*Routledge/Cañada Blanch Studies on Contemporary Spain*

# UNTOLD STORIES OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Edited by

Raanan Rein and Susanne Zepp

# Untold Stories of the Spanish Civil War

This is the first scholarly volume to offer an insight into the less-known stories of women, children, and international volunteers in the Spanish Civil War.

Special attention is given to volunteers of different historical experiences, especially Jews, and voices from less-researched countries in the context of the Spanish war, such as Palestine and Turkey. Of an interdisciplinary nature, this volume brings together historians and literary scholars from different countries. Their research is based on newly found primary sources in both national and private archives, as well as on post-essentialist methodological insights for women's history, Jewish history, and studies on belonging. By bringing together a group of emerging and senior scholars from different countries, we highlight the polyphony of voices of diverse individuals drawn into the Spanish Civil War. Contributors to this volume have explored new or little-researched primary sources found in archives and documentary centers, including papers held by relatives of the people we study.

This volume is aimed at both scholarly and non-scholarly public, including any readers interested in the Spanish Civil War, twentieth-century European history, Jewish studies, women's history, or anti-fascism. This volume can be used both in undergraduate college courses and in postgraduate university seminars.

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# Contents

# Figures

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# Introduction

*Raanan Rein and Susanne Zepp*

The Spanish Civil War is still a source of heated debate in present-day Spain. Many Spaniards refer to "el pasado que no pasa" (the past that does not go away). The Spanish Civil War also remains a major point of reference in political battles around the world, especially in Western societies that seem more divided and polarized than ever since the end of World War II. In October 2022, five decades after the death of General Franco and three years after the Spanish dictator's remains were removed from the Valle de los Caídos mausoleum outside Madrid, Spain's senate approved legislation intended to bring "justice, reparation and dignity" to the victims of the civil war and subsequent dictatorship.[1] The Democratic Memory Law, promoted by the socialist-led government, won 128 votes in favor, but 113 members voted against and 18 abstained.

The legislation, which had been approved by Spain's congress in July 2022, contains dozens of measures intended to help "settle Spanish democracy's debt to its past."[2] Among them are the creation of a census and a national DNA bank to help locate and identify the remains of the tens of thousands of people who still lie in unmarked graves, a ban on groups that glorify the Franco regime, and a "redefinition" of the Valley of the Fallen, the giant basilica and memorial where Franco lay for forty-four years until his exhumation in 2019.

The new law builds on the 2007 historical memory legislation introduced under another socialist prime minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, which was resisted by Spain's conservative People's Party (PP). Many on the Spanish right have opposed legislative efforts to revisit the past, saying that they risked undermining the 1977 amnesty law and the so-called Pact of Forgetting that helped to usher Spain back to democracy after Franco's death.

In 2018, the government of Aragón, led by its socialist president Javier Lambán, decided to build the first civil war museum in Spain. (By now, we have a virtual museum of the war, started by our Canadian colleagues Adrian Shubert and Antonio Cazorla Sánchez.) This museum was to be built in Teruel and to include a memorial to victims of the war:

> un memorial con los nombres de todas las víctimas de la guerra, sin distinción alguna entre los componentes de ambos frentes. La fuerza

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> del mensaje de esta instalación consiste precisamente en no ahondar en las diferencias entre los bandos, sino en mezclar los nombres de los muertos de una forma en que nunca hubiera sido posible en vida.
>
> (A memorial with the names of all the victims of the war, without any distinction between the components of both fronts. The strength of the message of this installation consists precisely in not delving into the differences between the sides but in mixing the names of the dead in a way that would never have been possible during their lifetime.)[3]

It is no wonder that the idea of mixing the names of the dead rebels with the names of those who died defending democracy provoked a war of words. It seemed like a similar idea to the one promoted by Francoism beginning in the 1950s. The argument against it is that "[n]o distinguir entre víctimas es declarar que la responsabilidad es de todos y, por tanto, nadie tiene la responsabilidad. Porque fue una guerra entre hermanos" (not to distinguish between victims is to declare that the responsibility is everyone's, and therefore, no one is responsible, because it was a war between brothers).[4]

Instead of leveling the experiences of the Spanish Civil War, our project favors a differentiation of historical experiences by acknowledging and addressing diverse narratives and grievances. This volume presents the findings of our joint German Research Foundation (DFG) project, "Untold Stories of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939): A Re-Examination of Both Jewish and Women's Historical Experiences." The chapters in this volume aim to shed light on the lesser-known narratives and perspectives of individuals whose stories have remained unexplored and underrepresented in the context of the Spanish Civil War. Our project's title pays homage to Maya Angelou's powerful quote, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." We firmly believe that within the realm of historical research, it is our responsibility to uncover and share narratives that have been marginalized or forgotten. While we emphasize the recognition of untold stories, it is important to acknowledge that the Spanish Civil War has indeed been thoroughly researched by numerous scholars. Our project's objective was not to suggest that existing research is insufficient or inadequate; rather, our goal is to contribute to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of this historical period. The Spanish Civil War has been the subject of extensive scholarly inquiry, and significant advancements have been made in uncovering and analyzing its political, social, and cultural dimensions.

By focusing on the experiences of women who participated as volunteers in the International Brigades and the specific challenges faced by Jewish individuals and communities during the Spanish Civil War, our volume seeks to enrich the existing research landscape. We believe that multiple perspectives are essential for our understanding of historical events, and our aim is to shed light on the stories and experiences that have remained marginalized or overlooked. In doing so, we build upon existing scholarship by offering a more inclusive and nuanced perspective.

While non-Spanish scholars took the lead from the 1950s through the 1980s, in the post-Francoist years, a younger generation of Spanish scholars has contributed enormously to this constantly growing historiography, especially with local and regional studies. In the overall picture of European history, the Spanish Civil War was a landmark, a preparatory war in which Hitler and Mussolini on Franco's side and Stalin on the other side were testing out strategies and weapon systems. The liberal democracies of France and Great Britain practiced a policy of non-interference and thus facilitated the victory of the insurgents. The Soviet Union provided the republic with weapons and advisers until 1938. Spain, which had previously been on the periphery, became a military and political center in the clash of systems in Europe during the civil war. Politically motivated anti-fascist intellectuals from all over the world set off for Spain to fight against fascism.

The history of the International Brigades, the combat units of volunteers from more than fifty nations involved in the Spanish Civil War, has become a theme of interwar European history enshrouded in myth. Almost from the very beginning, these units have provided material for literary adaptations, and after World War II, they became the object of dispute in the ideologically charged debates of the Cold War, in which the volunteers were romanticized as heroic fighters for humanity, on the one hand, and demonized as agents of international communism, on the other hand. But the International Brigades already began provoking heated debate in all Western countries during the war. Liberal and left-wing public opinion mobilized on behalf of the Second Spanish Republic and the values it supposedly represented: democracy, progress, and social justice. At the same time, conservative and right-wing forces expressed their sympathy for the "anti-Communist crusade" of the Nationalist rebels headed by General Francisco Franco.

Support of the republic manifested in campaigns to raise money, food, and medicine to help it in its hour of need. At the same time, tens of thousands of young people around the world offered their assistance by choosing to travel to the Iberian Peninsula and defend the republic in the Spanish trenches. Figures for the total number of volunteers range from 35,000 to 60,000, with recent studies pointing to the lower figure.

However, there are still significant desiderata in this complex field of research, which we have addressed in our project: neither the Jewish chapters of the International Brigades nor women's contributions have been comprehensively and adequately addressed thus far. This lacuna is rooted in a theoretical paradox, which is that post-essentialist attempts at historiography are less likely to examine the differences in historical experience. Instead of focusing on women, for example, gender history asks specifically about social relations, power structures, the construction of "women" and "men," and the naturalization and stabilization of gender-coded binaries. This conscious move away from "women" and from the apparent evidence of their experiences—in other words, parameters that women's history delberately made use of—meant a fundamental methodological reorientation. Gender

history is perceived as more inclusive, since it also includes men and expands the subject area of research. During our project, we decided to distinguish between different historical experiences and separate particular perspectives so as not to sacrifice the unique critical potential of exploring diverse viewpoints. This certainly did not mean a restoration of essentialist notions of identity. Rather, we discussed post-essentialist methodological insights for women's history and Jewish history in order to develop a perspective that does not see these considerations as stages of a continuum but instead elucidates the nature of the challenges they pose to those writing history.

Despite their immense contributions and sacrifices, women who actively participated in the Spanish Civil War as volunteers in the International Brigades have largely been overlooked, overshadowed by other, more dominant historical narratives. We consider it our duty to acknowledge and bring these narratives to the forefront, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and diversity of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War.

Furthermore, we are interested in the intersection of Jewish history and the Spanish Civil War, exploring the experiences of Jewish individuals and communities during this tumultuous period. By examining the challenges faced by Jews and their active involvement in the conflict on the side of the Spanish Republic, we aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this historical period. Through this edited volume, we amplify these untold stories, providing a platform for diverse voices and shedding light on the experiences of women and Jewish individuals that might otherwise face historical erasure.

While research literature on the Spanish Civil War, and especially the International Brigades, is already vast, we hope that each chapter in this volume will make evident the important, if narrow, gap in the literature it fills. The "untold stories" relayed here follow the experiences of lesser-known volunteers from places like Palestine and make important conceptual interventions in research on volunteerism and "post-essentialist" methodology.

Chapter 1, by Nir Arielli (The University of Leeds), explores significant developments and new trends in the historiography regarding foreign volunteering, particularly in the context of conflicts and wars. Scholars have shown increasing interest in exploring and re-evaluating the motivations, experiences, and impact of individuals who chose to volunteer in foreign conflicts, shedding light on previously overlooked issues and challenging conventional narratives. Arielli demonstrates the need for transnational and comparative approaches to examine foreign volunteering across different conflicts and regions. This allows for a broader understanding of the phenomenon by considering similarities, differences, and interconnectedness between various volunteer movements. Arielli also shows how, instead of viewing volunteers as mere instruments of larger geopolitical forces, historians have aimed in recent years to understand the personal motivations, aspirations, and factors that led volunteers to participate. This chapter also explains that scholars

are more attentive to the gendered experiences of foreign volunteers. This attention includes examining the participation of women in conflicts, their roles, and the specific challenges they faced. Overall, the new trends in the historiography regarding foreign volunteering reflect a shift toward a more inclusive, nuanced, and interdisciplinary approach. By considering individual agency, gender dynamics, transnational connections, memory, and legacies, historians are expanding our understanding of the motivations, experiences, and influence of those who volunteered in foreign conflicts. Arielli argues that these developments contribute to a more extensive and diverse narrative of this significant aspect of historical engagement.

Susanne Zepp (Universität Duisburg-Essen) goes on to examine an anonymous source from the archives of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism at the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of East Germany, which today are in the holdings of the Federal Archives in Berlin-Lichterfelde (=SAPMO archive). Professor Hans Teubner, who had been active in the International Brigades as well, was responsible for the GDR archive. As the coordinator of the History Department, Teubner safeguarded all the material that was sent to him. Among these papers is a text of just less than forty pages by an anonymous French author titled "Madrid lies close to Berlin." This chapter problematizes the use of anonymous sources for research on the Spanish Civil War. While such sources can provide valuable insights and firsthand accounts, their use also raises methodological concerns that must be carefully considered. Zepp discusses the difficulty in verifying the credibility and authenticity of the anonymous text while acknowledging that anonymous sources can provide valuable insights into the Spanish Civil War. Zepp demonstrates how the anonymous text she encountered in the SAPMO archive is informed by the agenda of the German Popular Front in Exile and their radio station, Deutscher Freiheitssender 29.8. An examination of this text shows that Teubner preserved a repressed memory of the civil war in the party archives of the Socialist Unity Party, namely the activities of International Brigades members beyond the Communist Party.

Raanan Rein (Tel Aviv University) focuses on Jewish women who fought for social justice on both sides of the Mediterranean. His chapter examines the experiences and contributions of Jewish women activists in different contexts, shedding light on their roles in promoting social change and advocating for equality. Rein's research encompasses different historical periods and geographical locations, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of Jewish women's agency and impact. Rein's research explores Jewish women's activism during the early twentieth century in Palestine and also focuses on the involvement of Jewish women in the International Brigades. By examining the roles of Jewish women in the labor movement, women's organizations, and other social justice initiatives, Rein demonstrates how Jewish women challenged traditional gender norms and played significant roles in shaping the social and political landscape of the countries of their involvement. By highlighting the interconnectedness of Jewish women's activism across the

Mediterranean, Rein emphasizes the transnational dimensions of their work and the shared challenges they faced.

In Chapter 4, Omri Elmaleh (Brown University) focuses on Arab volunteers from Palestine in the Spanish Civil War, examining their motivations, experiences, and contributions to the conflict. Through his work, Elmaleh sheds light on their political, ideological, and personal reasons for action. By analyzing the broader historical context and the influence of global events, Elmaleh provides insights into what drove Arabs of the Palestine Communist Party to volunteer. Elmaleh also explores their experiences while in Spain. He examines their interactions with other international volunteers, their roles in various factions and brigades, and the challenges they faced on the battlefield. By studying personal testimonies, letters, and archival sources, Elmaleh offers a nuanced picture of the experiences of Arab volunteers, their struggles, and their contributions to the wider war effort. This chapter also explores the effect of the conflict on Arab societies, including its influence on political ideologies, national identities, and anti-colonial struggles in the region.

Tamar Groves (Extremadura University), Jorge Cáceres-Muñoz (Extremadura University), and Mariano González-Delgado (La Laguna University) in Chapter 5 focus on progressive education on the eve of the Spanish Civil War, exploring the continuities and ruptures in this educational approach during a critical historical period. By examining the evolution and impact of progressive education in Spain, the authors shed light on the ways in which educational philosophies and practices were shaped and influenced by Spanish society leading up to the civil war. This chapter delves into the continuities within the educational system, highlighting the ideas and principles that persisted despite the growing tensions and impending conflict in Spain. The authors investigate how progressive educators continued to advocate for student-centered learning, experiential education, and the promotion of social justice and equality even in bourgeois contexts. By examining the work of prominent educators and educational institutions, they demonstrate how progressive educational theories and practices remained influential and relevant even after the Nationalists' victory.

In Chapter 6, Lena Hein (Freie Universität Berlin) analyzes the writings of German-Jewish author Ruth Rewald (1906–1942) and her social engagement in the Spanish Civil War. Rewald's novel, *Vier spanische Jungen*, is one of the few examples of German children's and youth's literature about the Spanish Civil War. This chapter reminds us of Rewald's volunteer work at the Ernst Thälmann children's home outside of Madrid, founded by the International Brigades, and argues that Rewald adapted the testimonies of the children she met as material for her novel, attempting to capture the experiences, emotions, and perspectives of children who lived through traumatic events during the Spanish Civil War and to present them in a way that is accessible, relatable, and age-appropriate. In a careful close reading, Hein demonstrates the degree to which Rewald strove to capture the authenticity of the children's voices and experiences and how carefully she chose language

and narrative techniques to be suitable for the target age group. The fictional characters based on real-life individuals or composite characters embody the collective experiences of children during the Spanish Civil War. By presenting the children's testimonies in a compelling and sensitive manner, Hein argues, Rewald wanted to help her readers develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of Spanish children of working-class families and foster empathy toward those who have lived through difficult circumstances.

Dror Sharon (Tel Aviv University) tells the story of the North Stoneham Basque Children's Camp, which was established in 1937 to care for the children of Basque refugees from the Spanish Civil War. In May 1937, over 3,000 refugee children arrived in Britain and were taken to the North Stoneham Camp, which had been swiftly erected by volunteers to receive them. The camp was intended as a short-term measure, and following the children's adoption by host families, it closed down in September 1937. This chapter sheds light on the unique challenges and experiences children faced while living in the camp and offers insight into their psychological, social, and emotional well-being as well as their educational and developmental needs. Sharon discusses how children in North Stoneham were exposed to intense ideological debates and exposes the often-dangerous politicization of the camp that led to the indoctrination of children by adults seeking to influence their beliefs and opinions. Sharon argues that while de-politicization may sound like a desirable goal, it also runs the risk of causing a lack of awareness and understanding about important issues. When children are kept isolated from political discourse, they may become more susceptible to manipulation and exploitation by those with vested interests. Children have the capacity to engage in political and social issues that directly affect them. De-politicization can silence their voices and hinder their ability to advocate for their rights, express their opinions, and influence policies that shape their lives.

Chapter 8, by Rosalie Sitman (Tel Aviv University), offers a close reading of two key texts by the Jewish-Argentine writer and editor Samuel Glusberg. This chapter demonstrates that solidarity in Latin America with the Republican cause was not limited to Spanish nationals but extended to members of other immigrant groups, especially those who feared for their fate under other authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. Sitman argues that the republic's democratic and inclusive ideals provided an opportunity for Glusberg to find symbolic refuge and protection. Glusberg had experienced political persecution, economic hardships, and social inequality, and he saw the Second Spanish Republic as a beacon of hope and progress. Supporting the republic meant for Glusberg standing in solidarity with a shared struggle for social justice and equal rights. Glusberg felt a sense of camaraderie and shared identity with those fighting for the republic, as he saw himself as part of an international community united against oppression.

In Chapter 9, Michael Hahn (Freie Universität Berlin) explores the writings of the theater director, writer, and critic Cipriano de Rivas Cherif (1891–1967) during the Spanish Civil War. Hahn focuses on Cipriano de

Rivas Cherif's activities as a diplomat in the service of the Second Spanish Republic: he served as Consul General and Secretary of the Spanish Delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva (September 1936–May 1938). This chapter argues that the Spanish Civil War and its end were a drastic failure in diplomacy, which Hahn attributes not only to the non-intervention policy of major powers, the absence of active mediation efforts, fragmented international support, and the harsh ideological divisions the war created by proxy but also to the ineffective role of the League of Nations. Hahn scrutinizes how Cipriano de Rivas Cherif, who was one of the founding figures of modern Spanish theater, played a less fortunate role in the League of Nations and could not change its lack of enforcement mechanisms and the internal divisions that limited its ability to address the conflict adequately. The failure of the League of Nations to play a meaningful role in resolving the war further highlighted the limitations of diplomacy during this historical period. This chapter examines the two-act play *¿Qué quiere decir Irene?* (What does Irene mean?, 1941), first published in 2013 and performed as a staged reading in Madrid in 2019, as the work that most poignantly reflects Rivas Cherif's experience in the League of Nations.

Shai Efrat (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) explores in Chapter 10 how flamenco, a Spanish art form that encompasses music, dance, and poetry, took on a significant role as a form of political protest in 1930s Spain. This chapter demonstrates that flamenco songs often contained lyrics reflecting the social and political climate of the era. Artists used their poetic and musical abilities to convey the struggles of the working class, the plight of the poor, and the injustices faced by marginalized communities. Through their lyrics, flamenco singers expressed dissent and raised awareness about societal issues. Flamenco, originating primarily from Andalusia, was closely associated with the *gitano* community, which faced marginalization and discrimination. Gitano artists used flamenco as a platform to shed light on their plight and the challenges they faced. Their performances often served as a protest against societal prejudices and the oppression they experienced. This chapter is also interested in how flamenco dance performance itself, with its intricate footwork, movements, and emotional intensity, allowed artists to express their discontent and resistance. Through powerful choreography and gestures, dancers communicated themes of struggle, defiance, and resilience, creating a visual representation of political protest. Efrat explains that flamenco gatherings were spaces where people came together to share music, dance, and poetry. These gatherings served as platforms for the expression of dissenting views. Artists and attendees used flamenco as a means to discuss political ideas, to question societal norms, and to foster a sense of solidarity among those who felt marginalized. Through metaphorical and allegorical lyrics, flamenco artists conveyed their messages in a way that could be understood by those familiar with the artform.

Catarina von Wedemeyer (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena) offers a comparative reading of the different conceptions of anarchism by Emma Goldman (1869–1940) and Federica Montseny (1905–1994) during the

Spanish Civil War. The two women had been in touch since 1928. However, Wedemeyer argues that they disagreed on too many issues to establish a friendship. One of these disagreements was the ideological impossibility of political collaboration: Goldman condemned Montseny for serving as Minister of Health in the Republican government (November 1936–May 1937), while Montseny denounced Goldman for being too detached from the reality of the Spanish Civil War. This chapter offers new insights on Goldman's and Montseny's views on anarchist arguments, such as their takes on feminism and carceral abolitionism or on the militarization of the formerly pacifist anarchist movement during the Spanish Civil War.

In Chapter 12, Gabriela Jonas Aharoni (Sapir College) analyzes the 2019 documentary *Milicianas* by filmmakers Tania Balló, Gonzalo Berger, and Jaume Miró. Based on a historical photograph, the documentary calls attention to the execution of five volunteer nurses from the Red Cross on the island of Mallorca. Jonas Aharoni argues that the documentary utilizes methods of historical research to ensure accuracy, credibility, and a responsible portrayal of the historical events. This chapter focuses on the methods of research and storytelling the filmmakers used and the challenges of reconstructing historical events and identities in the context of an enforced suppression of collective memory. Jonas Aharoni reminds us of the social, political, economic, and cultural factors that shaped the events depicted in the film. This contextual understanding of the ambiguities of seeing women in arms during the Spanish Civil War enables the documentary to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive portrayal of the historical period.

Esra Akkaya (Freie Universität Berlin) explores Turkish voices of solidarity with the Republican cause during the Spanish Civil War in the poems of Nazim Hikmet and Beki L. Bahar (Chapter 13). While the Turkish government adopted the principle of non-intervention due to its focus on domestic stability, geopolitical considerations, and pragmatic diplomatic calculations, Akkaya locates a poetic solidarity within the Turkish left: Nazim Hikmet (1902–1963), considered one of the most significant Turkish poets of the twentieth century, was a Marxist and an ardent advocate of social justice. The Spanish Civil War inspired him to write several poems that expressed solidarity with the Republican cause and condemned the rise of fascism. Beki L. Bahar (1926–2011) was also influenced by the Spanish Civil War. In her poems, she drew parallels between the struggles of the Spanish Republicans and the working class in Turkey. Her poetry emphasized the need for social equality and the fight against oppressive regimes. The poems of both Hikmet and Bahar raised awareness among the Turkish public about the larger implications of the Spanish Civil War and articulated its impact on their own political beliefs and aspirations, all while contributing to the broader intellectual and cultural movements in Turkey.

In the final chapter, Michael Petrou (Canadian War Museum) explains the policy of recruiting Canadian Spanish Civil War veterans by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) during World War II. This chapter sheds

light on the connections between these two historical events. Many Canadians, motivated by their beliefs in anti-fascism and social justice, joined the Spanish Civil War as volunteers on the Republican side. After the brigades were formally withdrawn from Spain late in 1938, the civil war veterans possessed unique skills, combat experience, and knowledge of warfare that made them valuable assets during World War II. Petrou researches the recruitment of Canadian veterans and elucidates how these individuals were identified, elected, and utilized on the basis of their previous combat experience and ideological commitment. In examining the recruitment process, this chapter sheds light on the existence of transnational networks and alliances during this historical period. It highlights the connections between different anti-fascist movements, organizations, and governments that cooperated in resisting fascism. Understanding these networks helps to clarify the broader dynamics of international cooperation during World War II. The British SOE was responsible for conducting intelligence gathering, sabotage, and subversion activities behind enemy lines. This chapter offers insights into the strategic value attributed to the veterans' skills and expertise in conducting covert operations. These insights also allow for the recovery and preservation of individual, heretofore untold stories and experiences.

We are grateful for the invaluable solidarity and the contributions of scholars and researchers who have shared their expertise throughout the duration of our project. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Lea Greenberg and Regina Prero for their vital contributions to the realization of this volume. Their dedication and support have been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition, and we are immensely grateful for their efforts. To Lea Greenberg, we extend our deepest appreciation for her meticulous and precise editing of the volume. Her keen eye for detail and linguistic expertise has greatly enhanced the quality of the manuscript. Her commitment to ensuring clarity and coherence throughout the text has been truly remarkable. We are profoundly grateful for Regina Prero's outstanding support in organizing the project workshops in both Berlin and Tel Aviv. Her unwavering commitment, organizational skills, and attention to detail have been pivotal in the success of these events. Without Regina's dedication and hard work, the three project workshops would not have been possible. We sincerely appreciate her efforts in facilitating our exchange of ideas and fostering fruitful discussions among participants. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to all the authors who have contributed their valuable research and insights to the volume. Their scholarship and dedication to uncovering untold stories have enriched our project greatly. The diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches presented in the volume have enhanced our understanding of the Spanish Civil War and its significance within the realms of history and literature. Furthermore, we would like to express our gratitude to the German Research Foundation (DFG) for funding this project through the "Initiation of International Collaboration" scheme. The support provided by the DFG has been crucial in realizing our objectives and promoting dialogue between

Germany, Israel, and Spain. Their readiness to fund an interdisciplinary project in history and literature allowed the exploration of diverse perspectives in research on the untold stories of the Spanish Civil War.

We are grateful that our volume was accepted by Routledge for publication, as it provides a unique opportunity to contribute to scholarly discourse and offers the potential for wider dissemination, impact, and engagement with fellow researchers and readers interested in the subject matter.

We hope that this volume will not only serve as an isolated scholarly contribution but also inspire further research and discussions in related fields, as we strive to give voice to those who have long been marginalized or forgotten. Together, we can honor these untold stories, enrich our collective knowledge, and promote a more inclusive understanding of history.

Rather than considering our volume as the final word on the subject, it should be seen as a foundation upon which future investigations can be built. Each chapter contributes to a broader understanding of the Spanish Civil War, but it also raises new questions and possibilities for exploration. The stories that have not yet been told are often the ones that challenge dominant narratives, provide diverse perspectives, and offer a more inclusive understanding of the past. By acknowledging the existence of untold stories, we acknowledge that history is multifaceted and complex and that there are always new angles to explore. International and interdisciplinary dialogue between researchers from different backgrounds, disciplines, and perspectives brings fresh insights and approaches to the table. By working together, we were able to pool our resources, expertise, and perspectives to delve into unexplored areas and give voice to those whose stories have been marginalized or overlooked. In this sense, this volume is intended as an invitation for future cooperation and to embark on further research journeys. In this spirit of open inquiry and collective effort, we hope to ensure that untold stories of the Spanish Civil War receive the attention they deserve and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this conflict.

Raanan Rein and Susanne Zepp
Tel Aviv, Berlin, and Essen, June 2023

## Notes

1 Sam Jones, "Spain Passes Law to Bring 'Justice' to Franco-Era Victims," *The Guardian*, October 5, 2022.
2 Jones, "Spain Passes Law."
3 Peio H. Riaño, "Un memorial en el Museo de la Guerra Civil que no distingue entre víctimas: 'La fuerza es no ahondar en las diferencias'," *elDiario.es*, February 3, 2023.
4 Peio H. Riaño, "Varios historiadores del proyecto de Museo de la Guerra Civil se opusieron al memorial que no distingue entre víctimas," *elDiario.es*, February 5, 2023.

# 1 Foreign Volunteering
## New Trends in the Historiography

*Nir Arielli*

Those familiar with the history of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War would find the responses given during a *Radio Free Europe* interview with two foreign volunteers in Ukraine in June 2022 strangely familiar. While International Brigaders often described the war in Spain as "a chance to strike back at fascism, to prevent it spreading any further across Europe," "Grinch," a North American volunteer in the Ukrainian Foreign Legion, remarked that "what happens here [in Ukraine] decides what will happen to democracy all around the world." His comrade "Jimmy" added, "[I]f they [the Russians] gain victory here, they will continue with other European countries."[1]

The flow of foreign volunteers to Ukraine prompted many to draw comparisons with either the enlistment of foreigners in the International Brigades in Spain or the recruitment of volunteers from abroad by Finland in its war against the Soviet Union in 1939–40.[2] In the decade before the 2022 Russian attack on Ukraine, scholars were considering whether the precedent set in Spain in the 1930s holds any lessons for our understanding of the "foreign fighter" phenomenon in the civil war in Syria.[3] Such comparisons rest on the assumption that there are intrinsic commonalities between foreign volunteers in different historical contexts. This chapter surveys some of the main trends in the recent anglophone historiography in the field, focusing in particular on terminology and definitions, reasons for enlisting, wartime experiences, military contribution, postwar return, and memory.

### Contested Definitions

Who should be considered a foreign volunteer? Agreeing on a definition or even on the terminology has not been easy. The first book dedicated to the comparative study of the phenomenon was David Malet's *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*, published in 2013. Malet defines foreign fighters as "noncitizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflicts."[4] This definition excludes foreigners who participated in state-on-state conflicts such as the Second World War or the current war between Russia and Ukraine.

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My own diachronic study, *From Byron to bin Laden: A History of Foreign War Volunteers*, published a few years later, uses a broader definition: "Foreign volunteers leave their country of nationality or residence and take part in a conflict abroad on the basis of a personal decision, without being sent by their government and not primarily for material gain."[5] This approach allows for the inclusion of volunteers who participated in a conflict but not in combat roles, such as the foreign nurses and doctors who aided the Republican war effort in Spain or Lord Byron who died in Greece in 1824 without having fought against the Ottoman Empire.

Elizabeth Grasmeder puts forward yet another term, "legionnaires," and another definition for us to consider: "foreigners who are neither citizens nor subjects of the state whose military they serve."[6] Unlike Malet, who concentrates on insurgents who seek to enlist supporters from abroad, Grasmeder focuses squarely on foreigners recruited by states. Legionnaires "are uniformed personnel who serve in a state's armed forces" and are therefore distinguishable from mercenaries or contractors who "fight outside a state's military" and its command structure.[7] However, Grasmeder does not distinguish between foreigners who volunteer to fight for another state and those who are otherwise enticed to enlist.

Two recent studies on "lone soldiers" in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)—diaspora Jews who travel to Israel without their families with the purpose of enlisting for military service—add fresh insights to conceptual discussions regarding the phenomenon. Timrah Schmutz suggests that we should avoid focusing strictly either on civil wars and insurgencies or on recruitment by states: "it would be erroneous—from both historical and contemporary perspectives—to connect foreign fighting to only one form of conflict or one type of armed entity." Instead, she argues that we ought to think "about the foreign-fighter phenomenon as an action (i.e. foreign *fighting*) rather than a label," thereby helping us "to de-essentialize and de-culturalize it."[8] Meanwhile, Lior Yohanani puts forward the idea that the study of foreign war volunteers would benefit from engaging with the literature on participation in voluntary high-risk collective action. Like refugee rescuers, for instance, foreign volunteers assume certain physical, social, legal, and financial risks as well as costs in terms of time, money, and energy. High-risk activists may choose to engage on the basis of beliefs and values, or they could "opt-in as a way out of unfavorable life circumstances."[9] As the following section shows, a number of scholars have argued that foreign volunteers decide to join conflicts abroad for very similar reasons.

## Motivations

The question of what brings people to travel to another country and volunteer for transnational military service has remained central to the historiography in the field. As recent studies have illustrated, the potential pool of volunteers is always larger—at times far larger—than the number of people

who actually commit to fighting for a foreign cause. For instance, Shay Hazkani has shown that several thousands of would-be volunteers from across the Middle East registered their willingness to join the Arab Liberation Army that fought alongside the Palestinian Arabs in 1948. However, only a fraction of these—approximately 10 percent in the case of Lebanon and a mere 800 out of 15,000 in Iraq—physically made their way to fight in Palestine.[10]

So what sets those who do volunteer apart? According to Fraser Raeburn, the explanation should be sought at the local or even "microsocial" level: "the communities of the faithful from whence the vast bulk of volunteers came." Focusing on Scottish volunteers who joined the International Brigades, he argues that the decision to volunteer "was made within a particular social and communal context, alongside friends, family and colleagues."[11] This accounts for the "clustering among the Scottish contingent," with volunteers often serving alongside friends and acquaintances from before the war. Furthermore, because the networks and branches of the Communist Party were constituted differently across contexts, some hubs produced more volunteers for Spain than others.[12]

In general, recent scholarship on foreign participation in the Spanish Civil War has tended to move away from Cold War era debates about whether volunteers were "heroic anti-fascists or dupes of Moscow."[13] Instead, more attention has been paid to how the volunteers perceived the conflict in Spain as well as their personal, non-ideological reasons for enlisting. This is not to say that previous studies were oblivious to the personal motivations of volunteers. Hugh Thomas, for instance, asserted already in 1961 that "many" British volunteers who traveled to Spain did so as they "desired some outlet through which to purge some private grief or maladjustment."[14] But recent studies have explored such issues in greater depth and produced new insights.

Judith Keene, who examines the foreign contingents that fought alongside Francoist forces, concludes that "the foreign volunteers for Franco fitted the Nationalist cause [in Spain] into the political frameworks that they had formulated in their own home contexts."[15] Samuël Kruizinga and Miriam van der Veen assess how such frameworks were nurtured and maintained. They examine how left-wing British, Dutch, and German-language newspapers "recruited" their readers to the cause of the Spanish Republic. These newspapers not only provided information about the war in Spain, but also defined the enemy that the Spaniards and their allies in the International Brigades were facing. By doing so, the newspapers forged a connection "between 'them' in Spain and 'us', bridging the considerable physical and emotional distances that separated the Spanish Civil War and its participants from the locales where their supporters could be found."[16]

However, foreign volunteers do not always hail from easily discernible groups. Darryl Li, who has researched the *Mujahids*—Muslims from abroad who fought in the war in Bosnia during the early 1990s—observes that their "motivations, orientations toward Islamic piety, and class backgrounds varied widely and confound any straightforward attempt at correlating

individuals to social variables or nationalities."[17] So what do foreigners who have taken part in different conflicts have in common?

My own work has focused on the "push" and "pull" factors that influenced the decision of volunteers to enlist and argues that their action should be understood as a search for meaning. Ego documents penned by volunteers and retrospective testimonies often concede that there was some sort of dissatisfaction with or void in their prewar lives. In that respect, there is a good deal of resemblance between foreign volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and those in more recent conflicts. Former International Brigader Esmond Romilly observed: "However strongly I sympathised with the cause of the Spanish people, no doubt if my circumstances in London had been completely satisfactory, I should have gone no further than sympathy." He felt that he was not alone in volunteering for a mixture of reasons: "I am assuming it will be taken for granted that everybody who joined the International Brigades had 'political motives'; but these were not the only reason they joined."[18] Romilly's remarks were echoed many years later by Hunter Page, a volunteer from the United States who fought alongside Kurdish forces in Syria. In a 2019 interview with *The Independent*, Page pointed out:

> [E]veryone who comes here and everyone who joins, it's always a mixture of political and personal reasons. I mean, if we had great home lives with wonderful spouses and great jobs, I don't think even the most radical political people could easily come here.[19]

A mixture of moral and personal reasons for enlisting can also be observed among the foreign volunteers who traveled to Ukraine in 2022. For instance, "James," a British volunteer, told *The Guardian*: "They [the Ukrainians] needed help, and I was doing nothing back at home. My life was going downhill so I thought I could do something better and help people who needed it."[20] The search for meaning and a sense of purpose, I argue, is a common denominator among foreign volunteers in different conflicts and at different times.

Nerina Weiss, who has researched foreign volunteers who joined Kurdish armed groups in Syria, Iraq, and Turkey, goes one step further. She argues that ideology is neither a precondition nor a necessary reason for the volunteers' initial mobilization: "ideology often does not even produce a sufficiently strong enough (imagined) community to persuade them to sacrifice their individual interests for a group or organisation with whom they have neither history nor culture in common."[21] While there certainly was a will to fight against the Islamic State from the outset, an alignment with the ideology of Kurdish organizations often only came following and as a result of mobilization. Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork among pro-Kurdish activists, she concludes that "the reasons and motives of the volunteers change throughout the engagement. People are continuously influenced: they act and are acted upon. . . . Decisions are made along the journey."[22]

**Wartime Experiences and Military Contribution**

Recent scholarship has done much to illuminate various facets of the volunteers' wartime experiences and interactions with their hosts. Jorge Marco and Maria Thomas, for instance, explore the implications of deploying a linguistically diverse force like the International Brigades that fought in Spain. They acknowledge that "[T]he dizzying mixture of languages present in the ranks of the Republican war effort . . . created serious and sometimes dangerous communication difficulties," forcing the high command of the International Brigades to abandon its initial internationalist and utopian organizational vision.[23] A more pragmatic approach was adopted after the Battle of Jarama (February 1937), with brigade commanders reorganizing soldiers into units where different languages were dominant. This improved military communication but reduced linguistic diversity within individual brigades. Marco and Thomas also emphasize the importance of polyglot volunteers who, as language intermediaries, became "an indispensable element of the Republican war effort."[24]

The military significance of foreign volunteers to their host's war effort has become a hotly contested topic in recent years. Focusing on the foreigners who fought alongside anti-Russian insurgents in the First and Second Chechen War, Kristin Bakke puts forward the following notion:

> Although transnational insurgents may strengthen a domestic insurgent movement by contributing resources, fighters, and know-how, they can also weaken the movement by introducing new ideas about what the struggle is about and how it should be fought.[25]

Indeed, Bakke argues that some of the ideas and tactics that the foreign fighters introduced into the conflict fueled divisions within the resistance movement and caused a popular backlash among Chechen society.

For its part, the United Nations Security Council adopted a far less-nuanced view. The high number of foreigners who flocked to Syria during the early years of its civil war and the emergence of the Islamic State prompted the UNSC to pass Resolution 2178 in September 2014. It deployed a new term—"foreign terrorist fighters"—which elicited scholarly criticism, and it asserted unequivocally that such "fighters increase the intensity, duration and intractability of conflicts."[26] Early analysis seemed to conform to this view. When discussing the role played by foreigners who joined the ranks of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, Fabrizio Coticchia argues, "[M]ilitary experience acquired in other conflicts is vital in the case of ISIL" and

> that foreign fighters have played a role particularly with regards to the capability to carry out specific tactics, such as suicide bombings, to share lessons learnt on conventional warfare, and to adapt, both in the structure of training and in methods of addressing new challenges (e.g., air strikes).[27]

Conversely, my own research has shown that, across several conflicts, foreign volunteers have a mixed record in terms of their military contribution. Numerically, they tend to make up a small fraction of the fighting force of their hosts, often constituting less than 10 percent. On numerous occasions, untrained and unsuitable volunteers proved to be a nuisance for the armed forces they joined. If foreigners have been of benefit to their hosts, it was in cases where the volunteers brought with them technical expertise that was otherwise lacking (e.g., the ability to fly aircraft) or where their presence conferred political and propagandistic value.[28]

A number of recent studies provide more evidence that the primary contribution of foreign volunteers to their hosts is more likely to be political rather than military. Take, for example, the almost passive-aggressive statement by Transvaal President Paul Kruger to arriving foreign volunteers during the South African War (1899–02), cited by Kennedy and Holdridge:

> I thank you for coming! . . . But we did not need you. Transvaal does not need any help from the outside. But because you want to fight for us, you are welcome. I take yours as a good sign that Europe is gradually recognizing the right of the Afrikander people![29]

Naman Karl-Thomas Habtom argues that the foreign volunteers who flocked to Ukraine in 2022 provided limited operational benefits for their hosts. Their main role has been outward-facing, internationalizing the conflict in order to sway Western public opinion, though even this propagandistic contribution was fairly short lived.[30]

The wartime experiences of minority groups and women who volunteer in foreign conflicts remain relatively understudied. There have been some pioneering studies in the context of the Spanish Civil War. For instance, Angela Jackson examines the distinctive involvement of British women in the war in Spain.[31] Gerben Zaagsma has shed new light on the Polish Jews, many of whom had resided in exile in France and Belgium before the Spanish Civil War erupted and went on to form part of the Botwin Company, a distinctly Jewish contingent within the International Brigades.[32] The present volume seeks to expand our understanding of women and minority groups in the war in Spain.

**Post-Conflict Return and Memory**

The often-difficult post-conflict trajectories of those foreigners who joined the Islamic State in Syria raises the question of what happens to transnational recruits who end up on the losing side. As recent studies have shown, the lengthy confinement of foreigners at al-Hol camp and their delayed repatriation from Syria are not without precedent. Kennedy and Holdridge have shown how Britain held foreigners who had fought for the Boers in the South African War in prisoner-of-war camps across the empire. The British

authorities often denied petitions by European consular officers, arguing that the volunteers had lost their right to consular support by joining Boer forces, thereby violating their countries' neutrality.[33] Robert Gildea and his associates wrote about the camps that were set up by the French government in 1938–39 along the Pyrenean frontier with Spain and in French North Africa to detain exiled Republican Spaniards and International Brigaders who were unable to return to their home states. The authors demonstrate how these camps soon became "crucibles for transnational resistance" once the Second World War broke out.[34]

The dramatic and at times cruel treatment of returnees from Syria, with some Britons being stripped of their citizenship, prompted historians to look at how ideologically suspicious volunteers who returned from Spain were treated in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Fraser Raeburn found that although the British state was wary of the supposed revolutionary tendencies of veterans returning from Spain, it did not impose substantive blanket restrictions on the activities of former International Brigade volunteers during the Second World War. There was some surveillance, but only a minority of the veterans were ever actually watched. In general, the approach of the British security apparatus was pragmatic: a sizeable portion of the Scots who returned from the Spanish Civil War were subsequently able to serve in the British armed forces, especially from 1940 onwards.[35] Jorge Marco observed how, in the United States, William J. Donovan, the first director of what soon became known as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), recruited a number of International Brigades veterans and sent them to serve as instructors in a newly established school for training in guerrilla warfare.[36] Conversely, Samuël Kruizinga, who has examined the trajectories of Dutch returnees from Spain, found that the volunteer Jef Last, among others, had his citizenship revoked in December 1936. He was allowed to re-enter the Netherlands, but as a stateless person. His citizenship was only restored in 1947.[37] David Malet and Jason Fritz, who surveyed historical responses by states to returnees, conclude that "returning foreign fighters were often left to themselves unless considered a threat to the state to which they returned."[38]

Finally, historians have continued to explore how the memory of cohorts of foreign volunteers in specific countries changed over time. When Sweden's volunteers returned from Spain, they were hailed as heroes by the workers' movement. However, soon afterwards the veterans were routinely subjected to police surveillance and harassment. A handful of veterans were interned as potential security threats during the Second World War. All this changed after 1945. Carl-Gustaf Scott notes:

> [T]he Swedish Left has needed to lean on the International Brigades' legacy more than most. For unlike the majority of its West European counterparts, the Swedish Left could not employ its role in the anti-Nazi resistance as a basis for its postwar legitimacy.[39]

This sentimentality about the "good fight" has led to idealized depictions of the volunteers' exploits in Spain.

Raanan Rein illustrates how the marginal group of Jewish communists who left Palestine to fight in Spain gradually made their way into the Israeli consensus some fifty years later. Although many of these volunteers had been part of the Palestine Communist Party, which was opposed to Zionism, with time their "struggle was appropriated by the Zionist establishment and they were portrayed as Jewish heroes, national patriots fighting to protect their people."[40] As pioneers in the antifascist struggle, these volunteers in the International Brigades could be linked to the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and other heroic figures in Jewish history.

At times, the memory of cohorts of foreign volunteers can do more than reflect the changing political and cultural landscape of their home state. Enrico Acciai focuses our attention on the enduring appeal of the Garibaldian tradition as a source of inspiration for subsequent generations of volunteers:

> The capacity of war volunteering to endure and persist over time has rarely been investigated in historiography: that is, the continuation not only of memories passed down from one generation of fighters to another, but also its ability to start up again as soon as a new movement of volunteers appears.[41]

Acciai points out that the tradition of the red shirts was invoked and manifested itself in Poland (1863), Crete (1866–67), France (1870–71), the Balkans (1876), Greece (1897), Serbia (1912 and 1914), and again in France (1914–15), during the Spanish Civil War, and among resistance movements in Italy, France, and the Balkans during the Second World War. In fact, echoes of the Garibaldian tradition could still be observed among some of the foreign volunteers who joined the Kurdish YPG in their fight against the Islamic State in Syria.

Foreign volunteers clearly represent an enduring phenomenon. Their motivations, experiences, significance, and legacy will undoubtedly continue to attract historiographic attention in years to come. With regard to the Spanish Civil War, new sources on individual volunteers may continue to come to light, as the example of Yael Gerson, examined in this volume, illustrates. The emergence of such sources can enrich our understanding of the support networks that assisted and sustained the International Brigades. Another area where the field is likely to expand is in the investigation of understudied historical episodes of volunteering. For instance, the project "Foreign Fighters: Past, Present and Future," led by Morten Heiberg at the University of Copenhagen, will highlight continuities between volunteering during the antifascist struggle of 1936–45 and the early Cold War period (1945–62).[42] Another case study that is ripe for further investigation is that of the Bangladeshi, Kurdish, and other foreign volunteers who fought alongside Palestinian organizations in their war against Israel in Lebanon in 1982.[43]

Finally, the integration of foreign volunteers in the Ukrainian armed forces during the current war with Russia will likely lead to new studies and, possibly, new insights that will help us to reassess the past.

## Notes

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13 Raeburn, "Politics, Networks and Community," 720–21. For the latter approach, see, for instance, R. Dan Richardson, *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 15. For a summary of the historiographic debate, see George Esenwein, "Freedom Fighters or Comintern Soldiers? Writing about the 'Good Fight' During the Spanish Civil War," *Civil Wars* 12, no. 1–2 (2010): 156–66.

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32 Gerben Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).
33 Kennedy and Holdridge, "The Recognized Adjunct of Modern Armies," 122. The volunteers from France who had lost their French citizenship as a result of

their participation in the South African conflict are reminiscent of the shameful treatment of Shamima Begum, who was stripped of her British citizenship when seeking to return to the UK from Syria in 2019.

34 Robert Gildea et al., "Camps as Crucibles of Transnational Resistance," in *Fighters across Frontiers: Transnational Resistance in Europe, 1936–48*, ed. Robert Gildea and Ismee Tames (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 49–69.

35 Fraser Raeburn, "The 'Premature Anti-Fascists'? International Brigade Veterans' Participation in the British War Effort, 1939–45," *War in History* 27, no. 3 (2020): 408–32.

36 Jorge Marco, "Transnational Soldiers and Guerrilla Warfare from the Spanish Civil War to the Second World War," *War in History* 27, no. 3 (2020): 387–407.

37 Samuël Kruizinga, "The First Resisters: Tracing Three Dutchmen from the Spanish Trenches to the Second World War, 1936–1945," *War in History* 27, no. 3 (2020): 368–86.

38 David Malet and Jason E. Fritz, "Historical Responses to Foreign Fighters and Returnees," in *Returning Foreign Fighters: Responses, Legal Challenges and Ways Forward*, ed. Francesca Capone, Christophe Paulussen, and Rebecca Mignot-Mahdavi (The Hague: Springer, 2023), 46.

39 Carl-Gustaf Scott, "The Swedish Left's Memory of the International Brigades and the Creation of an Anti-Fascist Postwar Identity," *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2009): 231.

40 Raanan Rein, "A Belated Inclusion: Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and Their Place in the Israeli National Narrative," *Israel Studies* 17, no. 1 (2012): 26.

41 Enrico Acciai, *Garibaldi's Radical Legacy: Traditions of War Volunteering in Southern Europe (1861–1945)* (London: Routledge, 2021), 4.

42 For more on this project, see "Foreign Fighters: Past, Present and Future," Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies, University of Copenhagen, https://engerom.ku.dk/english/research/centres_projects/foreign-fighters.-past-present-and-future/.

43 Bernard Weinraub, "Israelis Charge Palestinian Use of Mercenaries," *New York Times*, July 11, 1982, 1; Yazan al-Saadi, "Remembering the Past: Bangladeshi Fighters for Palestine of the 1980s," *Pakistan Defence*, October 7, 2016, https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/remembering-the-past-bangladeshi-fighters-for-palestine-of-the-1980s.454038/; Elif Genc, "The Kurdish Movement's Relationship with the Palestinian Struggle," *MERIP*, 2020, https://merip.org/2020/08/the-kurdish-movements-relationship-with-the-palestinian-struggle/; Matthew Petti, "The Kurds Who Died for Palestine," *New Lines Magazine*, April 27, 2023, https://newlinesmag.com/argument/the-kurds-who-died-for-palestine/.

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# 2 *Madrid est près de Berlin*

## An Untold Story from the Spanish Civil War in the German Federal Archive

*Susanne Zepp*

Narrative texts fulfill a significant role in research on the Spanish Civil War, especially if we understand them as vehicles for the production, transformation, and reproduction of cultural meaning in a social context. This is particularly the case for autobiographies, other ego-documents, and self-testimonies. In literary studies, the identity of author and narrative self is not automatically assumed to be the same, but this distinction is less frequent in historiographical studies. For an adequate treatment of self-testimonies, it is crucial to attend to the textuality of the historical source material and to accept that they do not provide direct access to history as such. This distinction applies to all historical contexts but is particularly pertinent in the case of such an ideologically charged conflict as the Spanish Civil War. This, of course, does not imply that these texts cannot serve as pivotal sources for reconstructing past social practice, contexts of experience, and life worlds. Self-testimonies can reveal historical actors as sentient and acting persons. These texts are self-constructions into which individual experiences have certainly been incorporated, but they are not mere reproductions of actual historical events.

This issue is raised in a particularly significant manner in the case of anonymous sources that are constructed as self-testimonies. In a meticulously prepared literature review, Emily Ross demonstrated in 2013 how often we are confronted with anonymous sources in our work in historical archives and, on the basis of her discussions of existing research, made a convincing plea not to exclude anonymous documents from historical analyses.[1] In doing so, she highlighted how diverse the reasons for anonymity can be—self-protection or even lack of authorship can be reasons for anonymous sources just as much as coincidence or unintentional contexts.

Robert J. Griffin once described the challenges of dealing with anonymous texts as follows: "Anonymity, as I began to discover, puts in question not only historiographical narratives, but also almost all of our ingrained assumptions and procedures for dealing with texts."[2] Anonymous publications make it palpable how much we have become accustomed to an automatic mutual construction of authors and texts. The distinction between these two dimensions can provide important insights for historical analysis.

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In this chapter, I examine an anonymous text on the Spanish Civil War that has preserved a distinctly German perspective (that of the *German Popular Front in Exile*, the so-called Lutetia Committee) in French. This text has been preserved in the Foundation for the Archives of Political Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR (SAPMO), a collection of archival materials that are preserved today in the German Federal Archives Berlin-Lichterfelde. The SAPMO archive includes documents, photographs, films, and other materials that were created by or for political parties and mass organizations, such as the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), the Free German Youth (FDJ), and the Democratic Women's League of Germany (DFD). These materials provide a unique insight into the political, social, and cultural life of East Germany during the period of socialist rule. The archival materials cover a wide range of topics, including political ideology, propaganda, education, youth culture, gender issues, and international relations. They also include materials related to the repression and surveillance that took place under the socialist regime, including files on individuals who were monitored by the secret police (STASI) and reports on dissent and opposition movements. The SAPMO archive is an important resource for researchers studying the history of East Germany, the Cold War, and socialist politics and culture more broadly. The collection offers a wealth of primary source materials that can be used to deepen our understanding of the complexities and contradictions of life under socialist rule.[3]

The SAPMO collection also comprises the archival material of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism at the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. The Institute for Marxism-Leninism was founded in 1949. In the early years, the institute's main duties were to publish the oeuvres of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin and to create a research library for the party. From the mid-1950s onward, the work of the institute focused on research into fundamental issues in the field of labor movement history. This included editing sources, and speeches and essays by functionaries of the workers' movement were published in this process. From 1969 until autumn 1989, research and editing projects were carried out by the History Department. In the beginning of the 1970s, the institute began saving documents from the archive on microfilm.

