



## Letter From the Editor

It began with the sound of cannons, rifle fire, and machine guns in the middle of a Saturday night in July 70 years ago. The U.S. poet Muriel Rukeyser was in Barcelona, sent by a London magazine to cover the upcoming People's Olympics (an international protest against the games hosted in Nazi Berlin). "The terror and habit of guns and warning and fear descend on every system and are absorbed," she reported. "All but the hatred of fascists, which increases."

Rukeyser wrote at a moment when people throughout the world expected the elected government to repel the military insurrection. Three years later, the war was over, the years of dictatorship had begun, and Albert Camus wrote sadly of the "bad wound in the heart" that afflicted those who had supported the republican cause.

That ambiguous legacy—the fervor of fighting for democracy, the tragic defeat, the pall of the Franco years—will be the subject of commemorative gatherings this year throughout Spain and the world. New documentary films are being released; monuments will be dedicated (see pages 1-2). ALBA will participate in many of these events and will sponsor others.

We are also planning to unveil a major exhibition, "New York City and the Spanish Civil War," at the Museum of the City of New York from March through August 2007. Funded by the Puffin Foundation, Ltd., co-sponsored by the Cervantes Institute, and supported by the staff at the Tamiment Library of New York University, the project includes a significant catalogue of essays and illustrations that reflects the most recent research about the impact of the war on American citizens. We are currently organizing additional cultural events to enhance public awareness of this unique story. After New York, moreover, the show will travel to Spain for exhibition in Madrid and Barcelona.

On another international front, ALBA's exhibition "They Still Draw Pictures: Children's Art in Wartime" is opening at the Cervantes Institute of Moscow, where accompanying catalogues have been produced in Russian and Spanish. That show will then move to the University of Alcalá de Henares and other venues in Spain.

Closer to home, we are proud to announce the publication of *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, edited by Peter N. Carroll, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small (see page 12). The volume offers yet another example of the legacy of the Spanish Civil War, not only for veterans of the war, but for the larger society. Books ordered through ALBA will be discounted; any earnings from these sales go to ALBA.

## The Volunteer

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## Seeking Eyewitness Testimony

Katie Halper and I are gathering video testimonies from New Yorkers who have firsthand memories of how the Spanish Civil War was lived/perceived/represented in New York City. This is part of a large project, whose main event will be the exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York (March-August 2007), "New York City and the Spanish Civil War."

If you have memories you'd like to share on camera, or if you know of someone who might, please zap me an e-mail at [jf2@nyu.edu](mailto:jf2@nyu.edu).

Thanks,  
James D. Fernández

We also continue to find new historical collections to add to the archives. Among recent acquisitions are the records of the Spanish Refugee Aid organization, a gold mine of material revealing the history of those who fled the Franco regime (see page 9).

As ever, we are glad to acknowledge the steady, loyal support of our readers and contributors. None of these projects would bear fruit without you. Please come to our programs, see what you've done.

Peter N. Carroll

# 70th Anniversary Homage around the World

## Bristol Launches Year of Conferences

In the first of what promises to be a busy year of commemorative activities, the Group for War and Cultural Studies of the University of Bristol, England, hosted a three-day conference entitled "War Without Limits: Spain, 1936-1939." Speakers hailed from as far away as New Zealand, Canada and Israel and as close by as Bristol, London and Belfast. Approximately 40 papers were given over the three days. The wide range of topics touched on such aspects as Spanish American poets, the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, British IBers in the Second World War, Jewish volunteers, and repression in the region of Galicia or Gibraltar during the conflict, to name just a few. The organizers were Professors Martin Hurcombe and Debra Kelly.

Three plenary lectures were given to a full house. Mike Richards of the University of the West of England spoke on "Public and Personal Memories of the War as Social History." Paul Preston of the London School of Economics recounted the "War Crimes of General Franco," unhesitatingly describing the persecution of Loyalist Spaniards as a "holocaust." French historian Rémi Skoutelsky commented on photographers and

photographers of the Spanish Civil War in a session entitled "The First Conflict of the Media Age, or How General Franco lost the War of Images."

Two documentaries were also included in the program and were introduced by their directors. Both films had Welshmen as protagonists. The first, *Filming the Brigaders--Homage or History* by Colin Thomas, is the most polemic. Ostensibly a documentary on the history of the IB and their memory in Wales, it actually compares the experiences of two Welshmen who fought in Spain, one in the IB and the other in Franco's Foreign Legion. The latter is presented in a more favorable light, as is the cause he fought for, while the International Brigades are seen under a most negative perspective. Needless to say, the question and answer session that followed was almost as hot as the record temperatures outside. The second film, *The Return Journey* by Sarah Dickens, is the story of the recently deceased Alun Menai Williams, a Welsh medic in the IB, and his first return to Spain in 67 years, where he had the honor of unveiling a plaque to British dead of the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade on the Ebro battlefield.

By all accounts, the conference was a success and a great start to what promises to be a busy year. International congresses on the International Brigades are scheduled for Salamanca in October and Paris in mid-November. In addition, an official congress with backing from the Ministry of Culture will be held in Madrid at the end of November.

—Robert Coale

## Spain Marks 70th Anniversary

To mark the participation of inter-

national volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, several Spanish organizations have planned a series of commemorative events for October. On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nationalist uprising, a small number of veterans of the International Brigades are expected to participate in public programs and to receive the thanks of the Spanish people for their efforts to defend the Spanish Republic.

During the first weekend of October, the University of Salamanca is hosting an extensive international conference on the theme "The International Brigades: 70 Years of Historical Memory." The program, which includes dozens of speakers, will feature a roundtable discussion focusing on the North American volunteers, with speakers Moe Fishman, Milton Wolff, and ALBA Chair Peter Carroll.

The Madrid-based Association of Amigos of the International Brigades (AABI) has organized a variety of commemorative events to follow the academic conference in Salamanca. These include an introduction of the international veterans to the Congress of Deputies; the unveiling of a monument to the IBs at Morata de Tajuña, one of the battlefields on the Jarama front; and a ceremonial tribute to the last Spanish commander of the IBs, Pedro Mateo Merino.

These events will be followed by a trip to Zaragoza in the Aragon region, where the Lola Soler Blazquez foundation will bestow the new "Social Fight Award" on the surviving veterans of the International Brigades.

Additional commemorative events will be held in Barcelona.

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## Corrections

In the last issue of *The Volunteer*, we neglected to mention that \$500 of the money raised at the Bay Area Reunion in March was contributed to The School of the America's Watch. In addition, the hospital to which money was sent is the William Solar Pediatrics Hospital in Havana.

## No Jubilem La Memòria

In November, the Catalonias organization No Jubilem La Memòria will host its fourth annual gathering in Marçà, Priorat, Catalonia, during the weekend of November 4-5. To mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of war, the main themes will include the reasons for the conflict and the tragic events of the early days. The program will include conferences, film documentaries, and commemorative acts. As always, International Brigade veterans will be especially welcome. For more information, please email Angela Jackson at nojubilemlamemoria@yahoo.com. More details of the program will soon appear on the web page [www.nojubilemlamemoria.tk](http://www.nojubilemlamemoria.tk).

No Jubilem La Memòria recently received a grant from the Catalan government to mount a small itinerant photographic exhibition, "Prelude to the Last Battle: The International Brigades in the Priorat, 1938" (Preludi de l'Última Batalla: Les Brigades Internacionals al Priorat, 1938). They have also been awarded funding for further research in this area.

## Memorial for Welsh Coal Miners

On Sunday, July 16, Britain's International Brigade Memorial Trust and Big Pit National Coal Museum unveiled a plaque to commemorate the involvement of Welsh miners in the Spanish Civil War. The ceremonies were held at Big Pit National Coal Museum and began with songs from C r Cochion Caerdydd.

La Columna Spanish Civil War reenactment group also performed at various venues, followed by screenings of several films about the events of the 1930s.

## Argentine Documentary Film

After many years of hard work, a group of Argentine filmmakers has produced the first documentary film about their country's volunteers in the International Brigades.

Titled *Those men--Argentinian Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War*, the film was directed by Ernesto Sommaro and researched by Jerónimo Boragina. The film consists of more than 700 historical photographs and interviews with veterans of the brigades. "What is more," the filmmakers write, "Victor H. Morales, the most important sports commentator in Argentina and Latin America, contributed commentary that reflects the feelings of the Spanish tragedy."

"The project has taken several years, and although we received collaboration from different people, we did not receive any institutional support. As a consequence, the results from this project have a double value for us. It is a dream come true to present this film for the 70th anniversary, and we hope we can inaugurate a phase in which Latin Americans could be represented in this fight for freedom and against antifascism."

The premiere was scheduled for July 20 at the Colon Theatre in Mar del Plata and by end of the month in the capital city.

For further information, email [imap322@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:imap322@yahoo.com.ar).

## Documentary on Palestine IBs

A new film about the Palestinian volunteers in the International Brigades, made by Eran Torbiner, had its premiere screening in Israel in July.

The English title of the film, *Madrid before Hanita*, requires explana-

tion: During the 1930s, the "official" position of the yishuv (who represented the Jewish population in Palestine) was to send money and aid to the Spanish Republicans, BUT not to encourage people to volunteer to fight in Spain. This was the position of Zionism not only in Palestine, but also in Europe: that the fight in Eretz Israel and the effort to create a solid yishuv was more important to Jews than fighting in Spain.

