when the war had become a long struggle. By then, some habits were already ingrained—personal initiative, improvisation (with varying degrees of luck), and promotion of

men according to personal merit rather than political conformity to the official party line. These habits were never broken in spite of the general climate of suspicion, of fear of spies typical of the worst manifestation of Stalinism, aggravated in this particular context by the military defeats. Why? Because of a triple contradiction. The International Brigades may have been a real army complete with its heavy apparatus, but they were still made up of politically aware volunteers. The leadership may have been Stalinist, but thousands of volunteers were not. And above all, officers and soldiers, stepping into the inferno of combat, ready to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives, living together 24 hours a day, could not be ordered around the same way they had been when their tasks were limited to gluing posters on neighborhood walls, distributing fliers, or selling newspapers on street corners, however "militarized" their organization might have been.

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Rémi Skoutelsky is the author of *L'Espoir guidait leurs pas: Les volontaires français dans les Brigades internationales, 1936-1939* [Hope Guided Their Steps: French Volunteers in the International Brigades, 1936-1939] (Paris, Grasset, 1998).

London Exhibit Presents a Battlefield of Memories

By Michael Richards

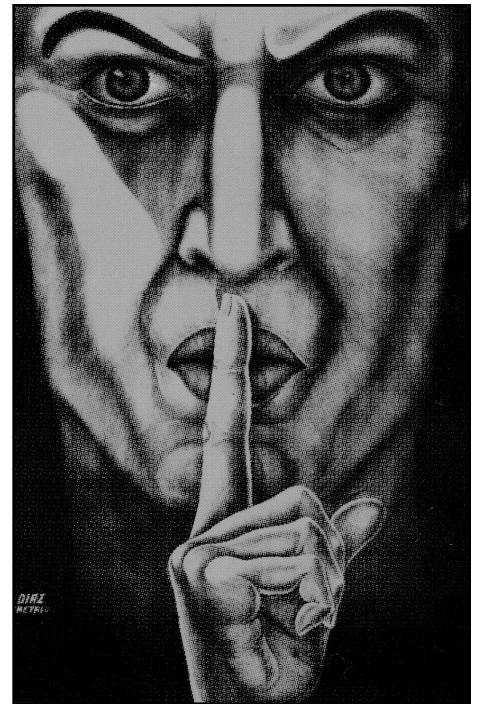
The Spanish Civil War was above all a Spanish war. But it was also a war that had universal significance. The conflict channeled the social inequalities and cultural differences of Spain in the 1930s into a brutal war without quarter. But it was also given other meanings as Spaniards and foreigners tried to make sense of the war's destruction. Spanish Republicans in particular made a moral and political appeal to individual consciences to defend democratic liberties since "pragmatic" foreign governments had deserted such principles. Thousands of volunteers answered the call and many did not return.

Inevitably, after 1939 the war became a battlefield of memories as both sides sought to draw on the conflict as a source of moral lessons. As after the war of 1914-18, ways were found to justify the losses and to

express the grief. But unlike the Great War, Spain's was an ideological war, and so it has been less easy to identify universal or religious truths that might lead to redemption of the sacrifice.

The long Cold War of the decades after 1945 froze images of the Spanish conflict as an ideological battle that had been a prelude to a more devastating war. Since 1989, historians and politicians have struggled over the post-Cold War legacy, both in Spain and abroad. One group aims to celebrate the West's victory over Communism; the other would prefer to discover more about the human origins, experience, and memories of Spain's Civil War. In this context, the inspiring exhibition, *The Spanish Civil War: Dreams and Nightmares*, currently on display until April 28, 2002, at London's Imperial War Museum, evokes the human rather than the ideological aspects.

In November 1996 Spain celebrated the visit of some 450 veterans of the International Brigades from 30 different countries to mark the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the Brigades to help defend the besieged Spanish Second Republic. The Spanish parliament, in an act of reconciliation, had voted to offer Spanish citizenship to the volunteers who had sacrificed the days of their youth and put their lives at risk in the struggle against fascism. Sadly, many Spaniards were subsequently ashamed when the Spanish conservative government of the Partido Popular, ignoring the parliament as the voice of the people, shunned the welcoming ceremony for the volunteers. This was from a political party with certain dubious links to the Francoist past that had very recently been elected in a spirit of reconciliation. The war was over, but an unpleasant aroma from the past seemed to linger in the air.