Among these materials from the History Department at the institute is a substantial collection on the Spanish Civil War. This collection did not emerge by coincidence. In February 1968, in preparation for the celebrations planned to mark thirty years since the end of the Spanish Civil War in the GDR, Franz Dahlem, the former chief political commissar for all the International Brigades in Spain and then Minister for National Defense, issued a call asking former volunteers in Spain to transcribe the memories of their experiences in the International Brigades and to submit these narrative accounts to the History Department of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. The Spanish Civil War was an important event for the GDR's collective memory—in terms of its ideological

battles, its international alliances, and its impact on the country's cultural and intellectual life. Many volunteers who fought for the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War became leading members of GDR society, and their engagement on the Republican side helped to establish the GDR's legitimacy as a socialist state, while the memory of the war in Spain continued to shape GDR cultural and political life for decades to come. As Arnold Kremmer put it:

> In no country, however, would the veterans of the Brigades be as welcome or exert as much influence after the second world war as in East Germany. Many of East Germany's future leaders, bureaucrats, generals and writers had been [members of the brigade] Thaelmann. Eventually, East Germany itself officially acknowledged that "the German-speaking units of the International Brigades represented the nucleus of the armed forces of the future GDR."[4]

The SAPMO archive contains a letter from a man called Hans Rosenkränzer from Cottbus written in May 1968, with which he responds to Franz Dahlem's appeal:

> Lieber Genosse Teubner! Ich möchte Dir als erstes brüderliche Kampfesgrüße übermitteln. Genosse Franz Dahlem richtete mit Schreiben vom Februar diesen Jahres an alle ehemaligen Spanienkämpfer einen Appell, dessen Inhalt Dir sicher bekannt sein wird. . . . Ich möchte Dir zum Geschichtsbuch einen Artikel, der anlässlich des 30. Jahrestages der Gründung der Inter-Brigaden in der neuen Cottbuser Zeitung veröffentlicht wurde sowie ein Foto aus Spanien zur Verfügung stellen. . . . Leider kann ich mich aus zeitlichen Gründen nicht mit der Geschichtsschreibung meines persönlichen Kampfes in Spanien befassen, da ich berufstätig und gesellschaftlich stark eingespannt bin sowie aufgrund der Krankheit meiner Frau und Betreuung meiner Kinder, die meine Freizeit vollkommen auslasten. Ich hoffe, dass Du von dem wenigen, was ich übermittle, etwas verwerten kannst. Ich wünsche Dir persönlich alles Gute und verbleibe mit einem kräftigen *Salud* Deine Genosse Hans Rosenkränzer.[5]

This document reveals three important items: first, it introduces us to the addressee of the materials, Hans Teubner, who had been in charge of the History Department at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism since 1963 and had himself been an instructor for officers in the International Brigades in Spain. Teubner was born in 1920 in Aue, Germany, and grew up in a working-class family. After the war, Teubner became a professor of philosophy and political science at the University of Leipzig, where he taught for many years. Despite facing significant challenges and obstacles in his career, including government surveillance, prohibition to work and censorship, Teubner remained a respected and influential figure in the intellectual and cultural life of the

GDR. Teubner's experiences in Spain, where he fought alongside other anti-fascist volunteers, deeply influenced his political and intellectual outlook. After the end of the civil war, Hans Teubner reached Switzerland via France, where he became head of the Communist party's southern section in March 1939. He also had contact with the Red Chapel resistance circles in Berlin around Harro Schulze-Boysen, Kurt Schumacher, Walter Küchenmeister, and Elfriede Paul. In 1940, he was interned by Swiss authorities as a fugitive and sentenced to a prison term. In May 1945, together with Bruno Fuhrmann, he returned to Germany and was in charge as Editor-in-Chief of the *Deutsche Volkszeitung*. In April 1946, Teubner joined the Socialist Unity Party (SED).

In 1950, like many other so-called Western immigrants, he came into conflict with the Party Control Commission. He was accused of being a "Zionist-imperialist agent." He was relieved of all party functions and worked as a statistician at the *VEB Bunt-und Samtweberei*, a textile weaving cooperative, until 1952, after which he was a lecturer in social sciences at the technical school for energy in Zittau. In 1956, the suspension was lifted, and he became a university lecturer, institute director, and vice dean of the Faculty of Journalism at Karl Marx University in Leipzig. From 1959 to 1963, he was editor-in-chief of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and a member of the party's district leadership in Leipzig. He then became a staff member at the Institute for Marxism-Leninism at the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party.[6]

But Hans Rosenkränzer's letter, quoted here in part, highlights another issue: as the responsible coordinator of the historical department, Teubner has safeguarded all the material that was sent to him by former brigadists after Franz Dahlem's appeal. A letter like this, which only announces the actual material, was kept just as carefully as postcards, posters, or private photos that were being sent in. Only a fraction of what was sent in at the time was published, but it is evident from the material that Teubner kept every single item and worked through everything in detail. In many materials, we can read his notes and comments, and Teubner even wrote short abstracts of the texts. Thanks to his meticulous efforts, a very diverse collection has been preserved, which includes an unpublished manuscript of a novella by Willi Bredel with an unpublished foreword by Heinrich Mann, as well as many handwritten stories of the experiences of former volunteers. Teubner also preserved the accounts of children's fates published by the Unitarian Service Committee shortly after the civil war, posters, flyers, handwritten newspapers of individual battalions, poems, stories, and pamphlets.

Historical sources can help to illuminate the ways in which narratives are shaped by larger historical forces, such as political and social movements, technological changes, and cultural shifts. Understanding these larger historical forces can help to shed light on the ways in which narratives reflect and shape the societies in which they are produced. The 1968 call was an explicit request to write and submit narrative accounts of personal experiences. This is why these texts about the Spanish Civil War need to be examined in a conversation between historiography and literature to distinguish, for example,

the autobiographical person writing from the biographical author and to avoid a merely referential reading of these autobiographical accounts. It is necessary to examine these texts both in terms of their participatory and relational dimensions and in their performative function. The narratives use rhetorical procedures, although first and foremost they are first-person documents without explicit literary pretensions. The fact that all texts submitted to the institute refer consciously to realistic narrative models demonstrates the extent to which the material from the SAPMO archive in Berlin-Lichterfelde must be understood as a rich source of untold stories.

Among this material is a text written in French that was inventoried under the title "An anonymous account of a French author." The archive folder is inscribed with a handwritten note by Teubner that reads "Two articles by unknown authors concerning the Spanish Civil War," and of these two files, a text of just less than forty pages is the aforementioned unknown author's narrative titled "Madrid lies close to Berlin." Dealing with an anonymous historical source presents several challenges. Since the author is unknown, it can be challenging to establish whether the source is genuine or a forgery. One must be especially cautious and scrutinize the content, provenance, and other contextual information to ensure the source's authenticity. Without knowing the author's identity, it can be difficult to determine their credibility, biases, and potential agenda. Nonetheless, this text written in French from the SAPMO archive provides valuable insights into historical events and perspectives of a German experience of the Spanish Civil War; the following will thus demonstrate why it is worthwhile to undertake an in-depth examination of this text. If we triangulate this anonymous source from the SAPMO archive with other sources to corroborate or refute its claims and assess its reliability, this French text reveals an untold story of the Spanish Civil War that is certainly valuable to read.

The document has been preserved as a typewritten text; there is no indication as to whether this text was transcribed by Hans Teubner or whether it already reached the institute in this form as an anonymous typed submission. It was typed on neutral white paper and is slightly yellowed, but it has not significantly deteriorated. The use of a mechanical typewriter is evident through certain irregularities in each stroke of the letter due to variations in pressure, ink saturation, and other factors. The presence of a table of contents and the division into eleven chapters suggest that the document is well organized and structured in a way that is intended to make it accessible and easy to use. In his short archival note, Hans Teubner dated the creation of this French text to the summer of 1937. The text begins with a representation of the situation in Nazi Germany at the time of the war in Spain.

The narrative is informed by the agenda of the *German Popular Front in Exile*. While the national *German Popular Front* was a predominantly Social Democratic resistance group against the Nazi regime founded in Berlin in 1936 and crushed by the Gestapo in 1938, there were also notable Popular Front aspirations in exile, based on various initiatives to form a *Volksfront* of

Social Democrats and Communists. Influenced by the model of the Popular Front governments in France and in Spain, a committee was formed in Paris in 1936 to prepare a German Popular Front in Exile, the so-called Lutetia Committee. The anonymous account in French is strongly invested in their agenda. The committee was active in Paris from 1935 to 1937 and gathered actors from various political currents who shared an anti-fascist conviction. This nucleus of the German Popular Front in Exile movement became known as the Lutetia Committee after the meeting place in the Hotel Lutetia on the Boulevard Raspail in the 6th arrondissement of Paris. The German Popular Front in Exile was primarily composed of socialist and communist exiles who had fled Nazi Germany. The movement sought to unite anti-Nazi German exiles across ideological lines to work toward the overthrow of the Nazi regime. The movement engaged in various activities to achieve its goals, including publishing anti-Nazi propaganda, organizing resistance cells within Germany, and supporting the Allied war effort against Germany during World War II. Members of the German Popular Front in Exile also participated in the International Brigades, fighting against the fascists in the Spanish Civil War. The German Popular Front in Exile faced many challenges during its existence, including internal disagreements over tactics and strategy, as well as external pressures from the Nazi regime and its allies. Despite these challenges, the movement remained active throughout the war.

The archival text features eleven chapters. Chapter 1, "La Guerre clandestine" (The secret war), reveals the fact that numerous German soldiers are fighting on Franco's side, although the German public in 1937 is not aware of this. The narrative presentation of this chapter is as follows: The section begins with a quotation from a letter written by a schoolteacher in Hamburg in January 1937, and interspersed with this is a direct address to the Gestapo that the author of this letter would no longer be in Hamburg and that it would therefore not be worth trying to arrest him. The text is written in a collective "we," which throughout the course of this chapter clearly demonstrates that this "we" does not believe the propaganda of the Nazi regime and instead advertises a different way of seeking the truth. The text emphasizes not only that the Reichstag fire was set by the Nazis themselves but also that German planes deliberately killed numerous civilians in Guernica. The critical view of the state of the media in Nazi Germany concerns not only socialists and communists but also German middle-class citizens who take an active interest in the fate of the Spanish Republic.

Chapter 2, "Nuits et jours aux prises" (Days and nights in violence), continues with a harsh critique of the propaganda about the events in Spain spread by the Nazi regime. This chapter criticizes the portrayal of violence against clergy and priests in Spain. These narratives would be exaggerated if they portrayed these outbreaks of violence as omnipresent. Rather, they were exceptional occurrences. The German press and radio stations were dedicated to disseminating "Goebbels's tale" claiming that the Soviet Union wanted to transform Spain into a Soviet colony in its own likeness. The propaganda

orchestrated by Goebbels is said to have a disastrous effect on children and young people in German schools and university barracks, among peasants and representatives of the middle class. As evidence of the destructive effects of propaganda, the text gives an anonymous quotation from a devoted democrat who expressed his disgust at the events in Spain. Among the German workers, Goebbels's propaganda is said to have less effect, because their class instinct would protect them from his deception. The text argues that international worker solidarity can take many forms: international worker solidarity was demonstrated not only through fighting on the front lines but also through humanitarian aid and support for the Spanish people. Many workers' organizations and labor unions around the world sent money or medical supplies to the Spanish Republic to support the fight against the fascist forces. The text underlines the international solidarity of German workers who secretly collected money for Republican Spain, thereby putting themselves in danger. For example, the anonymous author states that workers at a coal mine in the Ruhr collected seventy-three *Reichsmark* to support the republic, a war industry factory in Berlin collected fifty *Reichsmark*, factories in Bavaria and Württemberg collected between five and sixty-seven *Reichsmark*, and workers in Saxony and an aircraft factory in Nordhorn collected 100 and 180 *Reichsmark*, respectively. These acts of solidarity, according to the author of the text, represent the Germany of the workers, the "true reality" of the country. This is the final sentence on page 7: "Oui, c'est là, parmi les ouvriers, que bat le cœur de l'autre Allemagne, de la vraie Allemagne." (Yes, it is there, among the workers, where the heart of the other Germany, the real Germany, is beating.)

Chapter 3, "Franco a un plan quadriennal" (Franco has a four-year plan), focuses on the support given to Franco by German and Italian fascists from the very first moments of the coup. It reinterprets the support of the clerical fascists under Franco as a fight against the Soviet Union. This narrative was disseminated with such persistence that it led to doubts even among convinced Nazis. It should not be forgotten that a large part of the German male public had war experience from 1914 to 1918, which is why it was already completely evident in the Germany of 1937 that Nazi propaganda concealed relentless warmongering that would severely harm the German people.

Chapter 4, "Du beurre au lieu de canons" (Butter instead of cannons), criticizes a central aspect of Goebbels's and Göring's propaganda, namely that the production of weapons would be much more existential than the food supply for the German population. The German workers, however, saw through this propaganda. This chapter provides an account of Franco's active support from Nazi Germany in the form of war material, soldiers, and air force, which is supported by (again anonymous) testimonies and sources. One example is a small resistance newspaper by dockworkers, *Norddeutsche Tribüne*, in which port employees give testimony of the shipment of vast amounts of war material to Franco from October 1936 until March 1937. The source accuses Nazi Germany of providing a massive supply of

war equipment to Franco's troops, thus making a mockery of the international principle of non-intervention. It seems that the text wants to reveal to a French audience the sinister side of the non-intervention policy adopted by their own and many other governments toward Spain.

Chapter 5 reads "Goering envoie du chocolat aux enfants de Espagne" (Göring sends chocolate to Spanish children). This chapter lists the vast number of transport ships from Stettin, Kiel, Lübeck, Flensburg, Stralsund, and Hamburg that are sent out by Nazi Germany to support the putschists under Franco with war material. This chapter states that pacifists observing the North German port cities would have noticed more than sixty ships containing the heaviest war material, aircraft parts, heavy and light rifles, defense batteries, anti-aircraft missiles, aerial bombs, ammunition of all calibers and machine guns, and, finally, soldiers. However, the containers would have been labeled as containing food, and the boxes of bombs were labeled as containing chocolate. The text highlights the viciousness with which these false labels ridicule the targeted murder of civilians. This chapter also quotes an anonymous report from port observers, naming Mr. Matthias Rode and his transport company on Ferdinandstraße in Hamburg as one of the companies involved in organizing the arms transports to Franco. The text takes this report as another opportunity to protest harshly against the non-intervention policy.

Chapter 6 is titled "Mon Fils est en Espagne" (My son is in Spain). This chapter begins with the testimony of an anonymous friend of the narrator from a large city in central Germany, which is presented as paradigmatic of many other experiences. The friend reports a conversation with a father whose son is serving in the German air force and who has not been in touch for several weeks, making the family very worried. Days later the man receives a letter from his son, and it was posted in Spain. The text quotes anonymous reports from all parts of Germany, where parents tell similar stories of their sons in the air force: reports that they are now regularly stationed in Spain.

Chapter 7 carries the title "Guadalajara, Jarama—. . . et 25:4" (Guadalajara, Jarama—. . . and 25:4). This chapter highlights two historical events that have contributed to a change in the German public's perception of the Spanish Civil War: the devastating defeat of the Italian troops in Guadalajara and the similarly dramatic, albeit partial, defeat of the German special forces in Jarama. The news of the offensive from the Republican side at the gates of Madrid also changed public opinion. Hitler and Mussolini had great hopes for the battle of Guadalajara, since Franco had already wanted to take Madrid, which was close to Guadalajara, in March 1937. The fascist press had presented these battles as a series of victories. In fact, it was a catastrophic defeat, which the German public also became aware of. The capital Madrid, rich in symbolism, was still firmly in Republican hands, and the defeats on the German and Italian sides were devastating, but the propaganda in both countries depicted a completely different account of the factual events.

Chapter 8, "Nous crevons du plan quadriennal" (We cannot afford the four-year plan), reveals how, amid Goebbels's propaganda and in light of his proposed "fight against the Soviet Union in Spain," a massive policy of mobilizing, producing weapons, and preparing for war was being pursued in Germany. This chapter again quotes from the banned journal *Norddeutsche Tribüne* from June 1937, in which an unnamed merchant from Hamburg wrote the following:

> L'existence de 1'honnête commerçant est basée sur la paix et cesse avec la guerre. Les méthodes d'économie de guerre et les armements ont dressée contre nous le monde entier. Des millions de pacifistes en Europe et dans le monde entier considèrent, à l'heure actuelle, le national-socialisme comme le principal coupable de la course internationale des armements. L'adoration illimitée de la force a mis en marche contre noua les Etats-majors des autres pays. Toutes les fanfaronnades ne peuvent rien changer à ce que l'Empire anglais possède d'immense ressources, la Banque de France de gigantesques réserves d'or et la Russie des richesses inépuisables, tandis que nous fouillons dans les boîtes à ordures. Le boueux est devenu un élément si important de "l'économie allemande", que le "paragraphe aryen" a dû être appliqué dans cette profession jusqu'à la dernière conséquence. D'une façon générale, nous sommes contre la guerre. Je pense d'ailleurs qu'il ne faut pas tolérer que 1'Allemagne soit en entrainée dans une guerre dans laquelle elle sera battue avant même que la guerre ait vraiment commencée.[7]

This text is peculiar in that it repeatedly quotes bourgeois, business, and middle-class protagonists in order to underline the thesis of a deep inner resistance against the Nazi regime in all of German society. The merchant quoted in this chapter is not a socialist, and he is said to have taken part with conviction in the Great War of 1914–1918, but even he argues that the mass mobilization and aggressive war industry would be destructive to the German economy.

The main focus of Chapter 9, "L'Espagne, fanal du Front Populaire allemande" (Spain, the beacon of the German Popular Front), is making the agenda of the Lutetia Committee accessible to a French readership and illustrates the activities of the German Popular Front in Exile. This is accomplished through an intriguing narrative, an essential feature of the text that deserves special attention. The agenda of the Lutetia Committee is skillfully woven into a sense of suspense in the account and appears at the height of its tension; the anonymous author thus creates a gripping text. The story culminates in a description of how almost the entire resistance in Hitler's Germany secretly gathers to listen to the radio station of the German Popular Front in Exile, Deutscher Freiheitssender 29.8:

> Les ouvriers de Berlin, de Hambourg, de la Ruhr et de Saxe font une heure de chemin, par des moyens de transport ou même à pied, afin de pouvoir écouter, tranquillement et dans une sécurité relative, des

> émissions de T.S.F. antifascistes. Les tribunaux fascistes on beau prononcer des condamnations à la prison et aux travaux forcés, la vérité, aux yeux de ces braves, vaut plus que la liberté. Sept fois par semaine, ils risquent le camp de concentration, les tortures et les travaux forcés, rien que pour pouvoir écouter Moscou, Kiev, Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Prague et Brno. "Sans les informations de l'étranger, nous tombions effectivement dans la stupidité la plus complète; camarades, il est impossible d'exprimer par des paroles ce que le poste émetteur de la liberté, sur l'onde courte 29,8 signifie pour nous", voilà ce qu'a dit un vieil ouvrier de Berlin. C'est ainsi que, deux fois par semaine, il va "écouter la T.S.F.", bloc-notes et crayon en poche. Ecoutant en silence, notant seulement des faits, deux, tout aux plus trois hommes sont assis devant l'appareil, alors que la femme ou le fils, debout à la porte, fait attention aux mouchards. Les informations terminées, on compare les notes avec la presse de M. Goebbels, on les discute et on les apprend à peu à près par cœur. Ensuite, la tournée commence. Chaque auditeur connait dix à douze familles qui, grâce à "l'appareil récepteur populaire bon marché" de M. Goebbels qui constitue bien le plus raffiné de tous les "bienfaits sociaux" du Troisième Reich, son simplement coupées de l'étranger et ne peuvent s'offrir un grand poste. Alors, on relate point par point, on rectifie, on démasque le mensonge de Goebbels. Et chacun va à son usine où, à leur tour, des camarades de travail attendent l'information pour l'emporter chez eux. C'est un grand travail que de diffuser la vérité en Allemagne, et on risque son bonheur, sa liberté, sa santé et sa vie. Mais il faut que le monde sache; il y a des centaines de milliers d'hommes qui courent ce risque![8]

In 1986, Conrad Pütter published a comprehensive handbook on German-language radio activities between 1933 and 1945.[9] However, there has not yet been a study attending specifically to the numerous radio broadcasts in German from Spain. In the summer of 1936, German radio programs began to be broadcast by Radio Madrid, "La Voz de la España Republicana," and by Radio Barcelona. The latter was primarily for the use of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia but also for the Partido Obrero de la Unificación Marxista and the Iberian Anarchist Federation. In the autumn of the same year, German-language broadcasts also began from the station of the *Generalitat*, the Catalan regional government. These transmissions were broadcast via the facilities of Radio Barcelona. Finally, at the beginning of 1937, the station of the Spanish Communist Party and the station of the Spanish trade unions also broadcast German-language programs from Madrid.

Nevertheless, the German anti-fascists, fighting alongside the Spanish Republic against Franco's troops, established their own radio station as a voice of the opposition coming from anti-fascist Germany and not primarily from Republican Spain. Starting on January 10, 1937, the German Freedom station broadcast on shortwave 29.8, the frequency mentioned in this text.

The station was broadcasting directly adjacent to the fascist Deutschlandsender, which was spreading Goebbels's propaganda on the 30-meter band. The purpose of this was twofold. On the one hand, listeners to the Deutschlandsender would accidentally become aware of the Freedom Station's broadcasts, and, on the other hand, the work of the jammers would be made more difficult. Since the two stations were on such close frequencies, the jammers' interference measures had to remain limited so as not to make their own radio inaudible. Franz Dahlem and the German publicist Gerhart Eisler had agreed on the establishment of the station with the Spanish Minister of Information Jesús Hernández.[10] The Spanish Republic considered the station to be another way of fighting Germany, whose realpolitik was becoming increasingly aggressive against the Spanish Popular Front government and made Hitler's Germany a powerful supporter of the Franco putschists. For the Freedom Station's broadcasts, the team used a facility that had been built near Madrid only the year before by the German airline Lufthansa as a radio link for its South America route.

At the beginning, the station had two responsible journalists, first in Valencia and later in Barcelona. One of them was Erich Glückauf, previously special correspondent of the *Deutsche Volkszeitung* in Paris. The other was none other than Hans Teubner. The later coordinator of the materials on the Spanish Civil War at the Institute for Marxism-Leninism in the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party was indeed a protagonist of the story told here. However, this is not made explicit at any point in the text. This is may be due to a double ideological caveat in the GDR: the popular front movements were to be nominally continued by the National Front of the German Democratic Republic, an alliance of political parties, but de facto controlled by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). The actual purpose of the National Front was to give the impression that the GDR was a democracy governed by a broad-based coalition. In fact, all parties were subservient to the Socialist Unity Party and had to officially accept the SED's leading role as a condition of their existence. In elections, voters only had the option of approving or rejecting a single "united list" of National Front candidates. The historical popular front movements functioned differently in building real coalitions and were therefore seen in the GDR as an ambivalent historical case. Second, Hans Teubner had fallen out of favor with the GDR leadership in 1950 when he was accused of being a "Zionist-imperialist agent." Even though he was rehabilitated in 1956, Teubner cannot have had much interest in highlighting his own involvement in the story told in this text, a story that was recounted by an anonymous French author. But was it indeed an anonymous French author who penned this text? I have discussed this question with the scholar Marc Sagnol, and he confirmed that the French in the text was indeed written by a native speaker. However, we were both uncertain whether the text is in fact a translation of an account that was actually written in German, because it quotes exclusively German sources, and the text testifies to an intimate knowledge of the circumstances in Germany.

For instance, the *Norddeutsche Tribüne* was a minuscule newspaper produced by dockworkers, not a national newspaper, and certainly not that well known in France. One should perhaps also consider the target audience. Why the need for a text in French explaining the situation in Germany in 1937 in such detail? This can be at least partially explained by its argumentative structure, since many pages are devoted to proving that only the democratic countries adhered to a policy of non-intervention, while Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany massively supported Franco's troops.

It is tempting to speculate who from the environment of the Lutetia Committee could have written the original text in German. After all, some prominent individuals can be considered as possible authors. One candidate would be Heinrich Mann, for whom the Popular Front in Exile still appeared in his autobiography as a historical road not taken that he strongly lamented. Unfortunately, it is not possible to prove that Heinrich Mann was the author of the text. There are many other convincing candidates for the author of this text. The first major Popular Front in Exile conference in the Hotel Lutetia was a huge event with more than one hundred participants. Among them were Willi Münzenberg; Franz Dahlem; the editor-in-chief of the Red Flag, Alexander Abusch; the members of the Social Democrat Party Rudolf Breitscheid, Max Braun, Albert Grzesinski, Erich Kuttner, and Kurt Löwenstein; and many writers, including Klaus Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Ernst Toller, Ludwig Marcuse, Emil Ludwig, and Leopold Schwarzschild.

Last but not least, it also could have been Hans Teubner himself who authored this text, or one of the other writers mentioned. The translation could have been done by the later resistance fighter Jacques Decour, who was connected to the Lutetia Committee and had personal contact with many emigres from Germany, among them Bertolt Brecht and Klaus and Heinrich Mann. Decour was arrested by the French police in February 1942, together with Georges Politzer, Jacques Solomon, Danielle Casanova, and Georges Dudach, and handed over to the Germans, who executed him. Narrative diction and style of the text evoke Decours's translations, but it is once again impossible to prove that he was the translator of the text.

However, an untold story in its own right is the fact that a narrative account containing the agenda of the Lutetia Committee has been preserved in the archives of the GDR. And in the same manner, the story of the Deutsche Freiheitssender 29.8 is a piece of Spanish Civil War history that still needs to be told.

I will conclude with a final passage from the text that offers a juxtaposition worthy of commentary. First, the text repeats the slogan "Hitler will be defeated in Spain." The following paragraph mentions a certain Blomberg. This refers to Werner von Blomberg, the first Minister of War in Hitler's government. Following the Nazis' rise to power, he was named Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the German Armed Forces, and in this capacity, Blomberg played a central role in Germany's military build-up during the interwar years. However, in January 1938, he was forced to resign by his

rivals Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler. Hans Teubner's dating of the text to the summer 1937 can thus be substantiated when the author mentions Blomberg as a politician still in power:

> Comprends-on les dangers que Hitler et Blomberg y ont flairé pour leurs projets de guerre ? Comprends-on pourquoi le gouvernement hitlérien décida d'élever désormais les hideuses méthodes appliqués par Streicher contre les juifs au rang d'une grande action d'Etat dont l'envergure, ne s'était jamais vue dans l'Histoire ? . . . Ainsi, nous sentons que la lutte de l'Espagne pour la liberté ne lance pas en vain son appel, et qu'elle nous engage à créer le Front populaire aussi en Allemagne.[11]

In the Institute for Marxism-Leninism, Hans Teubner preserved a text in the archives of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism that provides a lucid analysis of the situation in Europe in the summer of 1937. This applies first to the very astute assessment of the danger of war, which the author sees proven by Nazi Germany's strong support of Franco's troops. The revision of the international order after the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 was a central component in the program of the Nazi Party, which had been in power in Germany since 1933. By 1935, Hitler's government had taken deliberate steps to dismantle the Versailles peace order with the reintroduction of universal military conscription and the invasion of the demilitarized Rhineland in March 1936. On July 7, 1937, the Japanese war in China began—another incident that led toward World War II.

But the foresight of the anonymous author of this text goes even further: when writing in summer of 1937, he interprets the deprivation of rights and persecution of German Jewry (which had begun immediately after the transfer of power to Hitler in 1933) not as a side effect of fascist politics but as a full-scale governmental operation in its own right. We are aware that the author of this text was affiliated to the German Popular Front in Exile movement. The commitment on behalf of the elected Popular Front government in Spain, the struggle of the volunteers in the International Brigades, and the realization that a full-scale state action was being prepared in Germany against its own citizens are here part and parcel of the author's political analysis, suggesting yet another untold story.

Anonymous sources of this character, which provide access to individual and collective interpretations, evaluations, or social knowledge about the international perception of the Spanish Civil War because of their anonymity and not despite it, are preserved in archives worldwide. The SAPMO archive is not the only archive in the German-speaking context. There are also archival holdings at the Dresden Military Museum and many regional and city archives.

The Deutscher Freiheitssender 29.8, which started broadcasting in January 1937, is remembered today as one of the first anti-fascist broadcasting stations of the exiled Communist Party. The text analyzed goes beyond such a profile in including the agenda of the Lutetia Committee among anti-fascist efforts; the anti-fascist perspective here is not exclusively communist.

Through the multiple anonymizing strategies of the text (no author's name, presentation of the German Popular Front in exile in French, use of anonymized sources and quotations in the text itself), it becomes evident the extent to which these perspectives were problematic in the European public sphere of 1937. But it also becomes clear how rarely these perspectives were remembered in the GDR and the Federal Republic and how crucial it can be to include them in research on the Spanish Civil War and German history.

## Notes

1 Emily Ross, "The Problem of Anonymity in Archives: A Literature Review," *BİLGİ DÜNYASI* 14, no. 2 (2013): 240–50.
2 Robert J. Griffin, "Working with Anonymity: A Theory of Theory vs. Archive," *Literature Compass* 4, no. 2 (2007): 463–69, here 466. See also, by the same author, "Anonymity and Authorship," *New Literary History* 30 (1999): 877–95.
3 www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/Navigation/Meta/Ueber-uns/Organisation/Stiftung-Archiv-der-Parteien-und-Massenorganisationen-der-DDR-im-Bundesarchiv-SAPMO/stiftung-archiv-der-parteien-und-massenorganisationen-der-ddr-im-bundesarchiv-sapmo.html
4 Arnold Kremmer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War in East Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 4 (2004): 531–60, here 535.
5 Dear Comrade Teubner, let me start by offering you my brotherly greetings in combat. In February of this year, comrade Franz Dahlem launched an appeal to all former combatants in Spain, the content of which you will be familiar with. I would like to provide you with an article, which was published in the new Cottbus Gazette on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the International Brigades, as well as a photo from Spain. Unfortunately, for reasons of limited time, I am not able to deal with the history of my personal struggle in Spain, as I am very busy with my work and social commitments, as well as with the illness of my wife and the care of my children, which completely occupy my free time. I hope that you will be able to make some use of the limited information I am transmitting. I wish you personally all the best and remain with a strong *salud* from your comrade Hans Rosenkränzer.
6 I refer in this account of the intellectual and political biography to the chapter on Hans Teubner in Wolfgang Kießling, *Partner im "Narrenparadies". Der Freundeskreis um Noel Field und Paul Merker* (Berlin: Dietz, 1994), 227–39.
7 The existence of the honest entrepreneur is based on peace and ceases with war. The methods of war economy and armaments have turned the whole world against us. Millions of pacifists in Europe and all over the world now regard National Socialism as the main culprit in the international arms race. The unrestrained worship of force has set the armed forces of other countries against us. All the bluster can't change the fact that the British Empire has immense resources, the Bank of France massive gold reserves, and Russia inexhaustible wealth, while we rummage through the rubbish cans. Sludge has become such an important element of the "German economy" that the "Aryan paragraph" has had to be applied in this profession to the last consequence. Generally speaking, we are against the war. I do not think it is acceptable that Germany should be drawn into a war in which it will be defeated before the war has really begun.
8 The workers of Berlin, Hamburg, the Ruhr, and Saxony travel an hour, by means of public transport or even by foot, in order to be able to listen, quietly and in relative safety, to anti-fascist radio broadcasts. The fascist courts may hand down

sentences of imprisonment and forced labor, but the truth, in the eyes of these brave men, is worth more than freedom. Seven times a week they take the risk of the concentration camp, torture and forced labor, just to be able to listen to Moscow, Kiev, Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Prague, and Brno. "Without information from abroad, we would indeed fall into complete ignorance; comrades, it is simply not possible to express in words what the freedom radio station on the shortwave 29.8 means to us," this is what an old worker from Berlin had to say. So twice a week, he went to "listen to the wireless," with notepad and pencil in his pocket. Listening in silence, noting only facts, two, at most three, men sit in front of the machine, while their wife or son, standing at the door, watch out for snitches. When the news is finished, the notes are compared with Goebbels's press, discussed, and memorized. Then the tour begins. Each listener knows ten or twelve families who, thanks to Mr. Goebbels's "cheap people's receiver," which is the most refined of all the "social benefits" of the Third Reich, are simply cut off from the outside world, and can't afford a proper radio. So, point by point, they rectify and unmask Goebbels's lies. And everyone goes to their own factory where, in turn, fellow workers wait for the information to be taken home. It's a big undertaking to spread the truth in Germany, and you risk your happiness, your freedom, your health, and your life. But the world must know; there are hundreds of thousands of people who are taking this risk!

9 Conrad Pütter, *Rundfunk gegen das "Dritte Reich": deutschsprachige Rundfunkaktivitäten im Exil, 1933–1945* (Munich: Saur, 1986).

10 This and other references to the history of the station can be found in an essay by André Scheer, "Die Stimme der Freiheit in deutscher Nacht. Der Deutsche Freiheitssender 29,8," in *Schriftenreihe Politische Untergrundsender* (Göttingen: Kurzwellen-Pressedienst, 1991), n.p. Accessible online at andre-scheer.de.

11 Do we understand the dangers that Hitler and Blomberg foresaw for their intentions of war? Do we understand why the Hitler government decided to upgrade the hideous methods applied by Streicher against the Jews to the rank of a massive state action, the scale of which had never been seen in history? . . . Thus, we feel that the Spanish struggle for freedom does not appeal in vain and that it commits us to the creation of the People's Front also in Germany.

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# 3 Jewish Women Fighting for Social Justice on Both Sides of the Mediterranean

*Raanan Rein*

In February 1941, the entire front page of *Kol Ha'am*, the organ of the Palestine Communist Party (PCP), was filled by a large obituary and manifesto. It opened with the following words:

> The Central Committee of the Palestine Communist Party announces with deep sorrow the death of comrade Yael Gerson, aged 27. A loyal and devoted comrade, one of the best communists in Palestine. Dear comrade Yael died on February 9, 1941, as a result of the ruthless terror and worsening of the regime in the imperialist prisons in Palestine. Dear comrade Yael had been trampled under the hobnailed boots of imperialist-Zionist terror; she has been sacrificed on the exalted alter of the struggle against the bloody imperialist regime, and for a world free of the horrors of war, destruction, and enslavement, for a socialist world.[1]

The last paragraph of the obituary stated, "[P]ersecuted by the police, Yael left Palestine in 1936 and made her way to Spain to participate in the Spanish people's fight against fascism." The newspaper's readers might have gotten the wrong impression that Gerson actively fought in the Spanish Civil War, when, in fact, she left Palestine only in 1937 and stayed in Paris, where she actively participated in mobilizing political support for the Spanish Republic.

At least 145 volunteers left Palestine to join the Republican struggle in Spain.[2] The majority were Jewish male communists. However, fourteen were women, one of them being Yael Gerson. After a short overview of reactions to the Spanish Civil War in Palestine's Jewish Yishuv and its leadership, this chapter looks at the life histories of these women, with special attention given to the trajectories of Yael Gerson, Dora Birnbach-Levin, and the Meites sisters, Haya and Ruth. The life trajectories of these women and their political commitment illustrate not only international women's participation in the Spanish war but also the diverse motives for volunteering in the Iberian civil war. This chapter highlights the need to take gender issues into consideration in discussing these motives, especially regarding what notions of agency or empowerment women used to justify their actions. The voices of female international volunteers in the Spanish Civil War have often gone unheard.

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*Figure 3.1* "Yael Gerson," *Kol Ha'am*, February 1941, 1.

To some extent, they were among the "nobodies" of the war. In recent years, however, there has been a growing scholarly effort to give voice to individuals and members of different genders, ages, and ethnic groups and incorporate their experiences into the broader history of the Spanish Civil War.[3]

**Support for the Spanish Republic in the Jewish Yishuv**

The Spanish Civil War resonated across the world. It also had a profound impact on the Jewish Yishuv and its internal debates regarding the need to devote most resources and energy to the struggle for establishing a new Jewish sovereign state in Palestine without ignoring international conflicts, especially the fight against the rise of fascism in Europe.[4] Responses to the war varied. Certain factions of the Yishuv, especially Revisionist Zionists, identified with the Nationalist rebels who sought to rid Spain of the "communist threat." Others remained neutral, following the example set by the British government, to which the League of Nations had entrusted the mandate over Palestine. But many of those identifying with Socialist Zionism expressed their support of the Spanish Republic by raising funds and collecting donations to aid it in its struggle.[5] The Histadrut (Confederation of Jewish Workers) played a key role in this solidarity campaign with the Republic.

The PCP, outlawed in 1921, was galvanized into action and mobilized considerable support through several front organizations.[6] The most notable of these organizations was Antifa, or "The Society to Aid Victims of Fascism and Antisemitism in Palestine." The PCP itself conducted its activities covertly. Although it had only a few hundred affiliates at any given time, the party's anti-imperialist propaganda was considered a serious threat by the British mandate authorities. Many communists were therefore detained by the British authorities and sentenced by courts to serve time in prisons,

and those born outside Palestine were often deported from the country.[7] The party's organ, *Kol Ha'am* (The voice of the people), had to be published clandestinely and was distributed by members of the Communist Youth.

Despite these manifestations of solidarity, a near consensus existed among virtually all sectors of the Yishuv, including the different factions of the Zionist left, against the enlistment of young volunteers from Palestine to the International Brigades (IB). The Spanish Civil War coincided with the Great Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936–39), which targeted both Palestine's Jewish population and the British authorities, and cost the lives of hundreds of Jews, Arabs, and Britons. The rationale behind the Zionist stance was summarized in statements such as "the struggle for the life of the Yishuv is as vital as that of the Spanish Republic" or "Hanita [a frontier kibbutz] comes before Madrid." The latter expression was coined by Yaakov Hazan, one of the leaders of the left-wing Zionist movement *Hashomer Hatza'ir*.[8] The Hebrew press mostly supported the Spanish Republic but at the same time largely avoided reporting on Jewish volunteers who left for Spain so as not to encourage others to follow them.[9] This attitude also reflected the hostility of the Jewish establishment in Palestine toward the PCP because of the latter's anti-Zionist campaign.

Still, between 150 and 200 volunteers left Palestine for Spain, and most of them are members of the PCP.[10] This is a considerable figure, considering that the entire population of the Yishuv numbered no more than 400,000 people at that time and that the Zionist parties strongly discouraged their members from volunteering in Spain.

**International Female Volunteers in the Spanish War**

International female volunteers arrived in Spain at the height of a feminist struggle in the country. In the new 1931 constitution of the Second Spanish Republic, women gained suffrage, and civil marriage and divorce were legalized. The challenges to traditional gender distinctions, however, became greater during the initial phases of civil war. As men left for the front, women were compelled, and often encouraged, to take up paid work, and their presence in the public sphere increased dramatically—mostly, but not only, in the Republican zone.

The first months of the war, in the summer of 1936, also saw the enlistment of Spanish and foreign women to the popular militias. The *Milicianas*, women who decided to leave the relative safety of their homes and jobs to enlist with armed groups and embark on a venture with a highly uncertain outcome, were at first lauded as a revolutionary icon of resistance and heroism but within a few months became the subject of scorn and ridicule. With the consolidation of the Republican Army, these women, who for the first time in their lives were experiencing the ability to control their own destiny, were gradually pushed out of the armed forces, sometimes even characterized as prostitutes. By May 1937, all women had been removed from the

frontline, as Republican men were concerned by the "modern woman" and the transgression of gender stereotypes.[11]

The enlistment of female volunteers from across the world to aid the Spanish Republic in its struggle against the Nationalist uprising was influenced by the significant gap between the revolutionary rhetoric of the Republic's supporters and the perpetuation and reinforcement of more traditional gender norms in practice. This was clearly demonstrated, for example, in the case of Cypora Gilert and Rosa Blanca, two of the volunteers form Palestine who were willing to place their bodies in the line of fire to take part in the armed struggle against fascism but were forced back to auxiliary roles on the home front.[12]

Estimates regarding the number of women volunteers in the IB range between 600 and 700. They constituted a small minority among more than 35,000 volunteers who traveled to fight fascism in Spain.[13] The ranks of the IB included a great number of Jewish volunteers.[14] In most cases, the percentage of Jews among the volunteers from each country was significantly larger than their share in the general population of these countries. The share of Jewish volunteers was particularly large among the women, although we do not have enough data on this group.[15]

At least some of the women who wanted to enlist were refused, as their ability to make any significant contribution to the anti-fascist struggle was doubted. Mothers neither were drafted to the IB nor were women without prior training in fields that could be of service, such as nursing.[16] Among those who were not allowed to join the IB were Simona Bronstein, Sara Weisblum, Bilha Tenenbaum, Hana Frank, and Lucia Horowitz; all came from Palestine and hoped to make it to Spain but were forced to stay in Paris while their partners enlisted in the IB.[17] While a rich historiography exists on the IB, there are only few studies on female volunteers. The scholarship on foreign volunteers in the Spanish Civil War has largely ignored the role played by women. Even less scholarly attention has been paid to the enlistment of Jewish women from different countries, despite their relative prominence, both on the home front and on the frontlines.

## Women of Palestine Joining the Struggle Against Fascism

Yael Gerson was born in Palestine in 1913. This meant that, unlike foreign-born communists, she could not be deported by the British mandate, although they could certainly pressure her to leave.[18] Gerson never made it to the Iberian Peninsula, but her tragic life and early death transformed her into a communist martyr. She became a figure of a mobilizing myth and a role model to emulate for the younger generation of the PCP, and later of the Israeli Communist Party, regarding international solidarity with the Spanish Republic.[19]

Gerson became involved in communist organizations at a very young age. On May Day 1928, at the age of fourteen, she organized a children's demonstration, which was one of the first activities of the communist youth organization. The schoolchildren demanded "mandatory and free education

for all the country's children" and voiced their support of their striking teachers.[20] Leah Trachtman-Palchan was of Yael's age, and she also joined the PCP and participated in that same demonstration that May. In her memoirs, she referred to Yael's leadership qualities.[21]

According to Yael's brother, Joseph, who was eight years younger than her, she attended the Tel Nordau School until the eighth grade and then began studying at Tel Aviv's Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium. In her memory book from the summer of 1927, at the end of primary school, her classmates wrote all sorts of patriotic notes about the Jewish homeland, but curiously enough, several notes pointed to Yael's character and the path she would take in her life. "Be proud and do not give in to anyone," wrote one student. "Do not expect anything from others," added another one, "shape your life with your own hands."[22] Gerson was a member of the Scouts movement: "We later discovered that her counsellor was a communist, and that he recruited the entire group under his guidance to the communist party."[23]

Soon after joining the communist youth organization, Gerson was appointed as the secretary of its Tel Aviv chapter. In 1929, she protested the mandate police's refusal to return the body of a PCP member who had died in a Jerusalem prison to his family. Two years later, she was tried, probably for the first time, and charged with "membership of an illegal association," along with other four female activists of the PCP, after participating in a secret meeting in Tel Aviv.[24] One of the other four female militants of the PCP charged in this trial and sent to prison with Gerson was the aforementioned Leah Trachtman-Palchan, who was later deported from Palestine to the Soviet Union. In summer 1935, Gerson organized several demonstrations supporting the hunger strike of fifteen communist prisoners who protested the denial of their rights as political prisoners.[25] Indeed, hundreds of communists were arrested by the British authorities in that period and were subject to torture as a method of extracting information and confessions from them. A considerable number died in custody due to the harsh conditions and lack of medical care. Gerson was detained for this protest and immediately joined the hunger strike herself.[26] On August 9, 1936, the Hebrew daily *Ha'aretz* reported that Gerson, "a known communist, who has been sentenced to prison twice," was arrested on the Tel Aviv beach. "The police has been searching for her since the beginning of the events [the Arab Revolt] but was unable to find her."[27]

Yael Gerson's life was a constant struggle. She was expelled from her school and could not be admitted anywhere else. Ruth Lubitz, who had joined the PCP in 1931 and remained a loyal member until her death in 2010, wrote in her memoir that even in her parents' home, Gerson "had to fight for the hard and dangerous path she had chosen."[28] And according to her brother Joseph,

> [Yael] stayed in the party despite my parents' objection. . . . In 1932 or 1933 she was arrested again and detained in prison in Bethlehem. When she was released, she left our parents' home and rented a room in

> town. She worked as a maid for a wealthy family in Tel Aviv. Throughout this time, she had to keep evading the police, which continued its persecution of communists.[29]

Like the rest of her comrades, Gerson went in and out of jail. Her prison sentences amounted to four years in total. She was arrested again in 1937 while she was staying in Be'er Ya'akov with Ephraim Wuzek, another member of the PCP.[30] They were charged with distributing communist propaganda and membership in an illegal association. Gerson was sentenced to two-week imprisonment and charged with a bail of twenty-five Palestine pounds.

Tired of repression, Yael decided to leave Palestine. According to Joseph:

> [M]y sister was involved with a communist man, Moshe Halevy.[31] Probably for fear of the Police in Palestine, Moshe went to Spain to fight against Franco. . . . He was wounded in the war and sent to France to recover. Meanwhile, Yael was released from custody and decided to go to Paris to be with him. The authorities in Palestine were keen to get rid of whoever they could and allowed her to leave. In Paris Yael found Moshe and the two lived together.

Elsewhere in his recollections, Joseph noted: "In 1937 Yael reached a deal with the police (that wanted her to leave the country) and went to Paris to meet her boyfriend." In Paris, she joined the French Communist Party. Historian Shmuel Dothan presents a different version of the events, claiming that Gerson decided to leave Palestine "after she had been abandoned by her Arab partner, who joined the rioters."[32]

Whichever version is correct, they are both meaningful for understanding the various motivations that spurred young men and women to leave their country and risk their lives in a foreign war. It seems that Gerson's decision to leave Palestine was not driven solely by solidarity with the Spanish Republic and the working class but also by her personal regard for Moshe. While this interpretation does not undermine her ideological commitment, it shows that personal relations and commitments played a similarly important role. The weight given to each of these identity components varied according to the changing circumstances of time and place.

In the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and after the outbreak of World War II (WWII), Gerson returned home to Palestine. According to her brother:

> [T]he French authorities deported many aliens, and Yael had to leave Paris and go back to Palestine. . . . Her partner, who was a Polish citizen, was sent to an internment camp in North Africa. Yael lost contact with him, but I later heard that he had been deported to Poland.

The British Criminal Investigation Department (CID) had warned Gerson that a resumption of her communist activity would lead to her arrest. Gerson,

*Figure 3.2* A group of Jewish volunteers from Palestine. On the right is Yael Gerson, next to her is Pinchas Chefetz, and Arie Lev is on the left.

*Source*: From Yael Gerson's family album. Courtesy of Eran Torbiner and Ido Dvir

however, had no intention to stay away from political activism. One evening in August 1940, she left a clandestine meeting of the PCP and was arrested.[33]

Thus, a few months after returning to Palestine, Gerson was again sent to prison in Bethlehem, where she soon developed pneumonia. Her condition quickly deteriorated due to poor conditions and neglect at the facility. She was removed from prison and sent to the government hospital in Jerusalem. When her condition turned out to be fatal, the British approved her bail. Her parents transferred her to the Hadassah hospital, where she died within a few hours, watched by policemen.[34] According to Joseph:

> [T]he British police continued its persecution of the communists and got to Yael (they brought communist pamphlets with them, and claimed that they found them while searching the house). After a few months of freedom, she was arrested again. She got pneumonia in the Bethlehem prison, and since antibiotics weren't yet in use, her condition worsened. . . . She was released and hospitalized in Hadassah by my mother. There, the medical staff tried giving her oxygen, but it was too late. She died at the hospital in February 1941. . . . My father went to Jerusalem, and he and my mother brought her back to Tel Aviv in a coffin.

Gerson was buried the next day, February 6, 1941.

Yael Gerson's tragic fate was discussed in court after the establishment of the State of Israel during the investigation of the disappearance of Sioma Mironiansky, former Secretary of the PCP. In 1941, he was detained for a police investigation and was never seen again. Suspicions were raised that he had been beaten to death by policemen, who later hid his body or threw it into the sea. In 1948, Israel's Attorney General ordered the investigation of this affair. During the public inquiry, witnesses provided detailed accounts of the violent repression of communists by the CID. It was also stated that Mironiansky was interrogated by an officer named Itzhak Steinberg. One of the witnesses noted:

> Steinberg despised the communist prisoners and detainees. There was a young woman, Yael Gerson, who was sent to the Bethlehem prison under suspicion of being a communist. She fell ill in custody, and her elderly mother, who requested the CID to visit her, complained that Steinberg drove her out and refused to grant her permission to see her daughter.[35]

**Dora Birnbach-Levin and the Republic's Medical Services**

Dora Birnbach was born in September 1911 to a Hassidic family in Sokołów Podlaski, Poland. From her youth, she rebelled against the strict religious discipline of her environment. At age sixteen, she left her parents' home and moved to Kraków, where she worked in a hospital for a couple of months and joined the left-wing Zionist movement *Hashomer Hatza'ir*. In 1933, she immigrated to Palestine. Armed with socialist ideals, Birnbach joined the kibbutz Ein Ha-Horesh. Within a short time, she was exposed to the escalating conflict between Zionists and Palestinian Arabs. She decided to leave the kibbutz, renounced the Zionist ideology, and moved first to Jerusalem and then to Tel Aviv, taking temporary jobs in construction or domestic service. She also took a short course in nursing, which would become particularly useful for her in Spain.[36]

In 1936, Birnbach was arrested by British authorities for her membership in a Jewish–Arab trade union that sought to challenge the *Histadrut* (General Confederation of Jewish Workers), which, as its name suggests, only represented Jewish workers. She was sent to the women's prison in Bethlehem, where she first heard about the Nationalist uprising in Spain. Years later, she recalled:

> [I]n 1937 I was serving a one-year sentence for political activism in Bethlehem. Around that time, news and rumors reached the prison about an anti-fascist war in Spain, ignited by the Francoist forces' uprising against the Spanish Republic, who were backed by the armies of Hitler and Mussolini.[37]

In May 1937, after almost a year in prison, Birnbach was released. The British authorities made her an offer she could not refuse: a release from

prison in exchange for her departure from Palestine. This was a rather common practice used by the authorities to force communists out of the country.[38] When interviewed about her choice to join the forces defending the Spanish Republic, she explained that she was determined to continue the anti-fascist struggle she had joined in Palestine. "I came to the conclusion that the right way to fight fascism was to go to Spain . . . to contribute my share."[39] Like many other volunteers, Birnbach was motivated by both political and ideological motives and more personal ones—namely, the difficulties she endured for her activism in Palestine. By aiding the Republic in its struggle, she would consolidate her sense of identity and strengthen her self-esteem.

Birnbach obtained a visa for France, allegedly to visit the Paris International Exposition. She contacted the IB's enlistment office immediately after her arrival.[40] In August 1937, she left France in a small fishing boat, along with a female doctor from Bulgaria, a group of Polish and Romanian nurses, a former priest from Canada who brought tens of thousands of dollars collected by supporters of the Republic in his country, and a young Anglo-Jewish journalist named Sam Lesser, who wrote for *The Daily Worker* (now known as the *Morning Star*).[41] After arriving in the Catalan town of Figueras, Birnbach traveled to the IB's headquarters in Albacete. She served as a nurse and helped

*Figure 3.3* Dora Birnbach-Levin next to her husband, Stefan, in Israel in the 1990s.
*Source*: Courtesy of Eran Torbiner

build and organize hospitals in Murcia, Valencia, and Catalonia. She also provided medical training for Spanish women and cared for war orphans.[42]

In the handwritten notes she composed many years later, Levin emphasized that the medical services of the IB employed more than 2,000 people, including hundreds of nurses and orderlies and that they were often assisted by the local Spanish population.[43] She also named some of the more prominent European and North American surgeons who volunteered to aid the Spanish Republic.

> In mid-1937, in the aftermath of the battles of Madrid and Jarama, the organizational foundations for the medical services had already been set in place. Our objective was to provide medical and sanitary care for soldiers, from first aid to lifesaving operations.

However, Birnbach clarified that the hospitals established by the IB "also stressed the importance of community work and public and cultural initiatives serving the local population. In home-front hospitals, the medical personnel and those suffering from mild injuries undertook the care of orphans."

After the fall of the Republic, Birnbach, like many other Republican refugees and former members of the IB, was detained in the Le Luc and St. Zachary internment camps in southern France until the outbreak of WWII.[44] After a while, a relative helped her reach Great Britain, where she spent the remainder of the war, and she participated in the creation of a Polish antifascist seamen's association, affiliated with the communist party.

In her notes and in an interview with her husband Stephan, Dora Birnbach-Levin mentioned several nurses who had come from mandatory Palestine. She recalled Adela Botwinska (born Weinraub) in particular, perhaps because both women returned to Poland after WWII to help build the new socialist state and since they were both driven out of the country by the government-led antisemitic campaign of 1968, eventually immigrating to Israel.[45] Another nurse from Palestine mentioned in Dora's notes is Ruth Meites.

### Together Yet Apart: Haya and Ruth Meites[46]

Haya Meites did not make it to Spain. She stayed in Paris and took part in the efforts to mobilize public support for the Spanish Republic's struggle against the Nationalist rebellion supported by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Her sister Ruth did arrive in Spain and served as a nurse in the Republican zone, until all members of the IB and foreign volunteers had to leave the country. Haya and Ruth's parents immigrated from Lithuania to Palestine in 1910 and settled in Haifa. Haya was born in 1904 in Vilnius and Ruth on October 23, 1910. It is not entirely clear whether she was also born in Eastern Europe, as some documents state, and therefore came as an infant to Palestine, or whether she was born in Haifa, as she declared in one of the IB documents.

A couple of years after their relocation to Palestine, in 1912, the family home in Haifa was accidentally burnt down. Their mother perished in the fire, and the father was seriously wounded. The children were put in an orphanage in Jerusalem, where they stayed until 1919. After their father came out of hospital, it seems that the family was reunited for a short time, but the children were soon sent to live on a kibbutz.[47] Haya became politically active in 1925 and joined the PCP. She was part of a group that worked in a clandestine printing press, hidden in a vineyard. "We have found a notebook where Haya wrote that they had secret printing works in Bethlehem in 1928," Jean Laroche, her daughter in law, told me in an interview. Because of this activity, Haya was arrested by the British authorities at least once in 1933.[48] Haya's ideological commitment impressed the party leadership, and she was sent to Moscow for additional doctrinal training sometime during the second half of the 1920s.