Hanita, a little settlement near the border of Lebanon, created in 1938 in a difficult place, became a symbol of the fighting for the creation of settlements and, ultimately, of the fighting for Jewish statehood. That is why the slogan of Zionists to discourage volunteering for the Spanish civil war was "Hanita has precedence over Madrid," or, as Eran translated it, "Hanita before Madrid."

The film is, consequently, about those who, despite the official (and widespread) attitude, thought that MADRID had precedence over Hanita.

The new film includes Palestinian Jewish volunteers. Apparently, no Arab or Armenian volunteers are still alive; we searched for them, but it was not easy. Those interviewed in the film are Dora Levin, Salman Salzman, David Ostrowski, Shemuel Segal, one ancient "Israeli" who lives now in Germany (Kurt Goldstein), and also family and friends.

This is a very moving film focusing on personal sentiments of people.

For more information about the availability of the film, contact the filmmaker: [erantor@hotmail.co.il](mailto:erantor@hotmail.co.il).

# National History Days: The Next Generation Picks Up the Story

By Victoria Ronga, Maryellen Groot, Laura Williams

**W**e had heard the stories. We were sophomores at Reading Memorial High School in Massachusetts; the stories were directed towards us and the stories would soon become about us.

As sophomores enrolled in Honors World History II, for our semester exam grade we were required to participate in National History Day, a national competition in which students create a project displaying, in exquisite detail, an event in history following that year's theme. For the 2005-2006 competition, topics had to clearly connect with the theme of "Taking a Stand in History: People, Events and Ideas."



Topics could be presented in a wide variety of ways either individually or as part of a group: exhibit boards, documentaries, essays, and performances. We knew we were going to create an exhibit board, but we soon became somewhat lost amongst centuries of world history and insufficient topics. We brought our case to Dr. Jeffrey Ryan, an RMHS history

teacher and an extreme Abraham Lincoln Brigade enthusiast.

Something was said along the lines of wanting to explore recent history and he took off. "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees," he dictated, quoting La Pasionaria, with whom we would later become very familiar.

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade had never been covered before as a National History Day topic, and our dropped jaws in response to La Pasionaria's quote essentially chose our topic for us. The fact that the men and women, who were ordinary people, were traveling to Spain of their own free will to fight the evils of fascism and to take a stand for democracy struck us the hardest. Their connection with the people of Spain and their feelings of responsibility to defend the elected government drove people to volunteer, despite limitations from the American government and a multitude of risks.

We then began the task of knowing the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in its entirety. A circular six-foot exhibit board was being constructed by us from wood, plexiglass, batting, fabric, screws, hinges, and staples in Victoria's basement, what would soon become a second home, and hundreds of note cards were being taken from research. The books piled up; the information and stories flowed between us even in the hallways at school. Twice we traveled to New York University to visit the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives at the Tamiment Library to touch 1936-39 war pamphlets and postcards and



Left to right: Maryellen Groot, Victoria Ronga, Dr. Jeff Ryan (11th grade Honors US History teacher), James DeBenedictis (10th grade Honors World History II teacher), and Laura Williams.

pore over pictures for hours, as well as attempting to translate Spanish.

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade became the biggest part of our lives; we soon began to talk about the Brigade members as though we knew them personally, and we spoke about them to anyone and everyone as often as we could. The objectives of National History Day are to teach students how to think critically and develop research skills as well as obtaining self-motivation. True, those goals were undoubtedly reached, but more so than those objectives we discovered the strength the human race possesses, and in turn, the strength we possess.

Many facts were uncovered about the Spanish Civil War, but the Abraham Lincoln Brigade oozes undeniably of courage and selflessness. Our hope to spread the legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade fueled

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## The Legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

Taking a Stand in the Spanish Civil War

### History

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many late nights. We felt obligated yet honored to create a project that did the Brigade justice, within an impossible 500-word limit.

We began National History Day in September with the goal of continuing to the national level of competition and seeing an A in place of our mid-term. By January our goal had changed to informing others of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and all that they did.

Our exhibit on the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was selected from our high school to move to the regional competition, in which we won first place, and proceeded to the state competition, where we again won out of the whole of Massachusetts. In June, the legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade traveled to Washington D.C.

for the national competition.

As it was in our school, at regionals, and at states, first the colorful and striking war posters will attract onlookers and then their necks will crane to find where the information begins to tell the story. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade tells a story that was almost impossible to capture with just pictures and words. There was heart and there was heartbreak that affected the Brigade members so strongly they continued to live lives of activism up until today.

We are today's youth; we have yet to stand up for something that we believe in, something that will better the world tomorrow. We want you to



know, we are the youth yet we hear you, and we will never forget what we heard. Thank you for 10 unforgettable months. 🗨

### Pennsylvania Student Reaches National Finals

In the National History Day essay contest, ninth-grader Lee Kennedy-Shaffer at Mechanicsburg Area Senior High School in Pennsylvania won second-place in the state competition and went on to be ranked nine out of over 100 competitors in the national competition. The paper on U.S. volunteers in Spain, "The Premature Anti-Fascists: The Abraham Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War," was based on extensive research in the ALBA archives.

Kennedy-Shaffer's conclusion: "They were scorned by their government, but they foresaw the consequences if they did not halt the advances of Hitler and Mussolini at that point. They lost the war in Spain. . . . The brave men of the Lincoln Battalion refused to concede, however. They maintained their vigilant stand against fascism and promoted democracy wherever and whenever they could, making them truly 'the premature anti-fascists.'"

### Former Exiled Children Host Drawings in Moscow

ALBA's traveling exhibition, *They Still Draw Pictures: Children's Art in Wartime*, opened this month at the Cervantes Institute in Moscow.

What makes this show remarkable is its sponsors: the organization formed by the Spanish children who were sent into exile by their parents during the civil war and who have remained in Russia for the past 70 years. Inspired by Jose Zorilla, of the Spanish consulate in Moscow, the "ninos de la guerra civil" sponsored the new exhibition.

Curated by ALBA's Anthony Geist and Peter Carroll, this version of the exhibition differs in content from the original traveling show. The first exhibition consisted of drawings held by the University of California/San Diego, but curators feared that continued exposure would damage the originals.

ALBA located another collection of similar drawings at the Avery Library of Columbia University in New York. Re-curating the show, Geist and Carroll decided to use digitalized scans instead of original art, allowing the material to be exhibited without fear of damage. With the permission of archivists at Columbia, the new show will remain in Moscow through the autumn, then move on to Spain for exhibition at other university museums.

# George Watt Memorial Awards for 2006

By Daniel Czitrom

The winners of this year's George Watt Awards continue to honor the memory of this Lincoln vet (1914-1994), author, activist, and leading figure in creating and supporting ALBA. For those who would like to get a better sense of his remarkable life story and his passionate commitment to radical social change, take a look at his engagingly written 1990 memoir, *The Comet Connection: Escape from Hitler's Europe*. After his stint in Spain, George served in the Army Air Corps during World War II; his plane was shot down over Belgium and he escaped from behind Nazi lines with the help of local Resistance fighters. The Watt Awards are designed to encourage student research and writing on the American experience in Spain, as well as on related topics in the Spanish Civil War and the larger history of anti-fascism.

For 2006, we were pleased to note a rise in both the number and the quality of entries. We received nearly 30 essays from all over the United States, as well as applicants from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Two of our three winners this year come from outside the U.S., reflecting ALBA's increasingly international profile. Starting in 2007, we will accept essays written in Spanish as well as English.

This year, ALBA is delighted to award three prizes of \$500 each for two undergraduate essays and one graduate essay. We publish here brief abstracts of the winning essays and will post the entire essays on our website: [www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org). This year's committee of judges included Sebastiaan Faber (Oberlin College),

Gina Herrmann (University of Oregon), and Daniel Czitrom (Mount Holyoke College).

Congratulations to this year's three winners!

**Undergraduates:**

**Sarah Sackman, Queens College-Cambridge University, United Kingdom**, "The Identity Politics of Jews and African Americans During the Spanish Civil War."

**Irene S. Walcott, New York University**, "Fitting the Rules to the Ranks: A Look Into the Nature of Discipline in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade."

**Graduate:**

**Judy Neale, University of Auckland, New Zealand**, "An Orchestrated Litany of Lines: *Contra el Guernica Libelo* by Antonio Saura."

## Abstracts of George Watt Awards 2006

### **The Identity Politics of Jews and African-Americans in the Spanish Civil War**

By Sarah Sackman

Among the 3,000 American volunteers who fought in Spain were 1,250 men and women of Jewish origin and around 80 African-Americans. The politics of identity were especially salient for these volunteers. They contended with a plurality of competing identities based on class, politics, nationality, ethnicity, and race. Often they experienced a sense of "double consciousness," trapped between how they saw themselves--as anti-fascists, universalists and Americans--and how the world saw them--as extremists, Jews, blacks, and un-American. These warring perceptions were fundamental in shaping Jewish and black experiences of the Spanish Civil War.

Both Jewish and black volunteers hoped Spain would allow them to overcome their social marginalization. Yet at the heart of their identity politics lay the paradox that their universalism was rooted in a particular world view. The desire of Jews and African-Americans to submerge themselves in the Popular Front originated

in their marginal cultural status.