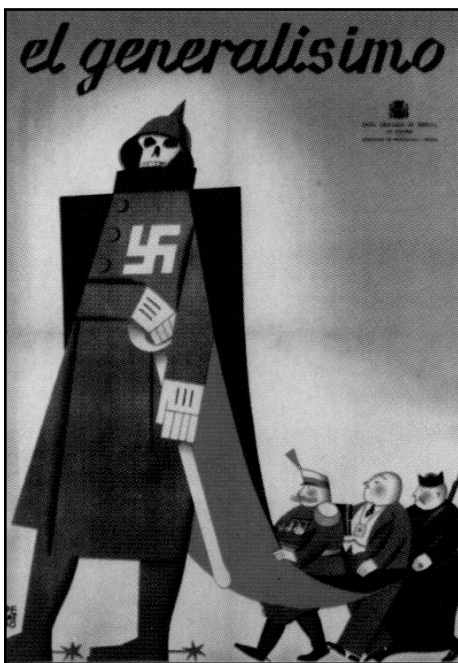
Silence (1936) Diaz Demertio

Fortunately, the autonomous Catalan parliament welcomed the octogenarian veterans with full honors in a moving ceremony to celebrate peace and freedom. In an age of pragmatism and the domination of money, thousands of Spaniards were clearly touched by the occasion, as was testified to by the crowds of people, young and old, who congregated at Valencia's North Station to greet the volunteers. The recollection of the spirit of idealism and solidarity of the 1930s produced emotional responses in acts of remembrance in several cities and many smaller communities,

Miguel Hernández's Spanish civil war poems are now available with new translations in a bilingual edition, *The Selected Poems of Miguel Hernández*, edited and translated by Ted Genoways, University of Chicago Press, \$25 cloth. Receive an ALBA discount by ordering from the ALBA Bookshelf, www.alba-valb.org.

especially in the working class suburbs of Barcelona.

Among the objects near the end of the Imperial War Museum's exhibition is an example of one of the