Several of Haya's comrades went to Spain to fight fascism. Notable among them was Meir Levi. Born in Jerusalem to a Sephardic family, Levi was a construction worker and became a member of the PCP at an early age. In 1935 he participated in a communist demonstration in Jerusalem and was shot and wounded by a British policeman.[49] Levi was forced by the British to leave the country in 1937. He arrived in Paris, where he was helped by his sister Miriam and her husband Max Amram.

France had the largest Communist party outside of the Soviet Union, and Paris became the organizational center of the IB. It was in Paris that the reality of being a member of the IB first became tangible through specific practices of

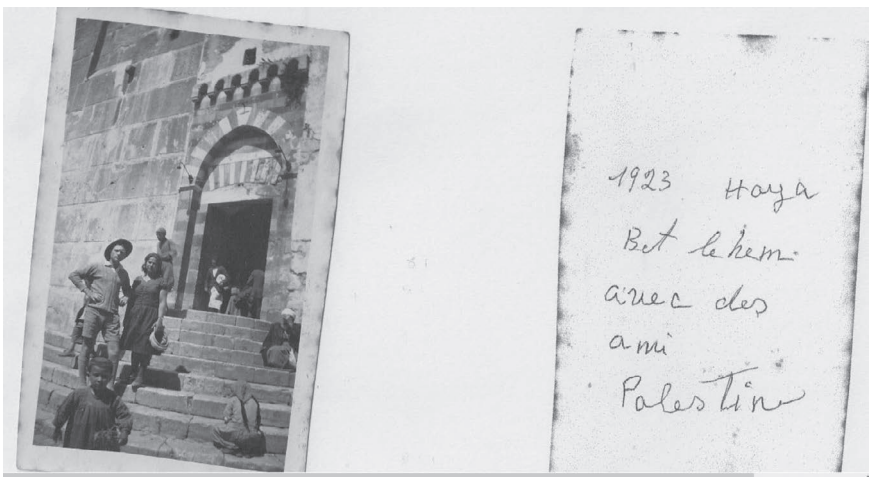


*Figure 3.4* Haya Meites with a fellow communist in Bethlehem in 1923.
*Source*: Courtesy of her son and daughter in-law, Pierre and Jean Laroche

affiliation and new personal encounters.[50] Haya did not leave Palestine together with Meir. She left a little later, on October 27, 1937 (the date stamped in her Palestinian passport), and it seems that she planned on joining Meir in Spain. The information she gave to obtain her visa was that she was a professional nurse. Although incorrect, it served its purpose at that point, and she got the visa. Still, she was not able to convince the Comintern officials that she could join the medical services of the Republic, so she stayed in Paris.

During the civil war, Levi was a political commissar of a Hungarian unit. He was captured on June 5, 1938, by the Nationalist army and sent to a prison in the monastery of San Pedro de Cardena, where he died of typhus on April 24, 1939. Haya kept a photo of the two of them and maintained close ties with Max and Miriam Amram.[51] Haya's commitment to the Republican cause was firm. A photo taken in Paris on June 20, 1939, from the family archive, shows Haya with a group of "friends who returned from the Spanish war," as is stated on the back of the photo. It is unclear whether Haya was considering going back to Palestine at the end of the Spanish Civil War. In early May 1939, however, the British authorities decided to ban the return of five communists who had left for Spain: David Camy, Yaacov Chen, Yechiel Winograd, Yehudit Kipper-Kalman, and Haya Meites.[52] At any rate, once the Germans invaded France in June 1940, Haya had to leave Paris quickly. She moved to Dordogne to join her sister Ruth, who was living there by then.

Ruth left Palestine in June 1937 on her own. She had been told to contact Max and Miriam Amram in Paris to facilitate her joining the IB and crossing into Spain. She entered Spain on November 17 of that year and went straight to Albacete, the Republican training base. Fortunately, she shared her story with David Diamant (Erlich), a Polish-French Jew who wrote the pioneering book on Jewish volunteers in the Spanish Civil War.[53]

In her testimony to Diamant, Ruth emphasized her training in Palestine as a nurse working with children in Tipat Chalav, a center that provides health and medical services in the field of health promotion and prevention for pregnant women, infants, and children. She made no mention of any political activity in which she was involved prior to leaving Palestine for Spain. Once in Paris,

> Max took me to Mathurin Moreau Avenue, where I got in touch with the relevant Comintern authorities. I went through two commissions, one political and one medical. I was asked various questions: do I feel morally strong enough, will I not be afraid of the bombings, etc. I was accepted as fit, but I still had to wait for months.[54]

Ruth was very impressed by the Parisian demonstration of July 14, 1937, and the way she described it reminds one of Pinchas Chefetz's excitement when he described the masses of workers who attended the annual party organized by *L'Humanité*, the PCF newspaper.[55] The experience of a massive event with a noticeable presence of the organized working class contrasted sharply with the very small clandestine activity of the communists in Palestine. Ruth's journey

to Spain started at the Gare de Lyon. During the trip, she met several other nurses. A party official from the Mathurin Moreau Avenue Committee accompanied them to Perpignan. At the crack of dawn, they crossed the border and made it into Spain. After a brief stay in Albacete, Ruth started her first job in a hospital installed in a village in Aragon. "You had to be strong, physically and morally, to survive the continuous bombing. Every time the fascist planes came, we had to evacuate all our wounded from the second and third floors, and all this in the greatest calm."[56] She became friends with another Jewish volunteer from Palestine, Cypora Nilar/Gilert. The head nurse was a young woman in her thirties from Lithuania who had already had six or seven years of professional experience. She served as a mentor for the newly arrived nurses. "She taught us, the young people, not only the job but also and above all the calm and composure needed." There were seven nurses in the hospital, four of whom were Jewish. They faced a shortage of medicine and equipment and were told to treat only fighters of the IB.

From time to time on the Aragon front, they were entitled to rest. Interestingly enough, although all volunteers were motivated by internationalist ideas, many of them opted for socializing with comrades from the same national or ethnic groups. This was the case with many Jews. As Ruth recalls, at times of rest, they were looking for the company of

> Jewish comrades of the Brigades. Among them, I remember Solomon Joffee, a wonderful comrade from Israel, Jankel Lukia, Siomke, a Russian comrade, Micha Bernstein, Meir Levi, political commissar of an infantry company, also from Israel. He was an admirable man; calm and modest; he fell later in the battle. We had a meal together and, for the first time in our lives, we ate rabbit. . . . We were happy to be with healthy fighters. We spent the day very happily and they told us important battle stories. We, the nurses, related our experience. We sang. This meeting was a great feast for us in the hard daily life of the hospital.[57]

After three months in Aragon, Ruth was sent to a hospital in Benito for soldiers with tuberculosis. There she worked with Sarah, another Jewish volunteer from Romania, as well as several Spanish nurses.

> We had seven wards and about 40 beds. The conditions were extremely difficult. We didn't even have the most essential medicines. We were terribly inadequate as many of the patients felt doomed due to lack of medication. We took out the dead in the silence of the night in order to avoid the pain of the other patients. . . . The situation was so bad, and we were so busy that we lost the notion of time. We never had time to read a newspaper.[58]

Ruth worked in this hospital until they were all evacuated. Leaving the hospital with the patients was a painful process that took more than twelve

hours. On their way, they had many incidents. Planes flew overhead. Despite the white flag with the red cross they were flying, they were bombed. Of all the nurses, only three survived, including Ruth. They arrived in Valencia with the sick and stayed there for three or four days. Then they were sent to Vic. Toward the end of the war in Spain, on January 17, 1939, Ruth married Eli Rappaport, another Jewish volunteer from Palestine enlisted in the IB.

## Conclusions

The echoes of the Spanish Civil War were heard across the globe, including Palestine. The struggle against the Nationalist insurrection, headed by General Francisco Franco and supported by Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy, inspired about 35,000 volunteers to travel to the Iberian Peninsula and aid the Republic to defeat the rebels. The Jewish presence among the volunteers in general and female volunteers in particular was noticeable. Yet histography has not devoted much attention to women's participation in the war and to Jewish participation in this conflict. It is only recently that research has turned more of its attention to women, Jews, and non-European or American volunteers, like in the case of Palestine.

In Palestine, unlike in many other countries, British mandate authorities not only allowed communists to leave the country but even encouraged them to go and fight for their political ideals, as long as they did it on the other side of the Mediterranean. The welcome received by those who eventually found their way back home differed significantly among countries, and so did the commemoration of the volunteers in the decades following the fall of fascism and the end of the Second World War. In Palestine many veterans of the Spanish Civil War were forbidden to return, and in the State of Israel, established in 1948, it took until the early 1970s for authorities to recognize the heroic anti-fascist struggle in 1930s Spain and the sacrifice made by international volunteers.

Based on documents held in private hands by relatives of female volunteers who left Palestine to aid the Spanish Republic in its hour of need, this chapter tries to—at least partially—fill the aforementioned lacunae. Of the fourteen women who decided to leave Palestine for Spain or were driven out of the country by the British Mandate authorities, there is enough information on seven or eight of them to develop a general profile of this group of women. They were young, educated, idealistic, and adventurous and hoped to create a better and more just world. Despite their youth, many of them were experienced political activists and had been subject to persecution and repression in their home countries before leaving to the Iberian Peninsula. Most, if not all of them, were childless when they left for Spain. The majority of women volunteers served in auxiliary roles, mostly as nurses and doctors in the IB's medical services or as translators. As the stories of Yael Gerson, Dora Birnbach-Levin, and the Meites sister demonstrate, the decision to become involved in the Spanish conflict was affected by a complex network of political and interpersonal

connections and commitments. These women chose to leave their families and lives in Palestine in a move that helped them define and consolidate their distinct personal identities. At the same time, we can see a parallel search for belonging, which they found both in the international struggle against fascism and in their private, interpersonal relationships.

All of them paid a significant personal price following the defeat of the Spanish Republic. At the end of the Second World War, Birnbach-Levin and Weintraub-Botwinska went back to their native Poland and joined the communist regime, only to find out years later that their loyalty to communism was questioned due to their Jewish origin. Ruth Meites found herself in an internment camp in Southern France before she could regain her liberty and move to the Dordogne, where she and later also her sister Haya found refuge during the German occupation of France. And Yael Gerson, who never made it to Spain, returned to Palestine and died tragically at a very young age.

## Notes

1 "Yael Gerson," *Kol Ha'am*, February 1941, 1 [in Hebrew].
2 *They Shall Not Pass! The International Brigades and Their Jewish Combatants in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939*, exhibition catalogue (Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 2003); *From Here to Madrid: Volunteers from Palestine in the International Brigades in Spain 1936–1938*, exhibition catalogue (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 2012).
3 Among recent examples, see Francisco J. Leira Castiñera, *Los nadies de la Guerra de España* (Madrid: Akal, 2022).
4 Zeev Sternhell, *Nation-Building or a New Society: The Zionist Labor Movement (1904–1940) and the Origins of the State of Israel* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1995).
5 Raanan Rein, "Echoes of the Spanish Civil War in Palestine: Zionists, Communists and the Contemporary Press," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 1 (2008): 9–23.
6 Amir Locker-Biletzki, "War and Memory: The Israeli Communist Commemoration of the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1986," *Israel Studies* 31, no. 2 (2016): 61–79.
7 Ha'aretz, August 13, 1938. For the history of the party, see Shmuel Dothan, *Reds—The Communist Party in Palestine* [in Hebrew] (Kfar-Saba: Shevna ha-Sofer, 1991); Leon Zahavi, *Apart or Together: Jews and Arabs in Palestine According to the Comintern Documents (1919–1943)* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keter, 2005); Jacob Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism in Palestine During the British Mandate* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2012).
8 Ya'akov Riftin, another leading member of Hashomer Hatza'ir, confessed on one occasion:

> We have neither the time nor the ability to deal day in and day out with the events taking place on the Spanish fronts. We too are defending ourselves in the trenches for the third year now. We are losing people every day. And no one knows if we have reached the height of terror or if the worst is still ahead of us.
> (*Hashomer Hatza'ir*, September 1, 1938)

9 Joseph Algazy, "The Civil War in Spain as Reflected by the Hebrew Press in Palestine, 1936–1939" [in Hebrew], in *They Shall Not Pass: The Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939*, ed. Raanan Rein (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 2000), 272–305.

10 Israel Centner, who himself went to Spain, was asked in 1937 by the PCP to write the history of the volunteers from Palestine. See his *From Madrid to Berlin* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Self-Published, 1966), as well as Eran Torbiner's documentary *Madrid Comes Before Hanita* (2006).
11 Sofía Rodríguez López, "Fallen Militiawomen in the Spanish Civil War: The Identity of the Unknown Fighters," *European History Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2023): 115–34; Lisa Lines, *Milicianas: Women in Combat in the Spanish Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 103–50; Inbal Ofer, "Women and the Spanish Civil War: The Radical Months," in *Spain 1936: Year Zero*, ed. Raanan Rein and Joan Maria Thomàs (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2018), 93–113.
12 Centner, *From Madrid to Berlin*, 57–58. On Gilert, see "The Verdict of Communists," *Davar*, September 27, 1934, 1 [in Hebrew]; "Belonging to an Illegal Association," *Ha'aretz*, September 20, 1934, 6 [in Hebrew]; "Belonging to the Communist Party," *Ha'aretz*, September 27, 1934, 6 [in Hebrew].
13 There is a large historiography of the IB; among recent contributions, see Giles Tremlett, *The International Brigades, Fascism, Freedom, and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Jaume Claret, *Breve historia de las Brigadas Internacionales* (Madrid: Catarata, 2016); Josep Sánchez Cervelló and Sebastián Agudo Blanco, eds., *Las Brigadas Internacionales: Nuevas perspectivas en la historia de la Guerra Civil y del exilio* (Tarragona: URV, 2015). On female volunteers, see Édouard Sill, ed., *¡SOLIDARIAS! Les volontaires étrangères et la solidarité internationale féminine durant la guerre d'Espagne (1936–1939)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2022).
14 Gerben Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
15 Nearly 200 female journalists from twenty-nine countries covered the Spanish Civil War. Many of them were Jewish, including Gerda Taro and Ilse Wolff. See Bernardo Díaz Nosty, *Periodistas extranjeras en la Guerra Civil* (Seville: Renacimiento, 2022).
16 Sioban Nelson, Paola Galbany Estragués, and Gloria Gallego Caminero, "The Nurses No One Remembers: Looking for Spanish Nurses in Accounts of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)," *Nursing History Review* 28 (2020): 63–92.
17 On women who followed their partners to Spain, see Rosa María Ballesteros García, "El efecto de Cronos. Brigadistas olvidadas por la historia," *Aposta. Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 37 (2008): 1–41.
18 The British authorities used similar tactics in the case of Pinchas Chefetz, a communist who was born in Palestine whose release from prison was conditioned on his "voluntary departure" from the country. See Raanan Rein, "El precio a pagar por decisiones personales: Pinchas Chefetz, la egohistoria y los voluntarios judíos en la Guerra Civil española," *Historia del Presente* 35 (2020/1): 137–52.
19 On the commemoration of the Spanish Civil War by the PCP and Israeli Communist Party, see Locker-Biletzki, "War and Memory."
20 "Yael Gerson (18 Years since Her Tragic Death)," *Kol Ha'am*, February 8, 1957, 3; Ruth Lubitz, *I Chose to Live in Struggle* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Shachar, 1985), 209–10.
21 Leah Trachtman-Palchan, *Between Tel Aviv and Moscow: A Life of Dissent and Exile in Mandate Palestine and the Soviet Union* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pt. II.
22 Yael Gerson's 1927 book of memories.
23 Joseph Gerson's handwritten memoirs. I thank Ido Dvir for sharing with me the written memories of his grandfather, Yael's brother, as well as other sources on Gerson's trajectory.
24 "Communists on Trial," *Ha'aretz*, August 13, 1931, 4 [in Hebrew].

25 No author, "Hunger Strike by Political Prisoners," *Davar*, July 22, 1935; No author, "The Political Prisoners' Hunger Strike in Jerusalem Continues," *Doar Hayom*, July 23, 1935, 1 [in Hebrew].
26 Jacob Markovizky, "The Pursuit after the 'Red Brothers'—The CID and the PKP (1921–1933)" [in Hebrew], *Israel Studies* 12 (2002): 289–303.
27 "Arrest of a Communist," *Ha'aretz*, August 9, 1936, 5 [in Hebrew].
28 Lubitz, *I Chose to Live in Struggle*, 210.
29 Joseph Gerson's handwritten memoirs.
30 For Wuzek's memories of his time in the Botwin Company of the IB, see Ephraïm Wuzek, *Combattants juifs dans la guerre d'Espagne la compagnie Botwin* (Paris: Syllepse, 2013).
31 Yael's brother might refer here to Moshe Levi (or Levin), wounded in the Teruel battle.
32 Dothan, *Reds*, 568. During her stay in Paris, Gerson held a letter correspondence with Leah Trachterman in Moscow.
33 "Accused of Communism," *Ha'aretz*, August 13, 1940, 5 [in Hebrew]; Carmit Gai, *Standing Alone: The Story of the Hebrew Communists, 1943–1949* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keter, 2019), 47.
34 According to former communist leader Tamar Gozansky, Gerson died in custody. See Tamar Gozansky, ed., *Arise, Ye Workers from Your Slumber: Life and Collected Works of Eliyahu (Alyosha) Gozansky (1914–1948)* [in Hebrew] (Haifa: Pardes, 2009), 479.
35 "Mironiansky's Widow Testifies," *Ma'ariv*, December 7, 1948, 1, 4 [in Hebrew].
36 See the eulogy written by filmmaker Eran Torbiner, November 29, 2010. I am grateful to Torbiner for sharing this text with me.
37 Birnbach Levin, interviewed by her husband Stephen. Transcript in the author's archive.
38 Nir Arieli, "Induced to Volunteer? The Predicament of Jewish Communists in Palestine and the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 4 (2011): 854–70.
39 Birnbach Levin, interviewed by her husband Stephen.
40 For a discussion of the political and emotional importance of the Palestine volunteers' stay in Paris before their departure to Spain, see Rein, "El precio a pagar por decisiones personales"; Raanan Rein and Ibal Ofer, "Becoming Brigadistas: Jewish Volunteers from Palestine in the Spanish Civil War," *European History Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (January 2016): 92–112.
41 See Sam Lesser, interview by Conrad Wood, 1986, *Imperial War Museum*, 9484, reel 4, www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80009271, accessed January 15, 2023; Jim Jump, "Sam Lesser: Veteran Communist Journalist Who Served with the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War," *The Independent*, November 1, 2010.
42 Dora Levin, interview by Eran Torbiner, May 6, 2003.
43 Dora Levin, "The Medical Services of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939," unpublished text, author's archive. On the IB's medical services, see Manuel Requena Gallego and Rosa María Sepúlveda Losa, eds., *La sanidad en las Brigadas Internacionales* (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2006); Nicholas Coni, *Medicine and Warfare: Spain, 1936–1939* (New York: Routledge, 2013), ch. 7; Isabel Anton-Solanas, Ann Wakefield, and Christine E. Hallett, "International Nurses to the Rescue: The Role and Contribution of the Nurses of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War," *Japan Journal of Nursing Science* 16 (2019): 103–14.
44 "Dora Levin," *Israel Horizons* (Summer 1993), 18.

45 Dora Levin's activities as a nurse are mentioned in a letter by Helena B., a Botwin Company nurse. See Deborah A. Green, "The Holy War on Fascism," in *Jewish Imaginaries of the Spanish Civil War*, ed. Cynthia Gabbay (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 92–107.
46 The following paragraphs are based on my article "The Meites Sisters and the Spanish Civil War: Women's Support for Republican Spain from Within and Without," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* (2023, in press).
47 Pierre Laroche, Haya's son, in an e-mail correspondence with the author, March 14, 2022; and interview with Jean Laroche, his wife, April 2022.
48 See "Trial of a Communist," *Doar Hayom*, November 14, 1933, 4.
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53 David Diamant, *Combattants juifs dans l'armée républicaine espagnole 1936–1939* (Paris: Éditions Renouveau, 1979).
54 Diamant, *Combattants juifs*, 167.
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# 4 "Fighting Other People's War"

## Arab Palestinian Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War

*Omri Elmaleh*

> "I am an Arab volunteer, I have come to defend freedom in Madrid, to defend Damascus in Wadi al-Ḥijara [Guadalajara], Jerusalem in Cordoba, Baghdad in Toledo, Cairo in Cadiz and Tetouan in Burgos!"[1]

These are the words of Muhammad Najati Sidqi, a Jerusalem-born Palestinian journalist, literary critic, and former secretary of the Palestine Communist Party who voluntarily traveled to Spain in August 1936 to band together with Republicans to fight against fascism and for freedom.

Much has been written about the role of the International Brigades (hereafter IB) in the Spanish Civil War. Very little attention, though, has been given to Arab volunteers who fought alongside the Republicans in a demonstration of international solidarity. Arabs were drawn from across the Middle East to fight a war far away from home. But while the actions of the international volunteers were recognized and commemorated in most of the countries from which they came, Arab volunteers have remained widely unacknowledged in academic writing and national discourse. Given the gradually accumulating historiography on Jewish participation in the IB, historians have also called attention to the question of Arab Palestinian volunteers. But the question is still highly murky, with incorrect information circulating.

This chapter is devoted to the virtually unexplored histories of Arab Palestinians who joined the struggle against the nationalist forces. Despite their willingness to fight and die for their ideals in "other people's war," they were confronted both by the racism and distrust of some of their Republican and communist brothers in arms and by the incomprehension and rejection of conservative and nationalistic Arab Palestinian culture. This extends to their marginalization in Palestinian historical memory even today.

### Historiographical Debate and Existing Literature

When talking about the participation of Arabs in the Spanish Civil War, in both popular and scholarly spheres, our existing knowledge is largely confined to the mobilization of colonized Moroccan troops into Spain to fight

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alongside Franco's forces against the Republicans. With over 80,000 well-trained troops—whether forcibly or willingly recruited—these Moroccan soldiers would prove to be a decisive factor in the outcome of the war.[2] This topic was covered extensively in both international and Spanish press during and after the war and has received substantial scholarly attention.[3] Moreover, in recent decades, there have been ongoing debates among Moroccans and Spaniards over whether to consider these combatants victims of Franco or accomplices to his war crimes.[4]

While the participation of Moroccan troops alongside the rebels has been examined and re-examined, the participation of Arabs on the side of the Republic has been largely ignored, with only scarce and imprecise references.[5] For Adnan Mechbal, there is a "clear historiographical amnesia" regarding the involvement of Arabs in the Spanish Civil War, in which they have been "curiously forgotten by an oddly selective historical writing and memory."[6] Regarding this amnesia, the pioneering work of Tunisian sociologist Abd al-Latif bin Salam in the late 1980s was the first rigorous paper on this topic. It also inspired additional publications on Arabs who took up arms and joined the IB.[7] Estimates vary from a few hundred to more than 1,000 Arab volunteers in the ranks of the IB.[8] Disparity in figures resulted from irregular record keeping among the Republican forces as well as mistranslations and misspelling of Arab names.

In the 1970s, the Catalan historian Andreu Castells recorded the names of 716 volunteers from Arab countries. Roughly, half of them were Algerians, over 200 Moroccans, and the rest from Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Tangier.[9] But it is clear that there were more volunteers from these and other Arab lands, such as Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and also Palestine, as documented, for example, in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) in Moscow.[10]

Discussing, analyzing, and reconsidering the trajectories of Arab volunteers from Palestine should be placed in historical context and utilize appropriate terminology of Palestine under the British mandate in the 1930s. Mandatory Palestine was a geopolitical and administrative entity established between 1920 and 1948 in what is today Israel and the State of Palestine. All inhabitants of this region under British rule, be they Jews, Muslims, or Christian, were formally and administratively Palestinians. Hereafter, and for the sake of the reader, I will use Jewish Palestinians and Arab Palestinians when addressing volunteers from Mandatory Palestine.

The number of Palestinian volunteers did not exceed 145–160. Most of them were Ashkenazi Jews who departed Mandatory Palestine to fight in Spain after July 18, 1936, chiefly members of the Palestine Communist Party (hereafter PCP) or other social activists.[11] Recent historiography has given more attention to Jewish participation in the Spanish Civil War, including Jewish Palestinian volunteers.[12] Jewish volunteers have also gained some national recognition, while their Arab comrades have remained in the scholarly and national shadow. As with Jewish volunteers, it cannot be determined exactly how many Arabs left for Spain. In existing literature, seven

individuals frequently appear: Najati Sidqi, Ali Abd al-Khalek, Fawzi Sabri Nabulsi, Jorge Jaroufe, Nagib Yussef, Mahmoud al-Atrash al-Maghrabi, and Malih al-Jarouf. I contend that this list should be reduced to the first three names, as there is firm evidence of their presence in Spain.

Mahmoud al-Maghribi was a Palestinian communist who reportedly fought in Spain.[13] Al-Maghribi was one of the most powerful leaders of the PCP in the early 1930s and a robust social activist until he passed away in the 1970s. However, in reading his edited biography that narrates his lifetime achievements, the absence of one chapter is striking—that of his mission to Spain. The reason for that is quite simple: he was never in Spain. Why and when al-Maghrabi was introduced as a *brigadista* is an open question. The same question applies to Nagib Yussuf, one of the prominent leaders of Anti-Fascist Committee of Palestine.[14] Yussef raised awareness and funds among Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine and around the world about the Spanish Civil War, but he did not physically aid the Republican forces.[15]

Dr. George or Jorge Jarufe is depicted as an Arab Palestinian doctor from Jerusalem who took part in a sanitary mission from Palestine.[16] While there is no doubt about Jarufe's eminent mission as a militiaman-doctor on several battle fronts during the war, he did not depart Palestine and was not a Palestinian by nationality or identification. Jarufe was a descendant of Arab Palestinians who immigrated to Peru. After the war, Jarufe came back to his homeland, where he was deeply involved in Peruvian politics and the health sector. He also campaigned intensely in favor of Republicans in Spain and spoke with admiration about his Peruvian countrymen—rather than Palestinians or other Arabs—who had fought for the future of Spain.[17] As for the Jaffa-born Malih al-Jarouf, I have not found any evidence that might place him in Spain.[18] The enlistment of Maghrabi and Yussef and the appropriation of Jarufe as Palestinian volunteers may have been innocent mistakes, but they were more likely an attempt to "thicken" the short list of Arab Palestinian *brigadistas*. By contrast, Sidqi, al-Khalek, and Nabulsi's time in Spain is indisputable, as it is grounded in oral and written evidence.

### Najati Sidqi: Fighting for the Freedom of Palestine in Spain

Muhammad Najati Sidqi al-Amini (1905–79) was raised into a middle class family and began working in the Post and Telegraph Department in Jerusalem in 1924, where Jewish fellow workers helped acquaint him with communist thought. He was one of the first Arab members to join the mostly Jewish PCP. Sidqi and Mahmoud al-Maghrabi were the first Arab members to be sent to Moscow's Communist University of the Toilers of the East.[19] The two returned to Palestine in 1929 and led the Comintern's policy of Arabizing the Communist Party in Palestine. Soon thereafter, Sidqi became the head of the party's newly founded central committee, in which al-Maghrabi was a prominent member. This rise to power, alongside fervent communist activity, eventually led to their incarceration in 1931 by the British authorities. They

were sentenced to two years in prison, after which they were deported from the country and started operating from Paris. Based in France in early September 1933, Sidqi (under the pseudonym Mustafa al-Omari) published and edited an underground monthly newspaper called *Al-Sharq al-Arabi*. Upon the suspension of the newspaper by the French authorities in early summer of 1936, Sidqi was summoned by the Comintern to Moscow.[20]

A few days before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Sidqi was asked by Dimitry Manuilski, the secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, to travel to Spain and collaborate with the Communist Party of Spain (Partido Comunista de España, hereafter PCE). His mission was to organize propaganda activities among the Moroccan recruits and mercenaries in Franco's ranks, with the objective of mobilizing mass desertion to the Republican army.[21] In general, Arab volunteers who fought for the Republic were in one of three groups: troops, military cadres, and propagandists.[22] Sidqi falls into the third category, as he did not take up arms but rather a pen and megaphone. Indeed, Sidqi was not a *brigadista* and had no affiliation to the IB. He was a communist journalist sent by Comintern and collaborated with the Republican side.

His intellectual abilities and writing skills framed his memories from his five-month stay in Spain (August–December 1936). It was first published on May 15, 1937, in the first issue of the *Sot a-Sha'ab* (People's voice), the bulletin of the Syrian Communist party, and in June 1938 in the Beirut-based magazine *Al-Tali'ah* (The vanguard) under the title "Five Months in Republican Spain: The Memoirs of an Arab Fighter in the International Brigades."[23] Later on, still in Syria, Sidqi published the book *An Arab Who Fought in Spain* under the name of Khalid Bakdash, the leader of the Syrian Communist Party.[24] These graphic accounts of his time in Spain were all incorporated into Sidqi's autobiography.

Sidqi refrained from publishing details related to his personal life or his political activity and intellectual thoughts from the twenties and the thirties. His clandestine and militant lifestyle led him to disguise these two turbulent decades of his life until the mid-seventies. Only then did he finish writing his memoirs under pressure from his family members, as he himself testified. Published postmortem, *Muzacarat Najati Sidqi* (Memoirs of Najati Sidqi, 1905–79), is an animated account that not only thoroughly depicts his time in Spain but also sheds light on the unique journey of an Arab Palestinian communist.[25] These memories are also incorporated in the documentary movie *You Come from Far Away*, which portrays his lifelong diaspora.[26]

As insightful as they are, these memoirs should be read with a critical eye. Sidqi was far away from the events he was writing about. But more than any other chapter, his mission in Spain is in desperate need of supporting references. While his presence and pre-defined assignment in Spain are documented elsewhere, there is little independent evidence to support Sidqi's detailed narrative. Since memoirs cannot stand alone as rigorous historical evidence, even one of the most well-known Arab volunteers' biographical

accounts might still be considered a "missing chapter" in this developing scholarly niche.

Sidqi notes that he arrived in France on August 10, 1936.[27] Nachman List, a veteran of the PCP and the representative of the Anti-Imperialist League in France, stated that at the beginning of the civil war, he was invited to Andre Marty's residence.[28] There, List met "Sa'adi and Mara" (the codenames of Sidqi and Al-Maghrabi). The three formulated an appeal to the anti-imperialist sentiments of Franco's Muslim soldiers.[29]

Soon thereafter, Sidqi secretly crossed the French–Spanish border at Portbou on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. After a short stay in Barcelona, he arrived in Madrid where he met the leaders of PCE, who entrusted Sidqi "to remove the veil from the eyes of the Moroccan soldiers, in the field, or in captivity."[30] Stationed in the PCE headquarters, he composed leaflets and pamphlets in Arabic for Moroccan soldiers and published articles in Spanish in Madrid's leftist and centrist newspapers (such as *El Sol*, *El Mundo Obrero*, *Claridad*, *Informaciones*, *Heraldo de Madrid*, and *Política*).[31]

Sidqi's clandestine and partisan way of life required taking safety measures; adopting codenames was one of them. In his time in the Soviet Union and Paris, he adopted the pseudonym of Mustafa Sa'adi and Mustafa al-Omari, respectively. In Spain, he worked and wrote under Mustafa ibnu Jala since "it was more appealing to Moroccans."[32] Mikhail Koltsov, correspondent of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, wrote in his memoirs that the leaflets drafted and disseminated by Ibnu Jala were found in the pockets of Moorish prisoners or corpses.[33] Although they were written in Moroccan dialect, these proclamations failed to generate mass desertion, perhaps due to the high rates of illiteracy among Franco's mostly rural recruits.

His activity went beyond writing. Sidqi was called to head south to the Córdoba front line to speak to the Moroccan soldiers and invite them to join the ranks of the Republicans using loudspeakers and propaganda leaflets. On September 25, 1936, Sidqi reached the battle trenches from where he could clearly see a group of turbaned Moroccan regulars preparing for combat. With a loudspeaker in hand, he reportedly said:

> Listen, brothers. . . . I am an Arab like you. I came from faraway Arab countries. I urge you, brothers, to flee from the ranks of your generals who oppress you in your own land. Come to us, we will welcome and honor you, we will pay each of you a daily allowance and whoever does not wish to fight will be returned to his family, his land, and his work. Long live the Popular Front! Long live republic! Long live President Azaña! Long live Morocco.[34]

After his return from the southern front to Madrid, Sidqi met the Soviet journalist Mikhail Koltsov, who covered early war events. Koltsov "wrote down everything I told him," according to Sidqi.[35] In an article published in *Pravda* in September 1936 and in his memoirs, Kolstov pointed out that

attempts were being made to form a battalion of Moroccan prisoners and deserters, "a task that is being handled by a young antifascist Arab named Mustafa ibn Jala."[36] On October 7, the Madrid-based *El Sol* announced the creation of a Spanish-Moroccan Anti-Fascist Association (Asociación Hispano-Marroquí), with the mission, among other objectives, "to set up a Moroccan Militia battalion, attached to the fifth regiment, to fight alongside the Republican forces against the traitorous fascist rebels."[37] This association, formed by Sidqi and a group of Republican Spanish youth, propagated the notion that Moroccans had been deceived or lured into fighting because of their misery and poor living conditions resulting from Spanish colonialism. It was a short-lived initiative due to a lack of support from the Spanish left, and the PCE in particular. Sidqi recalled that he carried out this project with great interest, but when the news reached the newspapers, his Spanish comrades "expressed their concerns about the objectives of such an association."[38]

Sidqi's mission did not end well. In a subtle manner, he lamented in his memoirs the increasing lack of confidence, mistrust, and constant suspicion his activities aroused among his Spanish comrades, both leaders of the PCE, such as Vicente Uribe, and Spanish soldiers on the front lines. There was very little willingness to initiate a dialogue with any Moroccan friend or enemy. At a certain point, Sidqi realized that he could not guarantee a "warm reception" to the Moroccan deserters, who were instead imprisoned, mistreated, sent back to the front against their will, or executed. Against this backdrop, Sidqi concluded, "I knew deep in my heart that my mission in Spain was failing."[39]

Frustrated, Sidiqi decided to leave Spain but nonetheless continue his efforts to find more productive ways to reach the hearts of Moroccan soldiers. At the end of 1936, the PCE sent him to Algeria to establish a secret radio station that would broadcast anti-Franco propaganda in classical Arabic and Moroccan tribal dialects throughout North Africa.[40] For "technical" reasons, according to a Spanish official of the PCE, this endeavor did not come to fruition, after which Sidqi's fight for Spain formally ended.

## Al-Khalek and Nabulsi: Left in the Footnotes of History Books

Upon the dissolution of the IB, a declarative letter addressed to "the Jewish and Arab working masses of Palestine" was published by a group of international volunteers from Palestine.[41] The statement affirmed that Jewish, Arab, and Armenian workers of Palestine were fighting against criminal fascism and for the liberty of Spain, Palestine, and the world. This group was part of the Naftali Botwin Jewish Company formed in December 1937 within the José Palafox Battalion of the 13th Dabrowski Brigade. The company was made up of mostly Yiddish-speaking Jews, primarily from Poland but also from Spain, France, Belgium, and Palestine.[42] Al-Khalek and Nabulsi were the only two Arabs in a company of volunteers with an overwhelming Jewish majority.[43]

Although other Arabs' names also appear in the lists of the Botwin Company, they are the result of the duplication of names, indicating poor research or a misunderstanding of the Arabic language or Arabic naming tradition and culture. For example, one source states that among the Palestinians volunteers were "Ali Abdul-Khaleq, Ali al-Jibawi and Ali al-Tayouni [*sic*]—all killed in battle."[44] These were not three different individuals; they were all Ali Abd al-Khalek. The latter surname al-Tayouni indicates al-Khalek's ancestors' village of Tayoun in South Lebanon, while al-Jibawi suggests his birthplace—the Palestinian village of al-Jib in the area surrounding of Jerusalem. The same is true for Fawzi Sabri Nabulsi, who was born in Jaffa, but his family originated from Nablus, as his surname suggests. Other sources include individuals under the name of "Ali al-Arab" or "Fawzi al-Arab," which should simply be translated as "Ali/Fawzi the Arab," with "al-Arab" being an adjective or perhaps a nickname rather than another individual.[45]

Beyond their origin, the very little we know about al-Khalek and Nabulsi comes predominantly from the Hebrew press, Israeli Archives, and memoirs of their Jewish comrades. While Sidqi left an autobiography covering most of his life, Nabulsi and al-Khalek did not leave any written trace behind. Nonetheless, while Sidqi's meticulous account of his time in Spain lacks cross references, Nabulsi and especially al-Khalek are repeatedly documented, albeit briefly, in the biographies and memoirs of their Jewish comrades.

Nothing is known about Nabulsi before 1936, except that he was "a light-skinned Arab and a short man with red hair and a freckled face".[46] According to the testimonies of PCP and Botwin members, al-Khalek was a baker in Jerusalem working in bakeries owned by Jews in the Mea Shearim neighborhood of Jerusalem, where he learned Yiddish and Hebrew and where he gained socialist maturity.[47] After becoming a member of the PCP, he was sent to Moscow in 1927 together with other Arab party members. Upon his return, he was elected to the central committee of the party.[48] Later, as an "intelligent and capable militant and a persuasive speaker," he was part of a vanguard of Jewish and Arab workers who "fearlessly fought against the British Mandate and against both Arab and Jewish chauvinism".[49] Al-Khalek spent many years in prison for tirelessly spreading communist propaganda; there he "sat alone on a prolonged hunger strike and walked naked in the winter, refusing to wear the uniform of prisoners in Acre prison."[50] Notably, while al-Khalek was, for his Jewish comrades, "bound body and soul to the brotherhood between Jews and Arabs of Palestine," Sidqi settled for a mild and short description of al-Khalek as an enthusiastic, illiterate person who was sent to Spain "because he was causing trouble in Palestine as a result of his aggression."[51]

In a short paragraph published in the *Haaretz* Zionist newspaper in June 1936, al-Khalek is critically depicted as standing in Hassan Bek Street in

Jaffa, surrounded by a large crowd, delivering a sermon of reproach and incitement against the Jews. The unknown author noted that al-Khalek was

> a well-known Arab communist, who received his education at a designated propaganda school in Russia and that it would be nice if the police would be more interested in the Arab communists, who walk freely in Jaffa and are not detained.[52]

Shortly thereafter, al-Khalek was arrested by British police.

Al-Khalek and Nabulsi were deported from Palestine when the Arab Revolt (1936–39) against the British mandate and Zionist establishment broke out. While suppressing the rebellion, the British police also persecuted communists in an attempt to clamp down on the subversive PCP. During the first months of the uprising, more than 200 communists—mostly Jewish—were arrested, out of whom at least twenty ended up in Spain; one of them was al-Khalek.[53] Like for many of al-Khalek and Nabulsi's Jewish comrades, going to Spain was an ideological choice, a ticket out of prison, or both.[54]

On October 17, 1936, a group of Jewish volunteers from the "Land of Israel" crossed the French–Spanish border near Perpignan.[55] Once in Spain, they went to the headquarters of the IB in Albacete. Casas-Ibáñez was one of the training bases of the IB outside of the city, where volunteers underwent intense military training before being sent to the front. In Casas-Ibáñez, among the many Jewish Palestinians, the two Arab comrades caught the attention of Michal Bron (Misha Brunstein), who would become the political commissar of the Botwin Company.

Bron, a Polish Jew, was curious about al-Khalek and Nabulsi. Having spent long days in the battlefield trenches with the two, as he learned about their undeniable support of international solidarity, Bron realized why al-Khalek and Nabulsi were adamant to be included along with their Jewish Palestinian friends in the Botwin Company.[56] Indeed, as soon as they arrived in Spain, the two asked to be incorporated into this company.[57] Bron vividly noted:

> Fawzi was young, lively and full of life while comrade Ali was a tall, middle-aged man with a deep political consciousness befitting a communist leader. . . . Ali's radiant personality, smiling face, and pleasant voice gathered many around him as he used to sing Arabic, Yiddish and Russian songs.[58]

The Jaffa-born Nabulsi was a machine gunner in the lines of the Botwin Company. In March 1938, Nabulsi was reported to have fought and died in the Battle of Lérida (March 27–April 3).[59] Later testimonies reveal that Nabulsi was indeed injured but was still alive when the war was over. Israel Centner, the official chronicler of the Palestinian volunteers of the PCP, noted that Nabulsi stayed in Gurs internment camp in southern France, which housed most IB members after the war.[60]

Nabulsi's postwar fate remained unknown for many years until a newspaper article appeared in August 1986 in the *Dvar Hashavua* Israeli weekly magazine. The author, Yeshayahu Sakli, positioned Nabulsi in a training camp in southern France in the fall of 1939. Sakli recalled that "Fawzi was about 25 years old, a quiet and lonely guy," when he pulled out a knife, intending to stab one of his Zionist camp companions as they were arguing about the situation in Palestine. A few months after this incident, Nabulsi was sent to the nearby hospital in Perpignan, where an X-ray revealed a bullet in his body from his time in Spain. Sakli happened to lie in a bed next to Nabulsi for an entire month, and they became friends. This firsthand testimony reveals that Nabulsi was injured in Spain, arrived in France in 1938, and spent his recovery time in Paris before arriving to Perpignan. According to Sakli, Nabulsi thought he could live with the bullet in his body, but he eventually died of infection in the Perpignan hospital and was buried in France in a Catholic funeral. Before passing away, Nabulsi asked Sakli to pay a visit to his family house in Jaffa and to tell them how he died. Two years later, Sakli arrived in Israel, but before going to Jaffa, he discovered that Nabulsi was a "fundamentalist terrorist who was sentenced to death for murdering many Jews throughout 1936–1938"—hence the ambivalent article titled "My Friend the Terrorist."[61]

Sakli's testimony is the only source in which "Nabulsi's voice is heard" and one that sheds light on his last days. Illuminating as it is, this testimony should be carefully analyzed as a single memory that cannot be verified without other supporting materials. Amos Levin, one of Nabulsi's Botwin comrades, vehemently opposed Sakli's accusation, saying Nabulsi was no terrorist but rather an antifascist hero who fought in Spain and then under the French anti-Nazi resistance until he died of tuberculosis in 1948.[62] Levin probably based his claim on personal acquaintance with Sarah Schnitzer, Nabulsi's partner. Apparently, Sarah and Nabulsi were in a relationship before the war, after which they reunited in Paris, where their only daughter was born in 1941.[63] Moreover, in two articles published in the PCP bulletin *Kol Ha'am*, only al-Khalek's name appears in the lists of fallen "Eretz Israel volunteers" in Spain.[64] This strengthens Levin's testimony that Nabulsi's death was not caused by a battle wound.

Ten years prior to Nabulsi's death, Efraim Wuzek, a Polish Jew and a member of the PCP, reported that on February 5, 1938, the Botwin Company embarked with the entire Palafox Battalion to Belalcázar, where a group of fifty-three Jewish volunteers coming from Casa Ibañez teamed up with them. According to Wuzek, this group included al-Khalek and Nabulsi, among others who came from Palestine.[65] Ten days later, on the evening of February 15, they arrived in Peraleda Camp (near the village of Peraleda del Zaucejo in southern Extremadura). In the early hours of February 16, the company, under the command of Karol Gutman, embarked on a two-kilometer walk to the foothills of the Sierra Quemada mountains. At a certain moment, Wuzek chronicled that they encountered heavy fire from which several volunteers were mortally

wounded by "a rain of bullets," including al-Khalek, who was among the first to attack the fascists while shouting "Long live the Communist Party!"[66] Al-Khalek was evacuated to the IB hospital Gota de Leche in Albacete. However, two days after, as stated by both Israel Centner and Michal Bron, he died in the hands of Hana Srulovici (Israeli), a Jewish volunteer nurse from Palestine. He was reportedly buried in a military ceremony in the IB cemetery of Albacete.[67]

### Hussein Yassin: An Accountant in the Service of Sectorial History

Salman Salzman, a Jewish Palestinian international volunteer, spent time, effort, and resources to find the burial places of his fellow comrades from "Eretz Israel" who fell in Spain. In Albacete, he found four graves, one of them of an Arab.[68] This indication and others might have led Hussein Yassin, a Palestinian journalist and novelist, to commence a journey to locate al-Khalek's resting place. As a former communist and a social activist, Yassin turned to Arab literature and history and found no mention of any Arabs in the ranks of the Republicans. For most of his life, Hussein was an accountant living between the Galilee and Ramallah. When he retired in 2012, he decided it was time to "mend history."[69]

Yassin arrived at the Municipality of Albacete using his own funds, and after several futile attempts, he obtained the following document that identifies al-Khalek's grave plot. The next day Yassin searched the large Albacete cemetery until he discovered the tomb mark, which was nothing more than a niche in the ground. Yassin informed me that he could not bear knowing that the grave site of this Palestinian activist-volunteer was not only unknown to anyone but also unmarked, abandoned, and neglected. During the same trip to Spain, Yassin paid for the construction of a marble monument with the inscription "Ali, the Story of an Honest Man," as seen in Figure 4.1.[70]

Upon returning home, Yassin dedicated himself to a five-year project of writing a fictional narrative about al-Khalek's life. *Ali, the Story of an Honorable Man* is a fascinating piece of literature, fantasy, and romance that chronicles with poetic language al-Khalek's lifetime from childhood in rural Palestine until death in Iberia.[71] Although Yassin relied on some historical anchors, this is a fictional tale. In Yassin own words: "For five years, I chased him in the books of Arab literature and history, and in the archives of the Palestinian Communist Party . . . Nothing! . . . so I had to narrate it."[72] Due to the passage of time and the substantial lack of written and oral sources, the model of a historical novel may be the only way to bring these forgotten Arab Palestinians' stories to the fore and out of a narrow circle of former communists and scholars.

### Fighting Together, Remembered Apart

Unlike the World War veterans who were celebrated and decorated as war heroes, both nationally and internationally in Western societies, it took several decades for the IB veterans to get proper acknowledgment. It is true


*Figure 4.1* In memory of a Palestinian *brigadista*: Ali al-Khalek's recovered resting place, April 4, 1938.

*Source*: Courtesy of Hussein Yassin

that they were worshiped as idols in communist societies, but the Cold War delayed their historical recognition in Western countries.[73]

According to historian Raanan Rein, it was a long and winding road for Jewish veterans of the Spanish War, but from the 1970s onward, they were gradually embraced by the Zionist establishment and narrative. For Rein,

> by creating a chain of events linking the Jews fighting Fascism in Spain to the anti-Nazi resistance, and then to Israel's wars against the Arabs, the way was paved for the inclusion of the Spanish Civil War *brigadistas* in the hegemonic Zionist narrative and thus in the Israeli pantheon of heroes as well.[74]

In the 1920s and 1930s, Jewish–Arab solidarity in Mandatory Palestine and the ideas of universalism promoted by the PCP were perceived as an

act of treason to the national interests of both Arabs and Jews.[75] From this nationalist perspective, both Arab and Jewish Palestinians "abandoned" their homelands in a crucial moment for the national struggle of each group.[76] Decades later, though, their shared vision of universalism has taken different paths within the Israeli and Palestinian contested narratives. Unlike the Jewish Palestinian volunteers, who were gradually presented as early Jewish fighters against fascism and Nazism, Arab Palestinian participation in the civil war remained an obscure and untold event at the far margins of the Palestinian national and historical narrative.

Even today, Najati Sidqi is almost forgotten in the annals of the Palestinian national movement, and Al-Khalek's and Nabulsi's antifascist struggle in Spain is nowhere to be found in Palestinian history books or even remembered in their own family clans.[77] The obvious question is: Why was a joint group of Arab and Jewish antifascist volunteers from Mandatory Palestine separated in historical memory? Four key insights emerged from this study.

### *Ambivalent Attitudes Toward Fascism, Nazism, and National Interests*

"Are we not also demanding freedom and democracy?" Sidqi asked rhetorically in his memoirs. For Sidqi and fellow Arab antifascists such as Algerian Rabah Oussidhoum, Tangerian Hachmi Hassani, and Iraqi Nuri Anwar Rufail, the downfall of European fascism and Nazism would propel the liberation of Arab peoples.[78] This aspiration, though, was not the leading mindset in the Arabic-speaking world, where more pro-Nazi and pro-fascist sentiments prevailed based on shared interests and common enemies.[79] Mainstream Arab Palestinian leaders, for example, hoped that fascist support might facilitate Italian and German sympathy for the Palestinian struggle.[80] During the 1930s and 1940s, Palestinian intellectuals, journalists, and local elites showed different levels of support and sympathy for the Fascist and Nazi movements in Europe, mostly because of their hostility to imperialist France and Britain, to the Soviet Union, and to both communism and Zionism.[81]

Pro-fascist tendencies were expressed in the Palestinian press coverage of the first stages of the war, while no word was mentioned of Arab participation in either camp.[82] For historian Mustafa Kabha, antagonism toward the colonial oppression of Britain and France coupled with extremely hostile views of communism and the Soviet Union as banners of heresy, atheism, and cruelty strengthened Palestinian public opinion and identification with the Spanish rebels.[83] Indeed, while Franco's fascist revolt was termed *thawra* ("revolution" or "national revolt" in Arabic), government forces were described as heretic communists.[84]

Kabha also shows the pervasiveness of anti-Jewish sentiment, as communism was attributed to Jews' "crimes and plots" targeting Palestinian Arabs. Jews were seen as a destructive element that brought bolshevism and even fomented the war in Spain.[85] The very notion that Arab Palestinians were willingly fighting alongside the Arabs' enemies—all united in the Republican

ranks—was a repugnant and sinful act. In a sense, they were double sinners, as they were sent by an infidel authority, the Comintern, and fought alongside British, French, and Zionist "colonialists."

Arab Palestinians' sacrifice was not lost on their Jewish companions. The Israeli leftist daily *Al-Hamishmar* stressed that, given the unreserved sympathy for Franco in the Palestinian press, it required exceptional daring for an Arab to volunteer in Spain.[86] Furthermore, in Arno Lustiger's book, Ali al-Khalek was depicted as "constantly concerned with casting an anti-fascist light, which was not easy for an Arab in clerical, fascist Palestine, under the control of influential agents of Hitler and Mussolini."[87]

The timing of departure to Spain was also a matter of tension. The years 1936–39 are remembered traumatically not only by the Spanish people but also in the Palestinian collective memory. These years coincided with the Arab Revolt, a nationalist uprising by Palestinians against the British Mandate and its stated goal of establishing a Jewish national home. In this broader context, both Jewish and Arab Palestinian communists and other radical left-wing activists were politically and socially marginalized by their respective national mainstream. The departure of Arab Palestinians to fight alongside "Bolshevik Jews" in other people's war received very little, if any, understanding or sympathy outside of PCP circles.

### *Few Against Many*

In the Arab world, Arab volunteers who supported the Spanish Republic are mostly ignored.[88] Jewish Palestinians were also ignored for decades, but they at the same time produced a substantial body of literature commemorating some 150 individuals, with varying levels of detail.[89] The more modest literary production of about three Palestinian Arab volunteers consists of Hussein Yassin's self-funded novel on Al-Khalek (2017), Sidqi's memoirs published in Beirut (1976), and the award-winning film *You Came from Far Away* (2012) that narrates Sidiqi's life, directed and funded by a Spanish filmmaker. Ironically, al-Khalek and Nabulsi are almost exclusively documented and remembered in "Jewish" historiography, where they are presented as "heroes who have shown exemplary courage on the Spanish battlefield, as implied by their heroic struggle in their own country."[90] Even Sidqi's valuable literary production has not received proper recognition, as "his [literary] status seems less important than that of people less talented."[91] All three have received limited recognition in Palestinian society and the Palestinian national narrative, mostly due to the mainstream refusal to include Arab volunteers in the Palestinian pantheon of heroes, as was done with their peers in Israel decades before.

### *Solidarity With "Zionist" Jews*

The ethnic tensions and rising violence between Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s were no more than an introduction

to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following the 1948 War of Independence/Nakba. Then and now, solidarity and egalitarian discourse between Jews and Arabs have been limited to the margins of both societies in conflict. Within these margins, al-Khalek and Nabulsi frequently visited the house of their comrade Yossef Schnitzer (who also died in Spain), even in the most turbulent times of conflicts between Jews and Arabs.[92] Moreover, Jewish and Arab Palestinian communists saw each other not only as equal party members and brothers in arms but also as life partners. The senior male Arab leaders of the PCP, for example, were in relationships with Jewish communist women.