The study examines the ideological challenges the Lincolns faced to their identity in Spain. The war promised a rebirth for the volunteers as heroic warriors in a just crusade, enabling their American, radical and ethnic identities to cohere. For the Jews, there was the possibility to shed their ethnic skin and realize a cosmopolitan ideal. For the African-Americans, they could both be proud to be black and stand alongside the white workers of the world.

However, the experience of the Spanish Civil War disappointed this promise. The blazing images of the workers of the world united in a Popular Front belied the complexity of Jewish and African-American identity politics. The encounter with thousands of Jewish volunteers, with African troops fighting for Franco, with Comintern's anti-Americanism and the racism of ordinary Spaniards muddled the progressive ideal of the Spanish Republic. The tensions between being American, being radical, and being Jewish or black were re-awakened by the realities of warfare.

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## Fitting the Rules to the Ranks:

A Look into the Nature of Discipline in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

By Irene S. Walcott

*My thanks go to the staff at ALBA and to Mr. Moe Fishman of VALB for their invaluable assistance in aiding my research.*

This paper examines discipline in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in light of the continuing debate over the motives, experiences and orchestration of the U.S. volunteers who fought on the side of Republican Spain from 1936-39. The existing representation of the “good fight” waged by the idealistic youth of Depression-era America is now being countered by another, revisionist perspective, the “dark side” of Communist control direct from Moscow that forced volunteers to stay in Spain and ruthlessly suppressed any military or political dissent. This research seeks to contribute to this debate by investigating one of the important questions: how much of the discipline was voluntary and self-imposed and how much was imposed upon the volunteers by Moscow and the Comintern?

After a critical analysis of the debate itself, the paper explores the uniquely political nature of the Spanish Civil War and composition of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. It then focuses on three specific aspects of discipline in the brigades: the role of political commissars, the response to desertion and deserters, and the introduction of saluting when the International Brigades were incorporated into the Spanish Republican Army. Many primary sources from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, now housed in New York University’s Tamiment Library, were used. These included the research files of John

Dollard’s 1942 study “Fear and Courage Under Battle Conditions,” oral history interview transcripts from the 1984 documentary *The Good Fight*, and papers from the Moscow Archives (which have only recently been uncovered and made publicly available).

Research on this debate led to several main findings and conclusions. Abraham Lincoln Brigaders were willing to do anything, even die, if shown in a democratic and humanistic way that what they were to do would further their political convictions, advance the fight against fascism and further democracy worldwide. A hugely important element of discipline to the volunteers was personal and self-imposed, which is, arguably, what kept them fighting in Spain.

While neither side of the debate can tell the complete story of the nature of discipline in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the “good fight” argument seems to hide far less than proponents of the “dark side” would like to believe. The former may be somewhat over-idealized, but the latter is highly decontextualized (the evidence does not lead clearly to the argument) and so more easily disproved. The American volunteers were strong individuals with strong political convictions and goals for the future. They brought these convictions and their previous experiences of struggle with them to Spain, where they went to further their ideals of fairness, humanity, individuality, equality, and democracy. Discipline in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, if it was to be successful, had to take this uniqueness into account. In other words, the rules had to fit the ranks.

## An Orchestrated Litany of Lines:

*Contra el Guernica Libelo*

by Antonio Saura

By Judy Neale

Pablo Picasso painted his now famous *Guernica* (1937) in response to the saturation bombing of the Basque town of Gernika by the German Condor Legion, which operated in service of the insurrectionary Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War. Painted for the legitimately elected Republican government, *Guernica* was finally delivered to Spain in 1981, during the transition to democracy following the death of General Franco. The outpouring of political and art-critical commentary which anticipated the “return” of this modernist icon and charged political symbol provided the material for a pamphlet by one of Spain’s prominent post-war painters, Antonio Saura. Entitled *Contra el Guernica. Libelo*, Saura’s satirical litany of invective was popularly but mistakenly interpreted as an attack on Picasso and his painting.

The contention of “An Orchestrated Litany of Li(n)es: *Contra el Guernica. Libelo* by Antonio Saura” is that Saura’s text in fact restores both *Guernica* and Gernika to their “true” frames, and constitutes a revisionist (art) history spanning the Spanish Civil War, the Franco dictatorship and the transition to democracy. In support of this contention, the thesis orients the reader to the individual and social voices, languages and literary genres drawn into *Contra el Guernica. Libelo* for the orchestration of Saura’s political and aesthetic themes, and to the constant transpositions of their respective codes. It thus reveals the artist’s erudition and suggests keys to his problematic text: dialogism—

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# Lincolns Star in Spanish Film



Dave Smith

## By Miguel Ángel Nieto

*Editor's note: The following article appeared in Madrid's El País, Sunday, June 25, 2006. It has been translated by Anthony Geist, co-producer of the documentary film, Souls without Borders.*

**H**arry Randall lives in the Arizona desert, in Tucson. His hands look more like a pianist's than a photographer's. In 1937 he was the photographer of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, composed of 2800 American volunteers who joined the Second Spanish Republic in the fight against fascism.

During the long year he fought in Spain, Randall took thousands of photographs and filmed dozens of hours of combat. Many of these images, largely unpublished, sat in boxes until a group of Spanish filmmakers dug them out

### ***Almas sin fronteras*** ***(Souls without Borders)***

Directed by Miguel Ángel Nieto, Anthony L. Geist, and Alfonso Domingo. Diagrama Producciones (Madrid, 2006), 54 minutes.

and used them in the documentary *Souls without Borders*, which aired on Spanish National TV on June 30.

Randall's photographic archive is the graphic memory of an unprecedented multiracial epic. In his photos black and white Americans stand arm in arm, all

wearing the same ragged uniforms. "For the first time in the history of the American military, black officers commanded white troops," reports the California-based historian Peter Carroll. "The Lincoln Brigade was the first fully integrated unit in the United States. This had never happened before, and didn't happen a short time later, in WWII, when the US Army remained segregated."

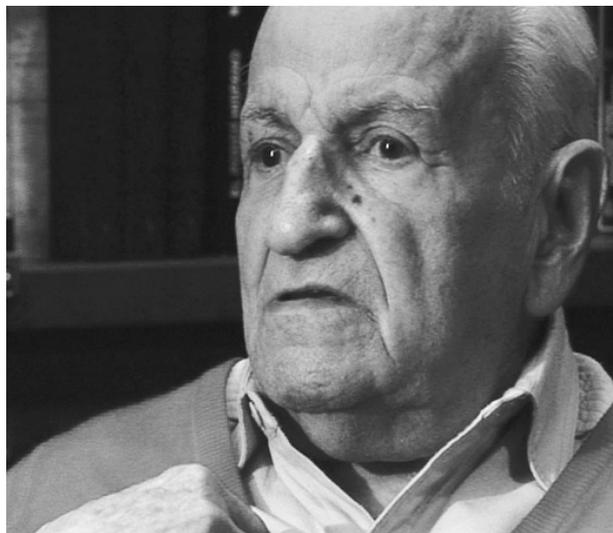
### **Oliver Law, African-American Commander**

The most legendary of the African-Americans in the Lincoln Brigade, Oliver Law, was approached by an American colonel who visited Spain in 1937. He asked Law, "Aren't you ashamed to wear a uniform with those bars?" And Law answered him: "I was a corporal in the American army, because I was Black. Here, in Spain, we earn our stripes for our valor, not for the color of our skin."

Law earned his stripes, leading his men in battle. In 1937 he was killed by mortar fire in Brunete.

One of the last African-American vets died in 1993. In a radio broadcast, Jimmy Yates said before he died: "It was in Spain where, for the first time, being a Black man, I felt like a free man."

In December 1936 the first American volunteers shipped out of New York. They left behind a country whose government had forbidden them to participate in the Spanish Civil War. They departed from a city where nine out of 10 inhabitants had no idea what was going on in Spain. They were headed for a country where they knew no one, and where no one



Abe Smorodin

was waiting for them.

They underwent brief basic training in Albacete and saw their first action in the battle of the Jarama, in February 1937. The Jarama was the first international battle of the Civil War, and the first encounter between the forces that would face each other

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in the Second World War just a few years later. German, Italian and Moroccan troops fought on the side of Franco. Volunteers from 54 of the 66 known countries in the world filled the ranks of the Republic.

David Smith is perhaps the last surviving veteran of the Lincoln Brigade who was in that battle. When he reached the Jarama they asked him, "Do you know how to shoot a rifle?" "Sure!" he lied. Then he made his way to the front. It was February 5, 1937, the eve of an offensive that would cost 20,000 lives over 19 days. "They had never before seen a war," says Carroll. "In that sense the Jarama was a baptism by fire for all of them."

"The only thing that kept us going was our political commitment. We were so committed that we went into battle without hesitation," recalls Smith. Another of the surviving vets, Abe Osheroff, is also haunted by memories of the war. "On the road to Belchite I realized that half the men I trained with were either dead or wounded."

"They did everything they could," explains Carroll, "but they were not professional soldiers. But what they lacked in training and experience, they made up for in commitment, spirit and faith. They were not fighting for themselves, or for money. They were fighting for deeply held beliefs. And they were willing to die for them."

## McCarthy Witch Hunts Willing to Die or Go to Prison.

Robert Steck was captured at the Ebro in April 1938 and then transferred to the monastery of San Pedro de Cardena, in the province of Burgos, a prison for Internationals that became

# The Lincoln's Activist Abes

Seventy years later the surviving veterans of that now legendary Brigade are still convinced that it was worth defending the Spanish Republic. "I have made many errors in my life," says Abe Smorodin, "but going to Spain was not one of them." The only thing he regrets is that he knew that sooner or later he would leave Spain. "But the Spaniards had to stay there. That was 70 years ago, and it still tears me up. I can't help it," he says with tears in his eyes.