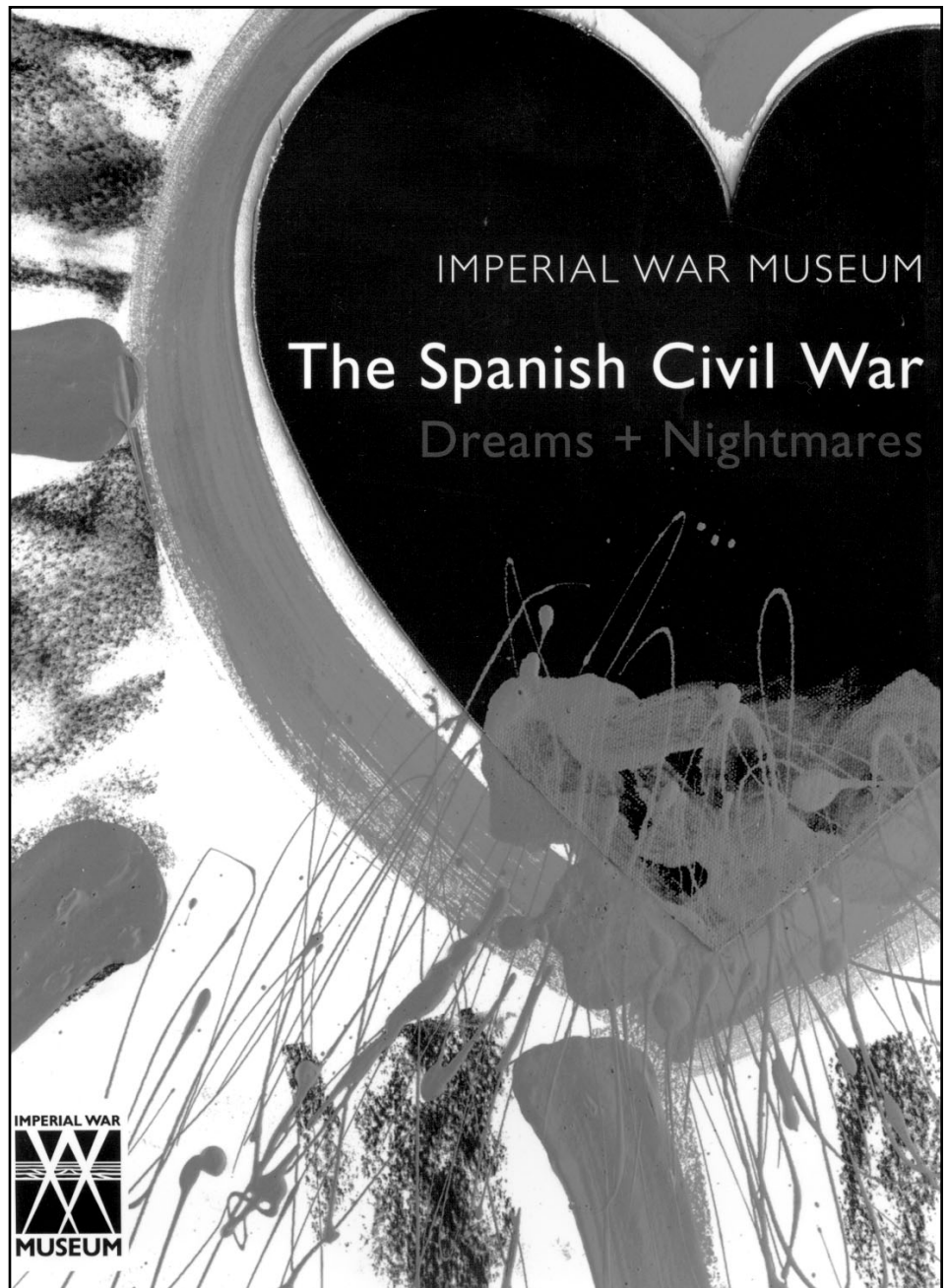
El Generalísimo, Pedrero

Spanish government's certificates granting citizenship to the brigadistas. Another of the final displays is the huge, inscribed roll-call, with the names of the hundreds of British brigaders who did not return from the war. This tangible record of sacrifice and international solidarity acts as a kind of final testimony in an exhibition that evokes sentiments that seem in many ways forgotten. But the lists of the dead, a public way of expressing the sacrifice replicated in hundreds of monuments across Europe and the United States, is balanced in this show by the intimacy of the letters, photographs, drawings, and diaries of some of the brigaders.

The extensive exhibit, curated with the assistance of historian Paul Preston, also includes significant works of art by Joan Miro, Henry Moore, Salvador Dali, Alexander Calder, Robert Motherwell, and many others. The eclectic historical artifacts include a coin salvaged from the ruins of Guernica, a campaign map used by General Franco, and drawings made by Spanish children.

The international dimension of the war is also balanced by the intimacy of photographs, including those by Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and David Seymour, and newsreel images of ordinary Spanish people, on both sides, suffering the privations and violence of the war. One of the most affecting sections of the exhibition is the display—in the form almost of a secular shrine—of writings by the Republican poet Miguel Hernández and pictures and artifacts related to his family, especially his wife, who smuggled his poems out of his fascist jail.

For most observers, it is difficult to see the volunteers in particular as anything other than heroes. Those who died were also martyrs in the sense of bearing witness through sacrifice for a great cause. The cause was justice and personal integrity and conscience as much as it was political in a narrow sense. In many cases on the left, Communism gave meaning to this cause. Equally, Catholicism gave sense to sacrifice on the right, as many of the touching artifacts in this exhibition, like the plaque to the memory of



Nationalist women, testify.

One important issue in Spain after the death of General Franco in 1975 was whether the war ought to be “alive” in people’s memories, or whether it should be “consigned” to a museum. This exhibition, as in all good historical presentations, seems to dissolve this rigid distinction between “live” memories and “dead” museum exhibits. It also usefully blurs the distinction between memory and history. It is curious, for example, how sepia-stained Republican posters from the war can be so moving. They do not really evoke the political liturgy as such, though for some this will be

Exhibition Poster, Terry Frost

powerful enough. Rather they evoke the sense of hope and faith for a collective and humane way forward. Nationalist posters, though the human tragedy was often as bad on that side as the other, can never really have this effect. Franco’s Nationalists called for the negation of humane change, and this cannot easily be expressed with inspiring slogans. ■

Michael Richards is author of *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco’s Spain, 1936-45* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Shouts From the Wall Ends Six-Year Tour

"The Spanish Civil War was fought on farms, streets, and walls," observed an art critic in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania's Morning Call, after viewing ALBA's poster exhibition Shouts From the Wall. "Good propagandists exaggerate; Spanish Civil War propagandists mythologized.... [M]ost of the heroes are colossal, most of the enemies monstrous. Figures have the sculptural and architectural might of Art Deco power plants. Shadows knife; patterns engulf; colors jolt like air-raid sirens."

The traveling exhibition, which has attracted more than 200,000 spectators since its opening at the Puffin Gallery in New York in April 1996, won reviewers' praise, inspired an outpouring of related cultural events, and brought the history of the Lincoln Brigade into 23 venues, from Boston to Seattle, Los Angeles to Tampa, Detroit to Shreveport. Its long, consecutive run of showings demonstrated a steady interest both in the art of the Spanish Civil War and in the young volunteers who left home towns around this country to fight in defense of the embattled Republic in Spain.

This spring, *Shouts* is appearing for the last time at the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. As in most of the other venues, the Kansas campus is focusing attention on the exhibit with courses, lectures, and other public programs, while local newspapers and radio spots are urging the citizenry to view this remarkable display of anti-fascist art. Kansas students will also focus on a unique website curriculum [see www.alba-valb.org] involving the case of University of Kansas student Don Henry, who was killed in Spain in 1937 and whose parents subsequently encouraged the university to investigate the "un-American" influences that led him to go to Spain. This curriculum, prepared by the National Archives, links student activities to the historical documents of the case.