While in Moscow, Sidqi married Ludka (Bat Sheva) Luberboim, a communist Polish Jew originally from Lvov (now in Ukraine).[93] In the Jewish press, she was mocked as a face scarf—covering European woman who went from the Jewish ghetto in Poland to the home of a Muslim in the Holy Land. Together "the two lovers were passionate followers of the Muscovite 'Rabbi' Lenin."[94] As Siti Khadijah, as she was mostly known among Arabs (after the name of the first wife and the first follower of Muhammad), Ludka acted on behalf of the PCP among the women and men of the Arab villages around Jerusalem with the aim of "turning Arab *Fallahs* into communists."[95]

It was reported that while in internment camp in Southern France, Nabulsi had two Jewish Palestinian female friends, both named Sarah. They sent him packages of sweets, cigarettes, and personal souvenirs, and he in turn used to write them love letters.[96] There were most likely not two women named Sarah but rather one: comrade Yossef Schnizer's sister, who was Nabulsi's wife, as previously mentioned. Raduwan al-Hilu, the PCP secretary from 1934 to 1943, was in a relationship with Yemenite Jew Simha Zabari, the most dominant female figure in the party.[97] Zabari is also a supporting character in Hussein Yassin's novel. She is presented as a notable and heroic woman, but, more importantly, Yassin writes extensively about an impassioned, fictional love affair between Zabari and al-Khalek, which also includes a vivid description of sexual intercourses. Unleashed from historical constraints, Yassin substituted al-Khalek for Radwan al-Hilu, since he sought to emphasize the alliance between Jews and Arabs that went beyond male brotherhood.

Romantic partnership between Arab men and Jewish women in the 1920s and 1930s had not been publicly discussed in Arab writing until Yassin's novel appeared. Yassin is indeed a pioneer in this respect, but it came with a price. His novel was listed for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, but he never won the award—due, according to Yassin, to this very controversial love affair. "The narrow-mindedness of many parts of Palestinian society today," said Yassin, "simply cannot endorse the notion that there were also Jews who were not Zionists, and who moreover fought against Zionism."[98] In Mandatory Palestine, Arabs' affiliations with Jews, whether friendly, collegiate, or romantic, have been considered one or two steps too far. In today's reality, where daily encounters between Israelis and Palestinians are limited to the military arena or construction sites, attempts to discuss the Jewish–Arab socialist brotherhood of the 1920s and 1930s, not to mention intermarriages, are still uncommon.[99]

***Promoting Progressive Ideas in a Patriarchic Society***

In the 1920s and 1930s, the rigid structure of patriarchal Arab Palestinian tribal society and its predominantly Islamic culture left very little room and tolerance for promoting liberalism, socialism, secularism, and gender equality. The antireligious element of communism, as embedded in Marxist-Leninist "scientific atheism," was particularly targeted as a threat to the fabric of traditional societies and Islam. While Soviet communism was not very far from the mainstream socialist views of the *Yishuv*, it was utterly alien to the conservative social system of Arab Palestine.

Fighting in Spain alongside "godless forces" was perceived as going against Islam and the Arab people, while the fascist rebels and their "Moros" were soldiers of God who took the banner of religious war for the sake of faithful people.[100] Hence, within mainstream Arab historical discourse, Sidqi, al-Khalek, and Nabulsi, who came from pious Muslim families, not only left Palestine when it needed them badly but also stood up against Islam.

Their progressive views on gender equality were another source of tension with tradition. In his memoirs, Sidqi notes how captivated he was by

> a scene that sends a shiver through the heart, a shiver of pleasure and of zeal: a Spanish girl wearing a militia uniform, holding a rifle on her shoulder, girdled with a belt of bullets, going out with the Spanish boys to defend sacred freedom.[101]

He contrasted this new female model of Spanish womanhood with the refined Iberian lady figure of Carmen that characterized the old Spain. These progressive gender visions and anti-religious sentiments may have been common in the ranks of the Republican camp, but they were certainly tabooed in Palestinian tribal society of the 1930s, as they are today.

**Welcomed Neither Here Nor There: Facing Dual Marginality**

> "Look! An Arab young man from Arab countries came to convey the news of the civil war in Spain . . . isn't this surprising?!"[102]

Anti-Islamic rhetoric prevailed in the Republican camp's politics, press, and literature, grounded in the widespread cliché of the *Moro cortacabeza* (head-cutting Moor), a widely propagated depiction of the cruel, vicious, and bloodthirsty Moor.[103] Dolores Ibaruri, the famed *Pasionaria* (one of the mythic leaders of the PCE), alluded to the "wild Moorish, drunk with sensuality, which pours itself into horrendous violations of our men, our women."[104] Even fascist high officers claimed that atrocities, looting, and rape were not the fault of Franco's Spanish troops but "things of wild Moors, Africans… we cannot deal with them."[105]

It is true that the Moroccans were the primary targets of Republican anti-Muslim propaganda, but Arab Muslims were also the objects of racism, mistrust, and deep suspicion in Republican Spain. Paul Nothomb, a Belgian aviator in the IB, wrote in his memoirs that Arabs who had joined the IB were treated by the Republican officers with a condescension clearly tinged with contempt.[106] These negative views were clearly manifested by Sidqi's first encounter with Republican militia men, in which he was greeted with incredulity. The militia officer asked him: "Are you really an Arab? You are a 'Moro'—a Moroccan? That's impossible, the Moroccans are marching with the fascist thugs, attacking our cities, killing, plundering us, and raping our women."[107] Sidqi entered Spain optimistic and enthusiastic, but he left pessimistic and disappointed. Sidqi blamed his Spanish brothers in arms who were unwilling to collaborate with "el Moro," whoever he was. Sidqi was not a Moro, but the "Moors were his friends," and these Moors are now at the gates of Madrid, as a PCE official once told him.[108]

The marginality of Arab Palestinian volunteers was not confined to the Iberian Peninsula. In April 1937, Sidqi was sent by the Comintern to Damascus and Beirut, where he took part in the local communist parties' activities.[109] During this period, Sidqi described Nazism and Islam as inimical doctrines. He professed that "every educated Arab who has studied the holy Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth, must become a fierce opponent of the Nazis' principles and their barbaric customs."[110] In 1940, Sidqi published a book on the topic to mobilize everyday Muslim believers to refute pagan Nazism out of religious obligation anchored in Islamic texts.[111] Ironically, and as happened in Spain, Sidqi's attempt to mobilize Muslims against Nazism not only failed to do so but also heavily criticized in the Communist Party. According to Sidqi, his reliance on Islamic texts in confronting Nazism stirred up his secular party colleagues, eventually leading to his expulsion from the party's ranks.[112] The post-Nakba/War of Independence world of Israel/Palestine was also hostile and uncertain for Sidqi, as "he lived in a world that did not belong to him, and died in a far place."[113]

## Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the unexamined trajectories of a handful of Arab Palestinians who left to fight in Spain, some of whom never returned. It has examined this question rigorously for the first time, reducing the number of known Arab Palestinian volunteers to three by assembling all existing evidence about them. They were politically active Arab Muslims who cultivated a universalist social struggle that was antithetical to a mostly tribal and Muslim society and to the perceived national interests of Arab Palestine. The promotion of these progressive notions was only possible within the Jewish-dominated circles of the PCP. Due to their radical anti-authoritarian social views, communist Jews and Arabs left for Spain to combat tyranny. Both the Zionist and Palestinian movements expressed little patience for young Jews

and Arabs fighting other people's war at a time when their homeland needed them the most. This episode was pushed to the fringes of national memory for decades in both Israel and Palestine. Nevertheless, a small circle of Jewish volunteers maintained these memories through written documents and oral histories, which came into use decades later when they eventually entered the Israeli Zionist narrative. Ironically, this "Jewish" historiography, coupled with Sidqi's memoirs, is probably the only documentation of the non-Jewish Palestinian volunteers in Spain. The recovery of this history is important in itself, but the Arab Palestinian volunteers' ideology of universal brotherhood also has a powerful and tragic resonance today. Sidqi's, al-Khalek's, and Nabulsi's exceptional trajectories are still a matter of taboo within Palestinian society, and this study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of a chapter of the Spanish Civil War that is still missing.

## Notes

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3 See, for example, María Rosa de Madariaga, *Los moros que trajo Franco* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2015); Francisco Sánchez Ruano, *Islam y Guerra Civil Española: Moros con Franco y con la República* (Madrid: La Esfera, 2004); José Antonio González Alcantud, ed., *Marroquíes en la guerra civil española, campos equívocos* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2003).
4 See, for example, "Las tropas moras en la Guerra Civil," *El País*, April 24, 2009 [online]; "Franco's Recruitment of Moroccans in Spanish Civil War: The Forgotten Injustice (Part I)," *Morocco World News*, July 9, 2012 [online]; "Spanish Civil War: When Moroccans Were Used as Cannon Fodder," *Morocco World News*, September 24, 2012 [online].
5 Salvador Bofarull, "Brigadistas árabes en la Guerra de España. Combatientes por la República," *Nación Árabe* 51 (2004): 121–34
6 Mechbal, "Los Moros," 9 (all translations are mine, unless otherwise noted).
7 Abd al-Latif Bin Salem, "Los voluntarios árabes en las Brigadas internationals," *Revista internacional de sociología* 46, no. 4 (1988): 543–73; Bofarull, "Brigadistas árabes," 121; Francisco Sánchez Ruano, "Rubio Hachmi. último combatiente marroquí por la República," *República* 49 (August–December 2002), 29–30; Georges Gonzalez, *L'Algérie dans les brigades internationales: 1936–1939 et ses lendemains* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016).
8 For a historiographical discussion on this topic, see Sánchez Ruano, *Islam y Guerra Civil*, 277–82.
9 Andreu Castells, *Las brigadas internacionales de la guerra de España* (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 1974), 379–83.
10 The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (http://rgaspi.com/) holds personal files of volunteers organized by country of origin. See folders Algeria 545, Morocco 620, Egypt 436, Iraq 437, Lebanon 607, and Syria 843. There are also two folders on volunteers from Palestine (625 and 626), though only Jews are listed.
11 Raanan Rein, "A Belated Inclusion: Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and Their Place in the Israeli National Narrative," *Israel Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 28.

12 On the IB, see Isidro Sánchez, ed., *Las Brigadas Internacionales. 80 años después* (Albacete: CEDOBI, 2019); Josep Sánchez and Cervelló Sebastián Agudo Blanco, eds., *Las Brigadas Internacionales: nuevas perspectivas en la historia de la Guerra Civil y del exilio* (Tarragona: UVR, 2015). On Jews in the IB, see Gerben Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017); Arno Lustiger, *Shalom libertad! Les juifs dans la guerre civile epagnole* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1991); David Dimant, *Combattants juifs dans L'Armée Republicaine Espagnole* (Paris: Renouveau, 1979). On Jewish Palestinians in the IB, see Raanan Rein, "Entre lo internacional y lo nacional-étnico: los voluntarios judíos de Palestina y Argentina en la Guerra Civil Española," *Dictatorships & Democracies* 8, no. 2 (2020): 47–75; Nir Arielli, "Induced to Volunteer? The Predicament of Jewish Communists in Palestine and the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 4 (2011): 854–70.
13 Avner Ben-Zaken, *Communism as Cultural Imperialism* (Tel-Aviv: Resling, 2006), 237–38; Dan Yahav, *They Too Were Heroes: Volunteer Fighters from Eretz Israel in the International Brigades in Spain* (Tel Aviv: Tcherikover, 2008), 164 [both in Hebrew]; Mustafa Kabha, "The Spanish Civil War as Reflected in Contemporary Palestinian Press," in *Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism: 1933–1945: Reappraisals and New Directions*, ed. Israel Gershoni (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 134.
14 Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 29.
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17 Gerold Gino Baunmann, *Extranjeros en la guerra civil española: los peruanos* (Lima: Industrial Gráfica, 1979), 113–16.
18 Author's interview with Hussein Yassin, March 16, 2022; Bin Salem, "Los voluntarios árabes," 570.
19 Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party 1919–1948: Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), 17.
20 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 14–15.
21 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 127.
22 Sánchez Ruano, *Islam y Guerra Civil*, 269.
23 Najati Sidqi, "I Went to Defend Jerusalem in Cordoba, Memoirs of a Palestinian Communist in the Spanish International Brigades," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 62 (Spring 2015): 102–09.
24 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 161–62. My attempts to find this book, or any evidence to its existence, have failed.
25 In this chapter, I used the original version published in 1979. A 2001 edition includes an introduction by Hanna Abu Hanna and was published by the Institute for Palestine Studies. On his intellectual trajectory after World War II, see Ibrahim Abu Hashhash, *Najati Sidqi: His Life and Literature* (Jerusalem: The Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs, 1990); Mona Asaad, *Najati Sidqi: A Writer and Political Thinker* (Damascus: Dar Al-Mubtada, 1992); Yacoub al-Audat, *Min Alam al Fikr wal Adab fi Filasteen* (Amman: Dar al-Isra, 1992).
26 *You Come From Far Away*, directed by Amal Ramsis (Egypt/Lebanon, 2018).
27 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 125.
28 Marty was the leader of the French Communist Party and the Commissar of the IB in the Spanish Civil War.

29 Nachman List, "Between Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Fascism," *Keshet* 3, no. 15 (Spring 1962): 159–61.
30 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 131–32.
31 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 131–32.
32 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 132
33 Mijail Koltsov, *Diario de la Guerra de España* (Barcelona: BackList, 2009), 121; Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 139.
34 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 137–38.
35 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 138.
36 Koltsov, *Diario de la Guerra*, 121. It is unclear whether Sidqi was (or not) in such a project. However, Kolstov's writing is a valuable external reference that affirms Sidqi's overall efforts to mobilize Moroccans to the Republican cause.
37 "Se va a crear el batallón antifascista de milicias marroquíes," *La Voz*, October 7, 1936, 3; "Batallón de Milicias marroquíes," *El Sol*, October 7, 1936, 5.
38 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 147.
39 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 147.
40 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 148, 150.
41 Dimant, *Combattants juifs*, 72.
42 See Gerben Zaagsma, "'Red Devils': The Botwin Company in the Spanish Civil War," *East European Jewish Affairs* 33, no. 1 (2008): 83–99.
43 Shmuel Dothan, *Reds: The Communist Party in Eretz Israel* [in Hebrew] (Kfar Sava: Shvana Hasofer Publishing, 1991), 246; "For Whom the Bell Tolls," [in Hebrew] *Ma'ariv*, June 18, 1990, 14; Moshe Bachar, "Hanita is Preferable to Madrid: The Reaction of the Yishuv in Palestine to the Civil War in Spain" [in Hebrew] (MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1998), 247; Sichon, "Les volontaires juifs," 55; Dimant, *Combattants juifs*, IX, 73, 41, 153.
44 Naim Nasser, "The Spanish Civil War and the Mysterious Fate of the Palestinian and Arab Volunteers" [in Arabic], *Hiwar al-Mutamadin*, November 11, 2008 [online].
45 Bin Salem, "Los voluntarios árabes," 570; Dimant, *Combattants juifs*, III and 73; Bofarull, "Brigadistas árabes," 121–34.
46 Yeshayahu Sakli, "My Friend the Terrorist" [in Hebrew], *Davar Hashavua*, August 22, 1986, 23.
47 "Jews in the International Brigades in Spain," *Al Hamishmar*, July 19, 1966, 2; Yossef Algazi, "With the Last of the Jewish Soldiers Who Fought in the Spanish Civil War," *Haaretz*, May 10, 2004 [online; both in Hebrew].
48 Mahir al-Sharlf, *Tariq al-Kifah fi Filastin wa-al-mashriq al-arabi: Mudhakkirat al-qaid al-shuyui Mahmud al-Atrash al-Maghribl, 1903–1939* [in Arabic] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2015), 87, 353; Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 76.
49 Israel Centner, *From Madrid to Berlin* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 1966); 251–52; Dimant, *Combattants juifs*, 283–84; Efraïm Wuzek, *Combattants juifs de la guerre d'Espagne: La compagnie Botwin* (Paris: Sylllepse, 2012), 169.
50 Ruth Lubitz, *I Chose to Live the Struggle* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Shahar, 1985), 187.
51 Dimant, *Combattants juifs*, 283–84; Musa Budeiri, *Shuyu'in fi Filastin: Shadhaya Tarikh Mansi* (Ramallah: Muwatin, 2013), 90.
52 "An Inciting Arab Communist" [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, June 2, 1936, 8.
53 Central Zionist Archives (CZA(, "Communist Activity in the Land of Israel," S25/7531.
54 Inbal Ofer and Raanan Rein, "Becoming Brigadistas: Jewish Volunteers from Palestine in the Spanish Civil War," *European History Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (2016): 94–97.
55 Ruth Levin, *The Righteous Were with Spain, 1936–1939* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ofakim Publishers, 1987), 69.

56 Levin, *The Righteous*, 135; Centner, *From Madrid to Berlin*, 251–53. Both Levin and Centner rely on Bron's book *Pasaremos* (Warsaw: Iskry, 1958), although no such testimony has been found in the in this book.
57 Dimant, *Combattants juifs*, 283; Efraïm Wuzek, *Combattants juifs*, 169.
58 Centner, *From Madrid to Berlin*, 251–53.
59 Lustiger, *Shalom libertad*, 433–34; Gerhard Hop, "Salud wa Salam. Araber im Spanischen Bürgerkrieg," *INAMO* 33, no. 9 (2003): 54.
60 Centner, *From Madrid to Berlin*, 162, 302.
61 Sakli, "My Friend the Terrorist," 23.
62 Levin, *The Righteous*, 205.
63 Author's interview with Hussein Yassin, April 4, 2023.
64 "And Rhese are the Names of the Heroes Who Fell in the Spanish War," *Kol Ha'am*, July 18, 1946, 3; "Yizcor," *Kol Ha'am*, July 18, 1947, 3.
65 Wuzek, *Combattants juifs*, 124.
66 Wuzek, *Combattants juifs*, 125–27, 169. See also: Lubitz, *I Chose to Live*, 187; Lustiger, *Shalom libertad*, 433–34; Dimant, *Combattants juifs*, 283–84.
67 Centner, *From Madrid to Berlin*, 251–53.
68 "For Whom the Bell Tolls," *Ma'ariv*, June 18, 1990, 15.
69 Author's interview with Hussein Yassin, March 16, 2022.
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71 *Ali, qisat rajul mustaqim* (Ramallah: Dar al-Ru'aat, 2017). The Spanish version was published four years later under the title: *Ali, el brigadista: Historia de un hombre recto* (Granada: Editorial Comares, 2021).
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73 Arnold Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War in East Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 4 (2004): 531–60; Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades 1945–1989* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
74 Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 29.
75 See Dothan, *Reds: The Communist Party*; Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party 1919–1948*; Jacob Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism in Palestine during the British Mandate* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012).
76 "The Palestinian Socialist Youth Hastens to Save Spain," *HaYarden*, January 1, 1938, 6; "A Group of 60 Communists from Israel is Fighting the Militia Brigades," *HaBoker*, November 9, 1936, 3.
77 Salim Tamari, "Najati Sadqi (1905–79): The Enigmatic Jerusalem Bolshevik," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 2 (2003): 167; author's interview with Hussein Yassin, March 16, 2022.
78 Inigo Alexander, "The Spanish Civil War's Forgotten Arab Republicans," *Middle East Eye*, November 19, 2021 [online].
79 Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Robert Melka, "Nazi Germany and the Palestine Question," *Middle Eastern Studies* 5, no. 3 (October 1969): 221–33. These assumptions are being challenged recently by scholars who assert that the attitudes in the Arabic-speaking world of the 1930s and 1940s were much more varied and nuanced. See, for example, Gershoni, ed., *Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism*; Götz Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon: The Ambivalence of the German Option, 1933–1945* (London: Routledge, 2009); Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
80 Kabha, "The Spanish Civil War," 135–36.

81 Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 29. Most notable in this respect was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, and his alliance with Hitler. See Jeffrey Herf, "Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Nazis and the Holocaust: The Origins, Nature and Aftereffects of Collaboration," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 26, no. 3/4 (Fall 2014): 13–37. This said that the majority of the Arab population in Palestine had limited political consciousness.
82 Kabha, *The Spanish Civil War*, 128, 133.
83 Kabha, *The Spanish Civil War*, 135–36.
84 Kabha, *The Spanish Civil War*, 128, 133.
85 Mustafa Kabha, *The Palestinian Press as a Shaper of Public Opinion 1929–1939: Writing Up a Storm* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 187, 236.
86 "Jews in the International Brigades in Spain," *Al Hamishmar*, July 19, 1966, 2.
87 Lustiger, *Shalom libertad*, 433–34.
88 Bin Salem, "Los voluntarios árabes," 553.
89 See also Mordechai Avi-Shaul, *Mark Milman: A Jewish Captain in Fighting Spain* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Author, 1945).
90 Centner, *From Madrid to Berlin*, 252.
91 Hassan Khedr, "Najati Sidqi wafada' aldhaakira," *Al-Ayyam*, September 29, 2005 [online].
92 Zvi Gilat, "After You, Pasionaria" [in Hebrew], *Hadashot*, June 27, 1986, 36.
93 Sidqi's memoirs were dedicated his wife Ludka and their older daughter Dawlat (also named International), who was born in Jerusalem in 1930. Their names are mentioned several times in the book (see pp. 1, 91, 107, 109, 111).
94 "The Communist Covered with a Scarf," *Do'ar Hayom*, December 10, 1931, 2; "Siti Khadijah Ludka before the Throne of Justice," *Do'ar Hayom*, December 9, 1931, 4.
95 "The Trial of the Arab Communists," *Ha'am*, May 15, 1931, 2. For more about Ludka's communist work, her trial, her imprisonment, and her marriage to Sidqi, see "The Trial of the Owner of the Communist Printing House in Ratisbonne," *Do'ar Hayom*, December 2, 1931, 3; "Ludka Was Sentenced to One Year in Prison," *Do'ar Hayom*, December 13, 1931, 4; "Siti Khadijah is Bat Sheva Luberboim," *Do'ar Hayom*, December 1, 1931, 1.
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101 Sidqi, "I Went to Defend Jerusalem in Cordoba," 103–04; Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 126.
102 A reaction of an English man driven by curiosity upon learning about the Sidqi's mission; see Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 131.
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104 Dolores Ibárruri, *Las heroicas mujeres de España* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Indo-America, 1938), 12–13.
105 Sánchez Ruano, *Islam y Guerra Civil*, 282–83.
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107 Sidqi, "I Went to Defend Jerusalem," 104–05.
108 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 137.
109 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 14.
110 Najati Sidqi, "Islam and Nazism" [in Hebrew], *HaBoker*, September 30, 1940, 2,
111 Najati Sidqi, *Al-Taqalid al-islamiyya wa-l-mabadiʾ al-naziyya: hal tattafiqan*? (Beirut: Dar al-Kashf, 1940).
112 Sidqi, *Mudhakkirat Najati Sidqi*, 166–67.
113 Hassan Khedr, "Najati Sidqi wafada' aldhaakira," *Al-Ayyam*, September 29, 2005.

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# 5 Progressive Education on the Eve of the Civil War and the Question of Its Destruction by the Franco Regime

*Jorge Cáceres-Muñoz, Tamar Groves, and Mariano González-Delgado*

## Introduction

At the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, Spain saw the emergence of a variety of educational projects aimed at progress. The origins of this general effort to transmit culture and knowledge to citizens can be found in the circulation of enlightened ideas and in the acknowledgment of the need to establish a national education system as set forth in the Constitution of 1812.[1] Since then, the aspiration to provide citizens with access to education has undergone many changes, some in the direction of increasing the central provision of educational services[2] and others working to improve the channels of dissemination.[3] At the foundation of this second tendency, associated with the development of progressive educational initiatives, is a determination to improve educational practices, an interest in understanding the role of educational agents and actors, an attempt to alleviate situations of vulnerability, the aim to gain efficiency in methods of transmitting knowledge, and an ideal of enriching the moral development of citizens. The Free Institution of Education, the New Education Movement, the Freinet movement, and Ferrer i Guardia's Modern School are examples of this phenomenon. This group of educational avant-gardes formed a heterogenous but solid body of progressive education theory and practice of different origins and nature.[4] The influence of these educational projects increased as they disseminated ideas and experimented with new practices through multiple initiatives and institutions that had an important effect on the educational reforms of the Republican period.

After the rebel victory in the civil war, Franco's regime imposed a complete dictatorship that reached its highest degree of severity during its first decade. The historical-educational research carried out on this period characterizes the education system as a total rupture with previous educational models, stressing the eradication of all traces of educational projects from the Second Republic. Instead, the dictatorship imposed National Catholicism, a combination of patriotism, Catholicism, and conservative social values.[5] This chapter looks at this first period of the dictatorship in relation to the

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preceding era to question whether there really was a total break with the educational model of the Second Republic or whether dynamics, practices, or ideas from the previous period in fact managed to survive. Thus, this chapter aims at unpacking the complex question of the continuity and transformation of educational discourses and practices and their interaction with the political context.[6]

The educational sphere lends itself to policies that can augment the control and subjugation of educational actors and agents across all levels of the education system. The regime's education policy undoubtedly sought to subdue and transform school practice in this direction. However, education is also an instrument of resistance, as evident in practices that take place inside school buildings, in educational interactions, and in communities. There is often more distance between educational policies and school culture than it appears. This opens the door to a more nuanced historical interpretation of the period, which goes beyond official academic or normative political texts and instead centers on the empirical level of school culture and educational actors. Thus, the aim of this chapter is not to oppose the accepted historiographical narrative that is supported by reliable sources. Rather, it is to distance ourselves from absolute terms that propose a total rupture between these two key periods in Spanish educational history and to suggest the integration of evidence attesting to a certain continuity between the Republican and Francoist periods in the sphere of education. This work is based on a series of publications that has been published in recent years and that attempt to support this hypothesis of partial continuity.[7] We suggest that these signs of continuity could be organized into three categories: evidence of utilization, evidence of undercurrent adaptation, and evidence of resistance. As we explain, these categories help shed light on the dynamics and behaviors of educational actors and agents, who built and maintained their own school culture in the face of wider political and social developments.[8]

## The Climax of Educational Modernization and the Consolidation of Educational Avant-Gardes

The establishment of the Second Republic in 1931 was marked by profound reform and fierce ideological conflict, unleashing the civil war (1936–39) that culminated in the defeat of the Republican government and the imposition of a new dictatorial order under General Franco,[9] who remained in power for almost four decades. Education played an important role in the political upheaval of Spanish history in the 1930s. The Second Republic placed the improvement of Spanish education very high on its list of political reforms. This was no easy task, as the four periods into which its government could be divided—the Provisional Government, the Azañista Biennium, the Radical-Cedista Biennium, and the Popular Front—were marked by attacks and contradictions leading to problems in implementing reforms, attempts to suppress what had been achieved, and, as a result, a continuous climate

of tension.[10] A series of reforms was therefore implemented that were considered crucial for revitalizing and modernizing the education system: introducing coeducation in all stages of the education system, reducing illiteracy, constructing new schools, improving and expanding school endowments, raising the professional and social prestige of teachers, allowing bilingualism in schools in Spanish geographical areas with a different linguistic identity, bringing culture to isolated areas of the country, and limiting or reducing the weight of the Catholic Church in Spanish education.[11]

This set of educational goals was pursued by advancing political reforms and economic investment.[12] To achieve this, institutions were established and different qualified and ideologically and pedagogically connected figures were put in charge of developing this progressive change.[13] The secularization of education was sought through measures such as the Law on Religious Confessions and Congregations of June 2, 1933; the decree that abolished compulsory religious instruction in primary schools; or the decree that regulated the teaching profession, preventing those who did not have an official teaching certificate from working in schools.[14] Apart from the aforementioned measures, the new teacher training policy stood out, because it offered a process of selection on the basis of training as an alternative to competitive examinations. It also provided more places for students and passed legislation on the reform of teacher training colleges, which developed the most complete and pedagogically well-founded teacher training strategy up to that time.[15] The decree on April 29, 1931, re-established bilingualism in Catalan schools, and it was complemented by Article 50 of the Spanish Constitution of 1931, which developed the principle of teaching and regional autonomy, making it possible to introduce the particular features of the different Spanish regions in each school. There was also an effort to build new schools given the dire situation in terms of number and quality of school buildings at that time. To this end, a school construction plan was launched, to be carried out over eight years with an investment of 600 million pesetas, approved by the parliament.[16] Finally, in the field of coeducation, various decrees allowed this cohabitation to exist in educational centers, including teacher training colleges. However, it is worth mentioning nuances that affected the curricula; in some cases, curricula maintained differences between the sexes, calling into question the effectiveness of the implementation of this measure due to the resistance of religious institutions.[17]

These educational policies to a certain degree signaled the consolidation of the educational avant-garde that had developed prior to this period. Since the last third of the nineteenth century, reformist and progressive ideas were being developed, and these alternatives sought to improve an educational system that needed to respond to the challenges of modernity. These actions moved from private, isolated, independent, or elite circles and gradually shifted to enter the public, shared, collaborative, and popular sphere. The educational policy of the Second Republic drew from the culmination and crystallization of a progressive education movement. Each of the components

of this larger vanguard educational movement had its modus operandi, its protagonists, and its tools for contributing to this network of educational progress and impact on the education system.

One key example is the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, or ILE. It was founded in 1876 by a group of intellectuals, politicians, and university professors belonging to the Spanish liberal bourgeoisie in response to the backwardness and intellectual conservatism of the country. They believed that only through education could Spain achieve the social, political, economic, and moral reform it needed to catch up with other nations. The main figure of the ILE was Francisco Giner de los Ríos. Together with other prominent figures in Spanish culture and politics in the nineteenth century, he developed an innovative pedagogical ideology inspired by different pedagogical, philosophical, and scientific currents such as pedagogical naturalism, Krausism, and positivism.[18] The institutionist pedagogical ideology was thus influenced by educational ideas, institutions, and personalities coming from countries such as England, Germany, Belgium, Italy, France, Switzerland, or the United States.[19] Krause, Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Dewey are just some examples of the sources of inspiration for this openness to the world. Although the ILE can be considered more an elite than a popular form of the avant-garde, its impact on education and on schools has been thoroughly demonstrated.

Through its teachers and students, the ILE defended various educational concepts and practices that were later echoed by the reforms of the Second Republic. Some of the most important examples are the concept of integral education, the principle of activity, coeducation, the importance of teacher training, the centrality of the school building and environment, and religious neutrality. The development of the Five-Year Plan for the creation of schools, the secularization of education, the reform of teacher training colleges, and the introduction of coeducation all corroborate its influence. To be effective, the ILE utilized various initiatives, and its members became prominent in the spheres of politics and research in Spain. The Museo Pedagógico Nacional,[20] the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas,[21] the Instituto-Escuela,[22] the Residencia de Estudiantes,[23] the Residencia de Señoritas,[24] or the Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza[25] exemplify this network of impact on Spanish education. The Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas was the last project with institutionist origins, exemplifying another pillar of Republican educational reform: that of popular and rural education.[26] The main aim of this initiative was to bring culture, the arts, and pedagogical and hygienic aid to the most isolated parts of the country. With this, the ILE culminated its pedagogical plan that spanned the most elite and academic spheres to popular education, closing the circle of its influence on the educational system by configuring Republican educational policy.

Another notable avant-garde movement is the New Education Movement. The Montessori system, Decroly's centers of interest, Kerschensteiner's work school, Kilpatrick's project method, and the Cousinet method, among other

initiatives, were increasingly introduced from the 1920s onward, above all in different schools, at scholarly events, and in both the specialized and general pedagogical press. This resulted in the propagation and implementation of progressive pedagogical and methodological principles that fought against teacher-centered pedagogy, encyclopedism, verbalism, and the passivity of the traditional teaching system. The heterogenous proposals of this movement aimed at a radical change in the structures of the educational relationship between educator and student, defending a paidocentrism within the framework of a school that would be connected to life and the community; these schools would host active, dynamic teaching and promote skills for living in society. In the years prior to the Second Republic in Spain, the principles of the Movement were implemented, sometimes in an eclectic manner.[27] Some noteworthy cases include schools in the Catalan educational context: Colegio Sant Jordi (1898), Escuelas Mosén Cinto (1904), Colegio Mont d'Or (1905), Escuela Horaciana (1905), Granja Escolar Catalana (1905), Escoles Catalanes del Districte VI (1906), Vallparadis (1910), Escuela de la Sagrada Familia (1910), Nuevo Colegio de Mont d'Or (1913), Escola del Bosc de Monjuïc (1914), Escuela racionalista Galileo (1915), Casa del Bambini (1915), Escola del Mar (1922), Mutua escolar Blanquerna (1923), and Grupo Escolar Milà i Fontanals (1931). Of note are also the initiatives in Madrid: Grupo Escolar Cervantes (1918) and Grupo Escolar Príncipe de Asturias (1918).[28]

And beyond institutions, the dissemination of scholarship through publications or the educational press was also a decisive path for communicating educational proposals featuring pedagogical ideas from New Education in Spain. The publishing house La Lectura launched a series of books on the new educational methods thanks to the board of directors led by Domingo Barnés, who had been president of the Association of Former Students at the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute since 1921.[29] Furthermore, the *Revista de Pedagogía*, directed by Lorenzo Luzuriaga, was established in Spain as the organ of dissemination for the New Education Movement.[30] Specific authors such as María Montessori became influential in Catalonia above all, thanks to the environment of educational innovation in Catalan schools and the positive reception of her ideas; the Third International Montessori Course was even held in Spain in 1916.[31] The influence of New Education ideas on Republican educational policy is evident in the adoption of secularism and the principles of activity and collaboration as the core of work in the classroom. This is directly related to the increase in autonomous experimental schools; the organization of the Pedagogical Missions; the development of institutions complementary to the school; the creation of agricultural camps, workshops, and libraries; and the introduction of advanced training courses for teachers.[32]

The Freinet movement was another part of the pedagogical vanguard in Spanish education during the first third of the twentieth century that had a notable influence during the years of the Republic. In Spain, it had a growing impact among teachers from different parts of the country.[33] Scholarly literature and primary historical sources indicate that the training and

dissemination of Freinet's ideas among Spanish teachers began some years before the Second Republic, but they reached the height of their impact during this period. Several teachers who were fascinated by Freinet's pedagogical work and the development of examples of a specialized pedagogical press in Spain allowed his ideas to flourish in the country. Works describing the techniques of the Modern School were published disseminating his ideas. Some of the works of note include "La imprenta en la escuela" (1926) by Sidonio Pintado Arroyo, published in the journal *El Magisterio español*; "La imprenta en la escuela" (1932) and "Técnicas auxiliares de la escuela: el cine, la radio, los discos" (1933) by Herminio Almendros, published in *Revista de Pedagogía*; both "Manera de construir el modelo de 1928 de la prensa escolar Freinet" (1929) and "La imprenta en la escuela: la última prensa" (1933) by Juan Manuel Cluet, also published in the *Revista de Pedagogía*. Furthermore, many teachers who introduced and disseminated Freinet's thought forged personal relations. From the beginning, meetings, gatherings, and talks were held regularly, giving way to the consolidation of groups. One example is the Batec group,[34] a sort of pedagogical word-of-mouth network[35] that generated a dialogue both among teachers and between teachers and students in Teacher Training Colleges. All these spontaneous and sometimes-independent initiatives reached a more advanced level with the creation of the Cooperativa Española de la Técnica Freinet (CETEF) in 1933. This served as a space for bringing together all the initiatives that the movement would undertake as well as for clarifying the ideas and practices that defined the actions of its members; this helped to build a consciousness for a pedagogical revolution and to shape a Spanish-speaking identity for the movement.[36] The Freinet movement in Spain also saw the creation of a periodical, the bulletin *Colaboración*, published for the first time in 1935.[37] As the Republican project gained momentum, Freinet's ideas and political convictions became very much in tune with the aspirations of different forces on the Spanish left. It was not by chance that the movement expanded during the Republican era.[38] The result was that Freinet techniques were one of the five most prominent pedagogical models adopted by Spanish teachers during the first third of the twentieth century.[39]

Another avant-garde experiment was the proposal of Ferrer i Guardia's Modern School. Ferrer i Guardia projected his anarchist and revolutionary aspirations onto education at a time of ideological vibrancy.[40] Pedagogically speaking, the influence later reflected in Republican educational policy was part of his aspiration to carry out a mixed, religion-negating, rational, and libertarian education.[41] Ferrer i Guardia considered the school to be an instrument of domestication or training, which is why he proposed the need to break with the oppressive education system controlled by the state.[42]

Republican policy thus turned education into a crucial axis of its political project.[43] This predisposition was mainly confined to the first period of the Republican government, when regenerationist and socialist tendencies were

mixed with the pedagogical influence of the aforementioned avant-garde movements. These had been carrying out parallel and evolving work for decades, beginning with merely practical or academic matters to end up being integrated into the political-regulatory sphere.

## New Perspectives on Education During the First Years of Franco's Dictatorship

The victory of the rebel side in the civil war led to the imposition of strict control, purging of political opponents, and the installation of an authoritarian dogma in education. From its beginnings, the dictatorship tried to eliminate and repress forms of teaching conducted in the Republic.[44] This aim was largely achieved, as shown by scholarly research dedicated to the study of the education system under the Franco regime, testimonies, and collective memory.[45] But in the following pages, we will develop a line of argument based on a hypothesis of continuity that various authors have been working on in recent years. According to this new line of research, the pedagogical innovation initiated during the time of the educational avant-garde in Spain did not suffer an absolute collapse; we argue for evidence of continuity that can be organized into three categories: evidence of utilization, evidence of undercurrent adaptation, and evidence of resistance.

The first category of evidence is characterized by the conduct of those who held positions of responsibility during the early Franco regime. There was a pragmatic use of institutions, materials, organizations, and progressive educational ideas with the clear intention of harnessing them for the consolidation of the new regime. We are referring to an adapted use of these previous educational elements, but this continuity still adds nuance to the dominant narrative of complete destruction.

One of the key structures for educational and scientific progress in Spain in the early years of the twentieth century was the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas (JAE). This institution played a dual role of cultural dissemination and pedagogical training. On the one hand, it disseminated Spanish culture abroad, and, on the other, it placed Spain on the international cultural stage.[46] One of the vital axes of the JAE was the promotion of international exchanges to put an end to Spain's scientific stagnation. The process of Europeanization that took place in Spain, thanks to the scholarships awarded by the JAE, was influential across all disciplines: medicine, engineering, law, philosophy, history, and pedagogy, among others.[47] The grantees in the field of education had an enormous impact on the Spanish education system. The subjects that drew most interest on behalf of the grantees were school organization and didactics. However, there was also an important flow of ideas associated with the New Education Movement and studies on educational theory, vocational guidance, and special education. The results of these projects can be seen in the grantees' publications

and the role they played within institutions of popular culture, professional associations, and medical-charitable institutions.

> Through the *Revista de Pedagogia*, the *Revista de Escuelas Normales*, the *Boletín Escolar* or *La Escuela Moderna*, or even the *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, the grantees disseminated new ideas, in particular through reviews of works by Montessori, Piaget, Petersen, Audemars, Claparède, Cousinet, or Vermeylen and the authors of the review Pour l'Ére Nouvelle, the organ of the European pedagogical renewal.[48]

The JAE's existence as such was interrupted by the civil war, and under the dictatorship, it underwent a transformation marked by a significant purge of its staff.[49] A large part of its functions was taken over by a newly created body: the Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) created by the decree-law of November 24, 1939 (BOE of November 29). The CSIC continued to manage study trips abroad, although under other criteria and standards.[50] We can see the continuity of the program here, maintaining some of its original spirit of internationalization but eliminating its more ideological aspects. The CSIC was assigned with the mission of developing a Catholic scientific program consistent with the regime, trying to surpass the scientific achievements of the previous period and simultaneously purge or disparage it.[51]

In addition to the trips, the former JAE sponsored the development of other projects under its scientific structure, such as the Residencia de Estudiantes, the Residencia de Señoritas, and the Instituto-Escuela. There is no doubt that the Franco Regime brought destruction to these institutions associated with the ILE. However, this destruction may not have been so complete, as there is evidence pointing toward a certain degree of continuity. The Residencia de Estudiantes ceased its usual functions in July 1936 with the outbreak of the civil war. The events that followed its official closure reveal the particular efforts to control the institution by the successive authorities that emerged from the new configuration of the regime. Starting in 1939, the Instituto de España, the CSIC, and the university all bid for and had control of the Residencia de Estudiantes and the Residencia de Señoritas. There is no doubt that the Francoist authorities considered these two institutions to be crucial, as can be seen in the words of the minister, dated June 27, 1939:

> The immediate opening of the universities requires the urgent reorganisation of those bodies which can best foster their teaching function and supply the very urgent needs of students. For this reason, this Ministry, considering that the infrastructure of the Residencias de estudiantes y de señoritas in Madrid constitute the basis of those bodies, whose technical organisation corresponds to the Head of the National Service of Higher and Secondary Education, who has ordered to proceed immediately with the reorganisation of these centres and the appointments that it deems appropriate for this purpose.[52]

In 1941, the Residencia de Estudiantes, already under the name of Jiménez de Cisneros, became part of the CSIC by a ministerial order, and its role was to house university and college students to complement their cultural training and also to house Spanish and foreign grantees designated annually by the CSIC. Here we find structures being used that were already consolidated in the previous period, with some similar modus operandi but for the benefit and under the management of the new dictatorship. Finally, in 1943, it once again came under the control of the university with a new name, Colegio Mayor, using the buildings of the university area.[53] In a short period, there were changes in ownership, management, and mentality, but the new regime maintained previous structures and, to a certain degree, their aims.

The Residencia de Señoritas was one of the key institutions in training women during the first decades of the twentieth century.[54] Wiping such an institution off the map was not a luxury the new educational authorities under the Francoist period could afford. As such, it constitutes a clear example of the exploitation of consolidated projects, as previously mentioned. The Residencia de Señoritas would end up being transformed into the Colegio Mayor Santa Teresa de Cepeda, transforming from a secular and liberal center to a Catholic and conservative one. However, there is enough evidence suggesting continuity and that the center was idiosyncratic in terms of its development, indicating that there was not a total break with the original residential model. First, some of the residence's employees remained in its management. Some examples are Eulalia Lapresta, right hand of the former director (María de Maeztu); Matilde Marquina, resident and former student; Enriqueta Martín y Ortiz de la Tabla (librarian); and Lucia Calvillo (accountant). We do not argue that the institution did not suffer any purging, but it is worth pointing out that the center continued to have a special identity related to the role and ideals of these women, who aspired to complete their university studies; they were educated, cultured, and actively developing their intellectual capacities. This was a far cry from the ideal for Francoist women, centered on the role of docile wives and devoted mothers. Undoubtedly, this issue generated the occasional conflict with Catholic and fascist organizations. At the same time, many curricular activities from the previous period were maintained, such as language classes, bibliometrics, poetry competitions, music, conferences, and exhibitions. This did not prevent it from being a center that served as an example of the re-education of the elites through political, religious, and moral tutoring.[55]

The prestigious Instituto-Escuela de Madrid is another educational center that maintained a certain degree of continuity. Clearly institutionist in origin, it underwent a transformation during the Franco dictatorship and became known as the Instituto Isabel La Católica. It is another example of an existing educational structure that has been exploited. Of course, there were changes and ruptures with the previous model of education, since the institution was adapted to a new context of religion and the separation of the sexes. But old habits, people, and materials also remained and are notable. For example,

some of the teachers from the previous period were re-admitted and some of the new teachers were former pupils who were trained according to the previous ideas and practices. Thus, an atmosphere marked by the youthfulness of the teaching staff, the close educational relationship between students and teachers, uncrowded classrooms, and a fruitful climate of collaboration with families continued to develop. In addition, a preparatory school was housed on the premises (maintaining the graded and cyclical education initiative of the previous period), and in 1948, the nursery section was incorporated. Other factors that explain the distinctiveness of the school stemmed from its permanent status as an experimental center for teaching. The school developed a diverse program of didactic practices derived from the use of the existing infrastructure: a physics and chemistry laboratory, natural history laboratory, literary museum, geography and history department, and drawing room. Complementary activities such as lectures, visits, excursions, artistic evenings, and the development of physical education and sporting activities continued. Medical care and school health services continued to be offered to students, as was already the case in the Republic.[56]

In addition to these surviving traditions in specific institutions, there are other, more general administrative and curricular areas that also show signs of continuity during the first years of Franco's regime. One example is the recovery of preparatory schools in the 1945 Primary Education Reform Act, which had already been created during the Republic as a way of achieving continuity between primary and secondary education. There was also a certain continuity in some teaching objectives and methodological guidelines in the reforms of 1945 and 1953, ranging from the definition of objectives, such as the enrichment of children's personalities, to the importance of action and experimentation.[57]

Likewise, ideas derived from the previous stage of Spanish history were present in internal debates about the new reform of teacher training already initiated during the civil war. The aim was to bring teacher training into line with the regime's idea of education and to link its design with the future law on the reform of primary education, which would come into force in 1945. To this end, technical commissions were set up and an intense debate took place between two clearly disparate positions. The first position was led by Pedro Sainz Rodríguez (the first Minister of National Education). His approach advocated continuing with the foundations of the Professional Plan of 1931, in which the balance between the cultural and pedagogical training of future teachers was—for the first time—very much focused on pedagogical and didactic knowledge. The intention was to continue leaving the burden of cultural training mainly on secondary education, thus safeguarding the university status of teacher training. The change would simply involve adapting this model to the national and Catholic ideals of the movement. The second position was led by José Ibáñez Martín (President of the CSIC) and Romualdo de Toledo (Director General of Primary Education). This was based on a total break with the Republican model of education.

The second position advocated that the cultural component of the curriculum should be strengthened, leaving the pedagogical component as a complement to teacher education.[58] In the end, the result was an eclectic vision in which the culturalist zeal of Ibáñez Martín and Romualdo de Toledo's position was maintained, with the pedagogical field remaining subordinate to it. The need for baccalaureate studies obtained in secondary education centers was nonetheless maintained as a preliminary step to training in the teachers' colleges. In short, the result was a conception of education that was rich in culturalist content but diffuse, since any hint of pedagogical continuity with Republican ideas was to be avoided, even if some supporters of the regime shared these ideas.

This impulse for continuity among those leading the technical commissions for education under the new regime was also evident in the drafting the 1938 school programs. Those who formed part of this commission had been grantees of the JAE and consequently had contact with the pedagogical innovations that were taking place abroad. This prior training of course generated a package of proposals in line with an innovative mentality in education. Thus, in the first proposals, features characteristic of progressive education of the time were put forward for primary education. From the conception of transmitting knowledge in cyclical order to the methodological application based on the principles of the Escuela Nueva: activity, globalization, paidocentrism, and participation.[59] This initiative, like the case mentioned earlier, ultimately did not proceed.

Finally, in the intellectual sphere, Dewey was vetoed by the Franco regime in the early stages of the dictatorship. His ideas were considered to be akin to other educational styles related to pedagogical avant-gardism. This was the reason he was introduced into Spain by the ILE; there was a direct justification for his rejection both in academic circles and in practice. However, the subsequent and progressive opening toward the liberal and American world (only timidly accepted by the Franco regime) allowed a subtle rapprochement, which also benefited from a reinterpretation of Dewey's message in accordance with Catholic pedagogical activism. This coincided with a later period of openness once Joaquin Ruiz Giménez's headed the Ministry (1951–56).[60]

These two last examples may suggest that continuity did not translate directly into policy reform, but that does not mean that it did not survive in other spheres. The second category of evidence, which we have termed "undercurrent adaptation," suggests continuity of progressive teaching practices within schools. We cannot argue that this can be generalized, but it certainly existed to some extent. Despite Franco's purging of teachers identified with the Second Republic, there were still teachers trained in the thought and practice of the pre-Franco period, in which the climax of avant-garde pedagogical ideas generated a significant impact on teachers' professional mentality. This allowed these ideas and practices to survive to an extent, even in the most ironclad period of Francoism. School practices described by aspiring headmasters are a case in point. The documentary

sources[61] show the use of an active teaching methodology and a paidocentric New Education conception despite the ideological climate and the political context charged with religiosity and patriotism. Decroly's centers of interest, Montessori's and Fröebel's take on play, references to Dewey to justify certain actions together with didactic materials, references to visits and excursions, and the importance of intuition are all examples of reasoning employed by candidates for school management in Francoist times who saw great merit in these daily practices. In the descriptions of these practices, one also finds the new uses and organizational changes of Franco's day-to-day schooling, charged with patriotic and religious overtones: military-style order and arrangement of pupils in rows, patriotic songs, flag-raising, and prayers. This shows that the school culture shaped in the previous period coincided with the implications of the new academic and normative-legislative discourses.

Another documentary source that allows us to confirm the hypothesis of continuity is the student teachers' reports of the first years of the Franco dictatorship.[62] This evidence shows continuity in certain categories. Here one sees the survival of materials that evoke the active and intuitive teaching of the previous period. For example, allusions were made to Montessori materials, Fröebel's gifts, and Decrolian methods. There are also descriptions of methodological forms typical of innovative pedagogy, albeit in the development of content related to the imposed Catholicism and patriotism. The intuitive method coexists with memorization, which gave rise to an eclectic form of didactics.

As further evidence of this eclectic approach, this period also saw the application of centers of interest as a methodology for learning religious content or outings and excursions accompanied by patriotic or religious songs to observe nature, or rather God's work of creation. There is also evidence of continuity between periods through the survival of models of school furniture influenced by the hygienist style of the late nineteenth century.[63] Therefore, in many cases, pedagogical coherence prevailed in the absence of a new didactic approach, as did the use of school tools and equipment. Active didactic strategies continued to be used; they were assimilated by teachers in their formative years but at the service of new ideological principles.

Finally, we would like to mention a third category of evidence that connects the educational past with the early Franco period: the evidence of resistance. Marked by development in private and clandestine contexts, it is also proof that the spirit of pedagogical innovation in Spain did not disappear with the early Franco regime. We have examples of private initiatives that tried to keep alive the practices of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, the Instituto-Escuela, or the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios. Examples of this continuity can be found in both Catalonia and Madrid. Schools in the Catalan case include San Gregorio, Talitha, Instituto Costa i Llobera, Thau, and Toni i Guida. Schools in Madrid include the Colegio Estudio and the Colegio Estilo.[64]

In the Basque Country, we can find another important example of resistance which maintained the spirit of the pedagogical vanguard of the republican period. Francoism persecuted all nationalist aspirations and their propagation through education in the region. The National Catholic state system of education was imposed, and consequently, teaching in Basque was banned. In the years prior to the civil war, there were ambitious projects linked to educational innovation, as in other parts of Spain, but of course corresponding to the particularities of Basque culture. However, all this was dealt a mortal blow by the new centralist regime. There nevertheless were those who resisted clandestinely and managed to build a bridge between the educational aspirations of the prewar period and the resurgence of innovative ideas through the Iskastolas movement in the 1960s. This impasse was marked by a proto-movement of domestic schools (*etxe-eskolak*) in which the teacher Elbira Zipitria was the initiator and key figure. Located in private flats, these forms of school resistance to Francoism developed a methodology in line with the principles of the New Education, with an active pedagogy linked to teaching Basque language and culture.[65]

In these conditions, pedagogical innovation—although it continued outside the official system in private or clandestine schools—would not truly penetrate the boundaries of schools until well into the 1970s with the climate generated by the Movements for Pedagogical Renewal, international influence, and the social, political, and economic circumstances of Spain in transition. This opened a new political period that began with the changes of the LGE of 1970 and continued with the 1978 Constitution.[66] However, the spirit of progressive pedagogical innovation never died. It continued, albeit weakened, diminished, and tenuous. This is because part of the school organization, the curricular model, the teaching bodies, and the methods of hiring staff were maintained.[67] And beyond ideological closed-mindedness and pedagogical blindness, there were even ways of utilizing structures from the previous period to the benefit of the new system.

## Conclusions

This chapter analyzes education during a short and critical period in Spanish history: the Second Republic, the civil war, and the first years of the Franco regime. The nature of these events makes it necessary to speak of change, rupture, and transformation. However, this research introduces the term "continuity" into the analysis, as there is evidence suggesting that the educational thinking, practices, and infrastructures of one period may have survived into the next. This new approach to the study of two historical periods as antithetical as the Second Republic and Francoism generates greater complexity in historical explanation and analysis. New terms such as utilization, adaptation, survival, resistance, or pedagogical coherence must be added to the already-familiar lexicon of destruction, dismantling, purging, rejection, persecution, etc. The new implications for researchers lie in understanding the

different rhythms of change when it comes to educational spaces. Although such significant and macro-structural historical events as an armed conflict, the enactment of a new government, or a new constitution mark key historical changes and divisions, a certain time lag affecting micro-structural levels must also be considered. In this way, this chapter defends a position of continuity in education that may seem controversial, but we understand this continuity to be merely circumstantial to the agents and phenomena that occur in the everyday dynamics of social systems.

The education system, as a social system, and the school, as a microsystem, contain subjects and agents with a culture and mentality that cannot be erased or deactivated instantaneously. The roles and practices of teachers, students, and families often set a different agenda from that of education policy and legislators. This leads us to highlight the survival and adaptation of educational practices and resistance to educational changes, even when the circumstances are as drastic and dramatic as those of the Spanish Civil War. This chapter is based on existing research that utilizes new sources; these sources go beyond official documentation limited to political-normative discourse of law or regulation and illuminate more signs of continuity than one might imagine.