Abe Osheroff now needs a wheelchair to move about. He has just turned 90, and he recently launched what he calls the PeaceMobile in Seattle. In fact, it is a van with loudspeakers in which he rides the streets of Seattle calling for an end to the war in Iraq. At the launching of the PeaceMobile, Abe told the audience, "I am 90 years old. I'm in a wheelchair, but it would be hard to find a more committed activist. As long as this mouth can eat and talk, as long as my head can think and I have a wheelchair for my body, I will continue to be an activist. What we are launching here today is a powerful tool for peace."



an improvised torture chamber.

That same year, while Dolores Ibarruri, *La Pasionaria*, followed international accords that forced the government of the Republic to withdraw all the International volunteers, Steck created in San Pedro what they called the Institute for Advanced Studies. In practice it was an underground university in which the prisoners learned from their comrades whatever they were qualified to teach. "In this way, we managed to keep up the good fight, and maintain our ideals."

Back in the US, they paid a price for having fought in defense of the Spanish Republic. In 1947 the Justice Department drew up a list of subversive organizations. The Abraham

Lincoln Brigade was on it twice, under "A" (ALB) and "V" (Veterans of the ALB). Jack Shafran and Moe Fishman were two of the many veterans who suffered reprisals and lost jobs because of it. "Anyone suspected of left-wing sympathies was branded a communist, and automatically lost his job," adds Shafran.

The case of Steve Nelson had international repercussions. Under the Smith Act he was sentenced to 20 years for sedition. The day before reporting to prison, Nelson spent the afternoon with his family in a park in Pittsburgh. "What were we to talk about?" asked Nelson. "How do you talk about having to spend 20 years in jail, how do you explain it?" ■

# Tamiment Acquires Spanish Refugee Aid Records

By Michael Nash

At the end of the Spanish Civil War, as the remnants of the Spanish Republican army, along with nearly 20,000 civilians, fled Spain to seek refuge in France, it became clear that the French government was highly ambivalent about offering asylum. Feeling threatened by Hitler and Mussolini, French leaders feared antagonizing Germany and Italy. The refugees who made it over the Pyrenees were, for the most part, forced into internment camps without shelter, running water, food, or sanitation facilities. Disease proliferated and the death rates were high.

For men and women on the Left, this humanitarian crisis reinforced the idea that the Western democracies had not only refused to defend the Spanish Republican government but also were determined to appease fascism at all costs. The cause of the Spanish refugees became a rallying cry that united the anti-fascist movements in Europe and America.

When France fell to the German army in June 1940, many of the more politically active refugees joined the resistance. Yet during the occupation, Spanish refugees found that it was impossible to assimilate into French society. Those who refused to work for the Nazis were sent to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where more than 80% perished. While some of the survivors were able to find their place in postwar society, many had been so traumatized that they were too disabled to take care of themselves.

As early as 1940, the American Left, through the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Aid Committee, had begun to provide assistance to these Spanish Civil War survivors. During the

McCarthy period, the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Aid Committee was labeled a subversive organization and its fundraising abilities were crippled. Aid for the Spanish refugees, however, was one cause that transcended the Left-sectarian divide. In 1953, Nancy Macdonald took the initiative and, with the help of Pablo Casals, James T. Farrell, Mary McCarthy, Norman Thomas, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Hannah Arendt and many others, organized Spanish Refugee Aid (SRA).

As part of its Spanish Civil War project, which began with the acquisition of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade archive, the Tamiment Library at New York University recently acquired the extensive historical records of Spanish Refugee Aid. This archive tells the story of the Spanish refugees and the SRA relief effort. More than 10,000 case files provide biographical information about the men and women who fled Franco Spain. They include demographic data (information about ethnicity, families, and regional affiliation, politics, and pre-civil war occupations), the role that these refugees played in the Republican army and government, the forced march out of Spain, and concentration camp experiences.

These unique records also document SRA's relationship with the anti-Franco underground (Communists, Socialists, Anarcho-syndicalists, and the Spanish labor movement), conditions in Spanish jails, Spanish political prisoners, and efforts by the European and American anti-Francoists to isolate fascist Spain from the international community. A preliminary survey of the refugee case files reveals that nearly 20% of those who received assistance were of Catalan origin. This is not surprising

since the Catalans, with their strong Communist or anarcho-syndicalist traditions, played very prominent roles on the Loyalist side during the



Spanish Civil War and later received particularly harsh treatment from the Franco regime.

Recognizing that these refugee files are an important repository of the historical memory of the Spanish Civil War, the government of Catalonia is supporting a project to preserve and catalog the SRA archives. During the second phase of this initiative, the Tamiment Library will digitize these files so that they can be made available through the state archives in Barcelona. ■

Michael Nash, an ALBA board member, is head of NYU's Tamiment Library.

# Media & the Spanish Civil War

By Robert W. Snyder

The international journalism that defined the struggles between nationalists and republicans in Spain is the subject of a fine exhibit at the Instituto Cervantes in New York City, *Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*. Skillfully blending prose and pictures from European and North American publications, the exhibition presents the story of the war and an analysis of the ideas and emotions it inspired in the news media.

Newcomers to the story of the Spanish Civil War will find a solid introduction to the struggle and why it mattered to so many people. Knowledgeable visitors will be impressed by photographs, excerpts from classic reports, and original copies of books, magazines and newspapers from the time of the conflict.

*Correspondents in the Spanish Civil*

*War* is broadly sympathetic to the Spanish Republic, but balanced including journalists sympathetic to Franco. The exhibit draws on newspapers and magazines from Portugal, the United States, Sweden, Canada, France, Britain, the Soviet Union, Poland and Italy. Against this broad canvas, many gems stand out: a chilling account of nationalist executions of republicans at Badajoz by Jay Allen for the *Chicago Tribune*; a photograph of Mikhail Koltsov of *Pravda* interviewing the anarchist leader Buenaventura Durruti; Harold G. Cardozo extolling the nationalist defenders of the Alcazar for the British *Daily Mail*; a copy of George Orwell's essay "Spilling the Spanish Beans," which was the foundation of *Homage to Catalonia*, in *The New English Weekly*; and reports from Spain about "Moors and colored people" in the war for the Baltimore *Afro-American* by

Langston Hughes.

The exhibit, supported by the Fundacion Pablo Iglesias and produced in collaboration with *El Mundo*, is presented in both English and Spanish. It is accompanied by a catalogue in Spanish of photographs, articles, and essays on the war including historian Paul Preston, and a recent interview with Geoffrey Cox, who covered the war for the British *News Chronicle*.

After New York, the exhibition will appear in Lisbon and Madrid.

*Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War* runs through September 30, 2006, at the Instituto Cervantes, 211 East 49th Street, New York, NY. The exhibit is open Tuesdays to Fridays from 12:30 pm to 6:30 pm and Saturdays from 10 am to 1:30 pm. Admission is free. ■

Robert W. Snyder, ALBA board member, teaches journalism and media studies at Rutgers-Newark.

## Seeking Paul Robeson Memorabilia

The Bay Area Paul Robeson Centennial Committee continues to gather Robeson memorabilia for a [permanent](#) Bay Area Paul Robeson Archive, whose ultimate home will be a public venue where young people can come and learn about this quintessential role model. This past April 8 through August 26, pieces from our collection were displayed in the exhibit "Paul Robeson, The Tallest Tree in Our Forest," at the African American Museum and Library in Oakland.

In more than seven years of collecting, we have received many unique items, including some we hadn't previously known existed; and so we know there is much additional material to be found. Do you have some memento you would consider donating to our developing historic archive? How about your family, friends and colleagues? Would you ask them?

Memorabilia can include almost anything related to Robeson:

- publicity, promotional leaflets, printed programs from his appearances
- audio or video recordings
- photographs, posters, artwork
- costumes or stage props used by him
- speeches by or about him
- newspaper or magazine articles, pamphlets, correspondence
- an autographed copy of "Here I Stand"

Any material you can provide will be an important contribution to our mission of helping to restore Paul Robeson to his rightful place in history and making his life and legacy more accessible to the public, especially the youth of today and coming generations.

Please write us at: [research@bayarearobeson.org](mailto:research@bayarearobeson.org) Visit our website: [www.bayarearobeson.org](http://www.bayarearobeson.org)

# The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain

The topic of historical memory in Spain, part of a larger resurgence of interest in the testimonies of victims of repression, will be the focus of a conference in New York. During the past few years, younger generations in Spain have started to confront the unresolved legacy of the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. The creation in 2000 of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, which has worked with victims' families to facilitate the exhumation of mass graves from the Francoist repression, has been accompanied by the production of a large output of historical research on the Civil War and its aftermath, together with a significant body of testimonial literature and film documentaries. This has coincided with a pro-Francoist backlash that has attempted to rehabilitate the dictatorship's version of history. The resulting media polemics have shown that emotions about Spain's past still run deep. Following the publication in July 2006 of the report of the Parliamentary Commission on the Victims of the Civil War and the Dictatorship set up by the present Spanish Government, this colloquium brings together speakers from Spain and the U.S. to discuss the current debates on how the Republic, Civil War and Franco Dictatorship should be remembered. Speakers will include:

- Julian Casanova, Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Zaragoza and a leading figure in Spanish media debates on the Francoist repression;
- Emilio Silva, Founder of the Association for the Recovery of

Political Memory (ARMH);

- Francesc Torres, installation artist and former King Juan Carlos Professor at NYU, whose photographic documentation of an exhumation will be exhibited in New York in 2007;
- Francisco Ferrándiz, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University de Deusto, who is conducting an ethnography of the mass grave exhumation process;
- Montse Armengou, co-director of a number of documentary films on the Francoist repression for Televisió de Catalunya, one of which will be presented by her the evening before the colloquium;
- Andrés Soria Olmedo, holder of the Federico García Lorca Chair of Spanish Literature at the University of Granada and Fall 2006 King Juan Carlos Professor at NYU, who will address the controversy surrounding Lorca's remains; and
- Gina Herrmann, Associate Professor at the University of Oregon, who has

undertaken oral history work with Republican militiamen as well as authoring a book on Jorge Semprún.