Shouts From the Wall was curated

for ALBA by board members Peter Carroll and Cary Nelson. The show consists of 35 large posters and lithographs as well as a pictorial history of the Lincoln Brigade, including an original wall newspaper and extensive wall text. After the Kansas show closes in March, these items will be returned to the various lending institutions (the ALBA collection at New York University's Tamiment Library, Brandeis University, and the University of Illinois) and to Cary Nelson.

ALBA had talked of such an exhibition for years, but the final catalyst emerged when the Puffin Foundation, Ltd., presented a \$25,000 grant to launch the curatorial process. Carroll and Nelson visited Brandeis on a snowy weekend in 1995 to study all the available posters and make the selections for the show. Among their discoveries was a much folded-up poster which, when unraveled, proved to be seven feet high, showing the symbolic *Lion of Madrid* by Jose Bardasano. The extraordinary poster, which became the icon of the show, had to be restored and preserved and was welded into a sturdy traveling frame.

The curators relied on the Technical Assistance Program of the American Federation of the Arts for professional advice about mounting, framing, wall text, and shipping crates. Each poster was protected by filtered glass to screen out ultraviolet light. The AFA also handled travel arrangements and contracts with the individual venues. Besides the initial Puffin grant, funding for the exhibit came from the Charles Lawrence Keith and Clara Miller Foundation, the Program for Cultural Cooperation Between Spain's Ministry of Culture and United States' Universities, the Blue Mountain Center, and the Needmor Fund.

Wherever the show went, Lincoln veterans and ALBA lecturers followed. In almost every venue, they participated in panel discussions, film and video screenings, poetry readings,

musical performances, classroom discussions, docent tours, and other public programs. At the Meadows Museum of Art in Shreveport, Louisiana, and at the Art Museum of the University of South Florida in Tampa, for instance, teachers brought busloads of public school students to view the exhibit and introduced them to ALBA's educational programs.

Such community outreach varied considerably, but the collective effect was to introduce the story of the Lincoln Brigade to people of all ages. The programs also attracted family members of vets, Spanish refugees, local scholars, and ordinary buffs who came to see what they had only heard about before. Indeed, *Shouts* became a prototype for ALBA's other exhibitions. Many host museums and galleries, such as Tufts University's Aidekman Art Center, Lehigh's Zoellner Art Museum, Southern Illinois University's Art Museum, and Centenary College's Meadows Museum of Art, signed up for the photo show, *The Aura of the Cause*, or the children's art exhibition, *They Still Draw Pictures*.

The Shouts From the Wall Schedule:

April 20-May 25, 1996: Puffin Gallery, New York City, NY
June 22-August 16, 1996: Berkeley Arts Center, Berkeley, CA
August 30-October 13, 1996: Museum of Albuquerque, NM
November 20-December 20, 1996: Jacob Lawrence Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
January 24-March 8, 1997: Meadows Museum of Art, Shreveport, LA
March 24-May 4, 1997: J. Wayne Stark Gallery, Texas A&M, College Station, TX
June 13-August 15, 1997: The Track 16 Gallery, Bergamot Station, Santa Monica, CA

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Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left

By Cary Nelson

New York: Routledge, \$45.

By Michael Batinski

Soldiers fighting for the survival of the Spanish Republic, listening to Langston Hughes read his poetry, and applying his verses to their struggle; Hughes translating Garcia Lorca's poetry on the fascist menace; Edwin Rolfe, in turn, clipping that translation from a newspaper, keeping it, and later writing his own tribute to the martyred Spanish poet—these are the moments that quicken Cary Nelson's imagination and guide his work for *Recovering the Poetry of the American Left*. *Revolutionary Memory* is about something more than poems safely locked away in college readers; it is about poets engaged actively in the moral crises of their times; it is about poets listening to each other's shared civic concerns and making common cause; and it is about poets and audiences of readers and listeners interacting with each other and becoming a chorus of voices raised in protest against injustice. This is a book about civics and how poetry works to invigorate a healthy political consciousness—not in Spain alone, but in our times as well.

Readers of *The Volunteer* do not need to be persuaded by Nelson's argument. *Revolutionary Memory* tells us what many have known in their hearts was right, but what some very smart people have told them was false. Art and politics can, indeed, work together for each other's enrichment. The poster show *Shouts on the Wall* confirms that truth. Abe Osheroff

knew so when he made his documentary *Art in the Struggle for Freedom*.

Pick up *Revolutionary Memory* and leaf through its pages for a few moments. It shouts to be read. Bold graphic art is woven together with impassioned poems. The illustrated version of Langston Hughes' "Christ in Alabama" follows Barbara Beecher's eye-catching woodcuts of the Klan, the atom bomb, and McCarthyism, which accompanied her husband's poetry. Again you will encounter that photograph from Spain of the child killed by fascist bombs, which was used in posters to summon the conscience of the world. This time the photograph appears, as it once had, with a poem reflecting on fascism's monstrous deeds.