## Notes

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# 6 Social and Literary Engagement

## Ruth Rewald and the Children of the Spanish Civil War

*Lena Hein*

Given our research interest, it is important to name and bear in mind the locations of the forgotten texts, neglected names, and untold stories discussed here. The source for this chapter is the Federal Archive of Germany and, more concretely, the collection SAPMO, containing the "Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR," which includes the folder titled "Civil War in Spain."[1] One of the many folders in this collection contains the mostly unpublished works and private documents of Ruth Rewald that are discussed in this chapter.

### Life and Work of Ruth Rewald[2]

Rewald was born in 1906 in Berlin to a non-religious Jewish family. She began studying law in Heidelberg, where she met her future husband, Hans Schaul. Rewald then decided to dedicate herself to youth welfare and began working as a nursery assistant at a daycare in Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin in 1930, gaining practical experience and collecting theoretical material for her first children's books and texts. In 1933, the couple emigrated to Paris due to the growing antisemitic sentiment in Germany: Hans Schaul was banned from his occupation as a lawyer, and Rewald was not allowed to publish anymore. In Paris, Schaul worked as a photographer, while Rewald took over a share of a bookshop, translated, gave lessons, and worked in administration. When they heard of the Spanish Civil War, Hans Schaul left immediately for Spain in September 1936 with the International Brigades, where he would serve in the 13th brigade in the Tschapajew Battalion. Their daughter, Anja, was born in May 1937, but Rewald decided to join the International Brigades in Spain, leaving her daughter with a close friend in Paris. Heiner Rau helped her obtain an invitation from the 11th brigade to live and work in the children's home "Ernst Thälmann" in La Moraleja, outside of Madrid, so that she could also conduct research for her children's book on the Spanish Civil War.

Thanks to their letters in the archive, we know that Schaul and Rewald were constantly writing letters to each other, but it seems that they did not meet more than a few times, although they were both in Spain. In February 1938, Rewald returned to Paris, where she started writing *Vier spanische*

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*Figure 6.1* Ruth Rewald at age eighteen in 1924.
*Source*: Private: Dirk Krüger

*Figure 6.2* Ruth with daughter Anja in August 1937.
*Source*: Private: Dirk Krüger

*Jungen* despite her financial problems and the generally difficult political circumstances. After the German occupation of France, Rewald fled with her young daughter to the small village Les Roisiers-sur-Loire. But on July 17, 1942, the German-Jewish author was arrested, brought to the prison of Angers, and then sent to Auschwitz and killed. A neighbor in the French village took in her daughter Anja, but after two years, she suffered the same fate as her mother. Hans Schaul was imprisoned in the French internment camp Djelfa in Algeria in 1941. He later managed to enter the Soviet Union and then the GDR, where he worked for the SED until his death in 1988.[3]

A brief account of what happened to Rewald's texts and documents will clarify why this is an untold story. After her arrest, her belongings and documents were sent to the Reichssicherheitshauptamt in Berlin, where all anti-Jewish activities were organized by the Gestapo. At the end of World War II, Soviet soldiers entered this building and took many files and documents with them to the Soviet Union, among them the box containing all of Rewald's belongings. Until 1960 these documents were returned gradually to the GDR, specifically to the Zentrale Staatsarchiv in Potsdam.

In the 1980s, the literary scholar Silvia Schlenstedt found the file with Rewald's documents while conducting research and informed Hans Schaul, who previously had not been aware of the existence of these documents. In 1989, Dirk Krüger wrote a dissertation about Ruth Rewald, bringing her back from the oblivion caused by her exile and assassination, even though she had published several children's books in her time. Her name appeared in a few articles and in some of those books on the market, but Ruth Rewald is otherwise mostly forgotten. Her life is representative of the time she lived in. It is a German-Jewish historical experience, a life of exile and of political engagement.

Despite her short lifetime, Rewald published several children's and youth's books; *Rudi und sein Radio* was the first one, in 1931. Subsequently, several of her short stories appeared in different papers in 1932, the same year her successful book *Müllerstraße—Jungens von heute* was published by Gundert Verlag in Stuttgart. While the first book thematizes new media, the radio, and airplanes, this one is a proletarian story based on her experiences in the daycare in Berlin. *Janko—der Junge aus Mexiko* was released in 1934 while Rewald was in exile in Paris, focusing on the topic of statelessness and exile, and in 1936, she published *Tsao und Jing-Ling* in a Swiss journal. This work was not published as a book until 2002. The text to be discussed in this chapter, *Vier spanische Jungen* (Four Spanish boys), was written right after her time in Spain but first published in 1987 by Dirk Krüger, who also stresses in his epilogue that Ruth Rewald placed more emphasis on social and political issues with each successive book or text.[4] Mathilde Lévêque uses the term "shadow literature" (*littérature de l'ombre*) for authors like Rewald whose work is almost forgotten until it emerges fortuitously during transfer between archives or similar moves.[5] Many of these authors faded into oblivion during this time, because they disappeared in the camps—and with them vanished their texts.

## *Vier spanische Jungen* and Its Intertextual Relations With Other Writings of Rewald

Along with *Die Kinder von Guernika* (1939) by Jewish author Hermann Kestens,[6] Ruth Rewald's novel *Vier spanische Jungen* is apparently the only children's or youth's book about the Spanish Civil War in German. In Spain, the genre of children's literature on the Spanish Civil War became more prominent after the Transition in 1977 and especially after 2000. Evidence for this is found in the two sessions dedicated to the civil war in the "III. Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil" in Vigo in 2003. According to José Belmonte, among the most cited authors are Bernardo Atxaga, Jesús Ballaz, Jaume Cela, Juan Farias y José María Merino, Emili Teixidor, Elena Fortun, José Luis Castillo-Puche, Juan Farias, Antonio Martínez Menchén, Fernando Marías, and Vicente Muñoz Puelles.[7] Isabelle Gräfin Deym furthermore stresses the function of children's literature of the Spanish Civil War as a space of both memory and counter-memory.[8] Nevertheless, the dominant argument in scholarly literature is that children's books on the civil war are not concretely political but also offer a social analysis of the children's lives and experiences during the war. This chapter examines how Ruth Rewald's writing for children contains a political dimension, regarding both historical events and their remembrance.

### *Vier spanische Jungen*

After the first chapter, which functions as prolepsis about a group of soldiers in the *Ejército Popular* during the first winter of the civil war, Rewald's *Vier spanische Jungen* begins on the eve of the military coup in July 1936 in the small, rural, rather poor village Peñarroya. The readership gets to know the four main characters and friends who are between eleven and fourteen years old: the funny rascal Jerónimo, the delicate dreamer José, the small and good-natured Rodríguez, and Álvarez, self-confident and very mature for his twelve years. The text also explains the socio-historical circumstances of the year before, the families of the children, the political situation for the miners, and the children's work in a coalmine. One day, the four friends spot troops heading toward the town and inform their parents about it. Fidel, Álvarez's father, organizes a successful defense against the military rebels, almost without weapons. The left coalition achieved certain advancements after their election in 1936, so the town now enjoys a period of happiness, motivation, and improvement. These conditions particularly benefitted the children who now have the possibility to go to school instead of collecting coal, because their parents are earning enough money. A new school is built, and we read a general description of the new teacher's pedagogy and how the children organize themselves in elected groups to keep their garden and facilities clean and functioning.

But after a short time, the war in the country also reaches Peñarroya. With the Francoist army getting closer, many men of the Republican and antifascist families flee into the mountains to join *las milicias*, among them

also Fidel, Sánchez, and Molero, Álvarez's, Jose's, and Rodríguez fathers. When the fascist troops occupy the village, violence, hunger, and fear begin to reign over the lives of the inhabitants, including the four protagonists. The novel also explores the issue of communication and information during the war. They bring a secret radio to Rodrigo's uncle, who lives in a small and disregarded village close by in order to receive information from Republican radio stations in occupied areas. The situation in Peñarroya worsens, and the four friends go back to collecting coal pieces despite the prohibition so that they can support their families. Inspired by a story of three children who fled from Málaga, the protagonists decide one day to run over to the Republican army. In the last chapter, the narrator's perspective switches to the Battalion Tschapajew of the International Brigades that finds the four boys, who think they have been caught by fascist soldiers. But the novel ends well as the battalion happily takes them in, recognizes them as the children of some of the militia men, and promises them to be brought up in a children's home with food and schooling.

### *Genesis of the Novel*

Rewald finished the manuscript in October 1938 after her return from Spain, but like many other manuscripts of that time, *Vier spanische Jungen* ended up in the literary drawer of exile and was not published until Dirk Krüger's edition from 1987. The historical material for the plot consists in the story of four boys fleeing from their hometown under Francoist occupation to the Battalion Tschapajew of the International Brigades in spring of 1937. Hans Schaul, member of this battalion, told Rewald about the event and took pictures of the children. His companion Alfred Kantorowicz wrote the story down as it happened,[9] but, together with Heinrich Rau, they wanted Rewald to write a children's book about it. In this letter from July 19, 1937, Schaul refers to this book project in the following way:

> Denn was muss dieses projektierte Buch enthalten? Erstens eine ziemlich genaue Schilderung des Leben im faschistischen Hinterland. Das ist nicht der schwerste Teil, denn darin sind die spanischen Faschisten keineswegs originell. Aber es gibt doch viele Einzelheiten, die spezifisch sind, wie sehen die Haeuser aus, wie sehen faschistische Soldaten aus, wie sprechen sie untereinander. Ferner sind fuer Dich einige militaerische Kenntnisse notwendig, keine konkreten, aber immerhin allgemeiner Art. Denn ich glaube Dir geschrieben zu haben, dass die zu uns uebergelaufenen Jungens uns wichtige Angaben machen konnten und dieser Punkt waere fuer das Buch doch sehr wichtig. Ferner weißt du ja, dass die Jungens zu uns herueberkamen, weil ihre Vaeter auf unserer Seite kaempfen. Es muss also auch eine gute konkrete Schilderung erstens des Lebens unserer Soldaten, ihres Geistes und ihrer Moral mit dasein. . . . Und schließlich muss auch das Leben der Soldaten der

> Internationalen Brigade richtig geschildert werden, womit wiederum eine Fuelle von Einzelkenntnissen verbunden waeren. Kurz, wie soll ich das brieflich alles behandeln, es ist doch fast ausgeschlossen.[10]

### *Children's Life Stories*

As previously mentioned, Rewald started working a few months later in the children's home (*Kinderheim*) "Ernst Thälmann" in La Moraleja, outside of Madrid. The building where the eleventh International Brigade founded this home used to be the country estate of María de Cubas, who fled at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. It hosted both war orphans and children whose parents were fighting and/or working and could not provide for them, mainly from the northern part of Madrid. In the home, a teacher from *Frente Popular* taught classes, and the comrades Concha und Bernhard took care of the rest of their needs. In a short speech during her arrival, Rewald asked the children living in the *Kinderheim* to tell her about their lives, families, and recent experiences so that people in other countries could learn about their situation.

Many aspects of these children's stories, which are also among Rewald's documents in the archive, served as raw material for her novel. But this chapter intends to show that they were not just a source of material for her fictional writing and that *Vier spanische Jungen* is not just a future-oriented propagandist text defending a certain message and the values of the International Brigades. It is not until the last chapter that the text adopts the perspective of the International Brigades, of Schaul and Kantorowicz, and how they experienced these real events. The novel remembers and recounts the stories and fates of those children from the *Kinderheim* while also telling the story of its four protagonists. The text becomes a space of memory and simultaneously discusses the fate of children generally during the Spanish Civil War. The text demonstrates a move toward the past, to the historical memory of voices that are usually unheard. At the same time, it looks to the future with a certain message and aims to inform the world about the ongoing civil war.

Rewald's writing on the children's personal stories shows her intention to remember them as individuals: she always includes their full names and sometimes also their age. Her transcription in German of their Spanish words—sometimes with the help of Concha—attempts to maintain their voices and language even through translated and transcribed language. As Krüger points out, she also let the children write and draw parts of their lives and then listened to their words, converting them into little life stories.[11]

A reading of the fictional novel *Vier spanische Jungen* with these unpublished texts by Rewald, which give voice to many children of the Spanish Civil War, provides an opportunity to reflect on the web of memories, historical-political representation, and fiction that are characteristic of Rewald's writing.

There are many children's stories containing harsh life experiences, like the one told by twelve-year-old Jesús Morata:

> 9 Geschwister. Vater arbeitslos vor dem Krieg. Ich habe immer viel gearbeitet. Damals also 10 Jahre alt. Kohlenreste (Carbonillas suchen, ein Kindergewerbe in Madrid, auch vor dem Krieg). Morgens um 8 in die Naehe der Fabrik gegangen. Kohlenreste. Bis Mittags. Von 1/2 bis Abend, bis der Sack voll war. auch wenn schon nachts. Nicht zum Verkaufen wie andere Kinder, fuer sie zu Hause. 'Nicht richtig, dass die anderen das so teuer verkaufen'. Mit einem Sieb den Kohlenstaub geschuettelt, bleiben kleine Stueckchen zurueck. Als der Krieg ausbrach, Vater bei Park Automobile gearbeitet, Mutter und Bruder in anderen Kriegsbetrieben. Jesus blieb mit zwei kleineren Geschwistern und einem aelteren Bruder allein zu Hause. Weiter Kohlen gesucht. Immer am selben Ort. Der lag jetzt nur einige 100 Meter von der Front. . . . Seine Mutter gehoert von Moraleja, wollte erst nicht. Aber zwei Bomben in seinem Haus innen eingeschlagen und nichts zu essen. Schliesslich doch ja.[12]

This text teaches the reader about child labor before and, more significantly, during the war in depicting these families' hardship. The work with coal is an omnipresent element both in the children's life stories and in Rewald's novel, as can be seen in the following paragraph describing the life of the four protagonists before the war:

> Jeder schleppte einen prallen Sack. Der schmale, zarte José trug ihn auf dem Rücken und ging gebeugt unter der Last. Der stämmige Rodriguez, der älteste von allen, hatte ihn über die rechte Schulter gelegt. . . . Sie hatten, wie jeden Tag, Kohlenrückstände auf der Alina-Grube gehackt und gesammelt.[13]

Another recurrent topic in the novel and in many of the children's narrations is violence and repression. Listening to their voices also means understanding the level of violence and death they were exposed to. The story of thirteen-year-old Maria Antonia, recorded by Ruth Rewald, provides a stark example of this reality:

> Ich war eines Tages zu Hause mit meiner Mutter [und] einer meiner Brueder. Da klopfte es an die Tuer. Und es waren drei Faschisten, die kamen, um meinen Bruder zu holen. . . . Und als er herausgegangen war, hat man ihm, ohne ein Wort zu sagen, mit dem Stock auf den Kopf geschlagen. Als mein Bruder schrie, ist auch meine Mutter hinausgegangen. Und man hat ihr auch einen Schlag auf den Kopf gegeben. Und da sie zu dritt waren, hat der dritte meinem Bruder einen Stich in die Seite gegeben. Und nachdem sie das gemacht hatten, sagte einer von ihnen: Jetzt koennen

> wir gehen, die Sache ist erledigt. Diese Verbrecher hatten die Stoecke mit Papier umwickelt und an der Spitze hatten sie eine Bleikugel befestigt. Das ist eine Geschichte, die ich niemals in meinem Leben vergessen werde.[14]

The shocking combination of a child's voice or text and violent content is also found in Rewald's *Vier spanische Jungen*, which combines these two features and often directly comments on death. For example, the narrator depicts Francoist repression in the following excerpt:

> Am nächsten Tag ging es von Mund zu Mund: 'Hast du die Schüsse gehört in der letzten Nacht? Sie haben die Gefangenen in den Kasernen erschossen.' . . . Auch die nächsten Tage erlebten die Menschen von Penarroya in lähmender Angst. Hunderte wurden erschossen, viele gequält und geschlagen, damit sie ihre Freunde verraten sollten.[15]

It seems to be a clear narrative decision to represent violence and death in this book for children and youth. The readership of this novel likely understood these themes, as the protagonists and the children of the *Kinderheim* experienced situations that often forced them to act as adults.

***Reports***

In addition to the life stories of children living in the *Thälmann Kinderheim*, there are other types of texts among Ruth Rewald's unpublished works in the archive. After her frequent exploratory missions or trips to different parts of Madrid, she wrote these experiences down, creating a substantial catalogue of reports on a variety of topics. In general, they focus on working-class neighborhoods, children, and women during war and related topics. Most of them even have proper titles, which reveal Rewald's intention of actually publishing them. Some examples include "Metroendstation Madrid: Tetuan," describing one of the most affected parts of Madrid in the civil war, the working-class neighborhood Tetuán; "Der Krieg beherrscht das Denken und Fuehlen der Kinder"; "Das Leben einer spanischen Familie buergerlicher Herkunft waehrend des Buergerkrieges oder wie die Revolution aus einer in, Geist und Kultur schwelgenden Intellektuellenfamilie revolutionaere Kaempfer macht"; "Casa Cuna," about another children's home; or "Das Unterirdische Madrid," about how people hid from bombings and lived in metro stations like the one in Tetuan. These reports or articles demonstrate Rewald's precise capacity of observation, and they aim to awaken solidarity with the Spanish children and working-class families. The clear mode of expression and the narrative structure show Rewald's proficiency in writing short-form literature.

As in the children's testimonies, there are also intertextual relations between these reports and her novel *Vier spanische Jungen*. A reading of two examples from these reports gives an impression of the texts themselves,

their writing style, and Rewald's reflection upon and transformation of this information into a fictional children's book.

*"Vor der Bruecke von Toledo"*

The first example is a fragment of her report "Vor der Bruecke von Toledo," in which she describes how she traveled to the final metro station in the south to see the situation in that part of the city.

> Hier, dicht vor der Front wird noch gearbeitet. Dunkle Schutthuegel umgeben das Fabrikgebaeude, und darinnen kriecht und wimmelt es wie in einem Ameisenhaufen. . . . Ich komme neugierig naeher und finde eine ungezaehlte Bande Kinder. In allen Alterklassen. Von 6 bis 14 Jahren. Sie sind hier von morgens bis mittags und des nachmittags bis es dunkel wird, um zu arbeiten. Sie versuchen, aus den Schutthaufen der Gasfabrik so viele verbrennbare kleinste Stueckchen Kohle abzuringen, wie moeglich. . . . Ich frage sie nun alles moegliche. Ob sie fuer sich arbeiten oder zum Verkauf, wo sie wohnen usw. Die Aelteren hoeren auf zu arbeiten und stuetzen sich auf ihre Schaufeln, die Kleinen kommen neugierig angelaufen und staunen mich an. Schliesslich entlaedt sich alles in einem prustenden Gelaechter. Da kommt mir erst zu Bewusstsein, dass diesen Kindern mein aeusserst vereinfachtes und krankes Spanisch wirklich Spanisch vorkommen muss. (Die Kinder des Heims sind so gewohnt mit Internationalen zu sprechen, dass sie schon selbst ihre Muttersprache vereinfachen, um sich den Auslaendern verstaendlich zu machen). Ich erklaere nun, dass ich Deutsche bin und darum so komisch spreche. 'Deutsche?' Alle Kinder ziehen sich hoechst misstrauisch vor mir zurueck. 'Deutsche sind alle Faschisten.' Und sie legen den Hand um den Hals, um zu zeigen, so murkst ihr uns ab. Ich erzaehle ihnen, dass laengst nicht alle Deutschen Faschisten sind, dass sogar viele von ihnen nach Spanien gekommen sind und—gegen die Faschisten zu kaempfen, und dass ich auch zu diesen Antifaschisten gehoere. . . . Diese Kinder wohnen nach wie vor in ihren alten Wohnungen. Ihre Haeuser sind fast alle durch Bombardements beschaedigt. . . . Sie sind alle aus der naechsten Naehe und leben seit mehr als einem Jahr ganz dicht hinter der Front. Die meisten sammeln die Kohlen fuer sich, damit die Mutter kochen kann, und damit sie es etwas warm haben. Sie gehen nicht eher vom Platz, als bis der Sack voll ist, und darueber wird es oft dunkel. Die anderen verkaufen die Kohle. 60 Céntimos fuer 1 Kilo. Es ist kalt und feucht. Die Kinder haben alle nur leichte Kleider und keine Struempfe an und bei manchen von ihnen ist die Haut am Gesicht so blass und gespannt wie Pergament, dass ich an Greisengesichter denken muss. . . . Sie haben Hunger, die Kinder von Madrid.[16]

This text between report, essay, and diary—a combination of reality and storytelling—again offers a voice to those usually left unheard: working-class

children at the outskirts of Madrid during the civil war. The theme of "hunger" is omnipresent in this text and in Rewald's novel. The topic is mentioned repeatedly, as seen in the following example referring to the time when Peñarroya was already beneath Francoist occupation:

> Mutter Molero saß auf dem Stuhl. Sie bewegte sich nicht. Nur ab und zu rollte eine Träne über ihr Gesicht. In den letzten Tagen hatte sie kaum etwas gegessen. Die dünne Garbanzensuppe mußten die Kinder haben.[17]

While the mother is providing for the nutrition of her children here, both in the quoted report and in the novel, the children also take over responsibility for their families by collecting and selling coals, as in the following scene:

> In diesem Jahr gab es viele Familien, die die Hitze schlechter als im vergangenen ertrugen. Sorgen und Hunger hatten sie geschwächt. Besonders traurig sah es bei Mutter Molero aus. Sie hatte einige Zeit lang Soldatenwäsche gewaschen. Diese schwere Arbeit neben der unablässigen Sorge um ihre sieben Sprößlinge hatte sie so elend gemacht, daß sie das Waschen aufgeben mußte. Auch Perez' Schlächterei ging zurück. Die meisten Bewohner der Straße hatten nicht mehr das Geld, Fleisch zu kaufen wie früher. So gingen die Kinder trotz des Verbotes und trotz der Strafe, die ihnen angedroht war, wieder in die Halden, um Carbonillas zu suchen.[18]

Another key aspect in "Puente de Toledo" is the children's awareness of German participation in the Spanish Civil War on the nationalist's side, evident in their immediate mistrust toward Rewald when she tells them her nationality. The references in Rewald's book to German and Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War are therefore not just an ideological decision for informing about these countries' involvement, but they also represent the contemporary reality. From her experiences and conversations with Spanish children during the war, she deduced that they were very much aware of this aspect of the conflict. The novel expresses this awareness in scenes like the following, where the protagonists observe the fascist airfield close by, recognizing the different airplanes: "'Das sind Caproni', sagte Álvarez. 'I wo', rief Jeronimo, 'sie sind doch schwarz und nicht weiß wie die Caproni. Junkers, schwere Bomber sind das.'"[19]

*"Die Wandlung der spanischen Frau"*

The second report considered here is "Die Wandlung der spanischen Frau." Women, and working-class women in particular, form the second group of people to whom Ruth Rewald is interested in giving a voice. She does this by approaching them during her trips to Madrid, writing about them in her subsequent reports, and representing their lives in her fictional children's book. In the following report, she describes her visits to different centers or places where

women met and organized during the war while also reflecting on structural issues concerning the role and position of women in Spanish society.

> In Madrid lerne ich eine junge spanische Frau kennen. Sie ist klein und schmal, erst 23 Jahre als, aber mit dem groessten Ernst und voelliger Selbstaufopferung gibt sie ihre ganze Kraft der Erziehung und Aufklaerung der spanischen Frau. Und das ist eine immense Aufgabe. Denn bis zum Jahre—sind die Frauen in einer fuer uns andere Europaeerinnen unvorstellbaren Rueckstaendigkeit gehalten worden. 60 Prozent in manchen Gegenden—waren Analphabeten und sind es zum großen Teil auch noch. Sie wurden selbst von ihren eigenen Maennern fuer so inferiore Wesen angesehen, dass man ihnen nichts zutraute als Kinder gebaeren und Kinder grossziehen. Selbst auf dem Lande, ließ man sie in den seltensten Faellen an der Bodenbearbeitung teilnehmen. Sie wurden fast wie Haustiere behandelt. Und diese jahrhundertlange Einschaetzung und Behandlung hat ihren Horizont und ihre Selbsteinschaetzung in solchem Maße verringert, dass sie sich selbst weder etwas zutraut noch auch Lust verspuert, etwas zu leisten. . . . Meine Freundin Julia organisiert Vortraege bei den Frauen der Arbeiter Madrids—auch dort muessen sie aus ihrer Lethargie gerissen werden, bei den Baeuerinnen auf dem Lande, sie organisiert Meetings, sie gruendet Schulen, sie hilft bei der Schaffung von Kriegsbetrieben. Voller Stolz erbietet sie sich, mir einiges von dem zu zeigen, was seit dem Juli 36 geschaffen worden ist. . . . Aber in den großen Staedten hat die Wandlung bereits energisch eingesetzt.[20]

Motherhood and education are deeply intertwined with the role of women in society. Rewald does not shy from exploring this issue. This is evident both in her reports, which, like newspaper articles, seem to be written with adult readers in mind and in her novel directed to children. In the following quote from the novel *Vier spanische Jungen*, one sees her intersectional approach concerning class and gender when she talks about the schooling system before the reforms of the Second Republic and *Frente Popular*:

> Viele der Knaben mußten arbeiten und konnten fast gar nicht in die Schule kommen. Andere mußten plötzlich zu Haus bleiben und helfen, wenn Vater oder Mutter krank waren. Wenn sie dann nach Wochen oder Monaten wieder in der Klasse auftauchten, hatten sie das meiste vergessen und mußten wieder von vorn beginnen. Den Mädchen erging es noch schlimmer. Daheim fand man es häufig unnötig, daß sie überhaupt lesen und schreiben lernten. Wurden sie etwas größer, dann mußten sie die kleineren Geschwister hüten und der Mutter helfen.[21]

Both in her report and in her novel, Rewald does not just criticize existing structures, but she also remembers the outstanding courage and behavior of certain women. The fictional character of Josepha, Alvarez's mother, can

be read as homage to people like Julia or Concha from the children's home. Take, for example, the following passage in which Josepha recalls her own political past in Asturias, where she spent time in jail and actively participated in the political organization of women:

> Ich hatte damals auch meine beiden kleinen Gören, aber ich war fest entschlossen, einmal etwas zu wagen, eben damit es die Kleinen später besser haben sollten. Und ich sprach mit den Frauen in der Grube. Als ich einen kleinen Stamm sicher gewonnen hatte, machten wir Frauenversammlungen. Das war damals nicht so einfach, denn Versammlungen waren verboten. Aber wir kamen trotzdem zusammen. . . . Und es wurde gestreikt.[22]

On the one hand, the text has a universal dimension regarding values like the people's bravery. On the other hand, it refers to a concrete historical experience, evident in references to real historical events, which can be called the "historical markers" of the text. Whereas many other children's books concentrate merely on children's experiences, in *Vier spanische Jungen*, Rewald consistently mentions and explores current historical and political circumstances. At the beginning of the text, someone comments on information in the newspaper, stating: "Morgen soll doch in Barcelona diese Olympiade, wie nennen sie die, Arbeiterolympiade, stattfinden. Was da jetzt nicht alles möglich ist bei dieser neuen Regierung."[23] Even though the conversation takes place between adults, the child readers receive the information about this important event. At the same time, the sentence marks the exact date of the story, as the "Worker's Olympics" should have started on July 19, 1936, a day after the military coup. This reference locates the story exactly on this decisive and tragic day.

Later, when the military coup leads the first Francoist troops to Peñarroya, Rewald's novel goes beyond exploring the fear and pain the children could feel and understand in this situation. The text also explains the events on a political and historical level:

> Von ihm erfuhr man, daß es sich um einen seit langem vorbereiteten Militäraufstand in ganz Spanien handelte. Man wollte die Regierung des Volkes, die sich nach dem freien Willen des Volkes gebildet und diesem Volk neue Rechte, größere Freiheit und mehr Brot gewährt hatte, stürzen. So wie hier in Peñarroya, so tobte in vielen Städten Spaniens der Kampf. . . . Spanien war in zwei Teile gespalten.[24]

On a narrative level, this explanation functions as a reading guide, suggesting that the happenings in Peñarroya are representative of the historical events all over Spain at that time. The story of our four protagonists in the little town—accessible and understandable for children and adolescents—thus offers a broader perspective on the events of the Spanish Civil War throughout the country.

One narrative strategy throughout the novel is an attempt to explain certain politics through their visible and comprehensible effects on society. This is evident in the following definition of a fascist:

> Ein Faschist, das war der Schloßherr, dem seit Jahrhunderten Landstrecken gehörten, auf denen Hunderte von Bauern ihre kleine Wirtschaft hätten betreiben können, der Schloßherr, der sich selbst um seinen Besitz nicht kümmerte, der hier und dort Verwalter einsetzte, die Bauern zwangen für einen geringen Lohn von Sonnenaufgang bis Sonnenuntergang den Boden zu bearbeiten. . . . Faschist, das war der Grundherr, der sich in Madrid mit den Bankherren und den Generalen verband, um jeden Widerstand der Bauern gegen diese Unterdrückung zu ersticken.[25]

The anaphorical syntactical construction regarding "the fascist" underlines an aspect of class that is, even today, often left out of debates on the historical memory of the Spanish Civil War, a conflict that is falsely referred to as a "war between brothers." The genre of children's literature does not change Rewald's efforts to write a political, social, and also adventurous novel.

### *Literary Devices*

Ruth Rewald designed a plot that is full of suspense, clear, and understandable for young readers. Its language is rich in form and imagery, inspiring thoughtfulness, insight, and emotional reception.

A closer look at some of its narrative devices illustrates this literary quality of the text. Although *Vier Spanische Jungen* is a children's book, it also recounts the lived experiences of many different adults, offering the reader a multiperspectival and polyphonic panorama. The paratextual or formal structuration of the text in twenty chapters both divides the plot into smaller units and has its own narrative function. In many cases, the beginning of a new chapter comes with a change of narrative perspective. This chapter division is also used to formalize a temporal switch through analepses or prolepses.

One chapter opens by showing a drastic stylistic change, expressing the sudden deterioration of the situation in Peñarroya on a formal level and through a change in perspective. The stories move from the four protagonist's experience to a description of the general situation in the town:

> Die Kinder wagten nicht mehr, in die Kohlenhalden zu gehen.
>
> —18.—
>
> Sechs Uhr früh. Die Erde bebte. Die Fensterscheiben klirrten. Penarroya fuhr jäh aus dem Schlaf. Bum, bum, bum. Granateneinschläge. Die Menschen sprangen aus ihren Betten. Kinder weinten. Krieg.[26]

The sudden and unique use of an elliptic style foregrounds this description of the direct sensorial experience of the war. Its onomatopoetic representation,

coupled with elliptic and paratactical syntax, expresses the drastic reality of war in people's lives. The text lifts up voices that typically go unheard. It establishes respect for the voice of the child as witness and testimony of the war, for his or her perception of the world.

> En esta visión de un conflicto armado de tales dimensiones, en el que se vio involucrada toda la población española, se echa en falta la particular óptica, tan distinta, tan relevante, de tanta trascendencia, de esos niños y jóvenes que, a la par que los adultos, también vivieron la guerra en primera línea, desde la vanguardia, o bien desde el exilio o el confinamiento en sus casas, en sus pueblos.[27]

In Rewald's novel, complex political and historical content is explained to a potentially young readership using fiction and certain narrative devices. In the following quote, for instance, the results of new politics following the 1936 elections are evident through an aspect of the children's daily life:

> José sprang aufgeregt aus seinem schmalen Bett, das er mit seinem jüngeren Bruder teilte. 'Aufstehen, Gabriel, die Schule beginnt!' Gabriel blinzelte, reckte sich und rollte auf die andere Seite. 'Laß mich in Ruh', murmelte er und schlief weiter. Aber José war ganz glücklich darüber, daß heute wieder die Schule begann. Er schlüpfte rasch in seine Hosen, blätterte in dem neuen Schulbuch, das gestern an alle Schulkinder der Stadt verteilt worden war. Dann lief er zu dem Eimer mit Wasser und wusch sich. Als er damit fertig war, stellte er mit Befriedigung fest, daß das Wasser kristallklar war im Vergleich zu der chinesischen Tusche, die er zurückließ, wenn er vom Kohlenschaufeln heimgekehrt war.[28]

These few sentences contain a wealth of social and political information: The children's different reactions show their generational differences concerning these historical experiences, offering a more differentiated and precise perspective on what is normally generalized as "the children of the Spanish Civil War." Gabriel only knows or remembers the happier times, with normal schooling and without having to work. The cursory mention of the small and shared bed marks social class, and the comparison of the morning washing subtly introduces the earlier social circumstances of José's everyday life.

**Conclusion: A Novel Between Political Commitment and Memory**

Although Rewald's writing should not be characterized as mere promotion of her political ideas, there is certainly a didactic impulse in her novel. But instead of representing socio-political wishful thinking, the text instead shows the historical reality and the scope of action of each individual and the collective. The text represents Rewald's observations of Spanish society concerning the role of children in historical events like the Spanish Civil War.

Their active, creative, and constructive intervention in reality often confronts them with injustice, cruelty, and hostility. At the same time, their role sets examples and encourages imitation, a characteristic of the text that shows a clear message and a didactic impulse.

Nevertheless, the novel and its implications are not limited to this didactic and propagandist element. The representation of children and the daily life of common people during the Spanish Civil War inscribes these often unheard and untold experiences into the historical memory of the war. Children's literature serves here as a space for historical memory. In this sense, *Vier spanische Jungen* remembers the historical experiences of the children from the *Thälmann Kinderheim* as well as the ones of the people described in the report.

In the time after the Spanish Civil War during the dictatorship, the text would have functioned as a space of counter-memory to the Francoist official historical discourse if it had gotten the chance to be published. Rewald's novel also reminds us of the need to remember the generation and perspectives of young people during the Spanish Civil War; the literature and authors capturing the experiences of this generation have often remained in the shadows of history. Tabea Alexa Linhard offers another perspective on Rewald's novel *Vier spanische Jungen* by analyzing its Jewish facets. Even though there are no direct references to Jewishness or antisemitism in the novel, Linhard emphasizes Rewald's search for

*Figure 6.3* Ruth Rewald in exile in Paris.
*Source*: Private: Dirk Krüger

poetic justice and claims that the novel is an example of Jewish writing from the Spanish Civil War, as "the novel provides a window into what fighting fascism in Spain meant for exiled Jewish writers, among them Rewald."[29] Without confining her work to one category, we can therefore also locate Rewald's novel in the large and fluid context of Jewish literatures.[30]

Today, Ruth Rewald's children's books can be bought, but she is still largely unknown and seldom mentioned in any research papers. Dirk Krüger is the only scholar who wrote a monograph on her (his dissertation in the late 1980s). Nevertheless, there has been some progress, such as the translation and re-editing of some of Rewald's texts.[31] The only visible memorials to her in public space are the primary school in Les Resoirs, France, which was named after her daughter, Anja Schaul, and a commemorative plaque at her house in the same village, markers remembering Rewald's literary heritage and the village's history from 1933 to 1945.

By telling this untold story, this chapter has shown that Ruth Rewald's *Vier spanische Jungen* is not only a didactic and propagandist text oriented toward the future but also a space of historical memory for unheard voices and untold experiences of the Spanish Civil War. The intertextual references to Rewald's reports and the life stories of the children from the *Thälmann Kinderheim* shape a novel that combines both adventure and political and ideological implications, a testimony of the Spanish Civil War.

## Notes

1 The designation "SAPMO" in German stands for "Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv," and the specific folder is called "Bürgerkrieg in Spanien."
2 I would like to thank Dirk Krüger for our email correspondence regarding Ruth Rewald and the permission to use pictures of Rewald from his private collection for this article.
3 Dirk Krüger, *Die deutsch-jüdische Kinder- und Jugendbuchautorin Ruth Rewald und die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur im Exil* (Frankfurt am Main: dipa-Verlag, 1990), 215–54.
4 Dirk Krüger, "Nachwort," in *Vier spanische Jungen: Herausgegeben und mit einem Nachwort von Dirk Krüger*, ed. Ruth Rewald (Cologne: Röderberg, 1987), 188.
5 Mathilde Lévêque, "Erika Mann, Lisa Tetzner, Ruth Rewald: la littérature de jeunesse en exil (1933–1945)," in *Le livre pour enfants: Regards critiques offerts à Isabelle Nières-Chevrel*, ed. Cecile Boulaire (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 2.
6 Tabea Alexa Linhard, "A Novel That Never Was: Ruth Rewald's *Vier Spanische Jungen*," in *Jewish Imaginaries of the Spanish Civil War*, ed. Cynthia Gabbay (New York, London, and Dublin: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022), 158.
7 José Belmonte, "El peso y la sombra de la Guerra Civil española en la narrativa para jóvenes," *Ocnos* 9 (2013): 124.
8 Isabelle Gräfin Deym, "La memoria de la guerra civil española en la literatura infantil y juvenil," *Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca Stud. hist., H.a cont.* 25 (2007): 181.
9 The text is among Rewald's documents in the Bundesarchiv (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], pp. 82–87) but was also published in the exile magazine

*Das Wort* from March 1938 and Kantorowicz's book on Spain *Tschapaiew. Das Bataillon der 21 Nationen*.

10 For what must this projected book contain? First, a fairly accurate account of life in the fascist hinterland. This is not the hardest part, because in this the Spanish fascists are by no means original. But there are a lot of details that are specific, like what the houses look like, what fascist soldiers look like, how they talk to each other. Furthermore, you need some military knowledge, nothing concrete, but at least of a general nature. Because I think I wrote to you that the boys who defected to us could give us important information and this point would be very important for the book. Furthermore, you know that the boys came over to us, because their fathers were fighting on our side. So, there must also be a good concrete description of the lives of our soldiers, their spirit, and their morals. . . . And finally, also the life of the soldiers of the International Brigades must be described correctly, which in turn would involve a wealth of individual knowledge. In short, how should I deal with all of this in a letter, it is almost impossible (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/7, pp. 53–54; all translations are my own unless otherwise indicated).

11 Dirk Krüger, "Nachwort," 180.

12 Nine brothers and sisters. Father unemployed before the war. I always worked a lot. I was ten years old at the time. Coal scraps (looking for *carbonillas*, a children's trade in Madrid, also before the war). I walked near the factory at 8 in the morning. Coal scraps. Till noon. From 1/2 till evening, until the sack was full. Even if already at night. Not to sell like other kids, for them they were for at home. "Not right that the others sell it for so much." Shaking the coal dust with a sieve, leaving little pieces behind. When the war broke out, father worked at Park Automobile, mother and brother in other war factories. Jesús stayed at home alone with two younger siblings and an older brother. He continued searching for coal. Always at the same place. Now it was only a few hundred meters from the front. . . . His mother heard of Moraleja but did not want to at first. But two bombs hit the inside of his house and nothing to eat. In the end, she decided yes (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/18, p. 18).

13 Each one was carrying a bulging sack. The slender, delicate José carried it on his back and walked bent under the load. The stocky Rodriguez, the oldest of them all, had it slung over his right shoulder. . . . They had been chopping and collecting coal residue at the Alina pit, as they did every day (Ruth Rewald, *Vier spanische Jungen: Herausgegeben und mit einem Nachwort von Dirk Krüger* [Cologne: Röderberg, 1987], 18).

14 One day I was at home with my mother [and] one of my brothers. There was a knock at the door. And there were three fascists who came to get my brother. . . . And when he went out, they hit him on the head with a stick, without saying a word. When my brother screamed, my mother also went out. And she was also hit on the head. And since there were three of them, the third one gave my brother a jab in the side. And after they did that, one of them said: Now we can go, the matter is settled. These criminals had wrapped the sticks with paper, and at the tip they had attached a lead ball. . . . That is a story I will never in my life forget (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/18, p. 13).

15 The next day, it went from mouth to mouth: "Did you hear the shots last night? They shot the prisoners in the barracks." . . . The people of Peñarroya also experienced the next few days in paralyzing fear. Hundreds were shot, many tortured and beaten to make them betray their friends (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/18, pp. 92–94).

16 Here, close to the front, work is still going on. Dark mounds of rubble surround the factory building, and inside it is crawling and swarming like an anthill. Who could possibly be roaming around in this godforsaken area? I come closer curiously and discover a huge gang of children—of all ages from six to fourteen years.

They are here to work, from morning till noon and in the afternoon until dark. They try to wrest as much combustible coal from the piles of rubble of the gas factory as possible. (The children of the home are so used to speaking with international people that they even simplify their mother tongue to make themselves understood by the foreigners.) I now ask them all sorts of questions. Whether they work for themselves or for sale, where they live, etc. The older ones stop working and sit down on their shovels, the little ones come running up to me in curiosity and wonder. Finally, everyone dissolves into roaring laughter. Then I realize that my extremely simplified and strange Spanish must really be Greek to these children. . . . I now explain that I am German and that is why I speak so strangely. "German?" All the children back away from me, highly suspicious. "All Germans are fascists." And they put their hands around their necks to show, this is how you kill us. I tell them that not all Germans are fascists, that many of them even came to Spain to fight against the fascists, and that I am one of these antifascists. . . . These children still live in their old flats. Their houses are almost all damaged by bombing. . . . They are all from the immediate vicinity and have been living very close behind the front for more than a year. Most of them collect the coals for themselves so that their mothers can cook, and they can be a little warm. They don't leave the place until the sack is full, and it often gets dark above that. Others sell the coal—60 céntimos for 1 kilo. It is cold and damp. All the children are wearing only light clothes and no stockings, and some of their faces have such pale skin, stretched like parchment, that I have to think of old people's faces. . . . They are hungry, the children of Madrid (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], pp. 59–62).

17 Mother Molero was sitting on the chair. She did not move. Only now and then a tear rolled down her face. She had hardly eaten anything in the last few days. The thin garbanzo soup was needed for the children (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], p. 126).

18 This year, there were many families who endured the heat worse than last year. Worries and hunger had weakened them. Mother Molero's situation was particularly sad. She had been washing soldiers' laundry for some time. This hard work, in addition to the constant care of her seven children, had made her so miserable that she had to give up the laundry. Perez's butchery was also suffering. Most of the people living in this street no longer had the money to buy meat as they used to. So, the children went back to the coal tips to look for carbonillas, despite the ban and the punishment they were threatened with (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], p. 140).

19 "These are Caproni," said Álvarez. "Oh, come on," exclaimed Jerónimo, "they are black after all, not white like the Caproni. These are Junkers, heavy bombers" (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], p. 138).

20 In Madrid, I met a young Spanish woman. She is small and slender, only twenty-three years old, but she gives all her energy to educate and inform the Spanish women with the greatest seriousness and complete self-sacrifice. And that is an immense task. For until the year, women were kept in a state of backwardness unimaginable to us other European women. In some areas, 60 percent were illiterate and most of them still are. Even by their own husbands, they were considered so inferior that they were not trusted with anything but bearing and raising children. Even in the countryside, they were rarely allowed to participate in tilling the soil. They were treated almost like pets. And this centuries-long view and treatment have diminished their horizon and self-concept to such an extent that they neither trust themselves to do anything nor feel any desire to do so. . . . My friend Julia organizes lectures among the women of Madrid's workers—also there they need to be roused from their lethargy, among the peasant women in the countryside. She organizes meetings, she found schools, and she helps to create

war factories. She proudly offers to show me some of the things that have been created since July 36. . . . In the big cities, the transformation has already begun energetically (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], pp. 75–81).

21 Many of the boys had to work and could almost never go to school. Others suddenly had to stay at home and help out when their father or mother got sick. Then, when they showed up in class again weeks or months later, they had forgotten most of it and had to start all over again. The girls fared even worse. At home, it was often considered unnecessary for them to learn to read and write at all. When they got a bit older, they had to look after the younger brothers and sisters and help their mother (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], pp. 48–49).

22 I also had my two little daughters at that time, but I was determined to risk something for once, precisely so that the little ones would have a better life later on. And I talked to the women in the mine. When I had won a small base of members for certain, we held women's meetings. That was not so easy at that time, because meetings were forbidden. But we came together anyway. . . . And there was a strike (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], pp. 101–03). There are more documents in Rewald's file to analyze concerning this topic, like a letter by the Battalion Tschapajew addressed to all female members or a private letter by an uncle of Hans Schaul blaming Ruth's narcissism for his enlistment in the Spanish Civil War.

23 Tomorrow these Olympic Games are supposed to take place in Barcelona. What do they call them? The People's Olympiad. . . . Imagine all the things possible now with this new government (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], p. 14).

24 It was learned from him that this was a military coup d'état throughout Spain which had been prepared for a long time. The intention was to overthrow the government of the people, which had been formed according to the free will of the people and had granted these people new rights, greater freedom, and more bread. Just like here in Peñarroya, there was fighting in many cities of Spain. . . . Spain was divided into two parts (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], p. 44).

25 Fascists were the owner of the castle who for centuries had owned stretches of land on which hundreds of peasants could have run their small economy, the owner of the castle who did not care for his own property, who appointed stewards here and there, and who forced the peasants to work in the soil from sunrise to sunset for a small wage. . . . Fascists were the lord of the manor who joined forces with the bank lords and the generals in Madrid to stifle any resistance by the peasants to this oppression (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], pp. 84–85).

26 The children no longer dared to go to the coal heaps.

—18—

Six o'clock in the morning. The earth shook. The windowpanes rattled. Peñarroya suddenly woke with a start. Boom, boom, boom. Grenade impacts. People jumped out of their beds. Children were crying. War (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], p. 32).

27 In this view of an armed conflict of such dimensions, in which the entire Spanish population was involved, there is a lack of the particular perspective—so different, so relevant, and so transcendental—of those children and young people who, like the adults, also experienced the war on the front line, from the vanguard, or from exile or confinement in their homes, in their villages (Belmonte, "El peso y la sombra de la Guerra Civil española," 138).

28 José jumped excitedly out of his narrow bed, which he shared with his younger brother. "Get up, Gabriel, school is starting!" Gabriel blinked, stretched, and rolled over to his other side. "Leave me alone," he mumbled and went back to sleep. But José was quite happy that school was starting again today. He quickly

slipped into his trousers, leafed through the new schoolbook that had been distributed to all the schoolchildren in town yesterday. Then he ran to the bucket of water and washed himself. When he had finished, he noted with satisfaction that the water was crystal clear compared to the Chinese ink he left behind when he returned home from shoveling coal (BArch, N 2235 [Ruth Rewald-Schaul]/14 [1], p. 46).

29 Linhard, "A Novel That Never Was," 159.

30 Linhard, "A Novel That Never Was," 162.

31 In our email correspondence, Dirk Krüger informed me about projects like the new edition of *Müllerstraße* to be published this year, the translation of *Vier spanische Jungen* into Turkish, or the online publication of its Spanish translation on the website of the International Brigades. See www.brigadasinternacionales.org/wp-content/uploads/Los-ninos-de-Penarroya-web.pdf.

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# 7 Politicizing and De-Politicizing Childhood

## The Case of the North Stoneham Basque Children's Camp

*Dror Sharon*

### Introduction

In May 1937, a "well-equipped little canvas town"[1] appeared in a field near Southampton. The North Stoneham Basque Children's Camp was built hastily, almost entirely by volunteers, to facilitate the initial reception of 3,861 children from the Basque Country, or Euskadi. By the time they arrived in England, the improvised camp had a medical clinic, a church marquee and a cinema marquee, a kiosk, a clothing store, a currency exchange, and about 500 bell tents divided into three main sections. More than seventy years after he first came to England, Manuel Rodríguez still remembered the time he entered the camp:

> When we arrived in the camp it was a big mistake made by the authorities, in my point of view. As you went they said, "Are you a Socialist?" . . . and then send you to one part and they send the other ones to the other one. . . . So there was two camps more or less, and which caused a lot of fights because they'd take the pegs of the tents and they would collapse on you. Just playful.[2]

Manuel described an aspect of life in the North Stoneham Camp that appeared in several other oral histories and written recollections by individuals who came to Britain as refugee children from the Spanish Civil War: the segregation of children from Spanish Republican and from Basque Nationalist backgrounds and the hostility that emerged between these groups.[3] This chapter seeks to contextualize the party-political division in North Stoneham and place it within broader trends toward the politicization and de-politicization of childhood in Euskadi and Great Britain in the 1930s. It examines the motivations for the implementation of this camp policy and asks how the division corresponded to the children's own understanding of the political, national, and ideological tensions of the Spanish Basque Country.

Numerous important studies have examined the evacuation of children from the Basque Country and the evacuation to Britain in particular.[4] While some of these works have briefly pointed to the political division in North Stoneham,

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*Figure 7.1* An aerial view of the North Stoneham Camp Basque Children's Camp, showing its division into sections.

*Source:* Hartley Library, University of Southampton, MS404 A4164/2/4

this policy has not yet been the subject of close analysis. Drawing on a combination of archival and published sources alongside oral history, I seek to paint a fuller picture of life in North Stoneham and the relationship between the camp policy of segregation and contemporary ideologies regarding the politicization of children. The first section of this chapter discusses attitudes toward children, childhood, politics, and ideology in Spain and Great Britain in the years leading up to the evacuation. It points to the tensions between the politicized educational projects of the Spanish Republic and Basque Nationalist Party (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco* [PNV]) and the British humanitarian ideal of children as innocent and apolitical. The following sections provide a brief overview of the establishment of the North Stoneham Camp and the selection of children for the evacuation. This chapter then moves on to discuss children's recollections of the camp, drawing on a body of existing interviews, written testimonial, and studies based on this material. The final section addresses British media representations of the children and reactions to the identification of many of the children with the parties of the Spanish Popular Front. It is based on an overview of five nationwide, mass-circulated newspapers: *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Times*, alongside a close reading of selected archival sources.

I argue that North Stoneham was a site of collision between the progressive pedagogical ideas associated with the Second Republic, the Catholic and

Conservative ideology of the Basque Nationalist Party, and British humanitarian ideal of the apolitical child. Along the nearby port of Southampton, North Stoneham was the first point of encounter between the refugee children and their host society. It was also the last space where the entire contingent was kept together. From there, they were sent in smaller and more homogeneous groups to children's colonies throughout England, Wales, and Scotland. By paying closer attention to the role of political and national identity in this shared space, we might gain new insights into Spanish, Basque, and British expectations regarding the politicization of children and childhood in wartime and their relation to the children's lived experiences.

## The Evacuation of Children From the Basque Country

The nearly 4,000 children who found refuge in Great Britain were part of a much larger contingent of children evacuated from Euskadi in the spring of 1937. Responding to General Emilio Mola's offensive on the province of Bizkaia, the only part of the Basque Country not under insurgent control at this point in the war, the autonomous Basque government arranged the evacuation of the civil population from war zones. In coordination with foreign governments and aid organizations, between 25,000 and 30,000 children were sent abroad. About two-thirds of these children were evacuated to neighboring France, and the others were spread between different countries, including Belgium, the USSR, Mexico, Great Britain, and a few other countries.

This endeavor was not the first mass evacuation of children from war zones during the Spanish Civil War. Children were first evacuated from Madrid during the Francoist offensive on the city in autumn 1936. The following months saw the evacuation of tens of thousands of children from Madrid and other war zones to children's colonies in the rear-guard, namely in Valencia, Catalonia, Alicante, and Aragon. In February 1937, the Ministry for Public Instruction took charge of the operation of these colonies. The children's colonies served not only as safe havens from bombardment but also as educational centers that sought to prepare the children for active Republican citizenship. This often entailed a significant degree of ideological indoctrination, the nature and content of which varied according to the identity of the political party or trade union in charge of each colony.[5] The objective of these centers was not only to bring the war's most vulnerable and innocent victims to safety but also to guarantee the future and continuity of the Spanish Republic by instilling its values in the younger generation. The objectives of the evacuation abroad of children from Euskadi were similar. However, the Basque case was complicated not only by disagreements among the different factions of the Spanish Left but also by the vast ideological difference between Spanish Republicans and Basque Nationalists.

The autonomous Basque government, which initiated and arranged the evacuation, was formed only a few months earlier, on October 1, 1936. Its establishment marked the culmination of a long campaign for autonomy,

which had been the main objective of the PNV since the early twentieth century. Early Basque nationalism was founded upon deep Catholicism, anti-liberalism, and anti-socialism, and a strong emphasis on race in defining the Basque nation. Under the Second Spanish Republic, the PNV shifted toward a more centrist, Christian Democrat ideology, partly as cooperation with the Republic was seen as instrumental in the struggle for autonomy. This objective was not reached until the outbreak of the civil war, which led the PNV into a somewhat reluctant alliance with Francisco Largo Caballero's Popular Front government. Despite this anti-fascist alliance, a deep ideological chasm still remained between the PNV and the leftist Popular Front.[6]

In terms of territory, the newly established autonomous government only presided over Bizkaia and small fractions of its surroundings, since the other Basque provinces were taken by the Francoist side in the early months of the war. Alongside four representatives of the PNV, including *Lehendakari* (President) José Antonio Aguirre, three Socialists and one Communist minister comprised the government, as well as one minister each for the left and center Republicans and the leftist Basque Nationalist party, *Acción Nacionalista Vasca*. Within this new government, refugee work fell under the Department for Social Welfare (*Asistencia Social*), headed by the Socialist minister Juan García Colás. Following the bombing of Durango on March 31, 1937, this work was expanded to include the evacuation of children abroad. The *Asistencia Social* arranged the evacuation in collaboration with other government departments, most notably the Ministries of the Interior, Health, and Culture. The latter, headed by the PNV's Jesús María Leizaola, was responsible for the recruitment and employment of the teachers who accompanied the children abroad.[7]

## Competing Educational Visions

Much like its Popular Front counterparts, the Basque Nationalist Party also sought to continue its prewar educational projects. The PNV placed its pedagogical emphasis on teaching the Basque language (Euskara) and the inculcation of Basque heritage, culture, and Catholic morality rather than on secular democratic citizenship. Given their ideological discrepancy, Basque Nationalists and the parties of the left were deeply concerned with the education of children in exile. In refugee children's camps and shelters in the French Basque Country, Basque government departments had direct influence on the educational agenda. Historian Virginia López de Maturana has shown how the PNV-led Department of Culture and the Socialist-held Department of Social Welfare utilized their resources and connections to implement their respective political and pedagogical ideologies. She argues that colonies maintained by the Department of Culture mostly took in the children of Nationalists and could therefore more easily immerse the children in their parents' political culture and religion. Colonies maintained by the *Asistencia Social* were more

heterogenous, housing the children of Nationalists, Socialists, and Republicans together, and were not able to achieve the same degree of cohesion in their educational programs.[8] The preservation and transmission of political culture and values largely depended on homogeneity.