The colloquium will be chaired by Jo Labanyi, Professor of Spanish at NYU, who has a special interest in memory studies. Papers will be given in English.

The colloquium will be accompanied by a cycle of documentary films on the Francoist repression, "Images against Amnesia," shown at the King Juan Carlos Center at 7:15 pm on Thursdays, October 5, 12, and 26, and November 2 and 9, and at 2:00 pm on Saturday, November 11. The directors of several of the films will be present. For details on the colloquium and film series, see [www.nyu.edu/kjc](http://www.nyu.edu/kjc). ■

The event will take place Friday, November 10, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., at the King Juan Carlos I Center of New York University. Other sponsors include the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Consulate of Spain in New York.

## Watt Award

Continued from page 6

rehearsing 50 years of competing discourses surrounding *Guernica* and Gernika—and *double entendres*, associative irony and black humor. More specifically, this thesis argues that Saura effects a "return of the real": a re-viewing of the plastic reality of *Guernica* and of the traumatic reality of the "total war" unleashed on Gernika's civilian population. Indeed, it argues that read as an art manifesto, Saura's pamphlet locates (Picasso's) art's potential not in the representation

of the atrocity through symbolic iconography, but in the manifestation of its traumatic affect. *Contra el Guernica. Libelo* is thus understood also to engage with a major 20<sup>th</sup> century debate in aesthetics: how to "do justice to" an atrocity of this magnitude. Furthermore, the thesis suggests that the intertextual presence of Saura's own art and art theory in his pamphlet serves both to link his painting with Picasso's and to position it as more adequate to this task. ■

# THE GOOD FIGHT CONTINUES: World War II Letters From the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

*An ALBA Book Edited by Peter N. Carroll, Michael Nash, & Melvin Small*

*From the Preface....*

Europe had been at war for twenty-seven months before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, drawing the United States into World War II. But except for what the public could glimpse through newspapers, newsreels, and radio, few Americans had faced the horror of modern warfare. There was, however, one group of Americans who had already confronted the fascist enemy on the battlefield and had first-hand experience of the political stakes. These were the U.S. veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a volunteer army of about twenty-eight hundred men and women who sailed to Europe to fight against fascism in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39).

After nearly three years of bitter, cruel warfare, General Francisco Franco's armies defeated the Republican forces in March 1939. President Franklin D. Roosevelt acknowledged that U.S. neutrality in the Spanish Civil War had been a mistake. Six months later, the same German air forces that bombed the Basque village of Guernica in 1937 were flying over Poland launching the war that the Lincolns thought could have been prevented. Although many brigaders reluctantly hewed to the Communist party's non-interventionist line in 1939 and 1940, after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, they became enthusiastic about the second chance to achieve victory over fascism.

Even when U.S. military authorities, who were concerned about the brigaders' ties to the Communist party, attempted to thwart their ambitions by blocking officer's commissions and overseas combat assignments, the Lincolns remained doggedly loyal to the struggle. African American volunteers, who after serving in the integrated Lincoln brigade were forced into second-class duties in the segregated U.S. army, maintained their commitments to destroy the fascist beast; and when finally given the chance to fight, they proved to be exceptional soldiers. Wherever they served, individual Lincoln veterans won innumerable awards for bravery and sacrifice.

Despite their heroism in the second war against fascism, the Lincolns never overcame the stigma of having

## THEY HAVE SERVED WITH HONOR



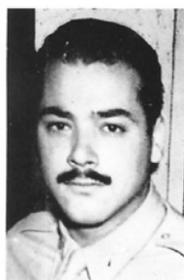
Sgt. Bob Thompson  
Distinguished Service Cross



Capt. Larry Lane  
Silver Star



Capt. Vincent Lossowski  
Legion of Merit



Capt. Mike Jimenez  
Legion of Merit



Capt. Irving Goff  
Legion of Merit



Sgt. Neil Wesson  
Legion of Merit

been "premature antifascists." By going to Spain, they marked themselves as radicals whose loyalty to the government was suspect. After World War II, they were among the first victims of the Red Scare.

Most of the letters in this volume were selected from thousands more that may be found in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) collection in New York University's Tamiment Library. Others came from the personal collections of individuals and their families that can be found in the ALBA collection or in other depositories.

## THE GOOD FIGHT CONTINUES

To order, use form on p. 17 or go to

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From James Bernard (Bunny) Rucker

July 14, [1944]

Darling [Helen Rucker]:

Soon, I'll be turning my back on the Jim Crow United States and with not a single regret. It won't be goodbye to Jim Crow because the Army seems to have pledged that it will carry Jim Crow to the far corners of the Earth. At least I'll be away from the main source and fountain of Jim Crow. That's a great relief under any circumstances. That relief and I know you are willing to grant it to me, overshadows any possible feeling of regret at leaving you. I won't be nearly as separated from you away from Jim Crow United States as I have been while I was here. You couldn't see me in North Carolina when we were only a few hours of a weekend apart, when you might have spent a vacation with me. For more than a year we were that close and yet separated as much by Jim Crow as we could possibly be by miles of ocean. Then for no other reason than Jim Crow, I was stationed in the most isolated camp in the country just as distant from you as any of the war theaters.

If our hearts could span Jim Crow, they can span any separation. So I have not the tiniest bit of maudlinism about adding a new kind of separation to that which has always been in effect in America. I hope to return to an America that is not Jim Crow. I've been hoping that for as long as I can remember, so I don't bank too much on my hopes, I just wear them like my dog tags. Just the experiences on the ride to and from N.Y. demonstrated that it makes Goddamned little difference to me if I return at all. Any American who can live comfortably in such a regime is someone whom I will never understand. So I could never be very content among them anyway. So I take the coming trip and subsequent events as just another part of the separation that we've already known. . . .

I'm sure you don't feel about Jim Crow United States the way I feel and that you feel capable of finding some satisfaction within its limitations. I never did and never will. I have never been satisfied with all the limitations that we've put up with. I will never look back on those times with any satisfaction. For every pleasure there was an insult. For every embrace there was a kick in the ass, for every kiss I was spit on. For every step toward your house there was a step back to Hell. My worst regret is that I was not allowed to leave Jim Crow U.S. sooner.

The first thing I will do will be to piss in the waters that wash the shores of the Jim Crow South. It will be a great day for me to absent myself from it. Here I have endured and seen as much of fascism as I'd ever expect to see in Germany or Spain. I've seen abuses of an entire people perpetuated in the most cynical fashion that lied and lied to the world. That presumed to impose liberty on people all over the world. God help such peoples if it's the liberty of the South and of Negroes. Promise an Italian or a Frenchman that his liberty will be that of American Negroes. Won't he rejoice at that! But aren't Negroes expected to rejoice at their own liberty! Liberty to ride the back of the bus. Liberty to be last class citizens in the life of the country.

Farewell Jim Crow America. Don't promise me that you will rid it of Jim Crow. Promise yourself. It won't be long before we know all the answers to these questions, Hon, and I'll be perfectly satisfied to know that I played some part in settling them. Whatever I'm leaving has been nothing but the hard lot of a Negro last class American and that is certainly nothing to cry over leaving. I still can't rejoice fully at leaving because I've seen tears of suffering in a Negro woman's eyes as late as the bus ride on Tuesday. It's not joyful to have that as a picture of the country you are serving. But that is the picture.

To you I'll leave all the love in my heart and a hope that my energies will produce happiness for you.

Your husband for always,

Bunny

*James Bernard (Bunny) Rucker (1919-1992) was responsible for transporting supplies and visiting dignitaries to the front, among whom was Langston Hughes. During World War II, he served in the army's Medical Division in Italy but transferred into an integrated combat unit, where he was severely wounded in 1945. He later was a reference librarian in New Jersey.*

From Alvin Warren  
[Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana]

Jan 14, 1943

Jack Bjose  
Executive Secretary  
Veterans of Abraham Lincoln Brigade  
100 Fifth Ave  
New York N.Y.

Dear Jack:

I am very sorry that I have not gotten the details of my situation to you earlier than this. I have been waiting to find out definitely as to the disposal of my request for a furlough to New York. It has been definitely refused, with the statement that I would not be permitted to enter any coastal areas. However, they are permitting me to travel to Chicago. So I guess you will have to answer all questions and act as my representative in N.Y. Below is a statement of the facts starting from the date of induction.