For too long, Nelson argues persuasively, the self-styled keepers of our cultural traditions have been working to persuade us that Left politics turned poetry into doggerel and shallow propaganda. Not so, he demonstrates convincingly. You may not need convincing, but Nelson's argument, with his impressive evidence, will invigorate heartfelt convictions with the voice of reason.

Revolutionary Memory recovers a tradition and exposes the destroyers of that tradition. For some years Nelson has been working to uncover the poets and their audiences who created a community of protest. His evidence includes poems printed on small cards to be handed out and read in union halls. He found a scrapbook compiled by a labor organizer between 1916 and 1918 and filled with political poetry. These poems sustained this Wobbly sympathizer. They echo a tradition of poets and audi-

ences stretching from the late 19th century to the 1930s and beyond. They represent a community of poets writing in response to each other. With remarkable sensitivity and passion, Nelson recovers that chorus of voices responding to the agony of the Spanish Civil War. No one, after reading his analysis of Madrid and its meaning for the poets on all sides of the Atlantic, can dismiss this poetry as shallow propaganda.

But such poetry has been dismissed as doggerel by those who would destroy that Left tradition. Nelson takes on these destroyers and leaves their arguments in rubble. Recovering memory, keeping a tradition alive, is an

SPECIAL DISCOUNT FOR READERS OF THE VOLUNTEER
To order Cary Nelson's *Revolutionary Memory*, which is published only as a \$45 hardbound book, at a 33% discount: 1) call the Routledge distributor (Taylor & Francis) at 1-800-634-7064 and tell them you have a form offering the book at the discount price of \$29.95 plus postage. Pay by credit card; or 2) FAX them the order, your address, and credit card number at 1-800-248-4724. Be sure to mention the discount!

important political achievement. New Hampshire's recent debate over the commemoration of the Lincoln Brigade confirms how the past folds into current politics.

Nelson's quarrel with his fellow academics is not just a tempest in a teapot. What is at stake is the education of our children and our prospects for the future. What has happened in the last generation is this. Teachers who would destroy the memory of the poetry of the American Left have been working to break a cultural tradition that has invigorated social consciences

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Film Review



The Devil's Backbone and the Phantoms of the Spanish Civil War

By Gina Herrmann

Guillermo del Toro's latest film, *The Devil's Backbone*, literalizes the way in which the Spanish Civil War continues to haunt the collective imagination, across nations, and across generations. Del Toro, an Austin-based Mexican director, has made a wonderful, if dark and sad, film that works by way of a reciprocal allegory: the Spanish Civil War as ghost story and the horror movie as the Spanish Civil War. The scariest ghost stories, Del Toro suggests, are the ones that have real political and social causes and consequences, while the most revealing political or war narratives expose the terror inherent in them.

The Devil's Backbone tells the story of a 10-year-old orphan, Carlos (Fernando Tielve), who is brought to an eerie orphanage in the middle of a stark, deserted Spanish landscape after his Republican father has been killed on the front lines. The orphanage is run as a boarding school by the idealistic Argentinean expatriate scientist, Dr. Cásares (Federico Luppi), and the somewhat embittered and disillusioned headmistress, Carmen (Marisa Paredes), the widow of a Loyalist poet. Carmen, the victim of an unexplained amputation, wears a prosthetic wooden leg, which endows her with a certain abject, fetishistic sexiness.

While the mysteries of the Spanish Civil War that rages outside the walls of the fortress-like orphanage remain mainly undisclosed to the young, sometimes violent boys who live there, the world on the inside provides enough secrets and threats to

keep young Carlos intrigued, if not terrified, by his new surroundings and his new companions. A huge unexploded warhead stands, piercing the ground, in the center of the school's courtyard. It functions not only as a reminder that war is the overarching context of their lives, but that human relations among the adults are reaching the point of murderous explosion. There is the tense and pathetic attraction between Dr. Cásares and Carmen, who in turn finds sexual release in the arms of a brutal former student, Jacinto. Jacinto (Eduardo Noreiga), for his part, is also sleeping with the school's sweet young cleaning woman. Jacinto attacks and intimidates the orphaned boys in part to divert attention from certain transgressions he plans to commit or already has carried out. Not only does Jacinto scheme to steal a small fortune in Republican gold reserves, which have been entrusted to Carmen, but the imagery of the film aligns him with the potential danger of the ominous bomb, and with the bomb's role in the mysterious disappearance of a young orphan named Santi.