In Britain, the North Stoneham Camp and the colonies that succeeded it were run and funded primarily by British voluntary groups and religious bodies with varying political and pedagogical outlooks. These included cooperative societies, the Roman Catholic Church in Britain, the Salvation Army, and numerous local committees, many of which sympathized with the Spanish Republican cause. As we shall see, Basque authorities were still involved in the care of the children in Great Britain, but their influence over the camp and colonies was more limited. However, as was the case with other countries, the children were accompanied by a group of adults responsible for their care and education. The expedition to Great Britain was accompanied by 118 auxiliaries known as the *señoritas* and by ninety-six teachers. Most, though not all, of the auxiliaries and teachers were single and childless young women. The contingent also included fifteen Basque priests who were to preside over the religious formation of the Catholics among the group.[9]

The question of the children's instruction in their temporary exile raised significant concerns among Basque Nationalist educators and politicians. In a diary entry from May 10, a Nationalist priest involved in the establishment of Basque schools in Bilbao recorded an exchange that he and a PNV politician had with a group of Basque mothers who demanded to send their children abroad. Over the phone, his colleague reproached the women for threatening to send their children to socialist colonies, declaring:

> [T]he Nationalist Party will not send any of its children abroad before all the problems arising from the evacuation are resolved. No colony of ours will leave here without priests, teachers, nurses, and other necessary staff. We shall not compromise on this.[10]

Nationalist concerns over the education of children away from Euskadi were also expressed in the press. In the days following the evacuation to England, newspapers from across the political spectrum published brief reports on the children's embarkation as well as announcements for parents. The coverage of the evacuation largely relied on statements by the British organizers and translations from the British press. However, some periodicals also published reflections on the children's exile. For example, the Bilbao edition of *Mujeres*, organ of the Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism, published a short letter by a mother who sent her children to England. The writer expressed her gratitude and confidence that the English would treat her children like their own. "I remain measured and calm," she wrote, "because I know my two little ones are sailing towards a safe haven, protected by the democratic, anti-fascist English people."[11]

The letter published in *Mujeres* suggests that the writer's gratefulness and trust in her children's hosts largely originated from their political orientation, as she perceived it. By contrast, an article published a couple of days later in *Euzkadi*, organ of the PNV, voiced concern with the religious and cultural instruction of Basque children sent to Great Britain.[12] The author claimed that the evacuation could save the Basque race from destruction. Yet this salvation depended not only on the physical safety of the children but also on their spiritual and cultural instruction according to the Basque Nationalist motto, *Jaungoikoa eta lege-zaharra* (God and the old law). As fathers were forced to part from their sons, educational duties remained exclusively in the hands of the Basque teachers and priests who accompanied the contingent. Teachers were to expose the children to their heritage through the teaching of Euskara and of Basque history, art, music, games, and dances. The priests' duties were deemed even more important, as they had to instill in the children the Catholic virtues of faith and of love of God and neighbor. However, this chapter not only laid out the duties of priests and teachers but also warned against the dangers of the child-centered pedagogy put forth by the *Escuela Nueva* movement. This movement's ideas had a profound influence on educational policies in the Second Republic as well as the teaching in children's colonies during the civil war.[13] The article in *Euzkadi* stated that:

> [T]here is a pedagogical stream that argues that to become a good man, the child must be educated with liberty, to his liking, according to his inclinations. This is folly. . . . The child must be accustomed to being virtuous. That is why nature endowed him with docility and softness.

The author went on to argue that "when secular education is consistent, there can be no obedience, no chastity, no reverence of the parents, [there can be] nothing except each person doing as they please." According to this view, secular education was detrimental not only to Nationalist ideology but also to morality and virtue at large. The adults placed as in charge of the children of Catholic Basques were therefore obliged to shield them from its perils.

### Non-Intervention, the Innocent Child, and the Noble Basque

The care, education, and image of all groups of children evacuated from the Basque Country during the civil war also depended on government and public attitudes in the receiving country. In Britain, Spanish Republican and Basque Nationalist efforts to incorporate children into these ideological projects were met with a third set of views and principles regarding the politicization of children. In the aftermath of the First World War, humanitarians throughout Europe and North America increasingly pushed forward an image of children as pure and innocent beings, removed from politics and national ideologies. The Save the Children Fund (SCF), established in Britain in 1919, was a key agent in this campaign. Historian Bruno Cabanes has argued that the "cult of the universal child" that emerged in the interwar period and

its construction of children as innocent and apolitical victims ignored the politicized realities of the First World War, where children were not only victims but also active participants, mobilized through education and rhetoric.[14] The same holds true for the experience of children in the Spanish Civil War. As several historians have noted, the reception of the Basque children in Britain enjoyed a broader base of public support than any other initiative to aid Spain, as it was more successfully construed as purely humanitarian and non-political.[15] However, British public expectations of the young exiles rarely aligned with the ways in which they experienced and understood the civil war and their own role within it.

Since the outbreak of the civil war in July 1936, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's Conservative-led coalition government had adopted a strict policy of non-intervention in Spain, which it unsuccessfully sought to implement as an international policy. At the same time, large sections of British civil society sympathized with the Spanish Republic. In late 1936, various aid initiatives for Spain came under the umbrella of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief (NJC), which was led by Members of Parliament from across the political spectrum. While many of its constituent bodies and organizations had been vehemently pro-Republican, the NJC was committed to ensure that any activity taken under its name and using its funds would remain strictly humanitarian and non-political. Even before the evacuation of the Basque children to Britain, many relief initiatives and fundraising appeals emphasized the plight of children.[16]

The NJC began campaigning for the evacuation of children in the early stages of the Francoist offensive on Bizkaia. However, the crucial turning point for the evacuation was the bombing of Guernica by the German Condor Legion on April 26, 1937. Two days later, British journalist George Steer published in *The Times* a detailed report of the attack and the destruction wrought on the small town. Steer was initially sent to report from the Spanish Nationalist zone in the summer of 1936. He was expelled within a few months and began reporting from the Republican part of the Basque Country. While there, he had become a keen supporter of the Basque struggle for regional autonomy. His report on the bombing of Guernica pointed to the town's historic, cultural, and political importance for the Basque people. Steer noted, "[T]he objective of the bombardment was seemingly the demoralization of the civil population and the destruction of the cradle of the Basque race."[17]

Steer's report indicates a distinction between Basques and "Red" Spaniards. Both the PNV and the NJC drew on this distinction to garner public support and legitimate the children's evacuation to Britain. Another example of this approach can be found in a meeting held in the House of Commons the next day. Following a discussion of Steer's article, the Head of the Basque Delegation in London, José Lizaso, implored a group of MPs to help his government evacuate women and children from Bilbao. Lizaso reportedly stated that such measures would not compromise Whitehall's policy of

non-intervention, as "there were no Reds in the Basque Country. They [the Basques] were a cultured and a moderate people, few in numbers, though great in spirit, who asked only to work in peace among their own mountains."[18] From the outset, then, several key agents framed the Basque struggle as separate from the Spanish Republican one.

Alongside the Basque government and the NJC, the Roman Catholic Church also played a role in the evacuation to Britain, which further reinforced the distinction between Catholic Basques and "Red" Spaniards. One day after the bombing of Guernica, the Bishop of Vitoria, Mateo Múgica, wrote to the Arthur Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster. Writing in English, Múgica expressed his concern not only for the suffering of children in the civil war but also for the spiritual instruction of those who were departing from Spain. He entreated Hinsley to take interest and care of the children who may be evacuated to Britain, emphasizing that "certain groups opposed to the Church are seeking to profit by this occasion in order to inoculate these angelic souls with anti-Christian principles."[19] In his response, Archbishop Hinsley guaranteed Múgica that English Catholics would do everything within their means to safeguard the spiritual needs of evacuated children.[20]

Responding to a proposal made by the NJC and to mounting public pressure, Home Secretary Sir John Simon expressed his willingness to admit a limited number of refugee children into Britain. He laid out two main conditions for the evacuation: that there would be no charge on public funds for their maintenance and that they would be repatriated to Spain when conditions allowed.[21] This announcement marked the beginning of negotiations between Whitehall and the NJC regarding the terms for the admission of the children. In this context, representatives of the SCF voiced some reservations regarding the idea of evacuating children from Spain to Britain. Its Secretary, Lewis Bernard Golden, noted that from his experience of working with the NJC that "he had been forced reluctantly to the view that the desire to get the children sent to this country was actuated largely by political motives."[22]

Despite this position, the SCF eventually contributed to the care and maintenance of the children in Great Britain. For the reasons discussed earlier, the proposition to grant temporary asylum to Basque children was more readily framed as humanitarian and non-political. This endeavor drew in bodies that have hitherto refused to collaborate with the NJC on the grounds of its pro-Republican inclinations. Alongside the Roman Catholic Church, these included the Salvation Army and the Trades Union Congress (TUC). During the evacuation, a new body was created to handle the care of the young refugees: the Basque Children's Committee (BCC).[23]

Nevertheless, Golden's early warning demonstrates that the framing of this operation as strictly humanitarian and non-political was shaky from the outset. The children's evacuation abroad had propagandistic value for both the PNV and the Popular Front, a fact of which Francoists in both Spain and Britain, as well as the Home Secretary, were acutely aware.[24] The NJC was never quite able to establish the non-political credentials it sought, and

despite official statements, the BCC did not operate, nor was it perceived, as an entirely separate entity. A final but crucial factor that undermined attempts to depoliticize the evacuation was the fact that the refugee children defined their identity and understood their plight in political terms.

**The Selection of Children for Evacuation**

As noted earlier, the registration of children for evacuation was managed by the Department of Social Welfare. Political parties and unions that supported the Basque government were invited to submit lists of members wishing to send their children abroad.[25] Oral histories suggest that registration through a party or union was not the only way for a parent to secure a place for their child. Rodolfo Molina, for example, explained why he and his brothers were registered for the evacuation as anarchists:

> What happened was that when my father went to register us, he said that he was a Republican Socialist. They said that there weren't any more places for Republican Socialists, but there were still some places for Anarchists. So he said, "All right then. Put me down as an Anarchist. What the hell difference does it make?"[26]

Among the children who eventually left for Britain, those of PNV families were a minority. The Roman Catholic Church offered 1,200 places in its schools, convents, and orphanages, but of the children registered as Catholics, only 650 were sent by the PNV.[27] At least some of these children were native speakers of Euskara, although their exact number remains unclear. Basque speakers were a minority even among Nationalists and were mainly concentrated in the rural areas of Euskadi. Nevertheless, during the 1930s, Basque Nationalists made the teaching of Euskara a priority, partly drawing on educational models created in the years preceding the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The Second Republic saw the creation of a network of Basque schools (*ikastolas*), private schools that provided thoroughly Nationalist and Catholic education and instruction on the Basque language. After the outbreak of the civil war, the Basque Department of Culture oversaw the establishment of institutions named Schools of Euskadi (*Escuelas de Euskadi*), where Basque language instruction was made mandatory at the primary level. As López de Maturana has shown, the PNV was eager to nurture the Basque-speaking children who studied in these institutions after their evacuation to France. Their segregation from children who studied in state schools and non-Nationalist private schools was crucial for achieving this goal.[28] The PNV also sought to promote the teaching of Euskara to children who left for Britain. In a letter to Juan Garcia from June 1937, José Lizaso discussed some issues pertaining to education in the children's colonies. He noted that "there are many Euskara speakers among them" and that teachers should therefore be provided with Basque-language teaching material, in accordance with the government's policy.[29]

To some extent, the party-political division indicated a series of other distinctions between children along the lines of religion, social class, and ethnicity. PNV families that sent their children to Great Britain were often middle class and deeply Catholic. Families affiliated with Popular Front parties and unions were often working class and tended to have a more secular outlook. Many of these families had roots in other parts of Spain, from which people immigrated to the industrialized north in search of work. However, these broad generalizations might obscure the heterogenous nature of the Basque Country, and Bizkaia in particular, in the 1930s. While the PNV had traditionally defined Basque identity in terms of race, many "pure" Basque families supported the parties of the Spanish left and center. The index cards of children who remained in the United Kingdom during WWII indicate that numerous fathers registered as Basque Nationalists worked in blue-collar jobs, whereas at least some Socialists and Republicans held lower-middle-class jobs.[30] While some correlation existed between ethnicity, religion, class, and political identity, this correlation was not all-encompassing.

Contrary to statements by the BCC that sought to establish the neutrality of the operation,[31] it seems highly unlikely that parents would openly declare their support of General Franco to a Basque government agency in the context of civil war. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the claim that some of the refugees were the children of fascists sometimes resurfaced in the camp and in its coverage in the press.

## The Establishment and Administration of the North Stoneham Camp

Once the Home Office had granted its provisional clearance for the admission of children to the United Kingdom, the NJC began preparing for their reception. The Committee decided to settle the children in a temporary reception camp upon their arrival, from which they would be dispersed into smaller centers throughout the country. The camp was to function as a site of quarantine to prevent the spread of contagious diseases and, at the same time, to help the young refugees adjust to their new environment, play, and roam freely in the open air.[32] While the decision to place the children in a temporary camp was made hastily, it drew on an existing (albeit relatively recent) tradition of encampment in Britain and its empire. Its roots lay in the nineteenth century, from Victorian workhouses, to famine and plague camps in India, to the concentration camps created in South Africa during the second Boer War.[33] According to Jordanna Bailkin, these earlier forms of encampment established a tense nexus between aid and detention, which remained a key feature of the refugee camps created on British soil in the twentieth century.[34] While the refugee camp may provide relief in times of crisis, it also facilitates the management and control of refugee populations.

NJC representatives cooperated with the Southampton Joint Council, which brought together the local Labour Party, Co-operative Society, and

trade unions to establish the camp. The first camp administrator was H. W. H. Sams of the SCF, who had experience working with Russian and Armenian refugees in Europe. He worked in close collaboration with Leslie Witt of the Joint Council, Labour politician Henry Brinton, and Jack Pavey of the Co-Operative Society. A ground for the camp was quickly found in North Stoneham in the Borough of Eastleigh, with the nearby Moorhill House designated to serve as an infirmary. Alongside the Joint Council, various groups and organizations volunteered to help set up the camp. These included the Clarion Cycling Club, affiliated with the Labour Party; the Communist Party; the Boy Brigades and Boy Scouts; the Rotary Club; carpenters, plumbers, and other trades people; and university students and professors. The NJC's initial plan was to evacuate 4,000 children in two separate installments. However, NJC representatives in Bilbao urged the Home Office and Committee in Britain to evacuate the entire group in a single voyage, stressing the danger the children faced in the city. This meant the camp's capacity had to be doubled within a few days.[35]

After the children arrived, their first week in the camp was rather chaotic. By the end of that week, Sams retired from his post as administrator due to a mental breakdown and was replaced by Henry Brinton. Brinton was aided by Hope (Poppy) Vulliamy, an Ipswich volunteer who had lived in Spain and spoke Spanish and later went on the run a children's colony in the village of Hoxne.[36] While Brinton was thought to be good with the children, his administration of the camp was subject to harsh criticism. C. E. James, the sanitary inspector for the Borough of Eastleigh, repeatedly remarked in his diary that the camp was in chaos, that the administrative staff was slacking, and that the volunteers who flocked to North Stoneham were doing more harm than good.[37] The BCC was also dissatisfied with Brinton's work, and in mid-June he was replaced by Major W. J. Irwin.[38] Alongside British staff and volunteers, the Basque Delegation in London held an office in North Stoneham. Its representative in the camp was Jesús de Irarragorri, one of two Basque medical doctors who accompanied the children on their journey to England. His work in North Stoneham mostly involved the representation of the teachers and auxiliaries vis-à-vis the BCC and Basque government, but he was also tasked with creating a registry of the children in preparation for their dispersal to colonies.[39]

Although the camp was supposed to be evacuated within a couple of weeks, this process was ultimately not completed until September. The first groups of children left the camp within a few days, including a large contingent of 400 children who were sent to a Salvation Army hostel in Clapton. The evacuation of the camp continued gradually over the following weeks but was slowed down due to concerns about the spread of typhoid. By June 22, there were about 2,300 children left in the camp; by July 19, their number was down to 620, and by August 20, their number was down to 300. The last 200 children left the camp on September 19, accompanied by a kitten they had adopted as their mascot. They were sent

to a holiday camp in Kent, since they could not be kept in tents as the weather got colder.[40]

**Patterns of Division at North Stoneham**

The Basque children sailed from the port of Santurtzi on May 21 and entered Southampton late the following day. Disembarkation began on May 23 and lasted two more days, during which each child underwent a medical examination. After this, colored tape was tied to each child's left wrist, signifying their destination. Dr. Maurice Williams, the Port Medical Officer for Southampton, described this system in an article published in the *British Medical Journal*:

> White tape indicated "clean," and allowed the child to proceed direct to camp; red tape indicated "verminous," and the wearer was sent to the Corporation baths for de-lousing; blue was for "infectious or contagious" conditions and for entry to the isolation hospital or other institution. Blue-and-white tapes were used for other conditions requiring general hospital treatment.[41]

Health and hygiene were the first of several criteria applied to distinguish and better manage the Basque children. The children who were sent to the baths upon their arrival were temporarily placed in Camp II.[42] In his recollections of the North Stoneham Camp, Amador Díaz described this section as a relatively small one, located in the middle of the camp. He remembered his first morning in North Stoneham, when he went exploring and approached the second camp:

> I was told by a small group of children at its edge, that the ones with white labels should not enter that area as those these had red labels and had already been cleaned and given new clothes. I noticed that the boys and girls in this area were all wearing very un-Spanish clothes, identical jumpers and grey skirts or trousers. . . . It took a long time for this Second Camp to lose the stigma of being contaminated.[43]

The children were also split according to age and gender, although this division was less strict than others. Gender separation was limited to tents, where the children slept in same-sex groups of eight, with a teacher and *señorita* assigned to each one of them. While this sleeping arrangement seemed most natural to the British camp staff, it entailed the separation of sisters from their brothers. This forced separation caused significant distress to some of the children and especially to the older ones, tasked by their parents with looking after their younger siblings. A scene depicting such separation can be found in an autobiographical children's novel by Blas Óscar Guerrero Uriarte. It describes the protagonist's argument with

*Figure 7.2* Mealtime at the North Stoneham Basque Children's Camp.
*Source:* Hartley Library, University of Southampton, A4164/7/1/10

the British staff after he and his two brothers are assigned to a different tent group than their younger sister:

- "Hey, listen, wait a minute!", Blasín protested, raising his hand to ensure no one tried to separate his little sister from the family group. "Ascención is staying with us."

  The matron behind the desk quickly and briskly marked the names of the Gerrero Uriante family with an X.

  . . .

- "Young lad, this would only be for a couple of days, until we assign you to your colony."

  [Blasín] quickly thought: "What does that old lady want? Is she trying to sell me the story of "it will only be a couple of days"? She must think I'm stupid. No way, I promised my mother I would look after Ascención, and so I'll do." Blasín stopped thinking and resumed his protest. This time his tone was soft but resolute:

- "My sister is staying with us," and he grabbed Ascención's hand and held it strongly, almost hurting her.

A young helper then pulls Ascención, trying to help the matron, and Blas kicks her in response. Outraged, the English matron turns to two of the Spanish teachers:

> The doctor[44] has assured me that no one would do a better job than you in convincing this . . . animal that, for obvious reasons, we cannot allow girls and boys to sleep together; that would be . . . unforgivable. Please speak to this boy and explain to him that now he is in a civilized country, whose people have long parted with certain primitive customs that we consider to be immoral.[45]

Of course, this scene may have been exaggerated to serve the book's narrative. Nevertheless, it illustrates a sense of helplessness and confusion caused by the separation of siblings of different sexes in the camp.

The Girl Guides managed another small section of the camp that was allocated for the smallest children. By all accounts, this part of North Stoneham was remarkably well run.[46] About a week after the children's arrival, camp authorities decided to create another small camp for 200 of the eldest boys. This decision was reportedly driven by the understanding that these adolescents, who took on the responsibilities of their fathers and older brothers who had gone to fight or helped dig trenches themselves, felt infantilized in their new environment. While some accounts depicted this camp as a model of self-governance, others described it as a disaster.[47]

The separation of children into groups according to age, sex, and medical condition was one method of maintaining some order in an otherwise-chaotic camp. The reasoning behind these divisions varied, ranging from cultural norms regarding decency and modesty, to public health considerations, to consciousness of the unique needs of different age groups. The last criterion according to which children were segregated in the camp, the political affiliation of their parents, will be discussed in the following sections.

### Children's Accounts of the Political Division in the Camp

In July 1937, the communist writer and translator Yvonne Kapp wrote a short book on the North Stoneham Basque Children's Camp, which was published by the left-wing Victor Gollancz press. Writing under the pseudonym of Yvonne Cloud, she provided a detailed account of camp life and devoted the proceeds from the sale of the book to the BCC. In a chapter titled "Politics and Non-Politics," she described the decision to split the children according to the political allegiances of their parents:

> It is no wonder that, in the early days of the Camp, violent quarrels and hatred broke out in some of the tents and it was found necessary to divide the Camp into political sections: Basque Nationalist, Socialist, Communist

> and Anarchist, and to change to quarters of the few suspected Fascist children so that no one would be certain where they were on any night.[48]

Kapp/Cloud's account depicted this camp policy as a reaction to the children's identification with the political parties of their parents, which clashed with the expectations created by the framing of the evacuation in humanitarian and non-political terms.

At the same time, the children themselves were sometimes baffled by this policy and uncertain as to their own designation. After assuring readers that "as far as camp officials can discover every one of the 4,000 children is a baptized Roman Catholic," *The Daily Telegraph*'s correspondent amusedly described a scene he encountered in North Stoneham: "When the Basque priests were attempting to divide the children into groups yesterday, they asked a nine-year-old girl what her politics were. 'I belong to the Modern Women's party', she replied, with a proud toss of the head."[49] Miren Sesumaga noted:

> I remember asking my cousin Begoña, who was a very good friend of mine, 'What am I?' and she would say '*Socialista*' and I would say '*Socialista*'. I kept forgetting what I was but the question would come up once in a while.[50]

The segregation implemented in North Stoneham maintained the existing educational divisions between children in the Basque Country, separating children who attended *ikastolas* and *escuelas de Euskadi* from those with different educational backgrounds. It is likely that it also reflected the differences between urban and rural areas, with Euskara speakers hailing mostly from the latter. Such divisions were probably less clear-cut among the children of Socialists, Communists, and Republicans who attended state schools. Furthermore, children brought up in the cities most likely encountered and mixed with children from different backgrounds outside the school system.

In their recollections of the camp, Rafael de Barrutia and Herminio Martínez provided contrasting accounts of how the division in the camp corresponded with their own self-understanding. De Barrutia pointed to the somewhat artificial nature of this division, noting the following:

> We were differentiated in the camp, as they said that the first, second and third camp corresponded to Socialists-Communists, Republicans and Nationalists, respectively. And so, I had friends from the same street who were housed in other camps for this supposed ideology or sentiment. There was no physical division. The entire compound was made up of one camp, but as I said, we knew them [the camps] by this order.[51]

It is possible, however, that this account referred mainly to the Spanish Republican section of the camp, where further internal divisions were enacted between children registered through the different Popular Front parties. By

contrast, Martínez recalled a clearer distinction between Popular Front and Basque Nationalist children, while pointing to his own difficulty in understanding the concrete meanings of these ideological labels:

> They tended to keep very much to themselves. But for us it was *los Nationalistas* and we used to look and see the priests there. There was a definite barrier between the two sections, it must have been a different field close by. They were dubbed los *Nationalistas* and we were the *Socialistas*. You didn't understand what these things meant at all but they were, they were designated differently.[52]

This account also points to a conflation between Basque Nationalists and Francoists, not only due to their identification as "Nationalist" but also due to their Catholicism. This conflation probably increased hostility and suspicion toward PNV and Catholic children in the camp. Some of the teachers and auxiliaries seemingly shared this attitude. Mari Angeles Jauregui recalled leaving the PNV Camp with her sister in their first morning in North Stoneham and losing their way back:

> My sister asked one of the *señoritas* from the Socialist camp if she could tell us where the PNV camp was and in an unpleasant tone she replied 'Go and find the priests, they'll tell you where you have to be.' How could we know where the priests were or the monks? That was unpleasant. That's what I mean when I say things were very politicised.[53]

At the same time, her testimony also indicates the special privileges enjoyed by Nationalist children thanks the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church:

> The bishop came to see us. We had a beautiful church and Basque dances and songs were organised and the Socialists and the Communists would come and sing the Internationale spoiling it all of course.

The bishop that Jauregui referred to was probably William Timothy Cotter, the Catholic Bishop of Portsmouth, who visited the camp to conduct a ceremony on the Feast of Corpus Christi on May 27. Amador Díaz's recollections suggest that this celebration might have been one of the motivations for the splitting of the Camp between Republicans and Basque Nationalists. He remembered that he and his brother spent their first two nights in tent 437 in the third camp, on the eastern section of North Stoneham. On their second morning, some *señoritas* came into this part of the camp, "saying that this area was for those who were members of the PNV and therefore likely go to mass." Díaz attributed this policy to the Basque priests who accompanied the contingent, noting, "I suspected then, and I still do, that this separation was thought of by the priests wanting to keep together those who were regular communicants, fearing that the less religious children would encourage apathy towards religion amongst them."[54]

*Figure 7.3* Traditional Basque dances in the camp.

*Source*: Euskadiko Artxibo Historikoa/Archivo Histórico de Euskadi. Colección Instituto Bidasoa-Fondo Luis Ruiz de Aguirre, Sancho de Beurko. 1800/N1_43_F5H43-F5

The cultural and religious activities organized by the priests and the fact that the cinema marquee was apparently placed in their section of North Stoneham also caused some envy among their peers in the other camp. One person remarked, "[T]he PNV children had chapels, priests, movies, dancing, everything you could think of, but we savages had almost nothing."[55]

**Coming to Terms With the Politicization of Children in War**

The arrival of the Basque children in Britain and their first weeks in North Stoneham drew significant attention from the local and national press. Kevin Myers has argued that media representations of the children emphasized the innocence and apoliticism of children, on the one hand, and the religiosity of the Basques and their aversion to the revolutionary left, on the other hand.[56] Coverage in most media outlets downplayed the presence of children from Communist and Socialist families in the contingent and their adoption of symbols such as *The Internationale* and the clenched fist salute. This representation was in line with the messages of the NJC and BCC and may have been seen as a useful way of garnering public support and legitimacy for the reception of the children. A striking example of this tendency can be found

in a *Daily Telegraph* article on the children's arrival to Southampton. The newspaper's correspondent remarked:

> [W]hen I said good-bye to this group they all replied "Adios" or, the Basque equivalent, "Agur," which means "God be with you." Nowhere did I see the Communist clenched fist salute, but I often heard the cry "Gora Euzkadi," which means "Long live the Basque country."[57]

However, this framing indicates that the question of how politicized and specifically how "Red" the young exiles were remained a main topic of concern. The illustrated newspaper *The Sphere*, for example, cited an English businessman who had lived and worked in northern Spain for several years and claimed that most of the refugees "are definitely 'reds', constantly using the Communist clenched-fist salute and completely revolutionary in outlook. To allow them too much freedom here would be most harmful."[58]

The splitting of North Stoneham into sections along political lines is hardly mentioned in the mass-circulated newspapers surveyed here. A rare exception can be found in an article published by the center-left *Daily Mirror* about the aforementioned mass on Corpus Christi. This chapter described how the Catholic children built an altar in the open field, while "Communist children played football, blew mouth-organs, fired pop-guns, whopped and enjoyed themselves on the other side of the camp." Yet, as the Catholic children began to sing,

> Their voices reached the ears of their comrades at play. And one by one, with footballs, popguns, dolls, mouthorgans, chocolates and half-smoked cigarettes, the Communist children joined the service, kneeling round the altar. Behind the Bishop stood a boy holding aloft a standard from which floated the Union Jack, the Government flag of Spain, and the Nationalist flag of General Franco. Enmities were forgotten here.[59]

This idyllic description was unusual not only in indicating that there was a spatial division between children of different political backgrounds in North Stoneham but also in referring to the presence of "Communist children" in the contingent. However, while acknowledging their presence, the *Daily Mirror* presented its readers with a story of rehabilitation. This chapter seems to suggest that a few days in peaceful, moderate, and neutral England, combined with a joint prayer, were enough to draw the children of Spanish Communists back to the church and foster fraternity and understanding among children from different sides of the bitter Spanish conflict. Their evacuation to England restored these children's right to a safe and innocent childhood, free not only from war and want but also from politics.

Over time, the fact that most children in North Stoneham identified with the parties of the Popular Front became more difficult to deny. On June 19, the Francoist insurgents conquered Bilbao. The news was given to the children, in both English and Spanish, through the camp's loudspeaker van,

leading to an immediate and mixed reaction of panic, grief, and anger. Some children tried to run away from the Camp, and a few others threw stones as the van. It became evident that whether they came from families supporting the Popular Front or the PNV, the children in the camp regarded the Francoist insurgents as their enemies and were convinced that the fall of Bilbao would have serious ramifications for their families.[60]

Over the following weeks, friction intensified between some of the children and the camp authorities. C. E. James, the sanitary inspector for Eastleigh, described the deterioration in his diary. After Major Irwin had replaced Brinton in late June, a staff member told James that Irwin was "a dictator" and that several people in the Camp described him as a fascist, adding that "the fault lay in the fact that the whole affair was a political one." In July, James reported several incidents of rioting, with the children attacking the church

*Figure 7.4* Refugee children in North Stoneham giving the clenched fist salute.
*Source:* Image by Edith Tudor-Hart, courtesy of © archiv.fotohof.at and Peter Suschitzky

marquee and threatening to burn in down. He remarked, "[T]he 'communist element' in the camp were causing a lot of trouble." On July 30, the radio van was burned. James reported this with a wry comment, saying the local people would be glad, as they had previously complained about the noise.[61]

In her book on North Stoneham, Yvonne Kapp tackled the expectation of "English people whose concern is humanitarian" to encounter thoroughly innocent and neutral children in their visits to North Stoneham. Drawing on the rapid developments and growing interest in children's psychology in the 1930s, Kapp argued that all children had a strong need for external reassurance. For the Spanish Republican children, who constituted the majority of the contingent, this need was intertwined with politics; they needed to know that their hosts were "on their side." Although they did not fully grasp the complexities of Spanish politics, their parents' allegiances were deeply ingrained in their own identities. Moreover, the Nationalist uprising was the very cause of their plight. Kapp maintained that "to disabuse them, to try and explain the finesses of British policy in this matter is a waste of breath and worse." She concluded:

> An enemy attacked. As a consequence they have been through experiences to shatter the health of body and mind; seen sights to scatter sanity; known grief and fear beyond description. Then, as a further consequence, they have been taken from this monstrous daily torture into a safety made dark by loneliness and homesickness, a peace clouded by anxiety for those they love and need. The enemy who attacked was Fascist.[62]

## Conclusion

The North Stoneham Camp was created as a temporary measure for the reception of the Basque refugee children who fled Bizkaia in May 1937. Plans for the children's evacuation to Britain were shaped by competing sets of expectations and ideas about their education in exile and the role that politics, religion, and ideology should play in it. The British organizers of the evacuation, as well as politicians and large sections of the press, adopted a humanitarian ideal of childhood's apoliticism. However, prior to their evacuation to Great Britain, the children's education was shaped by competing Spanish Republican and Basque Nationalist visions for the region's future citizens. The children's politicized understanding of their identities was reinforced by months of civil war. Even if they did not fully understand the doctrines of their parents' parties, they recognized Franco's forces as their enemies and undermined organizers' efforts to frame the rescue scheme as entirely neutral and apolitical.

In North Stoneham, the children were divided into sections according to various criteria, including the political allegiances of their parents. The Basque priests who accompanied the expedition seem to have played a crucial role in shaping this policy. While the internal division in North Stoneham

reflected and continued existing divisions in the Basque Country, it also generated a degree of friction and hostility between children from Popular Front and Basque Nationalist backgrounds. The fall of Bilbao on June 19, 1937, marked the starting point of a process of reckoning by British individuals, organizations, and journalists with the heterogenous nature of this group and how many of the children identified with the leftist parties of the Popular Front—a process that continued to unfold long after the evacuation of the North Stoneham Camp.

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8 Virginia López de Maturana, "Exile, Identity, and Education: The Evacuation of Basque Children to the French Basque Country, 1937–1939," in *War, Exile, Justice and Everyday Life, 1936–1946*, ed. Sandra Ott (Reno: University of Reno, 2011), 85–106; Virginia López de Maturana, "Exilio, identidad y educación. Los

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# 8 Between *Chicos de España* and "Homenaje al pueblo español"

## Toward an Interpretation of Samuel Glusberg's Solidarity from the Margins

*Rosalie Sitman*

The literary reviews that proliferated during the first half of the twentieth century throughout the American continent provided transnational spaces of possibility for the encounter and propagation of new or competing political and aesthetic trends and ideas.[1] They also served as mouthpieces for the formulation of alternative critical discourses at momentous historical junctures that required ideological definition, political commitment, and an ethical position: namely, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and the beginnings of the Cold War. Situated at the crossroads between the personal itineraries and collective political-cultural projects of intellectuals from different Latin American nations, these dialogic and polyphonic "documents of culture" were at once witness and protagonist, product and producer of enduring texts and contexts in volatile socio-political circumstances. Hence their value both "as history and as text."[2]

This relational textual network was part of a fluid system of sociability and communication, also comprising the encounters, congresses, travels, correspondence, *tertulias*, memoirs, diaries, book reviews, commentaries, publishing, translation, and other manifestations of cultural agency that defined intellectual praxis. As flagships of complex vital and discursive relationships where the American reality intertwined with the new aesthetic orientations and European ideological-political debates, these publications are an ideal vehicle for taking the pulse of the times and tracing the trajectories of the intellectual networks and circuits that actively contributed to the consolidation of cultural fields throughout Latin America.[3]

The Jewish-Argentine editor Samuel Glusberg (1898–87) was a consummate spinner of such webs and expert in the art of founding and sinking literary magazines, both within and across national borders.[4] Better known by his pseudonym Enrique Espinoza, Glusberg was a tireless writer, publisher, and cultural promoter whose unassuming demeanor belied the dynamism and determination with which the wheeler and dealer pursued his cultural campaigns and politics of "persons and periodicals."[5] Propelled by an unwavering faith in the redeeming and rallying potential of (Latin) American letters, his cultural enterprises on both sides of the Andes had a significant

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impact on contemporary intellectual formations and debates, as well as on the professionalization of the publishing industry in the Southern Cone. The contribution made by Glusberg's cultural entrepreneurship to the promotion of local talent and the diffusion of ideas in Buenos Aires and Santiago has received belated recognition and is attracting growing scholarly interest in his person and his work.[6]

Glusberg's literal and figurative border crossings, through and within the transnational cultural circuits in which he circulated, had a profound impact in shaping the diffuse contours of the double immigrant's cultural agenda. This study will focus on two paradigmatic texts that illustrate the rallying force exercised by the Spanish Civil War in the construction of identity and the formation of intellectual spheres of influence in Latin America. A close reading of Glusberg/Espinoza's travelogue *Chicos de España* and "Homenaje al pueblo español,"[7] a special issue of the Chilean edition of his literary review *Babel* devoted to the Spanish conflict, will provide insights into how artistic and intellectual circles across the Atlantic experienced and re-interpreted Spain's fratricidal war.[8] Specifically, this chapter will explore the part that it played as Latin American intellectuals debated their role and positioned themselves within their respective cultural fields—and in the international arena—against the backdrop of the ideological polarization that split the world into two irreconcilable camps on the eve of WWII.[9]

For Glusberg and the tight-knit cohort of intellectuals who made up and produced *Babel*-Chile, their solidarity from the margins with the Republican cause was more than an expression of genuine humanitarian concern for their plight. On the one hand, it functioned as an identitarian trope that allowed them to define themselves and act within cohesive intellectual spaces, where perceived de-territorialized experiential commonalities and the aesthetic or political affinities of the network carried more weight than barriers of nation and ethnicity and transcended epistemological paradigms of center and periphery.[10] On the other hand, it served them as a "tool for intervention" in contemporary public debates and events both at home and in Europe, albeit from afar.[11] As we shall see, the relentless repudiation of Francoism and, by extension, the condemnation of fascism and Stalinism and the rejection of all forms of authoritarianism would remain a distinctive identity marker of the intellectuals grouped around Glusberg's Chilean edition of *Babel*.

In a sense, the "Babelian" adventure began when Samuel Mohiliver Glusberg immigrated as a small child with his family to Argentina in 1905 in the wake of the pogrom that had decimated the Jewish community of his native Kishinev at the turn of the last century. This tragedy prefigured the rabbi's son's enduring perception of his otherness:

> Que éramos personas distintas, lo supe a edad muy temprana cuando Kischnev se convirtió a raíz de un pogrom en 'la ciudad de la matanza,' según el título de un todavía famoso poema del poeta nacional hebreo J. N. Bialick.[12]

He was barely out of school in 1919 when he used the money gifted to him by an uncle in Chile to launch "Ediciones Selectas América. Cuadernos mensuales de Letras y Ciencias" as a means to divulge his literary discoveries. The enormous success of these pamphlets led to the creation of the Biblioteca Argentina de Buenas Ediciones Literarias (BABEL) and the publication of over sixty cheap yet scrupulously edited titles that transformed the twenty-something talent scout into the much sought-after publisher of such luminaries as Leopoldo Lugones, Horacio Quiroga, Benito Lynch, Alberto Gerchunoff, and Alfonsina Storni, to name but a few.[13]

In April 1921, Glusberg decided to complement his publishing endeavors with the creation of an eponymous literary review. *Babel. Revista de arte y crítica* was expressly apolitical, as much a showcase for acclaimed Argentine writers as a platform for the diffusion of promising new talent, in line with the Jewish immigrant's concerted efforts to reaffirm the Argentine dimension of his identity and gain entry to mainstream cultural circles. At the same time, the inclusion of Augusto D'Halmar, Pedro Prado, and Gabriela Mistral in the roster of contributors pointed to the bridges that the young editor was building with Chilean peers, while the presence of Cuban Juan Marinello, Peruvian Pedro Basadre, and Venezuelan Arturo Uslar Pietri brought to the growing network the legitimation of established Latin American figures.[14]

Toward the end of the decade, Glusberg replaced *Babel* with the more vociferous *La Vida Literaria. Periódico de Crítica, Información y Bibliografía*.[15] The broadsheet practiced a manifestly Americanist cultural policy, in the spirit of the message of continental unity propounded by the leftist North American Jewish intellectual Waldo Frank and the Peruvian Marxist intellectual José Carlos Mariátegui, with whom the Argentinean had established an epistolary friendship. Perhaps not surprisingly, the leftist thought and especially the Americanist ideal that they promoted had struck a chord in the heart and mind of the Jewish entrepreneur. Threatened by the xenophobia and rife nationalist sentiment that were fast making headway among certain right-wing sectors of Argentine society and the cultural field with the blessing of the Argentine Catholic Church, an increasingly alienated Glusberg welcomed the more palatable alternative they offered of being part of a complicit intellectual brotherhood that transcended national borders and barriers of ethnicity or faith. The three hatched the idea of launching a publication of continental scope, which they significantly called "Nuestra América," but the death of Mariátegui in 1930 truncated the project.[16] Frank then suggested inviting the aristocratic *salonnière* Victoria Ocampo to join the venture, an idea that Glusberg enthusiastically endorsed. Unfortunately for the Jewish editor, Ocampo commandeered the project and transformed it into the successful "revista *Sur*," leaving Glusberg to lick his wounds in a scathing note published in *La Vida Literaria* shortly before its demise in 1932.[17]

Smarting from this rejection and deeply troubled by the convulsed intellectual climate and acute economic, social, and institutional crises of the early 1930s, a more radicalized Glusberg sought in the left the place that the

rightist nationalists and the liberal elite had denied him. In 1935, eager to escape the stifling authoritarianism of "infamous" post-coup Argentina, the disillusioned editor abandoned the country that he would always call his own and crossed the Andes to neighboring Chile, where a brief holiday turned into marriage and a protracted stay of nearly forty years.[18] Shortly after the wedding, Samuel and Catita Glusberg embarked for Spain, on the voyage that would engender *Chicos de España*.

Chile in the mid- to late 1930s enjoyed a climate of political tolerance and ideological pluralism where exiled intellectuals and refugees fleeing from Latin American dictatorships or persecution in Europe could find shelter and participate in the lively cultural scene of Santiago's bohemian cafés.[19] The unprecedented authoritarianism of the second quasi-dictatorial administration of Arturo Alessandri had polarized the left and led to the formation of an opposition coalition that banded together democrats, radicals, socialists, communists, and labor unions. The triumph of the Popular Front candidate, radical Pedro Aguirre Cerda, in the presidential elections of 1938 cemented the integration of these new social sectors of the left into the political system. Naturally, the Popular Front followed developments in Spain very closely.[20] The memory of Alessandri's repression and daily reminders of the lessons gleaned from the Spanish example made sure that the government adopted a conciliatory and non-confrontational course of action. Thus, Aguirre Cerda—at least initially—pursued accommodations between the right and the left and an immigration policy that was more sensitive to the urgency of the situation of Spanish refugees and European Jews.

Glusberg's self-exile in Chile was greeted warmly by likeminded local intellectuals familiar with his cultural endeavors—Mariano Latorre, Jorge Edwards Bello, José Santos González Vera—as well as by key figures of the thriving community of Latin American exiles, among them Aprista sympathizers Luis Alberto Sánchez and Ciro Alegría, and Venezuelan Mariano Picón-Salas.[21] In one way or another, they all contributed to the burgeoning continental imaginary being forged within the inclusive intellectual and literary spaces of sociability through which they circulated in cosmopolitan Santiago under the Popular Front—a far cry from the exclusionary Buenos Aires that the Jewish entrepreneur had escaped.[22] Binding together these intellectuals, as Sánchez attested, was the fate of Spain:

> La derrota de los republicanos en España aceleró el proceso de aglutinamiento en Chile. En las kermesses, rifas, funciones teatrales a beneficio de los republicanos españoles, se soldaban diferencias internas. . . . La guerra civil derribó los tabiques que nos separaban.[23]

Scarcely a year after his arrival in Santiago, Glusberg, former secretary of the Argentine Society of Writers, became the director of its Chilean counterpart and began contributing impassioned texts in support of the Spanish Republic to the *Revista de la SECH* (Sociedad de Escritores de Chile), which

he had founded in collaboration with Manuel Rojas.[24] He also collaborated in *Onda Corta*, a publication created with the express purpose of defending cultural freedom by bolstering Spanish Republicans and indicting fascism. It was here that Glusberg first published "Significación histórica del 'Mono Azul,'" one of three "programmatic" texts that he appended to the travel notes in *Chicos de España*.[25]

Although symbolically dated 1935, the actual year during which the Glusberg couple traveled to Spain, *Chicos de España* did not see the light of day until October of 1938; this was the same year that saw the Popular Front come to power in Chile and the same year of Glusberg's decisive encounter with Trotsky in Mexico—a fateful meeting that sparked a lifelong admiration for the Marxist ideologue, markedly reflected in the pages of *Babel* and its director's cultural politics.[26] *Chicos de España* is a hybrid text—part travel diary, part essay—comprising eight chapters, a Heinean epilogue, and three appendices. Not intended for publication, it was to be a record of Glusberg's impressions as he and his wife crossed Andalucía on the way to Madrid, ostensibly to attend a conference of librarians, at the behest of Lugones. However, in reality, the trip was more a belated honeymoon.[27]

But in 1938, appalled by the atrocities perpetrated by "los verdugos seculares de España, trayendo aviones italianos y alemanes para masacrar a las mujeres y los niños bajo su propio cielo nativo," the Argentinean changed his mind and decided to make his notes public.[28] It was a transformative act of defiance. By preserving for future generations of "chicos de España" a textual record of the "España infantil" that he and his wife had traveled through, only three years earlier, led by a motley bunch of "mozalbetes"—that is, a record of "the Spain that was" before "la revuelta criminal de los generales facciosos"[29]—the cultural agent had morphed into an agent of memory with a historic mission at a historic time. In this sense, *Chicos de España* becomes a militant text; a discursive weapon that—"en la imposibilidad de volar hasta ellos como André Malraux y otros escritores internacionales, admirablemente equipados para su defensa"[30]—enabled the now also Chilean cultural promoter to assume his moral responsibility as a writer and intervene, however obliquely, on behalf of the heroic Republican resistance. To write was to act.

In *Chicos de España*, Glusberg prioritized his ethnic (Jewish) identity in order to construct collective identification with Republican Spain.[31] He articulated a meticulously crafted Sephardic frame of reference (beginning with his pseudonym, Espinoza, in honor of the Jewish Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza) to evoke the ties that bound him, an Ashkenazi Jew (and by extension all Jews), to the linguistic, literary, and cultural traditions of *Sefarad*: the Spain of Jehuda Halévy, the medieval poet "que supo intuir la esencia de España, acunando y acuñando los primeros versos castellanos de que hay memoria en nuestro idioma."[32] As the text progressed, the Jewish motifs increased. Myriad allusions to Spain's enlightened Jewish past—"testimonio elocuente . . . de una época de tolerancia"[33]—were counterposed to the dark and menacing Spain of "una siniestra pareja de la guardia civil," "sombríos

tricornios," "soplones," and "la bárbara represión de Asturias," in a specular dynamic of sameness and alterity. It was an effective discursive ploy.[34] By retrieving and appropriating common cultural bonds from a forgotten shared past, Glusberg/Espinoza established a chain of memory between the "Madre España,"—"que han compartido todos los grandes judíos"[35]—and "la España joven" embodied by the Second Republic that, on the occasion of Maimonides's centenary, had officially recognized that same "convivencia histórica durante siglos."[36]

These perceived historical and cultural commonalities were compounded by the prospect of a tragic shared fate in Glusberg's "Por qué los judíos deben ayudar al pueblo español."[37] The text was an impassioned wake-up call urging Jews to spring into action and rally in support of Spanish Republicans—and in self-defense:

> [El judío] debe ponerse cuanto antes de parte del pueblo español en este definitivo juego de vida o muerte. . . . De lo contrario, tarde o temprano, correrá la misma suerte del judío alemán que no supo sumarse a tiempo a la campaña contra Hitler, en la esperanza de salvarse por su cuenta de los infernales campos de concentración.[38]

The example of "el comportamiento del sanguinario general Franco con la población israelita del África española," inspired by "los eruditos husmeadores del Tercer Reich," served as a stark reminder that, in the totalitarian war being waged, the various fascist regimes did not discriminate in their treatment of the "heroico pueblo español" and European Jews.[39]

The inclusion of this "voz de alarma" in the final section of *Chicos de España*, even though it had already appeared in the Buenos Aires Jewish monthly *Judaica*[40] in July 1937, underscores the Jewish editor's prescient preoccupation with the very real threat facing his coreligionists, certainly in Europe but also closer to home, where "la Guerra santa, que otra vez predican los obispos de la iglesia romana,"[41] and the rising xenophobic sentiment, fanned by pro-Nazi propaganda and right-wing nationalist sympathizers, were fast becoming a major concern:

> [p]ues el odio actual al obrero sobreviviente a la masacre, pongamos, de Málaga, por las tropas italianas y la aviación tudesca, en nada se diferencia del antiguo odio al hebreo. Y no solo allá los identifican en un mismo color de sangre los señoritos que creen tenerla azul . . . porque el enemigo 1 del judío es el mismo del pueblo español.[42]

In 1939, President Aguirre Cerda appointed poet Pablo Neruda as special consul for Spanish immigration, first in Spain and then in Paris. Charged with selecting refugees whose trades would be beneficial for the country, Neruda made sure to include a broad spectrum of intellectuals, writers, artists, and artisans amidst the 2,000 or so Spaniards who fled Europe on the

Winnipeg, a French freighter bound for the Chilean port of Valparaíso.[43] Among them was the Jewish Polish-Spanish typographer Mauricio Amster, who had revolutionized graphic design in Republican Spain with his propaganda posters and the Antifascist School Primer. In time, he would become one of Glusberg's closest friends and associates. He joined *Babel* shortly after his arrival in Chile and was responsible for redesigning the magazine.[44]

On May 1, 1939, "el hombre de las veinte patrias," as Glusberg was once dubbed,[45] inaugurated the Chilean edition of *Babel*.[46] "[A]ntes que una nueva revista, una revista de revistas que continúa de uno y otro lado de los Andes," read the editorial, emphasizing from the outset the transnational nature of the endeavor and the continuity of the network, while echoing its director's own intellectual and existential itinerary.[47] New collaborators joined the ranks of faithful contributors, Argentineans Ezequiel Martínez Estrada and Luis Franco. Of humble origins and anarchist leanings and with similar cultural and social concerns, Argentine-born Manuel Rojas and José Santos González Vera,[48] together with Mauricio Amster, were much more compatible "compañeros de viaje"[49] for Glusberg in his new Chilean circumstance. Not only did these "Babelian" intellectuals share ideological affinities, class, immigrant condition, and attitude toward literature and the literary task,[50] but they were also driven by an overriding ideal of justice, which manifested itself as a recurring leitmotif in their works.

If *Babel*-Argentina had steered clear of politics, the more mature *Babel*-Chile would boast a kind of political and aesthetic heterodoxy, committing to the international leftist opposition, with a libertarian bent, and adopting an ecumenical humanist-pacifist stance.[51] Influenced by Trotsky and the belief that the editorial task should serve an ideologically cohesive intellectual community capable of formulating a new American identity, Glusberg's new *Babel* aspired to offer "[u]na visión más elevada del nuevo mundo."[52] This may be understood as an indication of the locus of production from the new world projecting outwards in a universalist thrust as well as an expression of their collective purpose: to create a better world guided by the moral imperative of keeping alive "el sentimiento de libertad, estimando que el hombre debe ser la medida de todo."[53] Thus committed to the safeguard of intellectual, political, and cultural independence, they would relentlessly denounce Franco's excesses, Hitler's persecutions, Stalin's purges, and any other totalitarian or imperialist designs.[54] "Y España, la España negra, como herida que apenas cicatriza," always in the background.[55]

In July and August 1946, *Babel* published a special issue in homage to the Spanish people.[56] This was significant for several reasons: First, because it condensed the programmatic line of the magazine, highlighting the ethical-political dimension of its mandate—a blend of cultural Americanism with anti-imperialist overtones and a marked social concern. Second, because ten years after the outbreak of the hostilities, it underscored the continuing relevance of the Spanish conflict as a referent in the context of the growing concern over the new world order that was brewing at the dawn of the

Cold War in the aftermath of WWII. And third, because it acknowledged the testimonial value of chronicles and first-person accounts—in this case, the accounts of war correspondents Arthur Koestler and Vincent Sheean ratifying the validity of such documents, partway between personal and collective history, as legitimate sources for historical analysis.[57] Of these, Amster's depiction of the road to exile through the story of the Spanish orphan and the German *brigadista* who took him under his wing is striking for two reasons: due to the emotional impact of the humanization of victims dehumanized by the Francoist victors and also because Amster had tabled the harsh reality that children, too, were victims of the conflict.[58]

Ten years had elapsed since the beginning of the war in Spain: a temporal distance that now demanded the exercise of critical distance. This was the gist of Enrique Espinoza's essay, suggestively titled "Conciencia histórica."[59] It was time to reflect and take stock, to apply hindsight and assess the conduct of the protagonists. Espinoza's judgment was unequivocal. While he heaped praise on the political engagement of faithful poets from both sides of the Atlantic—Machado, Alberti, Miguel Hernández, León Felipe, Neruda and Vallejo—he deplored "el comportamiento equívoco" of the likes of Ortega y Gasset, Azorín, Pérez de Ayala, Menéndez y Pidal, and Gómez de la Serna, who had remained "*au dessus de la melée* . . . [c]uando la España Negra del convento y la caserna ensangrentó de golpe a la otra del trabajo y la República, con las bendiciones del clero."[60]

The more critical "Diez años,"[61] an impassioned contemporary *J'accuse!* from the pen of future national laureate Manuel Rojas, was a scathing indictment of the betrayal of the Spanish people by the government, the army, the Soviet Union, and especially the so-called democracies that had abandoned them to their fate "cuando la bota imperialista de los nacis y fascistas resonó en sus imperiales posaderas."[62] And all for the sake of defending "el negocio de todos y de cada uno."[63] The inflamed anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist rhetoric of Rojas's invective served different purposes. It showed *Babel*'s awareness that the civil war had been as much a class war as an ideological confrontation and a conflict of economic interests and of creeds. Second, its overarching censure of Francoism, fascism, Stalinism, and the democracies confirmed its status as a mouthpiece for the independent left. Finally, in the context of the presidential elections of September 1946 in Chile, by criticizing North American imperialism and vindicating social revolution, *Babel* was clearly aligning with specific sectors of the Chilean left—sectors that, committed to the social struggle and critical of the country's recent rapprochement with the United States, were only playing the democratic game in order to secure the victory of the Popular Front candidate in the impending elections. This was *Babel*'s not-so-subtle way of intervening in the local public debate as a publication that was directed and run by immigrants. All this occurred against the backdrop of tirades against the Spanish church and national fascist Catholicism, as well as constant ridicule of the figure of Franco through the liberal use of diminutives and pejoratives: "el generalito

español que arrasó a sangre y fuego su país," "dictadorzuelo," "don Paquito, el enano de Salamanca."[64]

As we have seen, the echoes of the Spanish Civil War reverberated on American soil, forcing intellectuals to take sides and galvanizing public opinion. An inflamed anti-Francoist and anti-imperialist rhetoric, anchored in a Latin Americanist praxis with a clear ethical stance, enabled Glusberg's "Babelian" intellectual alliance to define itself politically and ideologically. Their solidarity with the Spanish Republican cause and the class struggle allowed them to intervene in defense of liberty, intellectual autonomy, and cultural independence, whether from a distance, in the international debate, or closer to home, in the Chilean political scene.