I was inducted into the Army June 8, 1942. I was held at Camp Upton, N.Y. for one month before being sent to a Replacement Training Camp. I arrived at Fort Knox Ky July 7 1942. Here I received my three months basic training attached to a gunnery platoon. During my training period, I was interviewed by my superior officers and recommended for Officer Training School. At that time I was the only drafted man out of my entire company to be so recommended. Later on I also received the highest recommendations for officers not specifically attached to my organization. (During that period I was promoted to Squad leader.) The company commander asked if I would [like] to stay on as a cadre (training personnel) after the training period was completed. I told him that I would rather not as I preferred to join an active division or enter one of the tank technical schools.

Near the end of the training period I was called in by the Battalion commander for an interview before going before the Officer Candidate School board. This interview lasted well over an hour, when the usual interview of this type lasted only about ten minutes. During the discussion many questions were asked about my attitudes toward labor unions, Harry Bridges, my political affiliations etc. Several days later I was ordered to appear before the Medical Board for a physical examination for officers school. This in itself was unusual as it was customary to go before the Officers School Board (and if accepted, then go to a physical examination.) The examining officer turned me down because of certain alleged defects. I was told at that time, that the findings of the medical officer would not affect my status as an enlisted man and that I would be sent out to active service. From then on, until I was transferred, I functioned as acting cadre on the company training staff. The Commanding Officer told me at that time that I would soon go to a division or to one of the technical schools.

On October 27, 1942, I received a War Department order to entrain for Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. Here, I entered the H.Q. and H.Q. Post Company, 1530th Service Unit. Let me tell you something of the character of this company. It is composed of I-B or limited service men, many of whom, in my opinion, are malingerers. Further, there are Japanese, Germans, and Italians in this company who are not allowed to go to combat outfits. Some are suspected of Fascist-Nazi leanings. In addition there are deserters, A.W.O.L.s, drunkards, and general troublemakers. It was until recently, staffed by non-coms who have been rejected by regular outfits and many of whom have been in the guardhouse at one or another. The main function of the company is that of a work outfit. There is no military training carried on at all. It supplies K.P.s, sentries, prison guards, work details and a host of other non-descript details. It has all the characteristics of a dumping place for undesirables and problems. You can well imagine the state of morale

Continued on next page

in such an outfit. Then there is this further fact. My mail is censored along with that of the foreign born and the suspects.

Upon my arrival at Fort Benjamin Harrison, I immediately asked my first sergeant if he knew why I had been sent there and what steps could be taken to secure a transfer into a combat outfit. He told me that he didn't know the reason that I had been sent in, but that more than likely it would fall into one of the three categories.

1. Physically unfit or limited services.
2. Being of foreign origin, with relatives in the land of my nativity
3. Having participated in labor or progressive activities, such as my background as a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish War 1936-1938

I asked if he would attempt to find out from the Personnel Division, Post Headquarters what was the reason and what I do to effect a transfer. He said he would. The result was, as he stated, that H.Q. did not know the reason why, that I had merely been transferred in on a War Department order. He further suggested seeing the Post Chaplain to see what he could do about the situation. This I proceeded to do. The Chaplain told me, as a result of his inquiries, that I was there because of physical condition. He suggested as the next step, that I apply for a physical examination to find out the exact nature of the alleged deficiencies and take the necessary steps to correct them. I did this. The medical findings were that I was perfectly fit for full and active duty. With this information I went to the head of the Personnel Division, Lt. Thomas, to find out what my exact status was and how I could be transferred out to combat duty. He told me that he did not know nor could he find out what the exact reasons for my being sent to this post were. This was in contradiction to the findings of Chaplain. He stated further, that there was no way I could be transferred to other services. The only developments since then is that the Military Intelligence has been visiting many of my former friends and employers, soliciting information of a political nature, about me.

In closing I want to remind you of certain facts which I think are important. You know that the Army is desperately in need of technical men. I have five years experience with Diesel engines. To make that experience more valuable to the Army, the year previous to my induction, I attended a Diesel Engineering School so that I could qualify as an expert in my field. This knowledge is needed by the Army now. Further, my two years experience in Spain has provided [me] with knowledge that can be very useful in the combat services of our Army. I feel that I can help achieve successes with a minimum of cost in life and blood. All I want out of the Army is the chance to serve like any ordinary American soldier to be able to go overseas to participate in the battles which will bring the downfall of our country's enemies. Any source of action which you may decide upon has my full agreement. You may use my name and the facts in the case in any way you see fit.

Fraternally Yours  
Pvt. Alvin Warren

*Al Warren (aka Cohen, 1913-1997), who was born in Brooklyn, was a truck driver and taxi driver and a CIO organizer before going to Spain to work in transport. A corporal in the 29th Infantry, he landed at Normandy as a demolitions expert. He was later a founder of an anti-Vietnam War group, Veterans for Peace.*

letters continue next page

From Dr. Sidney Vogel  
[Ft. McClellan, AL]

Saturday, 2-13-43

Dear Ethel [Vogel]:

[...]I must tell you about the 'short arm' inspection, which I already mentioned to you[...] Yesterday I did it again and so can give you a better report. Well it seems that 1x a month by AR [Army Regulation] # something, men (enlisted) get a 'short arm' inspection. Actually it is supposed to be an examination for everything but it resolves itself actually to contagious diseases--especially venereal. Since I am given an hour to examine over 200 men you can imagine how thoro it is. The men are lined up by a tough 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. and are undressed except for a coat. I sit on a chair and as each comes to me he opens his coat and lifts his arms so I can see his arm pits (crabs, etc.) and then after a quick glance at his chest & belly we get down to the short arm. And since they don't know at this stage of their training how to adequately expose themselves for this inspection, I have to repeat almost 200 times "do this," "do that," and "next," so that I must have suggested a phonograph record for the next time. The 200 men seemed like 800 to me even tho the Lt. helped by bellowing instructions. Well, with this picture, and the shyness of men exposing themselves in this way, I'd like to make a few observations. Altho I am a doctor and have seen parts of bodies before, I have never seen so many of the same part in so short a time. And it is surprising to see the variations in size, color, form, contour, and associated characteristics of surrounding parts. It surprised me as a doctor, and I think a paper ought to be written. True my judgment may have been warped by the speed up of the work and I was rather tired afterwards, but I think I am right in saying that there are red ones, pink ones, blue, orange & yellow; long, short & medium; twisted, straight, curved; symmetrical & asymmetrical; efficient looking and non; disproportionate; etc. ad infinitum and not ad nauseam. This impressed me so much (and also the Lt. who had his nose right in it in a rather unscientific 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. way much to the embarrassment of the men) that I suggested the use of these variations instead of fingerprints and am going to suggest the same to [FBI Director] Edgar Hoover. There just aren't 2 alike, which observation probably isn't very acute of me.

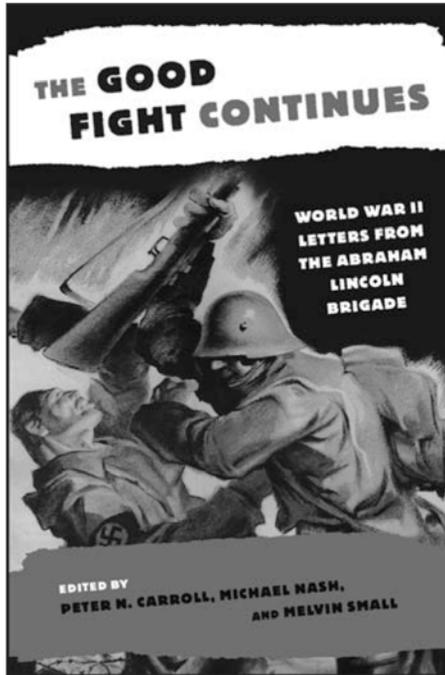
As I told you the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt., a swell tough guy with a Polish name, and speech, and warm understanding young face, had that face right into the source of my work, much to the annoyance of the men. He too must have been amazed and he kept asking me various questions re each one as his wonderment increased. I of course had no time to answer all. He also made rather pertinent general observations which I too could of made, but I had work to do.

One case of crabs aroused an exclaim of excitement from the Lt. and he insisted on a personal exam. And when I told him I had had them 2x etc. he broke down and openly told me how he had had them, and a warm bond between me, himself and the patient developed. And that's all. And that's why, in overcoming my insomnia, I no longer count sheep. So good night little boys and girls until to-morrow at 6 P.M. (If Allan had been writing this story he would have drawn pictures, which would have made the story 'Short Arm' sound better.)[...]

All my love,  
Sid

*Sidney Vogel (1904-1986), a surgeon and psychiatrist, was chief of the Casa Roja Hospital at Murcia. After participating in the Army's North African and Italian campaigns, he practiced psychiatry in New York. ■*

**New!**



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World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

Edited by **PETER N. CARROLL, MICHAEL NASH,** and **MELVIN SMALL**



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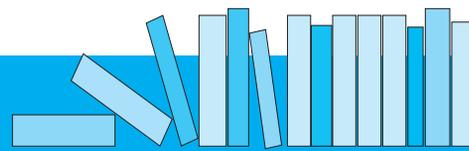
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## Spain and Britain

***Churchill and Spain: The Survival of the Franco Regime, 1940-45.*** By Richard Wigg. Routledge, 2005.

**By Peter Stansky**

This is an excellent study of the relations between Britain and Spain during the Second World War.

Although it does not form part of this story, one cannot help wondering whether the Second World War would have taken place if Franco had been defeated, and if it had taken place, how it would have been different? Or on the other hand, if the Republic had survived, would Hitler have invaded Spain with potential serious consequences for the course of the war?