Santi's ghost, known to the boys of the orphanage as "the one who whispers," has singled out Carlos as his object of haunting. And unlike the rest of the boys, it is only Carlos who can conquer his fear in order to investigate what it is that the "undead" Santi is seeking. Nearly half of the film has transpired before Santi's image is presented on the screen. The ghost child appears to live in the murky, sea-like waters of the cistern in the dungeons of the compound. His vis-

age, at first very frightening, reflects the pale, rubbery quality of a water-creature; the greenish cast to his skin, the bubbles that float up from his mouth, the wet footprints he leaves about the eerie passageways, his bulging, fixed eyes. But what is most astounding about the ghost of Santi is his resemblance to the Frankenstein monster. The physical similarity speaks to two meanings: the first is the strange construction of the Frankenstein monster as both a figure of innocence and as the manifestation of "the living dead"; and the second is Del Toro's obvious recourse to the brilliant Erice 1973 film *El espíritu de la colmena*, which also tells the story of a child's haunting by the Spanish Civil War as represented by the transplantation of the Frankenstein monster from the screen and into the real world of a young girl. The use of the Erice film as an intertext for *The Devil's Backbone* recalls yet other Spanish texts about children and the Spanish Civil War, from the novels of Ana María Matute, to the short stories of Manuel Rivas, to the film adaptation of Rivas' *La lengua de las mariposas* (in English, *Butterfly*).

What does this recourse to the themes of childhood and ghosts or monsters have to tell us about the Spanish Civil War? How does the ghost story function as a political allegory? Two answers come to mind. First, it seems to me that historical realist war films may have the capacity to capture the multitude of tragedies brought on by war and, in so doing, may potentially succeed in arousing the astonishment and pity of the audience. But war films rarely manage to transmit the emotion of sheer terror that can be the most devastating experience of war—the not-knowing of so many things: from the enemy who lays in wait around the next building, to the location of a land mine, to the falling of bombs on

Continued on page 23

"There's Still Steam Coming Out of the Ol' Kettle!" *Abe Osheroff Visits the University of Texas*

By Miguel Ferguson

Standing ovations were the order of the day when Abe Osheroff visited the University of Texas at Austin last November to show his award-winning documentary, *Dreams and Nightmares*, and lecture to students from across campus.

Speaking to over 300 journalism students about the potential they have to change the world for the better, Abe recounted anecdotes from personal interactions with some of the most notable journalists of the 20th century, including Ernest Hemingway, Herbert Matthews, and George Seldes. He also discussed the trials fledgling journalists are sure to face in honestly reporting events in an increasingly corporate-dominated news market.

Abe also addressed a large number of social work students and faculty about the benefits of living a life of conviction and social activism. "The pay that comes from dedicating one's life to social justice," he said, "is far beyond anything Bill Gates earns." He got a rise from the crowd when he remarked that "some of the finest people I've known have spent time in prison for following their convictions." Many in attendance had heard Abe speak in his last visit to the UT in April 2000. After a standing ovation, many gathered around to thank him for the inspirational message he shared.

In another undergraduate class of social work students, Abe expressed his concern that much of what is being enacted under the guise of patriotism after September 11, namely tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations and violations of civil liberties, must be opposed. When a student asked, "What can one person do?" Abe recounted that determined individuals working together agitated for legislation (workers and unemployment compensation, for example) that we now take for granted but that in his youth seemed "at best, utopian, and at worst, downright nutty!"

Abe's 1974 film, *Dreams and Nightmares*, reached a standing-room only crowd of several hundred in a presentation titled "From the Spanish Civil War to September 11: Perspectives on War and Peace in the 21st Century." After the screening, Abe addressed a broad array of topics from the SCW to the current "War on Terrorism," stressing the counterproductive consequences of U.S. military action, yet stressing the need for anti-war activists to see many proponents of the war as essentially decent people with good hearts. The presentation, one of the larger campus gatherings to

take place this year, ended with (another!) standing ovation and Abe taking questions until almost midnight.

Abe Osheroff continues to show that the legacy of the Lincoln Brigade still captivates the hearts and minds of a new generation yearning for a just and democratic society. The UT-Austin would like to say - mil gracias y VIVA LA BRIGADA!

Dr. Miguel Ferguson teaches in the School of Social Work at UT-Austin.

BRIGADERS RETURN TO THE CAVE HOSPITAL

By Angela Jackson

On November 4, 2001, five brigaders travelled to Catalonia to attend the unveiling of two plaques in the remote mountain village of La Bisbal de Falset.

During the Battle of the Ebro in 1938, many of the wounded had received treatment in an improvised hospital situated in a large cave near the village. Those who died were buried in a communal grave in the local cemetery, among them International Brigaders of various nationalities. The grave was unmarked, but a list was kept of the names of the dead. Local and international support has made it possible to honor their memory and to acknowledge the role of the medical staff who worked in the cave.

A plaque in the cemetery was unveiled by Sam Russell, a veteran who had fought with the first group of British volunteers. In Catalan and English, the plaque is inscribed, "In memory of those who died in the cave hospital of Santa Llúcia and are buried here—Spaniards and

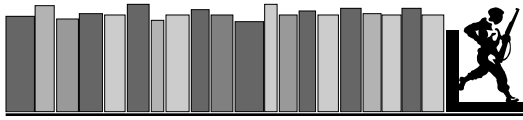
International Brigaders—who fought together in defence of the Republic at the Battle of the Ebro, 1938."