By the time *Babel*-Chile ceased to exist in 1951, it enjoyed widespread recognition.[65] Clearly, "el extranjero de tanta calidad intelectual"[66] had succeeded in translating his transitive and transformative migratory experience[67]—"esta torre que yo mismo he sido"[68]—into a successful collective cultural venture, produced by and within a Latin American context. The documentary legacy of *Chicos de España* and transnational *Babel* underscores the ease with which people and ideas could cross oceans and mountains and take root and flourish under different political circumstances, but within a space where the cohesiveness of a perceived cultural identity and commonality of language—in a broad sense—held more sway than porous national or geographic borders (i.e., in Latin America). Tracing the story of the border crossings of "magnet intellectuals"[69] such as the multifaceted Jewish-Argentine-Chilean cultural mediator and promoter Samuel Glusberg—and, by extension, the role played by their transnational intellectual circuits in forming and consolidating autonomous intellectual fields in Latin America[70]—has significant implications for the construction of a cultural map of the continent. Unfortunately, such contours exceed the borders of this text and must necessarily be left for future studies.

## Notes

1 Cynthia Gabbay, "Identity, Gender and Anarchist Practices in the Memoir of Micaela Feldman y Etchebéhère," *Revista Forma* 14 (2016): 42–43. For a more comprehensive definition and analysis of "transnational literature," see Stephen Clingman, *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

2 Fernanda Beigel, "Las revistas culturales como documentos de la historia latinoamericana," *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana* 8, no. 20 (2003): 105–15. From the extensive corpus of literature about Latin American cultural periodicals, see, among others, Noemí Girbal-Blacha and Diana Quattrocchi-Woisson, eds., *Cuando opinar es actuar: revistas argentinas del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1999); Jorge Schwartz and Roxana Patiño, "Revistas literarias/culturales latinoamericanas del siglo XX," *Revista Iberoamericana* 70, no. 208–09 (July–December 2004); Marcela Croce, ed., "Dossier: Revistas argentinas del siglo XX," *El Matadero. Revista de crítica literaria de literatura argentina* 2, no. 4 (2006); Saúl Sosnowski, ed., *La cultura de un siglo. América*

*Latina en sus revista*s (Buenos Aires: Alianza Editorial, 2008); Aimer Granados, ed., *Las revistas en la historia intelectual de América Latina: redes, política, sociedad y cultura* (Cuajimalpa: Juan Pablos Editora, 2012); Rose Corral, Anthony Stanton, and James Valender, eds., *Laboratorios de lo nuevo. Revistas literarias y culturales de México, España y el Río de la Plata en la década de 1920* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2018); Verónica Delgado, Alejandra Mailhe, and Geraldine Rogers, eds., *Tramas impresas. Publicaciones periódicas argentinas (XIX–XX)* (La Plata: Editorial de la Universidad de La Plata, 2014); Antonia Viu, *Materialidades de lo impreso: revistas latinoamericanas 1910–1950* (Santiago: Ediciones Metales pesados, 2019); Horacio Tarcus, *Las revistas culturales. Giro material, tramas intelectuales y redes revisteriles* (Temperley: Tren en movimiento, 2020); Regina Crespo, ed., "Dossier: Revistas en América Latina: redes, política y cultura," *Revista Historia de América* 9, no. 158 (January–June 2020).

3 On the formation, role, and function of intellectual networks in Latin America, see Eduardo Devés-Valdés, *Redes intelectuales en América Latina. Hacia la constitución de una comunidad intelectual* (Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios Avanzados, 2007); Álvaro Fernández Bravo and Claudio Maíz, eds., *Episodios en la formación de redes culturales en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2009); Álvaro Fernández Bravo, "Redes culturales. El latinoamericanismo y sus bordes," in *VII Congreso Internacional Orbis Tertius de Teoría y Crítica Literaria, Centro de Estudios de Teoría y Crítica Literaria* (2010), and "Nuevas contribuciones para una teoría de las redes culturales," *Cuadernos del Cihla* 14 (2011): 209–15; Claudio Maíz, "Las redes intelectuales: secuencias, contactos, religaciones transnacionales. Aportes al saber literario," in *Viajeros, diplomáticos y exiliados. Escritores hispanoamericanos en España (1914–1939)*, vol. 1, ed. Carmen de Mora and Alfonso García Morales (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2012), 39–52. More recent publications include: César Zamorano Díaz and Geraldine Rogers, eds., "Dossier: Periodicals and Cultural Networks in Latin America," *Catedral Tomada* 6, no. 11 (2018); María del Carmen Grillo, ed., "Dossier: Redes e impresos en América Latina, siglos XIX y XX," *Revista Historia de América* 9, no. 159 (July–December 2020); Claudio Maíz and Ramiro Esteban Zó, eds., "Dossier: Episodios de la historia literaria de América Latina a partir de redes intelectuales y archivos," *Palimpsesto* 10, no. 17 (2020); Regina Aída Crespo, Claudio Maíz, and Claudia Lorena Fonseca, eds., "Dossier: Revistas culturais latino-americanas dos séculos XX–XXI: teoria, circulação e suportes," *Caderno de Letras* 39 (2021); Adriana Rodríguez-Alfonso, "La estructura del cenáculo; Las redes intelectuales ante la literatura latinoamericana," *Latin American Research Review* 58, no. 1 (2023): 1–17.

4 The following are the periodicals that Glusberg founded in the period between the publication of the Argentinean and the Chilean editions of Babel: *La Vida Literaria* (1928–32), *Cuadernos Literarios de Oriente y Occidente* (1927–28), *Trinchera* (1932), *Trapalanda, un colectivo porteño* (1932–35). Despite the different names, they may be understood as comprising a continuum of one sole publication. The editor himself appears to suggest this in the editorial of the first issue of Babel-Chile: "Aunque *Babel* es en verdad, antes que una nueva revista, una revista de revistas que continúa de uno y otro lado de los Andes la publicación de *Trapalanda*" Enrique Espinoza, "Resurrección y símbolo," *Babel* 1, Santiago de Chile (May 1939): 1.

5 Originally used by Arnold Chapman to describe the relationship that the North American intellectual Waldo Frank forged with the Hispanic world, the term is also very apt to describe the modus operandi that characterized Glusberg's entrepreneurial practices. Arnold Chapman, "Waldo Frank in the Hispanic World: The First Phase," *Hispania* 44 (1961): 633.

6 Particularly noteworthy are the six anthological volumes, with their respective introductory studies, edited by Jaime Massardo, Pierina Ferretti, and Lorena Fuentes, with the collaboration of Patricio Gutiérrez, and published by LOM Ediciones (Santiago, Chile) between 2008 and 2011. Sebastián Hernández Toledo, Verónica Delgado, and Melina Di Miro have also published numerous studies about Samuel Glusberg/Enrique Espinoza and his cultural entrepreneurship on both sides of the Andes.

7 Although written in 1935, *Chicos de España* was not published until 1938: Enrique Espinoza, *Chicos de España (1935)* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Perseo, 1938); "Homenaje al Pueblo Español, A Diez Años de la Guerra Civil Española," *Babel* 34 (July–August 1946).

8 Horacio Gutiérrez, et al., eds., *A guerra civil espanhola e a América Latina* (São Paulo: PROLAMEPAL/USP: CEDHAL/USP: ECA-USP, Terceira Margem, 2018) [electronic resource]. Compiled by students at the University of Ottawa, this preliminary annotated bibliography of the Spanish Civil War in Latin American Literature illustrates the impact that the Spanish War had across the ocean: Gabriella Álvarez de Luna et al., eds., "Bibliografía anotada (acercamiento preliminar). La Guerra Civil española en la Literatura Latinoamericana," *Espéculo. Revista de estudios literarios* (2008): Biblioteca Virtual Universal, https://biblioteca.org.ar/. See also Raanan Rein, "A Trans-National Struggle with National and Ethnic Goals: Jewish-Argentines and Solidarity with the Republicans During the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 20, no. 2 (2014): 171–82.

9 The Spanish Civil War galvanized Latin American intellectuals into a frenzy of cultural productivity organizing congresses and rallies, and publishing articles, reviews, pamphlets, and poems. It was a time that witnessed possibly the greatest collaboration and transatlantic solidarity between intellectuals of the Spanish-speaking world. Carmen de Mora, "Introducción. Aspectos del hispanoamericanismo español en las primeras décadas del siglo XX," in *Viajeros, diplomáticos y exiliados Escritores hispanoamericanos en España (1914–1939) Vol. I*, ed. Carmen de Mora and Alfonso García Morales (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2012), 20.

10 Maíz, "Las redes intelectuales," 45.

11 Cited in Sebastián Hernández Toledo, "Between *Babel* and *Babel*. Editorial and Cultural Projects by Enrique Espinoza in Argentina and Chile (1928–1939)," *Meridional. Revista Chilena de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 13 (October 2019–March 2020): 67.

12 Handwritten notes, possibly in preparation for a future autobiography, in which Samuel Glusberg recalls his family and their emigration to Argentina. Glusberg Archive, CeDInCi, s/l, s/f. (FSG 6.1592/S1.1), 2.

13 For Glusberg as editor and the publishing world in Argentina, see Verónica Delgado and Fabio Espósito, "1920–1937. La emergencia del editor moderno," in *Editores y políticas editoriales en Argentina, 1880–2000*, ed. José Luis de Diego (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 59–89; Fermín Estrella Gutiérrez, *Memorias de la vida literaria* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1966), 43; Fernanda Beigel, "El editorialismo programático," in *El pensamiento alternativo en la Argentina del siglo XX: identidad, utopía, integración (1900–1930)*, ed. Hugo E. Biagini and Arturo Roig (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2004), 445–54.
Verónica Delgado, "Semblanza de Samuel Glusberg (1898–1987)," *Portal Editores y Editoriales Iberoamericanos EDI-RED, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes*, 2018, www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/samuel-glusberg-kischinev-1898-buenos-aires1987-semblanza-888975/.

14 Sebastián Hernández, "Samuel Glusberg/Enrique Espinoza: revistas culturales y proyectos editoriales en Argentina (1921–1935)," *Revista Universum* 2, no. 27 (2012): 211–21.

15 Melina Di Miro, "Las campañas culturales de *La vida literaria* a través de la multifacética figura de Glusberg/Espinoza," *Historia, Voces y Memoria* 11 (2017): 51–64; Verónica Delgado, *La Vida Literaria de Samuel Glusberg: la revista de un editor 1928–1932* (La Plata: Biblioteca Orbis Tertius, Universidad Nacional de La Plata; Buenos Aires: Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas, 2020).
16 Horacio Tarcus's studies remain the most comprehensive works to date about the Frank-Glusberg-Mariátegui triangle: Horacio Tarcus, *Mariátegui en la Argentina o las políticas culturales de Samuel Glusberg* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones El Cielo por Asalto, 2001) and "Revistas, intelectuales y formaciones culturales izquierdistas en la argentina de los veinte," *Revista Iberoamericana* 70, no. 208–09 (July–December 2004): 749–72. Also see Horacio Tarcus, ed., *Cartas de una hermandad. Leopoldo Lugones, Horacio Quiroga, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Luis Franco, Samuel Glusberg* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2009) and "Samuel Glusberg, entre Mariátegui y Trotsky," *El Rodaballo* 4 (Autumn–Winter 1996) and 5 (Summer 1996–97); and "*Babel*, revista de arte y crítica (1921–1951)," *Revista Lote. Mensuario de Cultura* 7 (1997): 6–9.
17 The Jewish editor vented his frustration and disillusionment in the pages of *La Vida Literaria* 28 (1931) as well as in his correspondence with Waldo Frank. Rosalie Sitman, *Victoria Ocampo y SUR: entre Europa y América* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Lumiere, 2003).
18 Glusberg married his cousin Catalina Talesnik and remained in Chile until shortly before the military coup of September 1973 when he relocated back to Buenos Aires, where he lived until his death in 1987.
19 Hernán Soto, *Antología de la solidaridad chilena: España 1936* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 1996); Bernardo Subercaseaux, "Editoriales y círculos intelectuales en Chile 1930–1950," *Revista Chilena de Literatura* 72 (2008): 221–33; Javier Pinedo, "'El asilo contra la opresión'. Pensadores iberoamericanos en Chile 1930–1940: exilios, conceptos y visiones del país," *Taller de Letras* 56 (May 2015): 67–87.
20 Alvar de la Llosa, "An Encounter Between Two Frentes Populares? Diplomatic Relations Between the Spanish Republic in War Time and the Chilean Republic (1931–1940)," *Revista de Historia Social y de las Mentalidades* 22, no. 1 (January–June 2018): 31–46.
21 José Santos González Vera, *Algunos* (Santiago de Chile: Nascimento, 1967), 34. Regarding the Aprista exile in Chile, see Sebastián Hernández Toledo, "Apristas en Chile: circuitos intelectuales y redes políticas durante los años 1930," *Revista de Historia y Geografía* 31 (2014): 77–94 and *La persistencia en el exilio. Redes político-intelectuales de los apristas en Chile (1922–1945)* (Santiago: Ediciones Biblioteca Nacional, 2021).
22 The years of the Popular Front in Chile were characterized by an artistic effervescence that witnessed the rise of important literary movements, such as the surrealists grouped around the *Mandrágora* magazine and the Generation of 1938. Hernández Toledo, "Between *Babel*"; Subercaseaux, "Editoriales"; Pinedo, "El asilo."
23 Cited in Subercaseaux, "Editoriales," 232.
24 Pierina Ferretti and Lorena Fuentes, "Los proyectos culturales de Samuel Glusberg. Aportes a la historia de la edición independiente en la primera mitad del siglo xx latinoamericano," *Andamios* 12, no. 29 (September–December 2015): 183–206.
25 Enrique Espinoza, "Significación histórica del 'Mono Azul'," in *Chicos de España* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Perseo, 1938), 119–23; Hernández Toledo, "Between *Babel*."
26 Glusberg meticulously recorded his encounter with Trotsky in "Cuaderno de México," his diary for 1938 (CeDinCi Archive, Buenos Aires), and later went on to become became Trotsky's literary representative for Latin America; Nicolás

Miranda, *Contribución para una Historia del Trotskysmo Chileno (1929–1964)* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Clase contra Clase, 2000): 31. See also Sebastián Hernández, "Enrique Espinoza y la revista Babel. Del sincretismo ideológico al trotskismo intelectual. Recepción de la ideología trotskista en Chile (1936–1945)" (unpublished manuscript), uploaded to www.academia.edu/32492192/Enrique_Espinoza_y_la_revista_Babel_Del sincretismo ideológico al trotskismo intelectual. Recepción de la ideología trotskista en Chile (1936–1945).

27 To date, very little has been written about *Chicos de España*; see Daniel Mesa Gancedo, "Notas de viaje de un judío errante. *Chicos de España*, de Enrique Espinoza," in *Viajeros, diplomáticos y exiliados Escritores hispanoamericanos en España (1914–1939) Vol. I*, ed. Carmen de Mora and Alfonso García Morales (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2012), 369–91.

28 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 10.

29 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 10, 9, 52.

30 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 10.

31 Even though his Judaism was a central component of his identity and he never renounced his ethnicity, Glusberg distanced himself from official Jewish wheeling and dealing; Enrique Espinoza, *Gajes del oficio* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Extremo Sur, n.d.), 86.

32 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 94.

33 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 63.

34 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 21, 48, 52, 83, 48.

35 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 99.

36 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 109; Florinda F. Goldberg, "¿Tiempo en disolución? Sobre fronteras identitarias y escritura judía en América Latina," in *Múltiples identidades: Literatura judeo-latinoamericana de los siglos XX y XXI*, ed. Verena Dolle (Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2012), 213–26.

37 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 99–110.

38 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 109.

39 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 106, 105.

40 Ariel Svarch, "Salomon Resnick and the *Judaica* Project: Translation Strategies and Representation in the Making of Jewish-Argentines (1933–1946)," *Historia Crítica* 80 (2021): 103–27.

41 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 110.

42 Espinoza, *Chicos*, 109.

43 Pablo Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido memorias* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1974); Jaime Ferrer Mir, *Los españoles del Winnipeg el barco de la esperanza* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Cal Sogas, 1989); Angelina Vázquez Riveiro, *Winnipeg: cuando la libertad tuvo nombre de barco* (Madrid: Ediciones Meigas, 1989); Julio Gálvez Barraza, *Winnipeg: testimonios de un exilio* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Cal Sogas, 2012). For Chile and the Spanish Civil War, see Cristián Garay Vera and Cristián Medina Valverde, *Chile y la Guerra Civil española 1936–1939* (Santiago de Chile: Fundación Mario Góngora, 1994); Cristián Garay Vera, *Relaciones tempestuosas: Chile y España 1936–1940* (Santiago de Chile: Colección IDEA, 2000); Carmen Norambuena and Cristián Garay, *España 1939: los frutos de la memoria. Disconformes y exiliados, artistas e intelectuales españoles en Chile 1939–2000* (Santiago de Chile: Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2001).

44 Mario Martín Gijón, "Los polacos del exilio republicano español; Mauricio Amster y Marian Rawicz," *Estudios Hispánicos* 25 (2017): 21–32; Juan Guillermo Tejeda, *Amster* (Santiago de Chile: Universidad Diego Portales, 2011).

45 According to Glusberg's friend González Vera, the writer Mariano Latorre had coined the moniker; González Vera, *Algunos*, 34.

46 Clearly, the date chosen for the launch was not a coincidence but a tribute to Trotsky.
47 Espinoza, "Resurrección," 1.
48 Both writers would be awarded the National Prize for Literature.
49 In reference to Enrique Espinoza, *Compañeros de viaje* (Santiago de Chile: Nascimento, 1937).
50 Enrique Espinoza, "El diario, la revista, el libro," in *De un lado y otro* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, n.d.), 3.
51 Patricio Gutiérrez, "Heterodoxia, Praxis y marxismo creador en la revista Babel," in *Babel, revista de arte y crítica 3*, ed. Patricio Gutiérrez, et al. (Santiago: Lom Ediciones, 2008), 7–28; Juan José Adriasola and Luis Valenzuela Prado, "Community and Heterodoxy in Enrique Espinoza's Work in Babel," *Cuadernos Lírico* 23 (2021): 1–15; Ferretti and Fuentes, "Los proyectos culturales"; Pinedo, "El asilo."
52 *Babel* (Chile) 13 (September–October 1940); this appeared as a second subtitle in the cover of the publication.
53 Loose Separata in *Babel* 28 (1945).
54 Jaime Massardo, "Los tiempos de la revista *Babel*," *Babel. Revista de arte y crítica. Tercer Trimestre de 2008* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2008), 7–31; Hernández Toledo, "Between *Babel*."
55 "*Babel* cumple diez años en Chile," *Babel* (Chile) 50 (segundo trimestre 1949): 69–70.
56 "Homenaje al Pueblo Español, A Diez Años de la Guerra Civil Española," *Babel* 34 (July–August 1946).
57 Arthur Koestler, "La sedición," Homenaje al pueblo español, *Babel* 34 (July–August 1946): 3–13; Vincent Sheean, "El último voluntario," Homenaje al pueblo español, *Babel* 34 (July–August 1946): 34–59. The latter was translated by Catiucha, the editor's wife.
58 Mauricio Amster, "La rama y el retoño," Homenaje al pueblo español, *Babel* 34 (July–August 1946): 60–63.
59 Enrique Espinoza, "Conciencia histórica," Homenaje al pueblo español, *Babel* 34 (July–August 1946): 17–21.
60 Espinoza, "Conciencia histórica," 17.
61 Manuel Rojas, "Diez años," Homenaje al pueblo español, *Babel* (Chile) 34 (July–August 1946): 24–31.
62 Rojas, "Diez años," 27.
63 Rojas, "Diez años," 25.
64 Luis Franco, "Don Paquito," Homenaje al pueblo español, *Babel* (Chile) 34 (July–August 1946): 14–16.
65 For some, like the writer Armando Uribe, *Babel* was "la mejor revista cultural que haya habido en Chile." Armando Uribe, "Presentación," in Manuel Rojas and José Santos González Vera, *Letras Anarquistas. Artículos periodísticos y otros escritos inéditos*, ed. Carmen Soria (Santiago de Chile: Planeta, 2005), 5.
66 Gabriela Mistral, Epígrafe, *Babel* (Chile) 60 (1951): n.p.
67 Gabbay, "Identity," 43.
68 Enrique Espinoza, *Babel* (Chile) 60 (cuarto trimestre 1951): 206.
69 Pinedo, "El asilo," 86.
70 Maíz, "Las redes."

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# 9 A Theater of Diplomacy

## Cipriano de Rivas Cherif (1891–1967) and the Spanish Civil War

*Michael Hahn*

Cipriano de Rivas Cherif's personal testimony of the outbreak of the civil war offers a glimpse into the dramatic turmoil that hit Spain in July 1936. Since February 1936, he had been on tour with Margarita Xirgu's theater company in Mexico and Cuba—performing Federico García Lorca's *Yerma* (1934) and *Doña Rosita la soltera o el lenguaje de las flores* (1935), among others—when, in July, both personal and professional reasons led him to cut short his participation in the tour. On July 18, 1936, with reports of a military uprising in North Africa reaching him at the port in Veracruz, Mexico, Rivas Cherif embarked on a steam ship bound for Bilbao, Spain. He might have reconsidered had he known how quickly the uprising would become a threat to him and his wife personally. Upon listening to Dolores Ibárruri *La Pasionaria*'s July 19 radio address,[1] he enthusiastically had a radiogram transmitted to her.[2] It would almost be his undoing: Published by *Mundo Obrero*,[3] the periodical of Spain's Communist Party, the insurgents utilized it to identify and track the ship. The *Cristóbal Colón* was forced on an odyssey via Southampton, Le Havre, and Saint-Nazaire until she (dubbed "Spain's 'Flying Dutchman'" by the British press) finally dropped anchor in Cardiff on September 27, 1936.[4] The incident suddenly made President Manuel Azaña (1880–1940) aware of the extent to which his brother-in-law was at risk in the impending war.

### Diplomacy

In order to comply with the President's request that he and his family remain outside the country for security reasons, Rivas Cherif seized the opportunity—against his own will, as he repeatedly emphasized—to enter the diplomatic service,[5] a field into which he had sought admission already as a young law graduate,[6] then (and now?) in the hopes of being able to "compaginar un servicio público resguardando mi independencia artística como escritor."[7] Thus, on September 6, 1936—despite his lack of any relevant political experience whatsoever—Cipriano de Rivas Cherif was catapulted into a politically sensitive government position in Geneva, Switzerland.[8]

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It was not the first time the relationship with Azaña set the course for Rivas Cherif's future career. In a 1938 diary entry, Rivas Cherif observed that it was "el *encuentro*" with Azaña that "fijó mis designios en la vocación literaria."[9] In 1920, the two close friends had co-founded the literary journal *La Pluma*, ultimately enabling Cipriano's entry into the theater business with his avantgarde *Teatro de la Escuela Nueva*.[10] Now, in 1936, the outbreak of the Spanish War once again closely linked their professional fates: During his term as Consul-General and Secretary of the Spanish Delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva, Rivas Cherif remained in close telephone contact with Azaña, "a temporadas casi a diario."[11] After his dismissal in May 1938, he accepted a protocol post in Azaña's immediate vicinity in Barcelona, serving as Introducer to Ambassadors and Head of the Diplomatic Household of the Presidency of the Republic until their joint emigration to France in February 1939.

The 1936 military coup had led to a massive resignation of officials from the diplomatic service. By the end of the year, of the 390 diplomats on the Foreign Ministry's payroll, only fewer than 150 remained in service. By 1939, nearly 90 percent of the staff had resigned.[12] In order to defend its "derecho a no ser invadido, ni sojuzgado por ejércitos extranjeros" in a war denounced by Azaña as the greatest political crime since the partition of Poland in the eighteenth century,[13] the Republic was in dire need of "improvised" diplomats like Rivas Cherif.

In this respect, the importance of Geneva for the Republic's diplomatic endeavors should not be underestimated. It was, of course, clear that sanctions were out of the question. With conservative governments at the helm of the overwhelming majority of the member states,[14] achieving the unanimity required for League of Nations Council decisions (Covenant, Art. 5) was practically impossible from the outset. Manuel Azaña, who characterized the League of Nations Council meetings as "comedia," had no illusions about the fact that it was not the law but rather the law of the strongest that applied in Geneva: "el motivo de que Ginebra . . . se desentienda de nuestro pleito, es primeramente la debilidad de España."[15] It was France and the United Kingdom, its two most influential members—themselves interested in minimizing consideration of the war in the League of Nations[16]—on which he had pinned his hopes.[17] Still, the League provided valuable opportunities for high-level multilateral negotiation and the public exertion of pressure on its member states.[18] And since the League was the *only* international forum to which Madrid had access at the time, the question arises as to why the Republic did not establish a permanent Spanish representation there until November 1938.

### *Fault Lines Within the Republican Faction*

Rivas Cherif's correspondence with superior officials in the Spanish government reveals glaring discrepancies among the Republican leadership regarding the foreign policy to be pursued. Convinced that the war could not be

won militarily, President Azaña from the beginning saw international mediation as the only means of preserving the Republic—namely a joint agreement over the withdrawal of foreign troops, a ceasefire, and the implementation of a (supervised) plebiscite on the country's future constitution.[19]

On the other hand, the duo in charge of the *government*'s foreign policy—Julio Álvarez del Vayo, Foreign Minister (September 1936–May 1937; April 1938–March 1939),[20] and Pablo de Azcárate, the Spanish ambassador in London (September 1936–February 1939)—not only considered any mediation strategy doomed to failure from the outset as long as Franco could count on substantial help from Germany and Italy[21] but also feared the signal of military weakness that would emanate from a mediation request by the Republic.[22] For Álvarez del Vayo, a negotiated peace was virtually tantamount to surrender.[23] Prime Ministers Francisco Largo Caballero (September 1936–May 1937) and Juan Negrín (May 1937–March 1939) opted for continued resistance, with a view to introducing the Spanish conflict into a European war.[24]

Under the Republican constitution of 1931, the President of the Republic did not have the appropriate executive powers to override the government's decisions. Azaña's mediation attempt through Bosch Gimpera in London in the fall of 1936 was thus judged correctly (by Azcárate) as "escandalosamente anticonstitucional."[25] It was the first of numerous to follow; each and every one carried out without the knowledge or even support of the government.[26] The only *constitutional* possibility for the President of the Republic to influence Spanish government policy was through his power to freely dismiss the Prime Minister (Art. 75)—a right Azaña, however, did not dare to utilize against Negrín.[27] In turn, the head of government did not shy away from putting the President in his constitutional place: "[si] no se sigue su parecer, es que no ha convencido al jefe del Gobierno, que es el responsable. Así es la Constitución."[28]

Thus, the President of the Republic's relationship with both of his Prime Ministers was fractured: with regard to Francisco Largo Caballero, he had the "impresión de que estoy hablando a un muerto."[29] Juan Negrín, in turn, is said to have even accused Azaña of an "indiferencia por la suerte de España."[30] Azaña was isolated.

### *Rivas Cherif, the Consul-General in Geneva*

One level below in the hierarchy, the same irreconcilable differences separated Álvarez del Vayo and Azcárate, on the one hand, and Rivas Cherif, on the other hand. In letters to his friend Foreign Minister José Giral (May 1937–April 1938), a frustrated Rivas Cherif qualifies Álvarez del Vayo's policy as "simplemente periodística,"[31] as "espectáculo de la incompetencia unida a la mala fé,"[32] and complains that his own role in Geneva under Álvarez del Vayo was reduced to that of a mere "observador" who never received "un mínimum de instrucciones."[33] His main allegation against Álvarez del Vayo, apart from his "supeditación a los designios del partido comunista español"[34] and his

tendency to whitewash his Genevan performances[35]: the "alarde de independencia personal . . . eludiendo la información, el consejo, e incluso el cumplimiento de orientaciones manifiestas por el Presidente de la República."[36]

Yet, rather than at Álvarez del Vayo and Azcárate, it seems that the accusation of high-handed action must be leveled at the Consul-General himself, who quite frankly confessed to Negrín his "deseo de servir a la República *en la persona*—que siempre he puesto por delante de cualquier entelequia ni idea—de mi hermano el Presidente."[37] Sharing—and encouraging[38]—Azaña's stance on foreign politics, the jurist Rivas Cherif concluded from the President's constitutional power to "declarar la guerra . . . y firmar la paz" (Art. 76 lit. a)[39] that "[le] competen directamente las decisiones últimas de la guerra y la paz,"[40] a right, he believed, of which his brother-in-law had been deprived by self-opinionated government action. "Tuerto," he felt distressed at "la cegedad de los demás"[41]—and compelled but also entitled to take action on his own initiative,[42] even if this was against the will of his superiors. Consequently, the Consul-General's legitimacy to speak for the Spanish government was, of course, increasingly called into question.

Increasingly faced with Azaña's, and his own, political isolation, the Consul-General seems to have indulged more and more frequently in rash statements or even outbursts of temper. Already in November 1937, Azcárate had pointed out to Foreign Minister Giral that "se ve demasiado claramente que es un hombre que ha perdido el control de su propia conducta."[43] In January 1938, Rivas Cherif instructed Antoni Fabra Rivas, the Spanish Minister Plenipotentiary in Bern, in front of several witnesses and "con exaltación inexplicable" that "ya se había cargado a un Ministro de Estado . . . y que, si se presentaba el caso, lo mismo le pasaría a los otros"—a behavior denounced by Álvarez del Vayo as absolutely "intolerable" form of a "nuevo caciquismo" and "política de 'clan.'"[44] The final impetus for Rivas Cherif's dismissal on May 9, 1938,[45] was yet another secret exploration of the chances of an armistice with foreign diplomats, but this time, it filtered through to the British and American press:

> Two League delegates told the British United Press that Señor Rivas Cherif had suggested to them that some of the Latin-American nations might propose mediation and take an active part in it. The delegates thought he was speaking on behalf of President Azaña. They assumed, however, he was acting without the knowledge of Señor Del Vayo, the Foreign Minister, or Dr. Negrín, the Premier, who, it is understood, favour fighting to the end.
>
> Señor Rivas Cherif suggested that Latin-American members of the League should propose to the President of the Council that certain foreign countries should mediate to arrange an armistice. The Council would then authorize mediation. It is understood that Señor Rivas Cherif suggested that foreign Powers might aid in arranging a plebiscite in Spain. As far as can be ascertained none of the delegates approached

> agreed to act upon these suggestions. Two of them suggested that the Consul-General should approach foreign Governments through ordinary diplomatic channels.[46]

Despite Rivas Cherif's swift denial "that he has . . . taken any initiative in regard to mediation in Spain,"[47] the Foreign Minister—about to attend a Council meeting in Geneva—was snubbed. The Consul-General had become untenable; his "promotion" to Barcelona[48] was no more than a face-saving measure.[49]

### *Conclusion*

How helpful was the "improvised" diplomat Rivas Cherif to the Republic? Regardless of the question of whether the Republican leadership should indeed have made a greater effort to mediate internationally, what can be said is that Rivas Cherif's repeated solo actions in that matter significantly contributed to the Republic's failure to speak with one voice to France and the United Kingdom, which by necessity weakened *any* foreign policy strategy it pursued.[50] Internally, Rivas Cherif's at times somewhat pompous manner and his lengthy letters, not always kept in a professional tone,[51] ultimately only fueled the conflict between the President of the Republic and the government instead of contributing constructively to its resolution. The latter would have required a basis of personal trust between the Consul-General and the decision-makers in the government, something that quite obviously had already become illusory in the spring of 1937.[52] The deference to Azaña—whom Rivas Cherif frequently brought into play himself, for instance, when reminding Giral of his "aptitud, singularmente especial" for the post in Geneva[53]—unduly perpetuated this disruptive state of affairs, resulting in an "evidente lastre de peso para los intereses de la República y la credibilidad del Gobierno en el exterior."[54] Without this mixing of the political and the private, it is probable that a *delegado permanente* to the League of Nations would have been appointed well before November 1938.[55]

## Theater

For the man considered to be Spain's first theater director in the modern sense of the word,[56] who embodied the spirit of the Republic's theatrical renewal like few others,[57] the outbreak of the civil war thus in many respects marked a turning point. In 1933, Cipriano de Rivas Cherif had founded the *Teatro Escuela de Arte* (TEA), Spain's first modern theater school, "probablemente la propuesta renovadora de más aliento en la España de los años treinta."[58] In line with its founder's ideal of "un teatro con savia política y social y en el cual los problemas del individuo estén en íntima relación con la inquietud colectiva de la época,"[59] the TEA was conceived both as a school for all professions related to theatrical performance and as a laboratory of

scenic experiments, serving, in some respects, as a model for María Teresa León's *Teatro de Arte y Propaganda*,[60] arguably the most valuable political theater to be seen in Madrid during the war.[61] The school was continued by Rivas Cherif's former students. Still accepting new actors and actresses in the fall of 1937, there is evidence of theater performances at the front as well as in a hospital of the International Brigade.

Yet staying in touch with his students was by far not the Consul-General's only way of connecting with theater in those years. In January and May 1937, Rivas Cherif gave "cultural propaganda" lectures on contemporary Spanish theater in Brussels and Amsterdam.[62] From March to June 1937, he translated the satirical drama *Angelica* by Leo Ferrero, whose family he had befriended in Geneva; while not in Spain, the play premiered in Argentina in August 1938.[63] In September 1937, Rivas Cherif attended the V Soviet Theater Festival in Moscow at the head of a delegation on behalf of the Spanish Ministry of Public Education.[64] The delegation also included Miguel Hernández, who in the Soviet Union could find no trace of that "humanidad automática, mecanizada, sorda por indiferencia egoista al clamor de los pueblos atropellados" he had observed elsewhere.[65] One particular note from him from Moscow seems to convey in an exact manner Rivas Cherif's Genevan experience of ignorance and powerlessness that he in Moscow undoubtedly shared with his compatriots:

> A veces son ministros diplomáticos, relaciones exteriores, y a veces la vida, la muerte de millones de hombres depende de una buena digestión de una cena en Ginebra—todo lo emprenden, todo lo solventan con un aire aburrido de elegancia marchita.[66]
>
> (Sometimes it is diplomatic ministers, foreign relations, and sometimes the life, the death of millions of men depends on a good digestion of a dinner in Geneva—everything they undertake, everything they solve with a dull air of withering elegance.)

In the fall of 1937, Rivas Cherif participated in the board meetings of the newly established *Consejo Central del Teatro* in Valencia, with Antonio Machado and María Teresa León as vice presidents, Max Aub as secretary, and Benavente, Alberti, and Rivas Cherif as members of the advisory board.[67] As late as January 1939, Rivas Cherif worked on an adaptation of *Mariana Pineda* and (again) *Fuenteovejuna*, still under the impression of a performance he had seen in Paris on November 4, 1937, with a stunning Germaine Montero as Laurencia, and no doubt in an effort to counteract its appropriation by the insurgents as "national drama par excellence."[68] It was one of the last plays he had staged in Spain, in commemoration of the third centenary of Lope de Vega's death in 1935.[69]

At the turn of the year 1937/38, Rivas Cherif writes in his diary: "Me acucia de nuevo, y ahora creo que con ímpetu *decidido* la gana de escribir."[70]

And indeed, in the dire months to follow, literary writing seems to have helped him "[d]escans[ar] los nervios" and "matar la inquietud."[71] From July 1937 to September 1938, he worked on a play called *La piedra en el lago*[72]; in March 1938, he wrote on an unspecified novel. In July 1938, we find a first reference to his drama *Comedia sin máscara de la Vera Pax*,[73] which he did not finish until 1945. In September 1939—already in French exile—he began working on his play *Práxedes en persona*, conceived as a sequel to his drama *Un sueño de la razón* (1928).[74]

None of these projects would ever be published or performed on stage in his lifetime. In July 1940, Cipriano de Rivas Cherif was apprehended in Gironde near Bordeaux by the Gestapo and Spanish police, transferred to Spain, and sentenced to death by an ad hoc court, a sentence that, after Azaña's sudden death in November 1940, was commuted to thirty years of imprisonment. Until his release in March 1946, Rivas Cherif would spend nearly six years in various prisons. Here again, it was almost frenetic reading and writing in a kind of "fuga psicológica" that enabled Rivas Cherif to overcome what he called "contingencia política."[75] In the prison of *El Dueso* in Cantabria—where Antonio Buero Vallejo was also held prisoner—Rivas Cherif even resumed his directing activities, staging between 1942 and 1945 a total of twenty works with the actor-prisoners of the *Teatro Escuela del Dueso*.[76]

### The Play *¿Qué quiere decir Irene?* (1941)

In the prison of El Puerto de Santa María in Cádiz, where at least 194 prisoners died of a typhus outbreak that same year,[77] Rivas Cherif wrote the anti-war drama *¿Qué quiere decir Irene?* It is this "fabula alegórica," first published in 2013[78] and premiered as a staged reading in Madrid in 2019, in which Rivas Cherif most vividly processed his experiences as a diplomat during the civil war.

The plot of the two-act drama is told quickly: Irene, the mysterious figure at the center of the play, has been forced to flee from Greece to fictitious "Neutralia," where she seeks asylum from the war. She finds shelter in the comfortable "Guillermo Hotel" of the owner of the same name and soon finds herself surrounded by the other hotel guests. Meanwhile, no one seems to understand her. The recurring question in the play, "¿Qué quiere decir Irene?" (What does Irene mean?), is asked at least six times by different characters and remains unanswered until the end.

While it is true that the paratext does mark the theme as timeless—"Época moderna y aun modernísima; pero sin tiempo fijo en el pasado, el presente o el futuro"[79]—there are several references that unmistakably situate the drama in Rivas Cherif's Genevan period: the setting in the "Guillermo Hotel" (the lake, the Alps, the cuckoo clock) but even more so the dispute between the two half-brothers Mario and Sila, whose choice of name clearly alludes to the feud between Sila and Gaio Mario in the *Roman* Civil War. In the play, the

confrontation between the two eventually turns into a "ciego combate a puros palos," a blind fight with plain sticks, a fight that kills *in the name of peace*—with both Mario and Sila invoking "Irene" and claiming her as their own:

*Mario*. ¡Por tu libertad combatiré en mar y tierra, allí donde se encuentre tu enemigo!
*Irene*. ¡No por Dios!
*Sila*. Por tu seguridad lucharé hasta que reines sobre el haz de la tierra.
. . .
(*Salen afuera desafiados*.)
*Irene*. ¡Oid! ¡Escuchadme!
. . .
*Irene*. Por defender mi tranquilidad se matan los hombres.

(*Mario*. For your freedom I will fight on land and sea, wherever your enemy is!
*Irene*. Not for God's sake!
*Sila*. For your safety I'll fight until you reign over the face of the earth. . . .
(*They go out in defiance*.)
*Irene*. Listen! Listen to me!
. . .
*Irene*. Men kill each other to defend my peace of mind.)

Through the other hotel guests, including the Swiss "Guillermo Hotel," the English "Miss Albion," and "Professor Whitehouse" as President of the United States, Rivas Cherif reconstructs a veritable "League of Nations"—of bystanders—in neutral Switzerland. But instead of pursuing a common goal, which in the case of the League of Nations, at least according to its Covenant, would be "to achieve international peace and security," these figures are only concerned with themselves: They are rather (or this is how they are introduced) members of a poker game who ponder over their respective stakes and risks. Throughout the play, there is talk of "cuentas claras," of "grandes propinas," and "dólares oro," of stock exchange prices and currency exchange rates.[80] Needless to say, the hotel guests do *not* intervene in the increasingly bitter argument between Mario and Sila; it is a question that simply does not arise.

The most prominent figure in this series of bystanders is the businessman Guillermo-Hotel, CEO of "el consorcio bancario-turístico más acreditado de Neutralia."[81] Solely concerned with financial profit-making, he does not bother at all with idealistic or humanitarian considerations; seeing no monetary value in it, he rejects even the admission of war refugees. Even though this figure is, of course, a bit on the nose, parallels can be drawn to the interest-led policy of the Swiss government during the Spanish Civil War. Despite its official statement of strict neutrality, the Swiss federal council took measures that clearly favored the party of the insurgents.[82] While refusing to join the non-intervention agreement initiated by the French *Front*

*Populaire* government, Switzerland, under Italian influence, nevertheless banned all arms exports to Spain (a ban that hit the Republic particularly hard), prohibited all expressions of solidarity by its citizens, and confiscated any domestically printed propaganda material of communist, anarchic, antimilitarist, or anti-religious nature. Meanwhile, as early as mid-1937, it established a trade mission in Salamanca to represent its interests in Francoist Spain. In late 1938, the Swiss government made a significant contribution to the nationalist war effort through its approval of a loan from the Swiss Bank Corporation, thus distinguishing itself notably from other democratic countries.[83]

The appearance of Professor Whitehouse, whose character description reads: "como cualquier presidente des los EEUU de América, cuando llevaban sombrero gris de copa,"[84] is marked by ignorance to a similar extent. In the dramatic situation in which Irene finds herself, he is most concerned about the dollar exchange rate. Whitehouse has made the trip to war-ridden Europe solely for one reason: to participate in a chess tournament. To him, the war is an abstraction, something that does not remotely affect him—an attitude that, in turn, clearly points to the isolationism of the United States of America between World War I and World War II and the view, widespread among historians, that President Roosevelt either did not care about the Spanish Civil War or had to remain inactive due to domestic and international constraints[85]:

*Irene* (*. . . se precipita a los pies de Whitehouse*): ¡Sálveme usted!
*El Profesor* (*Perplejo y haciendo intención de levantarla del suelo*): ¿Qué quiere decir?
*El guía:* Irene.
*El Profesor:* ¿Irene?
*Irene:* Le ruego que me escuche a mí; que no dé oídos a quienes pretenden hablar en mi nombre. . . .

*(Irene* (*. . . rushes to Whitehouse's feet*): Save me!
*Prof. Whitehouse* (*Perplexed and intending to lift her off the ground*): What do you mean?
*The Guide:* Irene.
*Prof. Whitehouse:* Irene?
*Irene:* I beg you to listen to me; do not listen to those who pretend to speak in my name.)

The US President does not even begin to comprehend Irene's request for help. It fades away, unheard, in the hubbub of the conversation, and Professor Whitehouse ends up playing chess against himself. By placing the tragedy inherent in Irene's fate in juxtaposition with comic elements from the *commedia dell'arte* tradition, the drama ultimately produces the effect of radical disillusionment.

With Irene appearing at the center of the drama as a concept whose very meaning has been lost to those involved, the drama denounces all those who wage or permit war in the name of peace. Regarding the Spanish Civil War, this of course refers first and foremost to Francisco Franco himself, who in July 1936 told a US journalist that "he would kill half of Spain if necessary to pacify the country."[86] But it also points to Great Britain and France, who, mindful of their own interests, tolerated "breaches of international law on a wide scale . . . in what was assumed to be the general interest of peace."[87] In November 1937, sixteen months after the breakout of the Spanish War, the French Prime Minister commented to his British counterpart that their two countries "could congratulate themselves that their Spanish policy had undoubtedly helped them to pass a very difficult year without a breach of the peace" (!).[88]

But above all, the drama can be considered an homage to Manuel Azaña,[89] who deliberately put precisely this—peace—at the top of the famous tricolon with which he finished his speech on the occasion of the second anniversary of the outbreak of the civil war: "Paz, piedad y perdón."[90] He did this even against fierce opposition in his own ranks. In its reprint of the speech, the newspaper *El Socialista* suppressed the word "paz"[91]; it was a word that was simply too problematic to print at the time. In his *Causas de la guerra de España*, Azaña writes: "Es seguro que si todas las potencias europeas hubiesen tenido en aquella ocasión una conciencia pacífica y una percepción desinteresada de sus deberes de solidaridad humana, la guerra española habría sido ahogada en sus orígenes." (It is certain that if all European powers had had on that occasion a peaceful conscience and a disinterested perception of their duties of human solidarity, the Spanish war would have been stifled at its origins.)[92]

The last sentence of the drama is addressed directly to the audience. It reads:

"Irene, quiere decir la Paz."
(Irene means peace.)

## Notes

1 The experience is reflected in Cipriano de Rivas Cherif, "Carta abierta: A Juan, marinero del 'Colón'," *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona), July 19, 1938, 7.
2 "Por republicano, por español y por hombre le agradezco su magnífico discurso, oído en alta mar, en el viaje impaciente por encontrarme en España." (As a republican, as a Spaniard and as a man I thank you for your magnificent speech, heard on the high seas, on the impatient voyage to find myself in Spain.)
3 "Un telegrama de Rivas Cherif a nuestra camarada 'Pasionaria'," *Mundo Obrero*, July 31, 1936, 1. Rivas Cherif names the periodical *Frente Rojo* instead, which first appeared on February 21, 1937. See *Retrato de un desconocido. Vida de Manuel Azaña (seguido por el epistolario de Manuel Azaña con Cipriano de Rivas Cherif de 1921 a 1937)* (Barcelona: Ed. Grijalbo, 1979), 332.

4 "Mysterious Spanish Liner," *Belfast News-Letter*, September 28, 1936, 7; "Spain's Mystery Ship," *Belfast News-Letter*, October 26, 1936, 13. Rivas Cherif and his wife were the only passengers allowed to disembark in Le Havre.
5 In his biographical account and correspondence, Rivas Cherif claims that he would have preferred to stay in Madrid in order to "organize the official propaganda"; cf. for example, *Letter to Giral*, August 8, 1937, Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), DIVERSOS-JOSE_GIRAL, 17, n. 83, 2–3 ("Comprendí que el Presidente quería verme lejos" [I understood that the President wanted to see me away]).
6 Manuel Aznar Soler, *Valle-Inclán, Rivas Cherif, y la renovación teatral española (1907–1936)* (Barcelona: Cop d'Idees, 1992), 21.
7 Cipriano de Rivas Cherif, *Expediente sobre Cipriano de Rivas Cherif*, AHN, FC-CAUSA_GENERAL, 1524, Ex3, December 31, 1938, 100 (reconcile a public service with safeguarding my artistic independence as a writer).
8 "El nuevo cónsul general de España en Suiza," *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona), September 6, 1936, 12.
9 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, December 31, 1938, 100 (the *encounter* [that] fixed me on my literary vocation).
10 Aznar Soler, *Valle-Inclán, Rivas Cherif, y la renovación teatral española*, 19–25.
11 Rivas Cherif, *Retrato de un desconocido*, 363 (at times, almost daily).
12 Ángel Viñas, "Una carrera diplomática y un Ministerio de Estado desconocidos," in *Al servicio de la República. Diplomáticos y guerra civil*, ed. Ángel Viñas (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2010), 268.
13 Manuel Azaña, *Diarios completos. Monarquía, república, guerra civil* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2000), May 31, 1937, 974 (right not to be invaded or subjugated by foreign armies).
14 Richard Veatch, "The League of Nations and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–9," *European History Quarterly* 20 (1990): 188–89.
15 Azaña, *Diarios*, May 31, 1937, 974 (The reason that Geneva . . . disregards our fight is first of all the weakness of Spain).
16 Veatch, "The League of Nations and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–9," 182.
17 Azaña, *Diarios*, 975.
18 A tension expressed in Rivas Cherif's Geneva characterization as "blanquísimo sepulcro," on the one hand, and as "centro informativo de Europa," on the other ("Carta abierta," *La Vanguardia*, July 19, 1938, 7; *Letter to Giral*, n.d., n. 85, 3).
19 Cf. Antonio Marquina, "Planes internacionales de mediación durante la guerra civil," *UNISCI Discussion Papers* 11 (2006): 230, passim; Javier Tusell, "Conversación en Vich," *El País*, July 15, 1986, https://elpais.com/diario/1986/07/15/opinion/521762407_850215.html. In his January 1937 address, Azaña stressed that "[c]orresponde a otros limitar la guerra y restablecer el Derecho internacional, escandalosamente violado en nuestro suelo." From "Documents of the Civil War—III," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 14, no. 54 (1937): 91 ("it is up to others" to end the foreign invasion and thus "limit the war and reestablish international law, scandalously violated on our soil").
20 Álvarez del Vayo maintained his influence in determining the Spanish foreign policy also in the interim period. See David Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva. La Sociedad de Naciones, la Guerra de España y el fin de la paz mundial* (Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2016), 383–84, 593; Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Azcárate*, November 18, 1937.
21 Pablo de Azcárate, *Mi embajada en Londres durante la guerra civil española* (Barcelona: Ed. Ariel, 1976), 68–69; regarding Bosch Gimpera's fall 1936 mediation attempt: "en condiciones que, para el más miope, . . . la privaba de toda posibilidad de éxito" (in conditions which, to the most short-sighted person, . . . deprived it of any chance of success), 62.

22 Azcárate, *Mi embajada en Londres durante la guerra civil española*, 60 and 64 (February 27, 1937): "apareció la nota franco-inglesa con la iniciativa de mediación. Pésimo efecto aquí. La palabra 'mediación' desastrosa. Gran error" (. . . the French-English note with the mediation initiative appeared. Lousy effect here. The word "mediation" disastrous. Big mistake). In his study *Inseguridad colectiva,* Jorge evaluates Azaña's policy as "[error] por completo en los medios" de "poner fin a la tragedia Española" (complete [error] about the ways to end the Spanish tragedy), 395.
23 Julio Álvarez del Vayo, *Give Me Combat: The Memoirs of Julio Álvarez del Vayo* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 171; cf. Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 259.
24 For a juxtaposition of the "partido de la paz" and "de la resistencia," see Ángel Bahamonde Magro and Javier Cervera Gil, *Así terminó la guerra de España* (Madrid and Barcelona: Marcial Pons Historia, 2000), 273–86.
25 Azcárate, *Mi embajada en Londres durante la guerra civil española*, 62 (scandalously unconstitutional).
26 The last one being launched even from French exile: "Azaña Making Spain Peace Move," *Evening Telegraph*, February 17, 1939, 1.
27 Bahamonde Magro and Cervera Gil, *Así terminó la guerra de España*, 284–86.
28 Azaña, *Diarios*, May 9, 1938, 1231–32 (. . . if we do not follow your opinion, you have not convinced the head of government, who is the responsible. This is the Constitution.)
29 Azaña, *Diarios*, May 31, 1937, 970 (impression that I am talking to a dead man). Cf. Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, April 17, 1937, 19: "Conversación con Manolo. Está enfadado. Está *sólo*." (Conversation with Manolo. He is angry. He is *alone*.)
30 Julián Zugazagoitia, *Guerra y vicisitudes de los españoles* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1977), 397 (indifference to Spain's fate).
31 Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Giral*, n.d., n. 84, 2 (simply journalistic).
32 Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Giral*, n.d., n. 85, 3 (spectacle of incompetence combined with bad faith).
33 Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Giral*, June 24, 1937, 1 (observer; minimum of instructions). Cf. *Letter to Giral*, August 8, 1937, 6: "Aquí, . . . no habiendo más quehacer que lo que hay, casi casi hasta sobra el Consul." (. . . there being nothing more to do than what there is, almost almost even the consul is superfluous here.)
34 Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Giral*, June 24, 1937, 5 (submission to the designs of the Spanish communist party). For the anti-communist element of British policy de la Rasilla del Moral, "In the General Interest of Peace? British International Lawyers and the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of the History of International Law* 18 (2016): 40.
35 Rivas Cherif, *Retrato de un desconocido*, 368: "resonantes triunfos ginebrinos . . . que mis informes particulares desvirtuaban un tanto, contradiciendo la propaganda official que Vayo se hacía" (resounding Genevan triumphs . . . that my particular reports somewhat distorted, contradicting the official publicity that Vayo made for himself).
36 Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Giral*, June 24, 1937, 5–6 (flaunted personal independence with which the information, advice, and even compliance with declared guidelines of the President of the Republic is evaded); cf. *Letter to Giral*, n.d., n. 84, 2–3; *Letter to Giral*, November 12, 1937, 2; *Letter to Azcárate*, November 12, 1937, 1–2.
37 Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Negrín*, July 19, 1937, 7 (emphasis added; desire to serve the Republic in the person—which I have always put ahead of any entelechy or idea—of my brother the President.)
38 Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 379 and 386: "gran alentador de las iniciativas de Azaña."
39 Declare the war . . . and sign the peace.