But this thorough and well-documented study deals with what did happen. It is full of paradox. In part to get him out of Britain, Churchill sent the arch-appeaser, Sir Samuel Hoare, as Ambassador to Spain. Hoare in fact did a brilliant job in helping to keep Spain "neutral," a neutrality that was deeply sympathetic, not surprisingly, to the Axis. Franco helped as he could, most dramatically by sending the Blue Division to fight against the Russians. But it would have been far worse for the Allies if Franco had fully joined with Hitler and Mussolini. Through clever diplomacy, the bribing of Spanish generals, the continuing of trade with Spain, the supplying of gas, and the purchasing of wolfram (which was also being sold to the Germans), Britain and the United States kept Spain out of the war. The Duke of

Alba, Spain's ambassador to London, had a special relationship with his "cousin," the British Prime Minister, as he too was descended from the first, 17th century, Winston Churchill.

The irony of Wigg's story is that in this situation, Churchill turned out to be the arch-appeaser. Although the Pretender to the Spanish Throne, Don Juan, was not particularly adroit, he had a lot of support among powerful forces in Spain, including his premier peer, the Duke of Alba, as well as quite a few generals. Hoare, British Foreign Secretary Eden, Roosevelt, and the U.S. Department of State were all in varying degrees anti-Franco and would have been happy to see a transition to a monarchy that might be increasingly constitutional. This seemed to be more of a likelihood as the Allies began to win the war. This was particularly true as Franco, rather than trying to accommodate himself to the situation, in fact became more doctrinaire and stepped up his execution of enemies. But Churchill almost alone strengthened his commitment to Franco and publicly stated that he did not wish to cause him any trouble. During the Spanish Civil War, Churchill had occupied in turn both pro-Franco and pro-Republic positions, driven by his commitment against Germany. But as World War II was ending, as in his earlier days, he reverted to his hatred of Bolshevism and his conception of the threat that the Russians represented after the war. As a sop to world opinion, Spain

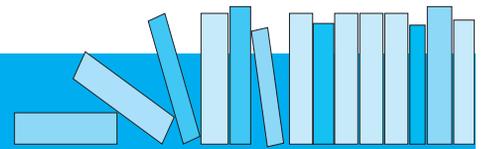
was not to be allowed to join the world community in the United Nations. Sadly, the opportunity was not taken, and would not happen for 30 years, to move to a form of state that, while far from ideal, as it might still be dominated by Franco, would have been preferable to his continuing oppressive dictatorship. Had they wished, the Allies might have been able to topple Franco entirely.

Wigg, in this meticulous study, is convincing about Churchill's importance, and he also gives us vivid descriptions of the other players, both British and Spanish. He stops his story in 1945. In that year, in a Labour government, Clement Attlee, after whom the British battalion was named, became Prime Minister and Ernest Bevin Foreign Secretary. Why didn't they throw their considerable power in favor of a change or at least a modification of regime in Spain? Presumably the power of the United States, now more pro-Franco than it had been, and the heating up of the Cold War did not allow for that sadly missed possibility. ❏

Peter Stansky, with William Abrahams, has written about Julian Bell and John Cornford and their involvement in the Spanish Civil War in *Journey to the Frontier*.

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## Cold War Lingers in New History

***The Battle for Spain. The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939.*** By Antony Beevor. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006.

By Helen Graham

Weighing in at over 900 pages, military historian Antony Beevor's new general history of the Spanish civil war is already a best seller in Spain. The English-language edition, published in Britain last June, has received much media attention, and at a relatively more manageable 526 pages, it too looks set to become a market leader. (The U.S. edition appears this fall.) After the author's previous block-busting success with *Stalingrad* (1998) and *Berlin: the Downfall* (2002), there is an identifiable Beevor "product" that will appeal to a large general audience. The product is highly readable--for Beevor writes very well--and combines an original, archive-based take on the military dimension with an intelligent synthesis of the rest, culled from the publications of specialist academic historians whose work would rarely otherwise reach the general reader.

*The Battle for Spain* follows this formula, and in many respects the resulting work of synthesis fulfils a useful function in giving a non-Spanish reading audience access to the findings of recent specialist research. This is particularly noteworthy in the case of Beevor's treatment of the murderous Francoist repression of the

Helen Graham is the author of *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction*.

1930s and 40s, on which a huge leading edge bibliography has been produced by Spaniards over the last 25 years, almost none of which has been translated into English.

In terms of Beevor's analysis of the war itself, he is most thought provoking on the military detail. There are many nice observations that bring alive the problems ordinary soldiers faced. Much more controversial is his negative assessment of Republican Chief of Staff, Vicente Rojo, considered by many commentators--including other military historians--to be the outstanding strategist of the war. Beevor criticizes his military leadership and considers him irresponsible to have engaged in "prestige operations," as the author describes the Republic's major diversionary attacks at Brunete, Belchite, Teruel and the Ebro. Certainly these proved costly to

the Republic in men and material. But such actions were vital to projecting an image of military vitality and political will. Without them, the Republic's foremost political leaders knew they stood absolutely no chance of breaking the international diplomatic deadlock that, in perpetuating Non Intervention, was killing the Republic. Indeed even Beevor's technical criticisms of the "prestige operations" often ignore the profound and lasting effects of the arms shortages inflicted by Non Intervention.

But Beevor is much less interested in the devastation wrought by Non Intervention than he is in Russian involvement with the Republic. He assumes rather than demonstrates that Republican military resistance was run by Soviet advisers. Moreover, he sees the Second Spanish Republic at war as virtually a Soviet satellite. But again, this is not a view sustained by his own substantial mining of newly

Continued on page 20



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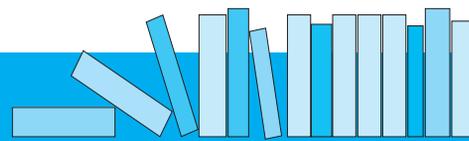
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available Soviet sources. Rather, it is an article of faith, much as it has always been for Cold War historians, from Burnett Bolloten to Ronald Radosh, and to whose school Beevor clearly belongs. As with his predecessors, Beevor's anti-communism at times blinds him to the evidence of his own material. Many of the reports filed by the Republic's Soviet advisors indicate their utter powerlessness to affect military outcomes given material shortages and the huge organizational and personnel problems they confronted. They were equally bewildered by the complexity and diversity of the Republican political scene, which neither they nor their Soviet masters ever really understood, let alone controlled. In the end, of course, the Cold War view of the Spanish Republic at war is an imperialist one: "Spain" was a blank canvas until written on by agendas of the great powers. The history of Republican Spain and the agency of its protagonists are entirely written out of the script.

Without any apparent sense of the absurdity of the proposition, Beevor tell us that in August 1936 in Spain "the communists" were interested in building an army only because they judged that, compared to the militia, it would be easier to dominate. But in the apocalyptic conditions of summer 1936, all of the Republic's frontline defenders were interested in building an army to fight Franco. Whether in Mérida or Madrid, communists, socialists, anarchists and republicans were absorbed body and soul by present danger: how might they conceivably offer an effective resis-

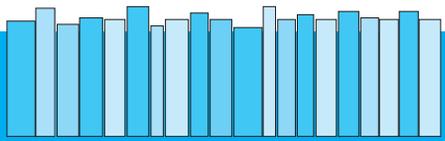
tance to the onslaught of the Army of Africa's seasoned troops? Quite simply, how might they stay alive?

Nor is the sociological complexity of Spain's wartime mass communism ever really explored. Beevor makes passing reference to the movement's social and cultural hybridity but never draws any conclusions from this in terms of its political trajectory during the war, nor to its manifest and obvious weakness when faced with the Casado coup that capsized Republican resistance in March 1939. Though the movement purportedly controlled everything in Republican Spain, the historian is increasingly awash with evidence (much of it courtesy of the Soviet archives) that indicates quite the opposite. Ultimately the problem with Beevor's relentless anticommunism is the problem of all conspiracy views of history: they never do justice to the complexity of how and why things happen. No doubt many communists at the time believed their party-movement's rhetoric: that "history" was on their side, that theirs was the grand design. But that belief is an historical phenomenon, while Beevor seems to mistake it for a methodology.

Much counterfactuality also creeps into Beevor's assessment, in spite of this being the historian's cardinal sin. If Francoism was bad, he insists that a victorious Republic, post-victory, would have engaged in just as bloody a repression. Once again, this isn't so much argued as stated and assumed—indeed there isn't even a passing reference to the evidence/arguments to the contrary available in several of the specialist texts the author cites in his own bibliography.

Taken together, the implicit message of Beevor's intense ideological anti-communism, combined with his equally vehement criticism of Francoist barbarity, would seem to be "a plague on both your houses." This is not so very far removed from views explicitly expressed by some elite British opinion formers at the time. But for a widely read professional historian to be implying the same in the 21st century is myopic and more than unfortunate, ignoring as it does the quite fundamental differences between the Francoist and Republican political projects. No doubt the author would say that this is simply the current reviewer's own "article of faith." But in fact these differences are pretty much empirically verifiable if one compares the judicial, social and economic practices of the Republican state at war (warts and all) with the practices of Franco's (emergent) new order.