Following this moving ceremony, the large crowd of local people and visitors proceeded to the cave, where a delegate from the Catalan government, Cèsar Puig, unveiled the second plaque in memory of those who had served, suffered and died there during the battle.

One of the speakers, Dr. Reggie Saxton, was given a particularly warm welcome. He had returned after more than 60 years to the place where, as a young man, he had saved many lives by using new techniques for the transfusion of blood.

After the speeches, the young people of the village distributed drinks and proposed a toast to peace, which was heartily endorsed by all those present. The events were brought to a memorable and enjoyable conclusion with traditional music and dancing.

Angela Jackson is writing a study of British women in the Spanish Civil War.



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ed. by Alvah Bessie & Albert Prago

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By Jordi & Arnau Carulla

EXHIBIT CATALOGS

The Aura of the Cause, a photo album

ed. by Cary Nelson

VIDEOS

Art in the Struggle for Freedom

Abe Osheroff

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Added to Memory's Roster



Thomas W. O Malley 1914-2001

Thomas O'Malley, a retired furniture maker, died in Provincetown, Massachusetts, on November 16, at the age of 87.

Born in New Jersey, O'Malley grew up in New York City's Hell's Kitchen and there acquired a lifelong commitment to social justice. He went to Spain in 1937 and saw action on the Aragón front. Later, he served in the U.S. Army and was among the first wave of troops to land at Iwo Jima in 1945. He retired in 1984 and, according to the *Provincetown Banner*, "he became a well-known observer of the Commercial Street scene from his front porch, while maintaining an active interest in international political affairs."

Ely Joseph Sack 1915 - 2001

My dad was a veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He lived the majority of his life as an ordinary, tax-paying, voting American citizen. He was the father of 4 children, myself and my 3 younger brothers. He survived his beloved wife, Edith, by almost seven years. He had 9 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren at the time he died.

Ely J. Sack was raised by Russian immigrant parents in Brooklyn, New York, the youngest of 3 sons. He told me that he had a normal and happy childhood, did very well in public school, and even graduated early in an accelerated program. However, no money was available for him to attend college full time, so he got various menial jobs and went to the City College of New York School of Commerce in the evenings, where he studied accounting. He later became a certified public accountant and made his living at this profession. He met his wife in Jacksonville, Florida, prior

to leaving for Spain. After they married, they lived there for the better part of their lives.

When I was about 4 years old, I can recall asking my dad about the deep and large scars on his left leg and other scarring on his right leg. He explained that he had been wounded—shot!—during his participation in a civil war in Spain. I was intrigued! He and my mother chose Luise Dolores as my name (*La Pasionara*), and this was also a part of the story—all very thrilling to his little girl. I grew up thinking that my dad was a hero, fighting and willing to die for the principles in which he believed. Whenever I asked questions about that time in his life, he answered fully, and as the years passed, the answers were suitably more complex. I learned of my father's involvement in the Spanish Civil War, but more than that, I was told of the beliefs and conditions that spurred him to volunteer to join the Lincoln Brigade. I admired him for standing up for what he believed was right.

It was much later in our lives, during a visit to my parents' home in Miami in the spring of 1993, that I became privy to the complete story of my father's wartime experiences. Within a month, I contacted Victor Berch at Brandeis, where the Archives were located at that time. My dad was asked to send his autobiography, as well as all photos and correspondence that were pertinent, as his contribution to the Archives. This began a project, via letter and telephone, wherein both of my parents and I worked together. I will always treasure that experience.

My father's decision to go to Spain to fight against Fascism and Franco was based on his social consciousness and his sympathy for the Communist movement. As a Jew, he had already

2001 Honor Roll

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Ely Joseph Sack

Ken Shaker

Leo Solodkin

suffered discrimination, and he wanted to join the fight for equality. He told me that he felt that he would be a coward if he didn't volunteer, and that he wanted to have the courage of his convictions.

My father made his way to Spain, participated in the "good fight," and was wounded. He was lucky enough not to lose his life, as so many other young volunteers did. He said that he never regretted his decision to join the fight, and that he would make the same decision again, given the circumstances that existed in 1936. His political activism ended when he returned to the United States in 1938, but his political ideas and idealism never wavered. I am grateful for his influence on my life. Dad used to say that even though "our side lost in Spain, at least history has shown that we were the 'good guys.'" And now, adios to one of the good guys... my beloved dad.

—Luise S. Stone



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ALBA'S TRAVELING EXHIBITION

THE AURA OF THE CAUSE

ALBA's photographic exhibit, *The Aura of the Cause*, has been shown at the Puffin Room in New York City, the University of California-San Diego, the Salvador Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, FL, the Fonda Del Sol Visual Center in Washington, DC, and the University of Illinois. This exhibit, curated by Professor Cary Nelson of the University of Illinois, consists of hundreds of photographs of the Lincoln Brigaders, other international volunteers and their Spanish comrades, in training and at rest, among the Spanish villages and in battle.