Ideological blind spots notwithstanding, Antony Beevor's book is worth reading for its broad synthesizing coverage—although the reader should beware of minor errors and gremlins that have inevitably crept in, given the scale of the author's endeavour. The book's real value, however, lies in Beevor's thought-provoking military analysis. For even if one disagrees with his conclusions, and there are plenty of grounds for doing so, his assessments will contribute to and stimulate wider interest in the complex ongoing debate over Republican military strategy and its political and material constraints. And that is no bad thing. ■



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## Letters to the Editor

Dear Friends,

Are the editors of *The Volunteer* trying to test the wits of its readers or drive them a little nuts? What is the language of the text on the wonderful SCW posters depicted on pages 2 and 3 of the most recent issue? Could it possibly be Esperanto? I suspect that there is more than one other reader puzzled by this?

The article on Fred Stix left open a few questions that the author needed, I believe, to address. I had never heard before of the ALB accepting volunteers who had no known political affiliations and connections with the Left as is implied in the article about Stix. It seems so anomalous that it requires some discussion/explanation. In the article, Stix mentions that as a German POW he escaped from the march eastward as the Red Army advanced. He then notes that when his fellow American POWs were liberated by members of the Red Army, they were stripped of their watches. However, he was not there to witness this and we are not told how he found out about this. Again, while looting and raping by the advancing Red Army--especially, but not exclusively--of Germans, is well documented, I have never come across a report of an incident of the sort reported by Stix. Lastly, I am baffled by Stix's service during the Korean War. How did a SCW vet get security clearance to obtain a combat position in a war against North Korea and Red China?

Yours truly,  
Gerald Meyer

*Editor's reply: Esperanto it is: "What are you doing to stop this? Esperantists [i.e., men and women] in the whole world act energetically against international fascism!"*

*The stories that Stix tells about the*

*eastern front in World War II obviously cannot be verified. "We were radical," he says of his political views. But for the record, there were many other Lincoln volunteers who had no known political affiliation. Stix's ability to serve in the Korean War suggests two possibilities: 1) the absence of clear political affiliations put him under the Army radar; 2) those who tried to stop radicals from serving in the U.S. Army weren't always good at their work.*

Dear Editor,

My thoughts on the questions Mr. Meyer raised:

- 1) Numerous volunteers were non-party members. (Stix if I recall was one).
- 2) This is oral history. Stix may have heard of this type of treatment and taken it as fact.
- 3) There was at least one other volunteer who fought in Korea as an officer. I do not think that the Army regarded Stix as a security risk. (This is very much a personal observation.) He was a very low-ranking soldier to have had as much time in as he did. He did not make NCO until the tail end of Korea.

I also think that Mr. Meyer needs to keep in mind who the original audience for the article was: it was clearly noted as a reprint courtesy of DAV [Disabled American Veterans].

Chris Brooks

To the Editor,

The last issue of *The Volunteer* devoted three and a half pages to the story of Fred Stix. I must say I was outraged that this appeared in our publication, dedicated to carry on the legacy of the Lincolns.

Only a small handful of the Brigade were psychos, turncoats or adventurers who actually enjoyed warfare. Stix, by his own admission is one of those. "I had a desire to be

around danger." "I liked the adrenaline felt in combat." And then, "If I were young I would volunteer, right now, to go to Iraq."

It seems clear that Stix relates to war more from addiction than conviction. I cannot consider him a comrade of mine.

There are many life stories about Lincolns more worthwhile. But we only learn a little about them in their obituaries.

Take the life of Clarence Kailin, a lifelong activist in Madison, Wisconsin. He is a Lincoln vet who made a difference. Or consider Dutch Schultz, longshoreman and dedicated unionist, who won an award for saving the life of a fellow worker. For many years Dutch produced wood sculptures reflecting a broad social vision.

Let us hear about such Lincolns who lived inspirational lives, and let us do so while they are still with us.

Abe Osheroff

Dear Editor,

The wartime biography of Fred Stix was a fascinating story in your June, 2006, issue. I admire his bravery under fire, especially during the Spanish Civil War when he fought--presumably--for the Republican side. However, I found his philosophy sadly misguided--he was a Universal Soldier willing to fight for any paymaster! Especially galling was his confused morality when he said, in Iraq the U.S. soldiers "don't know who the enemy is." Yet he continues, "If I were young, I would volunteer right now [to go to Iraq]." Shouldn't *The Volunteer* at least put a preface to disclaim endorsement of Fred Stix' touching but morally bankrupt life story?

In Solidarity (and anti-Imperialism),  
Danny Li, MidPac Peace activist. ■

## Alun Menai Williams (1913-2006)

The last surviving Welch volunteer has died.

Alun Menai Williams, who served as a medic with the Thaelmann, George Washington, Garibaldi, Abraham Lincoln, and British Battalions, had trained as a medical orderly with the British army. He had left the military in the mid-1930s, but was called up as a reservist to serve for eight months in Egypt during the Abyssinian crisis of 1936. On his return, the ship was diverted to Majorca to collect British nationals after a military uprising in Spain.

Returning to Britain, Alun was heavily involved with challenging the growing threat of Oswald Mosely's Blackshirts, modelled on Mussolini's fascists. Nearly trampled to death by a police horse in the "battle of Cable Street," he decided to follow his best friend Billy Davies to join the International Brigades in Spain. On the third attempt he was successful, but he swam into Spain with other survivors after the ship in which he was travelling, the *City of Barcelona*, was torpedoed by "an unidentified submarine" on May 31, 1937.

Immediately sent to the Jarama front as a temporary medic with the Thaelmann Battalion, Alun then joined the newly formed George Washington Battalion and served with them at Brunete, where he was wounded while trying to save the life of George Nathan. He was temporarily demoted from sergeant to corporal at this time after taking out two riflemen

to act as stretcher bearers without permission of the battalion commissar. Subsequently transferred to the amalgamated Abraham Lincoln Battalion after three weeks with the Garibaldi Battalion ("the best dressed battalion in the Brigades"), he served at Belchite and then at Teruel, where he administered looted brandy to the mortally wounded of the Lincoln Battalion so that they could die obliviously drunk. The Americans called him "The Limey Doc."

After the Great Retreats in the spring of 1938, Alun applied to be transferred to the British Battalion. Withdrawn across the Ebro in September 1938, Alun carried the British Battalion banner at the departure of the Brigades for Barcelona and was photographed by Robert Capa in the same sequence as Milton Wolff.

On returning to the UK in December 1938, Alun was heckled at a meeting to Aid Spain and was accused of being a communist and a liar. He then decided to remove himself from the history books. He was rarely heard of again, but served in the RAF Military Police during World War II, where he bumped into Tiny Holland from the Abraham Lincoln Battalion in Barry, South Wales!

It was only in 2003, eight years after the death of his beloved wife, Maudie, that Alun started to write his autobiography, *From the Rhondda to the Ebro*, subsequently published by Warren and Pell in 2004. Suddenly the world became aware of this kind, humble and modest man. In May 2005 he returned to Spain for the first time in 67 years to unveil a plaque on Hill 705 with the names of 93 English-speaking dead of the XV Brigade. He

also laid some Welsh coal on the grave of his friend Harry Dobson, who had been evacuated to the Cave hospital at la Bisbal de Falset (see Angela Jackson's *Beyond the Battlefield*, published by Warren & Pell).

The last years of Alun's life were spent in preparing his "Spanish" chapters for Catalan with his friend and translator, Anna Marti. Alun spent St Jordi's (St George) Day on the Ramblas in Barcelona signing copies of his book, published under the title *I vaig tornar a creuar l'Ebre*, to the astonishment of people passing by.

The last three months of Alun's life were spent in Catalonia in the company of his many new friends. The trauma that he suffered in Spain was mitigated by the loving care that he received there. He was planning to attend the International Brigade Memorial at the London Eye on July 15 and the unveiling of a memorial to the Welsh International Brigaders at Big Pit Blaenafon the following day. Sadly, a badly boiled egg put him out of action with food poisoning, and he died after a brief confinement in hospital. —Alan Warren, publisher and friend

Miriam Bogorad Gittelsohn, wife of vet Lester L. Gittelsohn and long-time active supporter of VALB, passed away on Monday, July 31, 2006, in Syracuse, NY. Funeral arrangements were private.

Sue Bierman, the former San Francisco Supervisor and current Port Commissioner who helped get the city's approval for a monument to the Lincoln vets, died in a car accident, August 7, 2006.

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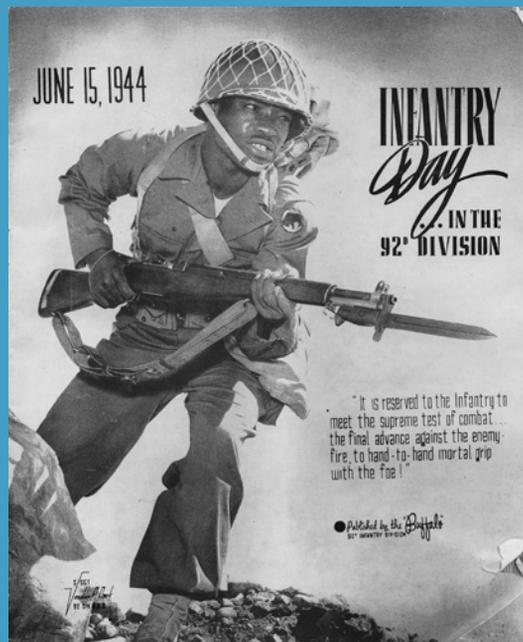
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