New Haven, CT

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For further information about *The Aura of the Cause* exhibit, contact ALBA's executive secretary, Diane Fraher, 212-598-0968. The exhibit is available for museum and art gallery showings.

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Contact Diane Fraher, ALBA executive secretary: 212-598-0968; Fax: 212-529-4603

Backbone

Continued from page 18

civilians. War is about double hauntings. The enemy who pursues and hunts down and surprises and destroys haunts his adversary. And the *memory* of the horror of war lingers, through trauma, in the collective and the individual imagination.

When Francoist historiography eliminated, and thus made hidden, the experiences of the defeated of the Spanish Civil War, the evidence of the vanquished could not be wholly erased, just suppressed. What the haunting of and by children symbolizes is the effect of war and its memory, which lingers in the present and the *future* until the wrongs committed against victims receive redress or recognition. Silence and secrets are invitations to phantoms. The youngest survivors or the children of survivors have had to hunt down their ghosts in order to discover the truth about the killers—under whose power they still must make and make sense of their lives. This same kind of dangerous power of secrets and lies lurks among the boys in the orphanage, determined to annihilate them and their Republican guardians.

The ghost of Santi is a metaphor for the failure to redress the crimes against the vanquished. It is the ghost's charge, then, to enlist the aid of Carlos so that he may confront his murderer; a murderer who still threatens the lives of all of the boys, the sons of dead Republicans. Carlos recognizes that only by acknowledging Santi can the truth be known, justice exercised, and peace be restored.

The title of the film refers to the folkloric name for the disease of spina bifida, in which the backbone never develops, thus cutting short burgeoning life. Dr. Cásares keeps jarred fetuses—miscarried due to spina bifida—in his office. The image not only foretells the ending of the film, but it suggests to me a reappropriation of Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada* (Invertebrate Spain) to evoke not the "spineless" Spain of 1898 but the regressiveness of Franquismo.

In this regard, Del Toro is not a filmmaker who relies on easy

resolutions. When the boys and their teachers come together in solidarity to fight their enemy, the result can be no other than horrifying, bloody, and tragic. But the enthusiasm and determination of their resistance stands as a reminder of what we know to be the noble legacy of the Republican cause.

To learn more about the film, see: <http://www.magiclanternpr.com/films/Devil'sBackbonePressbook.pdf> ■

Gina Herrmann teaches Spanish at Colby College. She will be part of an ALBA panel on women and the Spanish Civil War on Friday, April 26, at the King Juan Carlos Center (see p. 24).

Shouts

Continued from page 16

September 5-October 19, 1997: Emerson Gallery, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY

Nov. 8-Dec. 22, 1997: University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

January 27-March 13, 1998: Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, MA

April 4-May 18, 1998: Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Madison, WI

June 15-July 31, 1998: Elaine J. Jacob Gallery, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

August 20-October 10, 1998: Arthur Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

November 1-December 15, 1998: Center Gallery, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA

January 15-March 7, 1999: University Gallery, University of Delaware, Newark, DE

April 7-June 6, 1999: Zoellner Art Ctr., Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA

August 14-October 17, 1999: Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL

November 8, 1999-February 21, 2000: Southern Methodist University, Dallas

March 15-May 15, 2000: University Museum, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL

October 12-December 20, 2000:

Poetry

Continued from page 17

for generations and kept utopian and civic imaginations alive. If I understand Nelson correctly, these teachers would do irreparable harm to the civic imaginations of the next generation. The withering of imagination brings consequences as dreadful as a vote to disallow the erection of a monument.

Nelson takes a step beyond outrage. He provides a corrective strategy to be brought into the classroom. In the process of criticizing his opponents, he gives constructive guidance for restoring the ability to listen to the poetry of protest. That is no small achievement.

Revolutionary Memory is part of a continuing project, and so Nelson leaves us with some questions unanswered. Have the destroyers of the poetic Left prevailed? Their cohorts in history departments have been cranking out piles of books and articles to destroy the reputation of the International Brigades and to erect a monument to America's triumph in the Cold War. Perhaps their success cannot be measured in the classroom. When Nelson taught the poetry of the Vietnam War, his opponents had been hard at work obliterating a tradition of protest. Doubtless many poets wrote unaware of that tradition. Yet somehow they found the words to express themselves. There may be cause for hope no matter what happens in the classroom. ■

Michael Batinski teaches history at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

Aidekman Art Center, Tufts University, Medford, MA

March 15-April 30, 2001: Sweeney Art Gallery, University of California, Riverside, CA

September 15-November 25, 2001: Puffin Gallery, New York City, NY

January 15-March 10, 2002: Spencer Art Museum, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KA ■

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