40 Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Giral*, undated, n. 84, 2 (he is directly entitled to the final decisions with regard to war and peace). Giral contradicts this in his answer (August 6, 1937) only briefly, without going into further detail.
41 Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Azcárate*, November 12, 1937, 3 (one-eyed . . . the blindness of the others).
42 For example, in November 1936, Rivas Cherif wrote a personal letter to the French Foreign Minister Delbos (Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 261–62). For his talks with the French ministerial official Fauques-Duparc, cf. Rivas Cherif, *Retrato de un desconocido*, 365–66.
43 *Letter to Giral*, November 15, 1937 (it is all too clear that he is a man who has lost control of his own behavior); cf. Azcárate, *Letter to Rivas Cherif*, November 16, 1937: "ha perdido Ud. los estribos" (you lost your temper).
44 Julio Álvarez del Vayo, *Letter to Negrín*, February 11, 1938, 1 (quoting a dispatch by Fabra Rivas of January 22, 1938) (with inexplicable exaltation; he had already knocked out one Foreign Minister . . . and that the same thing would happen to others, if necessary; new chieftainship). The person referred to is Álvarez del Vayo, who, in spring of 1937, wanted to withdraw Rivas Cherif from Geneva and—possibly for that reason—was removed from office in May. In his biographical account, Rivas Cherif calls it "his own small part in the early stages of the President's design to use a government crisis to try to change Largo Caballero's bad war policy and the perniciously ineffectual diplomacy of Vayo, his minister of foreign affairs." *Portrait of an Unkown Man* (Madison/Teaneck: Associated University Presses, 1995), 305.
45 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, May 9, 1938, 78: "Bomba de la destitución" (Bombshell of dismissal).
46 British United Press, "Mediation in Spain," *The Liverpool Echo*, May 7, 1938, 3.
47 "Spain's SOS," *The Evening News*, May 7, 1938, 14: "denies 'absolutely and categorically' reports that he has . . . taken any initiative in regard to mediation in Spain."
48 "El Gobierno de la República," *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona), May 14, 1938, 4.
49 Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 525–527. According to Julián Zugazagoitia, Negrín was even willing to put Rivas Cherif in jail once he arrived in Barcelona (*Guerra de los españoles*, 400).
50 Cf. Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 261–62.
51 For example, *Letter to Giral*, August 8, 1937, 7; *Letter to Álvarez del Vayo*, February 1, 1938, forwarded by the addressee to Giral with the following comment: "Me limito simplemente a señalar el hecho de que es un escrito dirigido por un funcionario de la República, en tono oficial" (I limit myself to simply pointing out that it is a letter addressed by an official of the Republic, in an official tone.) Cf. Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 388, 390, 498–99.
52 Cf. Rivas Cherif, *Letter to Giral*, August 8, 1937, 2: "menosprecio absoluto" (absolute disregard).
53 *Letter to Giral*, n.d., n. 85, 3 (uniquely special aptitude).
54 Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 263–64 (evident weighty burden for the credibility of the government abroad), 590, passim; cf. also Ángel Viñas, "Prólogo," in Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 18: "chisgarabís consagrado" (dedicated busybody); "handicap insuperable" (insurmountable handicap).
55 Jorge, *Inseguridad colectiva*, 382–83, 386, 590–91: "Crear un puesto así y no nombrar al entonces Cónsul hubiese sido interpretado como un desdén hacia el presidente de la República" (creating such a post and not appointing the then Consul would have been interpreted as disdain for the President of the Republic), 383.
56 Together with Adriá Gual, cf. María José Sánchez-Cascado, "Ideas Teatrales de Don Cipriano de Rivas Cherif," *Teatro: Revista de Estudios Culturales/A Journal of Cultural Studies* 1 (1992): 141.

57 Enrique Díez-Canedo praised Rivas Cherif as "único director en activo al tanto del movimiento extranjero, que no copia de manera literal, sino que acomoda a las condiciones de nuestra escena" (only active director aware of the foreign movement, who does not copy it literally, but adapts it to the conditions of our scene). See "Panorama del teatro español desde 1914 hasta 1936," *Hora de España* (Valencia) 16 (April 1938): 43.
58 Juan Aguilera Sastre, "De la TEA republicana al Teatro Escuela de El Dueso. Rivas Cherif y el teatro durante la Guerra Civil," in *Figuras olvidadas en la cultura de la Guerra Civil*, ed. Emilio Peral Vega (Madrid: Guillermo Escolar Editor, 2022), 51–80 (probably the most innovative theater renovation proposal in Spain in the 1930s).
59 "Rivas Cherif dice que hay que hacer un teatro de la calle y para la multitud," *Luz*, November 15, 1933, 6 (a theater with political and social sap and in which the problems of the individual are closely related to the collective restlessness of the times). Cf. Nigel Dennis and Emilio Peral Vega, "Introducción," in *Teatro de la Guerra Civil: el bando republicano*, ed. Nigel Dennis and Emilio Peral Vega (Madrid: Fundamentos, 2009), 23.
60 Juan Aguilera Sastre, "De la TEA republicana," 51–80.
61 Manuel Aznar Soler, "Mª Teresa León y el teatro español durante la guerra civil," *Stichomythia* 5 (2007): 37.
62 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, January 12, 1937, 5; May 13, 1937, 23.
63 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, March 13, 1937, 14; June 29, 1937, 31; August 20, 1938, 90. Cf. María Belén Hernández González, "Razones para una traducción invisible. La Angelica de C. Rivas Cherif," *Anales de Filología Francesa* 22 (2014): 143–60.
64 Cf. Aguilera Sastre, "De la TEA republicana," 51–80; Juan Aguilera Sastre and Manuel Aznar Soler, *Cipriano de Rivas Cherif y el teatro español de su época (1891–1967)* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Asociación de Directores de Escena de España, 2000), 354–62.
65 Juan Cano Ballesta, "Una imagen distorsionada de Europa: Miguel Hernández y su viaje a la Unión Soviética," *Revista del Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Españolas* (1985): 208 (automatic, mechanized humanity, deaf through selfish indifference to the clamor of trampled peoples).
66 Cano Ballesta, "Una imagen distorsionada de Europa," 207.
67 Cf. Aguilera Sastre, "De la TEA republicana," 51–80.
68 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, January 2/3/8, 1939, 100–01; January 18, 1939, 101. Cf. Teresa J. Kirschner, "Sobrevivencia de una comedia: historia de la difusión de Fuenteovejuna," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 1, no. 3 (1977): 262.
69 Cf. Javier Domingo Martín, "Una *Fuente Ovejuna* para cerrar la Segunda República. La versión de Cipriano de Rivas Cherif," in *Fuente Ovejuna (1619–2019). Pervivencia de un mito universal*, ed. Javier Huerta Calvo (New York: IDEA/IGAS, 2019), 73–91.
70 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, December 31, 1937, 59 (I feel the urge again, and now I think with decided impetus, to write). Cf. Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, December 31, 1938, 100: "Soñé violentamente durante año y medio con unir mi nombre y mi esfuerzo a una misión, la que yo entendía corresponderle al Presidente . . . me queda el escribir" (I violently dreamed for a year and a half of joining my name and my efforts to a mission, the one that I understood corresponded to the President. . . . I am left with writing).
71 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, March 27, 1937 (rest the nerves) and March 23, 1937 (kill the anxiety), 71.
72 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, July 24, 1937, 34.
73 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, July 7, 1938, 86.

74 Rivas Cherif, *Expediente*, September 8, 1939, 119: "He empezado el 'Práxedes'"; cf. also August 28, 1938, 90.
75 Cf. Cipriano de Rivas Cherif, *Teatro (1926–1946)*, ed. Begoña Riesgo (Madrid: Colección Laboratorio, 2013), 65 (psychological escape).
76 Cf. Cipriano de Rivas Cherif, *El Teatro Escuela de El Dueso. Apuntes para una historia*, ed. Juan Aguilera Sastre (Madrid: Ediciones del Orto, 2010).
77 T. R., "1941–42: la epidemia del piojo verde," *Diario de Jerez*, March 29, 2020, www.diariodejerez.es/noticias-provincia-cadiz/coronavirus-cadiz-1941-epidemia-piojo-verde_0_1450355336.html.
78 Rivas Cherif, *Teatro*.
79 Rivas Cherif, *Teatro*, 259 (Modern and even very modern times, but without fixed time in the past, present, or future).
80 (Clear bills), (large tips), (gold dollars).
81 (Neutralia's most reputable tourism-banking consortium).
82 Elena Rodríguez Ballano, "Un socialista y una atalaya del SIDE en Berna," in *Al servicio de la República. Diplomáticos y guerra civil*, ed. Ángel Viñas (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2010): 205.
83 Sébastien Farré, *La Suisse et l'Espagne de Franco. De la guerre civile à la mort du dictateur (1936–1975)* (Lausanne: Éditions Antipodes, 2006), 415.
84 (Like any President of the United States of America, when they wore gray cylinder hats).
85 Dominic Tierney, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and Covert Aid to the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–39," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 3 (2004): 300.
86 "Entrevista con el jefe rebelde español," *News Chronicle*, July 29, 1936, www.historiasiglo20.org/HE/texto-franco.htm:

> Pronto, muy pronto, mis tropas habrán pacificado el país y todo eso . . . será pronto algo como una pesadilla. Pregunta: ¿Eso significa que tendrá que matar a la mitad de España? El general Franco sacudió la cabeza con sonrisa escéptica, pero dijo: Repito, cueste lo que cueste.

87 Hersch Lauterpacht, "Recognition of Insurgents as a de Facto Government," *Modern Law Review* 3 (1939): 1.
88 Cf. Glyn Arthur Stone, "Neville Chamberlain and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–9," *The International History Review* 35, no. 2 (2013): 381.
89 Cf. Riesgo, *Introducción*, 80–81.
90 Peace, mercy, and forgiveness.
91 Manuel Azaña, "Combatimos por la libertad de todos, incluso la de nuestros adversarios," *El Socialista*, July 19, 1938, 1.
92 Manuel Azaña, *Causas de la guerra de España* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2002), 33–34.

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# 10 *Como buen republicano*— Flamenco and Political Protest in the 1930s

*Shai Efrat*

Flamenco is often seen as one of the symbols of Spain, but for many Spaniards, it is socially and politically charged. As a genre born in the second half of the nineteenth century in Andalusia, it experienced ups and downs and managed to break through and become a popular genre around the world even under the dictatorial regime of General Francisco Franco. However, it may have been forgotten or suppressed that, decades before, flamenco was an integral part of the support and later of the fight for the Second Republic. Artists expressed their support mainly through songs, and some even took an active part in the civil war in the ranks of the Republic. This chapter gives voice to those artists, explores their identification with the Republic, and, finally, explains how this narrative was forgotten or replaced by another, one that was explicitly linked with the dictatorship—the Nationalist enemy.

Only little research on flamenco addresses the drastic political changes of the 1930s in Spain and highlights to the role of flamenco within this context. However, there are some exciting studies worth mentioning here: Grimaldos refers to the Republican flamenco poetry in his book, which extensively reviews and deepens the social history of flamenco.[1] Both Mora and Corrales write about Flamenco in Barcelona during the Second Republic.[2] Corrales focuses on the flamenco performances that characterized Barcelona during the civil war between 1936 and 1937. He also mentions their commitment to the Republic, reflected in flamenco performances at antifascist festivals in Barcelona. Mora examines the transition between Miguel Primo de Rivera's regime and the Second Republic. She describes various Republican events demonstrating social and political commitment that involved the participation or leadership of flamenco artists.

Both Mora and Corrales open their essays with the difficulty of placing flamenco in the political spectrum, since most studies tend to identify flamenco with the political right. It is, however, precisely in the 1930s that we see a shift in allegiances as flamenco formed stronger ties with the political left. Still, during Francoism, it once again became identified with the political right. As Corrales claims, this pendulum results from the fact that "el Flamenco, como cualquier otra manifestación artística, no puede ser encajado

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en determinada corriente política o ideológica" (Flamenco, like any other artistic manifestation, cannot be fitted into a certain political or ideological current).[3] Flamenco is a cultural and artistic expression that has adapted itself to changing circumstances. It is a dynamic genre that has been able to stay in motion and exist under different conditions and political regimes. Several scholars argue that those artists ultimately sought to assimilate to one political side or another according to the surrounding environment in each period and according to what would be advantageous for their career. I claim, however, that this is a somewhat superficial view of those artists, because their commitment to the Republic went far beyond satisfying the paying audience. Many artists risked their lives for it. There is no doubt that reality affected the position they chose at the time, and they did have specific interests to protect, but they were also motivated by ideology.

This chapter aims not only to explain the affiliation of flamenco artists to the political left during the 1930s but also to discuss the ability of the genre to move throughout the political map and serve different narratives. Following a brief introduction about flamenco, I offer several examples of artists who identified with the Republic and even actively supported it. Their untold stories explain their political tendencies during this period. Finally, I discuss this change in the narrative surrounding flamenco and highlight the essential nature of the genre, placing it in historical context.

## Flamenco's Origins and Development

Flamenco is a musical genre that took shape in Andalusia in the mid-nineteenth century and consists of three main elements: *cante* (singing), *baile* (dancing), and *toque* (playing, mainly associated with the classical Spanish guitar). It involves many specific artistic elements and a whole world of concepts, but it also has a firm social, political, and ideological dimension. There is a tendency to consider flamenco an ancient genre whose roots originated in Spain's distant past, but this is in fact part of a romantic perception of the genre and the entire region. The current consensus among researchers is that flamenco was formed into a musical genre only in the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was greatly influenced by the regional context and the rich folklore that characterized the area as a space of diverse cultures and religions.

Like other genres around the world, flamenco developed out of the processes of the modern division of labor, the change in the social structure, and the challenges to classical music, which together created a new bohemian current among those who tried to differentiate themselves in their lifestyle and culture. Indeed, the Andalusian bohemia created flamenco when they distinguished it from the folkloric styles in Andalusia, such as the *seguidilla*.[4] Flamenco was born in an urban context and reflected the transition from anonymity, rurality, and innocence to performance centered on the stage, professionalism, and artists with names that gained fame. The first manifestations

of flamenco appeared among the popular classes of the nineteenth century and as part of technological development, mass culture, and the commercialization of art.[5] Flamenco was thus born during the rise of the popular category and as part of those processes that co-occurred in different parts of the world. However, at the same time, it does not entirely fit into the popular category, largely because it was so tied to location—the close connection to Andalusia and the local folklore, as well as the ethnicity surrounding it, since many consider it a *gitano*[6] style. It is not easy to draw the line between popular music and folklore in the context of flamenco. Flamenco does not settle on just one side of the spectrum, whether politically, musically, or in many other ways, as I demonstrate in this chapter. It contains contrasts that allow it to remain in motion, to have different expressions, and to serve contrasting narratives.

During Spain's Second Republic (1931–39), which ended in a brutal civil war (1936–39), many flamenco artists clearly identified with the Republic. A significant portion of them supported the Republic, fought on the side of the Republicans, or encouraged them through music and art. However, a few decades later, with general Francisco Franco in power (1939–75), this history was forgotten and replaced. Instead, in the second half of the twentieth century, flamenco became identified with the dictatorship as a symbol of the Spanish nation.

## Singing for the Republic

Evidence of the Republican tendency among flamenco artists can be found mainly in the *Cante* for three main reasons:

1 Songs have explicit content. Even if it is not written (because flamenco has an oral heritage), it is easier to express a position in lyrics than in dance or melody. And it is also easier to record and preserve it.
2 At the time, the *Cante* was seen as the main element among flamenco *aficionados*.[7] The dance was considered more attractive for tourists, and the guitar playing accompanied the singer and dancer. The singers were thus the "important" people with the mission.
3 Flamenco singing can often be heard as a kind of cry; for years, it was considered a means of expressing a complaint and protesting the harsh reality.

This does not mean that no musicians and dancers also supported the Republic, as is evident in their participation in the antifascist events that Corrales describes.[8]

Compilations of flamenco music were released in 1996 and later in 2014. This was a significant contribution to the research and history of flamenco since it brought together a substantial part of the songs committed to the Republican cause by different artists. Among the artists in the collection is Manuel Jiménez Martínez de Pinillos, known as Manuel Vallejo (1891–60).

Vallejo was a successful and trendy Sevillian singer who also won the Golden Key award for flamenco singing (which has only been awarded five times since its foundation in 1868). The content of his songs was almost always political and social. His popularity demonstrates his ability to influence, and his choice to bring politics into his pieces was significant because of this. He was known throughout Seville for his leftist tendencies, where he completed several tours with the anarchist union National Confederation of Labor (CNT) truck. He was the first to record Republican *fandangos*[9] in Barcelona right after the declaration of the Second Republic. The lyrics were written by Emilio Mezquita y Vaca, while the music was created by Manuel López-Quiroga Miquel (known as maestro Quiroga) and edited by the Catalan record company La Voz de Su Amo[10]:

*. . . al grito de ¡VIVA ESPAÑA!*
*Canto un fandango . . .*
***como buen Republicano***.[11]

. . . to the cry of VIVA ESPAÑA!
I sing a fandango . . .
as a good Republican.

After the civil war, Vallejo was ostracized and suffered from epileptic seizures; he never experienced the same professional success again.

Another singer starring in the collections is "Chato de las Ventas" (1886–36). Born in Madrid in the Lavapies neighborhood, Pedro Martín Alonso started singing in metro stations before he began performing on stage in the Madrid theaters in the 1920s and 1930s. He was identified as a Republican and participated in Republican events, which eventually led to his arrest. At the outbreak of the civil war, he was in Extremadura returning from a concert tour. The Civil Guard arrested him there and, after verifying his Republican militancy, imprisoned him, and sentenced him to death.[12] On his death certificate, it states that he died of cardiac arrest, but there are in fact several accounts regarding his death. Another account, which was supported by his granddaughter, claims that he was shot to death by the fascists.[13]

In 1932, Chato de las Ventas contributed his famous *Colombiana* to the collection of the committed poems to the Republic. The song refers to Spain's different regions and identities: Catalonia, the Basque Country, Andalusia, Asturias, etc., each of which asks for freedom and independence when, finally, he also asks for it. This freedom is tied to the idea and the values of the Republic:

*. . . todo el mundo pide ufano*
*. . . voy a pedir también*
***como buen republicano***.[14]

. . . everyone is asking proudly
I am going to ask too
as a good Republican.

Another important example is "La niña de los peines" (1890–69). Born into a gypsy family of great artists, Pastora Pavón Cruz became a symbol of the flamenco world. She recorded almost all songs of the flamenco heritage in a comprehensive discography that is now cataloged as an oral heritage of Andalusia. Her support for the Republic was clear: during the Republic, she recorded republican songs, and during the civil war, she stayed in Madrid and continuously helped the Red Aid (Socorro Rojo). She also performed at charity events to raise funds for the Republican side. After the civil war, her artistic life was damaged and never recovered.[15] Her famous *tangos* clearly illustrate her republican tendency:

*Triana, Triana*
*qué bonita está Triana*
*cuando le ponen al puente*
*banderas* ***republicanas****.*

Triana, Triana
how beautiful Triana is
when they put on the bridge
Republican flags.

The song was not recorded until the 1940s, during the dictatorship, when its lyrics had to be changed according to censorship, and that is why it also remains so popular today.

*Triana, Triana*
*qué bonita esta Triana*
*cuando le ponen al puente*
*banderitas* ***gitanas****.*

Triana, Triana
how beautiful Triana is
when they put on the bridge
gypsy flags.

Another leading flamenco singer, who gained an excellent reputation during the years of the Second Republic and Francoism, was Juanito Valderrama. With the outbreak of the civil war, he joined the ranks of the Republican side within the CNT (the National Confederation of Labor). He first fought on the front line, but he soon moved to the rear and joined famous flamenco

figures such as Pepe Marchena or Niño Ricardo, who sang for the Republican forces in the first months of the war.[16] Valderrama is among those who, after the war, tried to stay and adapt to the new reality. He founded a new company, where he gave work to many artists who were vilified for political reasons. He composed his famous work "El Emigrante," a song with a hidden dedication to all the exiles of the period who were left with no choice:

> *Cuando salí de mi tierra/volví la cara llorando*
> *porque lo que más quería/atrás me lo iba dejando*,
> *. . . y aunque soy un emigrante*
> *jamás en la vida/yo podré olvidarte*.[17]
>
> When I left my land/I turned my face away crying
> because what I loved the most/I was leaving behind,
> . . . and although I am an emigrant
> I will never in life/be able to forget you.

Valderrama was even invited to sing this song before Franco. Antonio Burgos quotes him in his book *Juanito Valderrama: mi España querida*:

> Hizo Ricardo una introducción a la guitarra, con el fondo del piano del maestro Quiroga, y allí delante de Franco, por culpa de quien tantos españoles se habían tenido que ir de España y no podían volver y tenían que vivir lejos de su tierra, me puse a cantar la canción que precisamente hablaba de ellos, porque entonces no había todavía emigrantes a Alemania con la maleta amarrada con guita, sino exiliados de nuestra tragedia por todo el mundo.
>
> (Ricardo made an introduction to the guitar, with the background of maestro Quiroga's piano, and there in front of Franco, because of whom so many Spaniards had had to leave Spain and could not return and had to live far from their land, I began to sing the song that spoke precisely of them, because then there were not yet emigrants to Germany with the suitcase tied with money, but exiles of our tragedy all over the world.)

Franco, who enjoyed the piece and saw it as a patriotic message, even asked him for an encore: "Yo creo que he sido el único artista al que Franco, que era tan serio, le ha tocado las palmas y le ha pedido un bis." (I think I was the only artist for whom Franco, who was so serious, clapped his palms and asked for an encore.) Valderrama feared for his life and could not help but think that Franco would discover its real message: Mientras la cantaba por segunda vez no se me quitaba el mosqueo. Seguía pensando: "¿Qué va a pasar ahora como este tío se entere bien y ya no le parezca tan patriótica? ¿Pensará de buenas o pensará meterme en la cárcel?"[18] (While I was singing it for the second time, I couldn't get rid of my annoyance. I kept thinking, "What's going to happen now if this guy finds out and doesn't think I'm

so patriotic? Is he going to think good thoughts or is he going to put me in jail?") It did not happen, and everything went smoothly and even successfully. However, it exposed him to criticism, and he was put in a difficult spot. Those who did not know of his Republican past labeled him a Francoist, while he was identified with the *rojos* (reds) by some Francoists. In the eyes of Burgos, his decision to stay was bold and brave compared to those who fled.

I would also like to mention José Ruíz Arroyo ("El Corruco de Algeciras"). As he specialized in flamenco singing and began performing throughout Spain and recording albums, his Republican tendencies became apparent. Despite his obvious political leanings, Corruco was suddenly and tragically killed. The war caught him in a nationalist zone, where the national forces forcefully recruited him as they passed through Cádiz, and he had to fight in the Battle of the Ebro. As a result, he was killed by Republican fire at age twenty-eight while wearing the national uniform. According to Pinilla in *Público*, "Un amigo consiguió que no lo encarcelasen porque carecía de delitos de sangre, pero el cantaor republicano por antonomasia tuvo que alistarse en el bando franquista y fue abatido en la batalla del Ebro por fuego amigo."[19] (A friend managed to keep him out of jail because he had not committed blood crimes, but the Republican singer par excellence had to enlist on Franco's side and was killed in the battle of the Ebro by friendly fire.)

In one of his Republican songs, "Lleva una franja morá/¡Ay! Un grito de Libertad,"[20] he mentions the Republican flag and two important figures: Fermín Galán and Ángel Garcia Hernández. The two were the leaders of the rebellion against the Spanish monarchy and were executed in December 1930. The rebellion was suppressed but provoked political upheavals that led to the proclamation of the Republic. Since then, they have become a Republican symbol.

Finally, I would like to refer to "El Guerrita" (1905–75). Born in Cartagena, Murcia, Manuel González López started singing at the age of twelve. His nickname comes from the word *guerra* (war) precisely because of the many Republican words he interpreted and their combative tone. His adherence to the Republic was apparent. He recorded a variety of *fandango* lyrics as well as other styles, to which he gave a distinct Republican meaning:

***España Republicana***
*y lo es de corazón . . .*[21]

Spain is Republican
and it is from the heart . . .

In his songs, he also expresses his criticism of tyranny and encourages enlistment in the ranks of the Republic, when he directly states:

*¡Juntarse a nuestras filas!*[22]
Join our ranks!

His involvement in politics ultimately cost him dearly. In a well-known story about him, he was confused with a falangist *torero* with the same name; he was thus accused of being a traitor and even beaten by Republican fellows. He was seriously injured, leading to the end of his career.

There are many other examples of artists who supported the Republican cause and risked their lives for it. I have chosen to discuss some of them here to illustrate the reality of the period and the pattern that existed for a reason among flamenco artists. As these stories have shown, those artists' political commitment led many to the end of their careers, whether forced into exile, critically injured, or even killed. For artists who remained in Spain and tried to continue their careers, the postwar reality was very complex, and their political past put them in many positions of conflict and risk.

## The Republican Tendency

The aforementioned examples clearly demonstrate the Republican tendency that those artists had. It was hard to find such identification with the nationalist side. As Piñeiro writes, the nationalist side had its music, which was a different kind of music:

> Entre las canciones recopiladas del Bando Nacional destaca la presencia de un gran número de composiciones de origen culto o semiculto, en su mayoría de autor reconocido, sobre las que predominan aquellas vinculadas a la Falange. . . . La mayoría de estas composiciones presentan un ritmo militarizado (es el caso de Camisa Azul) reflejo de la organización castrense de este bando. En sus letras, existen una serie de ideas recurrentes (el amanecer, el sol, Isabel y Fernando . . .) sobre las que se sustentaban algunos de los fundamentos ideológicos de los llamados nacionales.[23]
>
> (Among the compiled songs of the Bando Nacional, the presence of a great number of compositions of cult or semi-cult origin stands out, most of them of recognized author, over which predominate those linked to the Falange. . . . Most of these compositions present a militarized rhythm [as in the case of Camisa Azul], reflecting the military organization of this side. In their lyrics, there are a series of recurring ideas [the dawn, the sun, Isabel and Fernando . . . on which some of the ideological foundations of the so-called nationalists were based.)

The only song found related to flamenco that was played on both sides is a *Copla Flamenca*, called "Mi Jaca." On the nationalist side, it was sung by Estrellita Castro, a famous singer and actress. In contrast, on the Republican side, it was sung by Angelillo, a flamenco *copla* singer and actor. But the songwriters had a clear Republican identity.[24] There were probably several flamenco artists who supported the nationalist side. However, there is no doubt that the general tendency was toward the Republic, and with good reason.

The main reason lies in the characteristics of the region and these artists' background. Andalusia in the nineteenth century was an area with a high concentration of peasants and agricultural workers, mostly uneducated and illiterate. Hierarchy, class differences, inequality, poverty, and hunger characterized the region. The concentration of land in the hands of a few and the working conditions led to conflicts, protests, and the creation of many movements and associations, including trade unions, some of them with anarchist agendas. Their main aim was to access land ownership. Ideas from the socialist spectrum began to spread throughout the region, and several socialist parties, recognizing the potential inherent in those unions, tried to recruit them into their ranks. That is how the connection with the political left was born, which later led to the sacrifice of many Andalusians in the battles for the Republic. As Goldbach describes:

> Sevilla was the first major city invaded by the Nationalist forces in the July 1936 coup. Both Triana and the neighboring barrio of Macarena were known to be hotbeds of anarcho-syndicalism and communism and presented the greatest armed resistance to the coup.[25]

Flamenco, as an art that was born in Andalusia at the same time, primarily among destitute, illiterate people, and sometimes within the families of these workers, was influenced by the struggles that were reflected in the content of the songs. The rise of the Second Republic in Spain initially benefited these workers, fulfilling the vision of abolishing the monarchy and improving citizens' rights. During the Republic, culture in general and flamenco in particular flourished. As Gamboa writes, "It will be during the Republic when the first flamenco artists join the Spanish Society of Authors and Publishers. According to the box office and ticket sales, cinematography, flamenco, football, and bullfighting are experiencing moments of splendor."[26] Vargas also describes this euphoria in the Republic:

> La II República constituyó uno de los momentos de mayor expansión e innovación estética en las artes y en la cultura en general, algo a lo que no fue ajeno el flamenco. En general, el mundo del flamenco, que era considerado "arte del pueblo", celebró con entusiasmo el advenimiento de la república, los espectáculos triunfaban con figuras de la talla de la Niña de los Peines, Manuel Vallejo o Pepe Marchena que estaban en un momento esplendente, aparecen nuevos estilos por parte de éstos y otros cantaores y la guitarra flamenca de concierto, personificada en Ramón Montoya, se presenta en París. Desde un punto de vista lúdico-social, el nuevo género musical se incorpora como una forma más de la cultura de masas, cual era el caso del cine o los espectáculos producidos para grandes auditorios tal ocurría con los conciertos de "ópera flamenca" en plazas de toros y teatros.[27]

> (The Second Republic was one of the moments of greatest expansion and aesthetic innovation in the arts and culture in general, something to which flamenco was no stranger. In general, the world of flamenco, which was considered "art of the people," celebrated with enthusiasm the advent of the republic, the shows triumphed with figures of the stature of the Niña de los Peines, Manuel Vallejo, or Pepe Marchena, who were in a splendid moment; new styles appeared by these and other singers, and the flamenco concert guitar, personified in Ramón Montoya, was presented in Paris. From a ludic-social point of view, the new musical genre is incorporated as one more form of mass culture, as was the case with the cinema or the shows produced for large auditoriums, such as the "flamenco opera" concerts in bullrings and theaters.)

That is another reason they fought for it and sought to protect and preserve it. The same support and sympathy toward the Republic were expressed in the period's songs, which were later used during the civil war.

**The Change in the Narrative**

With the victory of the nationalists and the rise of Francisco Franco to power, a few decades later, flamenco became identified with the dictatorship. Some even refer to the later period of Francoism as *Nacionalflamencismo*, and flamenco was transformed into—or rather returned as—one of the main symbols of the Spanish nation.

In the 1950s, in what is known as late Francoism, when the regime began to moderate and open up in certain ways (mainly for economic growth and to improve its image in the world), employment opportunities in the flamenco field increased. The then new Ministry of Information and Tourism launched initiatives in music and culture and new campaigns, inviting tourists from all over the world to experience what Spain had to offer: among other things, flamenco. This new atmosphere of development and tourism in Spain also opened doors for flamenco artists. During this period, two flamenco venues were born: the *Tabalo* and the *Peña Flamenca*. The new wave of tourists created a renewed demand for flamenco while the interest in flamenco in Spain itself emerged in cinema, music, and theaters. As a result, flamenco became associated with Franco's dictatorial regime within a few years and created the impression that there was a connection between the two, when in practice, flamenco managed to return and thrive under the regime, but not entirely thanks to it.

This change in the general narrative—from flamenco associated with the Republic to flamenco associated with the Francoist regime—was also possible due to the complex nature of the genre. Flamenco was born controversial and has constantly provoked discussion and criticism around it in different periods, whether regarding ethnicity, identity, quality, authenticity, or issues surrounding messages of hedonism and sensuality that it transmits through

aspects of the performance. Canova explains that flamenco contains many tensions expressed in binary contrasts, such as private–public, domestic–foreign, local–national, pure–impure, Gypsy–Andalusian, and traditional–modern.[28] I claim that these tensions allow it to exist simultaneously in different spaces and diverse expressions. Flamenco is not a single, unequivocal expression with precise characteristics but a spectrum of expressions. As a result, it can sometimes be *gitano* and sometimes Andalusian (instead of only one or the other); it can be traditional, and it can be modern. It depends on the point of view, the reality, and the different interests it may serve. The fact that it already contains these many possibilities allows it to exist in diverse spaces and fit different narratives with various interests. It allows the genre to stay in motion and pragmatically survive periods with distinct political and social challenges. Likewise, in the context of the civil war and the dictatorship, flamenco could be both Republican and, some years later, one of the marketing symbols of the dictatorship. Artists who survived the war and tried to restore their careers rebranded themselves according to the current reality and its demands. When they could, some even returned to protest through flamenco during later stages of the Francoist regime, such as José Menese, Antonio Gades, Paco Moyano, and Manuel Gerena.

## Conclusions

This case study examines the political and social dimensions of flamenco. As a genre born from below, from the people, it reflects their day-to-day life with all that it entails. During the Republic and the civil war, flamenco artists were identified with the Republicans through their poetry and singing, largely because these artists grew up in Andalusia. Flamenco is not associated with a particular political side but is influenced by life and experience. Due to the local character of flamenco, its Andalusian identity, and thus the common background of the artists and *aficionados* (flamenco fans), the general tendency to support the Republic in the 1930s is understandable.

At the same time, the success of the genre and its capacity to traverse the borders of not only Andalusia but also Spain repeatedly led to its appropriation on a political and national scale. The change in the narrative regarding flamenco that followed the wivil war shows how it can serve different interests and exist in diverse spaces, mainly thanks to its complexity and the tensions inherent to the genre. Today, after being associated with the dictatorship for years, flamenco has managed to shake this narrative and has undoubtedly become one of the most famous genres in the world.

Although there is still far more to learn about the life stories of these artists and others, this research opens up other questions. Many artists were forced into exile during and after the civil war; some became famous in exile and only later returned to Spain, and some never returned. It will be interesting to examine what happened to those artists during their exile and whether the protest continued. It is also interesting to investigate the moral or other

challenges faced by those who survived the war and stayed in Spain with the possibility to continue their careers. Alternatively, one could also examine the later protest among artists in the 1960s and 1970s when flamenco was already considered a famous national symbol.

## Notes

1 Alfredo Grimaldos, *Historia social del flamenco* (Barcelona: Península, 2017).
2 Eloy Martín Corrales, "El flamenco en la Barcelona revolucionaria: julio de 1936 a mayo de 1937," *Actas del XXVIII Congreso de Arte Flamenco* (Barcelona, 2000): 82–97.
Montse Madridejos Mora,"El flamenco en Barcelona. Intentos de adaptación a la II República," *Revista de Investigación sobre Flamenco "La madrugá"* 2 (2010): 1–15.
3 Corrales, "El flamenco en la Barcelona revolucionaria," 83.
4 At a later stage, some popular styles entered the corpus of flamenco in specific versions.
5 Cristina Cruces Roldán, "El Flamenco," in *Expresiones culturales andaluzes*, ed. Juan Agudo y Isidoro Moreno (Seville: Aconcagua Libros, 2012): 219–82.
6 The *Gitanos* (Romani people) were initially nomadic people originating in northern India. Today they are scattered around the world, mainly in Europe. Andalusia has a large community, with evidence of its presence in the area since the fifteenth century. As for flamenco, many see it as a Romani genre or at least one that was heavily influenced by the music and dances of that community. There is a long-standing controversy and an intensive search around the genre's origin to decide whether it is Romani or Andalusian. In some cases, those with Romani roots get supremacy in the flamenco world, and in some periods, Andalusians even tried to pass as Romani. Today, with a more mixed population, studies have tried to move away from a fixation with the origin and instead deal with current social and geographical issues.
7 The name was given to flamenco fans who also know how to appreciate and discuss it professionally.
8 Corrales, "El flamenco en la Barcelona revolucionaria."
9 A flamenco rhythm originating in a folk style.
10 Sara Pineda Giraldo, "La II República a compases flamencos," in *La Segona República. Cultures i projectes polítics. Congrés Internacional d'Història* (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2016), 8.
11 Centro de Documentación musical de Andalucía, *Cantes flamencos republicanos dedicado a los capitanes Galán y García Hernández* (Seville: Pasarela, D.L., 1996).
12 Pineda Giraldo, "La II República a compases flamencos," 13.
13 Grimaldos, *Historia social del flamenco*, 79; Chema Álvarez Rodríguez, "El Chato de las Ventas y el Amor de Juan Simón," *El Salto*, December 30, 2021.
14 Centro de Documentación musical de Andalucía, *Cantes flamencos republicanos*.
15 Juan Pinilla, "Las voces que no callaron," *Mundo Obrero*, November 13, 2020.
16 Pinilla, "Las voces que no callaron."
17 Antonio Burgos, "Aquella España de Juanito Valderrama. Sinfonía de introducción: una copla para el Generalísimo," *Magazine*, February 3, 2002.
18 Valderrama in Burgos, "Aquella España de Juanito Valderrama."
19 Pinilla in Henrique Mariño, "Los cantaores de flamenco que murieron por defender la República y luchar contra Franco," *Público*, November 16, 2019.
20 Centro de Documentación musical de Andalucía, *Cantes flamencos republicanos*.

21 Centro de Documentación musical de Andalucía, *Cantes flamencos republicanos*.
22 Centro de Documentación musical de Andalucía, *Cantes flamencos republicanos*.
23 Teresa Piñeiro-Otero, "El cancionero de la guerra civil. Propaganda y contrapropaganda sonora," *Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI* 12 (2005): 115–16.
24 José Manuel Gamboa, *Una Historia del Flamenco* (Madrid: Espasa, 2005), 278.
25 Theresa Goldbach, *Fascism, Flamenco, and Ballet Español: Nacionalflamenquismo* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico, 2014), 24.
26 Gamboa, *Una Historia del Flamenco*, 257.
27 Paco Vargas, "La Utilización Política del Arte Flamenco," *ÁticoIzquierda.es Revista de cultura. Opinión y actualidad* (2017). https://aticoizquierdaflamenco.blogspot.com/2017/07/la-utilizacion-politica-del-arte.html
28 Nicolas Canova, "La música como objeto geográfico. Estado de la cuestión y perspectivas de tratamiento," *Antropología Experimental* 15 (2015): 465–82.

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# 11 Talking About a Revolution

## Federica Montseny and Emma Goldman During the Spanish Civil War

*Catarina von Wedemeyer*

For the anarchists, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War signified the long-awaited realization of a worldwide revolution. In this regard, the Russian-Lithuanian-American-English anarchist and activist Emma Goldman (1869–1940) and Spanish anarchist and politician Federica Montseny (1905–94) agreed. The story of their intra-anarchist controversy, however, is yet to be told. The two comrades had been in touch ever since Max Nettlau introduced them during Goldman's first trip to Spain (December 1928–January 1929), but they disagreed on too many points to establish a friendship. One disagreement was the ideological impossibility of political collaboration: Goldman judged Montseny for serving as Minister of Health in the Republican government (November 1936–May 1937), while Montseny condemned Goldman for being too detached from the reality of the Spanish Civil War.

Unlike Sueiro Seoane's work (unpublished),[1] which mainly draws biographical parallels between the two women, this chapter focuses on both writers' publications dedicated to the Spanish Revolution. These works have never been subject to a comparative reading, but they are all the more compelling when read together, since both authors explored specific questions of the Spanish Revolution, such as the militarization of the formerly pacifist anarchist movement, while also engaging with more general issues, such as anarchist feminism or carceral abolitionism.[2]

While Montseny's oeuvre has not yet been systematically edited, Goldman's encounters with Spanish anarchists have been researched by Robert Kern, and a selection of Goldman's publications during the Spanish Civil War has been edited by David Porter.[3] This chapter begins with an insight into Goldman's publications in the English journal *Spain and the World* and then offers a parallel reading of Goldman and Montseny's writings, focusing specifically on Montseny's article "El anarquismo militante y la realidad española" from March 1937 and Goldman's "Address to the International Working Men's Association Congress" (dated 1937–38).

As Sueiro Seoane points out, both anarchists refused to be called feminists, because they associated this term with the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie.[4] Neither Goldman nor Montseny supported the suffragette movement. For

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Goldman specifically, the issue was not the electoral system but the existence of a government per se. Both women rejected marriage and considered the feminist movement too elitist, because the vocabulary was still tied to upper-class women who understood their feminism more in terms of patronage and charity. The Mujeres Libres were an exception to this rule, since they were an association of female workers and therefore embodied the ideal combination of an intersectional consciousness of gender and class.[5] However, since Montseny wanted to focus on the question of class only, she decided not to join the Mujeres Libres, while Goldman published with them and actively supported the related Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (SIA).[6]

Goldman had considered herself an anarchist ever since the age of thirteen, when she was forced to drop out of school and work in a corset shop in Saint Petersburg. In 1885, Goldman and her sister moved to Rochester, New York, where Emma worked as a seamstress.[7] She soon befriended a group of local anarchists, began editing the review "Mother Earth," and lived out a concept of free love with Alexander Berkman and Ben Reitman, among others. Goldman and Berkman were arrested several times until they were deported to Russia in 1919, where their excitement about the Russian Revolution would turn into disappointment. Since the FBI considered her the "most dangerous woman in America,"[8] Goldman would live in European exile from then on.

Federica Montseny, on the other hand, never had to work factory jobs, despite having been raised by anarchist parents who were both editors of *La Revista Blanca*. In comparison to Goldman's atheism, bisexuality,[9] and decision for a child-free life, Montseny seems surprisingly heteronormative with her use of religious metaphors, homophobia, and belief in women's fulfillment through motherhood.[10] Montseny published her first novellas at the age of fifteen (1920),[11] and she would go on to write over fifty books of fiction and essays throughout her life. As a member of the CNT, the anarchist *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, during the Spanish Civil War, she became the first female minister of Spain, serving as Minister of Health from November 1936 until May 1937. So while Montseny collaborated with the Republican government and argued for a unification of all antifascist parties in order to defeat Franco, Goldman strictly disapproved of all kinds of governmental structures and was extremely skeptical of the rapprochement between the CNT-FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica) and the communist Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT).[12] In a 1936 letter to Rudolf Rocker, Goldman comments on the circumstances:

> Well, dear Rudolf, I wish I could be more enthusiastic. It is not that I am of faint heart. It is that I cannot possibly believe in politicians no matter if they call themselves CNT-FAI. And some of them are that. Federica for instance. She has gone to the Right and she has a great influence here. She has become Minister of Health. What great achievement? It is all so sad.[13]

**Emma Goldman: Madrid, the Wonder of Centuries**

In July 1936, at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Goldman was mourning the loss of Alexander "Sasha" Berkman, who had shot himself a month earlier. After two months, she found new hope in the Spanish Revolution.[14] On September 15, 1936, Goldman traveled to Barcelona and from there to the Aragon front, Valencia, and Madrid. By then, almost 75 percent of the Catalonian economy was under anarchist administration.[15] Farms and factories had been collectivized and turned into libertarian communes; hotels, restaurants, and the public transport were organized by worker committees.

In October 1936, one month before the anarchist Buenaventura Durruti was shot dead, Goldman visited him at the front in Pina de Ebro, Aragón. In the obituary "Durruti Is Dead, Yet Living,"[16] Goldman quotes him speaking to a worker volunteering in his column: "Don't you see comrade, the war you and I are waging is to safeguard our Revolution and the Revolution is to do away with the misery and suffering of the poor." In the beginning, Goldman's war reports are filled with this same optimistic enthusiasm. Her contributions in the bi-weekly English anarchist review *Spain and the World*[17] range from observations, accounts, and homages to the courage of Spanish workers at the start of the conflict to fundraising petitions and motivational manifestos toward the end of the war.

During the war, Goldman would undertake three trips to Spain, each lasting several weeks. During her first visit in 1936 (September 15–December 23), Goldman witnessed the anarchist endeavors in Catalonia and the euphoria of a possible new world, but then the events of May events took place as the leftist parties suddenly confronted each other. The Republicans and the Communists fought against the anarchists and the Marxists, resulting in devastating losses on all sides.[18] Consequently, the Largo Caballero government was overturned, and the four anarchist ministers (Federica Montseny, Joan García Oliver, Joan Peiró, and Juan López) were dismissed from their posts. The Communist influence over the Republican government had become obvious: under Negrín most revolutionary achievements were revoked, and the influence of the Generalitat de Catalunya was severely limited.[19] During her second visit in autumn of 1937 (September 16–November 5, 1937), Goldman already noticed a weakened anarchist spirit. Another year later, Goldman's third visit (September 15–October 29) coincided with the disastrous Battle of the Ebro, from which the Republican army would not recover.

Within the Republican zone, Goldman traveled not only with Federica Montseny but also with Lucía Sánchez Saornil, the founder of the Mujeres Libres,[20] and her partner América Barroso; in 1938, she also traveled with Lola Iturbe.[21] Goldman actively supported the CNT-FAI by editing their *Boletín de información*[22] and by responding to English letters.[23] She wished to stay in Spain each year: "A thousand times would I have rather remained

in Spain to risk my life in their struggle than returned to the so-called safety in England."[24] However, since she did not speak Spanish, Goldman spent most of the time in London to support the Spanish Civil War by organizing publicity campaigns and screenings of the propaganda documentary *Fury over Spain* (1936). In collaboration with Mujeres Libres, Goldman showed tireless dedication in raising funds for Spanish refugee women and children and wrote fervent appeals for support of the Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (SIA), which were also published in *Spain and the World*. The review continued the tradition of the *Freedom Paper*, but during the Spanish Civil War, it also openly competed with supporters of the Soviet movements in Spain, creating the ideal platform for Goldman.[25]

During the first half of the war, Goldman's publications in *Spain and the World* shared the optimism of what Enzensberger called "anarchy's brief summer."[26] Goldman's article from September 1937 reads like a personal letter to the English comrades:

> You will be impatient with me that I have written so little since I got to Spain. The events are too overwhelming for letters. . . . Madrid is the wonder of centuries for there is nothing like it in fortitude and epic grandeur.[27]

Soon Goldman had convinced a considerable number of intellectuals to support the SIA, among them George Orwell and her friend Ethel Mannin. The latter participated in the fundraising campaigns, addressing people individually: "Sympathy is not enough. The children need food. Your help should come quickly. Need I say more?"[28] Goldman's appeal for support of the SIA from March 1938 is written in the same tone:

> We want membership and anything you can give out of the fullness of your heart to the SIA. . . . We beseech you comrades and friends to do your utmost in your efforts for the SIA. Fraternally, EMMA GOLDMAN.[29]

During her last trip in autumn 1938, instead of writing articles or letters, Goldman sent overviews of the latest events that the editors of *Spain and the World* organized as lists of topics. A contribution from November 1938, for example, begins with a passage titled "Eye Witness Account of P.O.U.M. Trials." As a former political prisoner herself, Goldman sympathized with the Marxist workers[30]:

> Even in the face of a possible death sentence Comrade Goldman reports that all the prisoners were unflinchingly brave. . . . Even the appallingly heavy sentences were met with raised heads and hands clenched in the Workers' salute.[31]

On "the collectives," Goldman reports:

> In spite of every discouraging element the workers' collectives still continue and some new ones have been started, one new clothing factory collective has been formed—almost entirely staffed by women, which operates at night, since more electric current is available at night, when other factories are closed down.[32]

And in "Front Line Trenches," we read:

> E.G. paid a visit to two Fronts and inspected the Division under our Comrade Roveres. Defeatism is non-existent, Fortitude and Courage are dominant. The civilian population refuses to be frightened by bombardment—although air attacks occur several times daily in some parts.[33]

Even toward the end of the war, Goldman insisted on focusing on morally uplifting news. At the same time, the list conveys a sense of urgency and fragmentation. Emma Goldman's contributions for *Spain and the World* overall demonstrate her strong personal commitment to the cause of the Spanish Revolution. To maintain English solidarity with the Spanish anarchists, she refrains as much as possible from publicly sharing her criticism about their collaborations with the Socialists, the Communists, and the government.

**Federica Montseny: A United Front**

Already in September 1936, Goldman seemed to have foreseen Montseny's political career. In a private letter, she wrote, "I saw and talked to Federica Montseny. She is the 'Lenin' in skirts. She is idolized here. She is certainly very capable and brilliant but I am afraid she has something of the politician in her."[34] Only two months later, Montseny would fill said position as Minister of Health, and while Goldman despaired over the coalition between the anarchist CNT-FAI and the socialist UGT, Montseny would do everything to preserve it.[35] In the same letter to Rudolf Rocker (from September 1936), Goldman comments on Montseny's political decisions as follows:

> She it was who helped to pass through the formation of the new Council which is replacing the Generalidad. It is really only another name for the same thing. Let us hope the CNT will have no reasons to regret having entered into the Council as a governing body. However, I am very glad to see that Federica is such an intellectual, and organizing force. She works like a dog, 18 hours of 24.[36]

Another ambivalent note is included in a letter by Goldman to Mark Mratchny from August 2, 1937:

> The address of Montseny is also very illuminating, though I rather found her a bit too self-satisfied, and uncritical. I don't say that in any sense of condemnation. One whose whole life was spent in one sphere must be even more insular than most of the Spanish comrades who have lived in exile. Naturally she would see everything in roseate colors. Nevertheless, she is among the ablest of our people, and certainly the bravest.[37]

In contrast to the international anarchists, who held on to their vision of an anti-hierarchical society, the Spanish anarchist ministers Federica Montseny and Joan Garcia Oliver found themselves amid the civil war and were constantly forced to make urgent decisions. To overcome the ideological differences within the left and to create a sense of unity between all workers, Montseny, for example, always addressed all leftist parties and often referred to the French Revolution:

> Esta es la bandera de la libertad, la bandera de la igualdad, la bandera de la justicia, levantada por el pueblo de Francia, por el pueblo de París, que supo vivir para dar un ideal al mundo. . . . Camaradas: amigos todos, socialistas, comunistas, anarquistas, republicanos: a la lucha para vencer, a la lucha para vencer, aun cuando nos cueste la vida, para el triunfo final, porque esta victoria y este triunfo son la causa y el porvenir del mundo.[38]

In her speech "El anarquismo militante y la realidad española"[39] from March 1937, Montseny defends her position by referring to the specific circumstances of the Spanish Civil War. She praises the Spanish revolution and insists on the anarchists taking credit for the initial success: "No hubiera habido revolución si no hubiésemos nosotros preparado al pueblo. Es este nuestro triunfo y el galardón más preciado que tenemos los anarquistas."[40] But Montseny then reveals her willingness to compromise, which directly opposes Goldman's principles: "Sin que la filosofía anarquista haya sido rectificada, hemos sabido adaptarnos a las circunstancias." Montseny defends the coalitions as necessary for a united antifascist front and celebrates the anarchist-socialist achievements in a way that Goldman deemed "self-satisfied"[41]:

> Se necesitaba un verdadero frente único . . . para oponer un valladar infranqueable al fascismo internacional, . . . ahora este pueblo que va venciendo a los fascistas, avanza socialmente creando un nuevo concepto de la vida, una nueva sociedad. Decidme si no es grande lo que estamos haciendo? Cuando contemplemos las horas que estamos viviendo nos asombraremos de nosostros mismos.[42]

Like Goldman, Montseny warns about a repetition of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, where the anarchist movement was shattered into pieces.[43] She reminds her readers of the bigger motivation to create an equal society, of which the antifascist struggle of the Spanish Civil War is only one element:

> El pueblo español, al luchar contra el fascismo, lucha al mismo tiempo contra las desigualdades sociales. . . . No se trata de una guerra civil. Es la guerra del pueblo, de los trabajadores contra el señorito, contra el militar, contra el parásito.[44]

So while both Goldman and Montseny criticized the Stalinists, Montseny, unlike Goldman, was still willing to collaborate with the Communists in Spain. Goldman spent 1919–21 in Russia and viewed the Communists as traitors to the cause ever since.[45]

Despite disagreeing in their political views, Goldman and Montseny did coincide in their grief over the loss of Durruti, and both helped to convert Durruti's legacy from that of a so-called troublemaker to a revolutionary hero. Montseny's obituary for Durruti is six pages long, and with its many repetitions, anaphors, parallelisms, and metaphors, it reads almost poetically:

> Durruti era un hijo del pueblo. . . . Durruti ha muerto, Durruti era más que un hombre, era ya algo legendario, Durruti ha muerto. Ha muerto en el frente luchando en esta tierra de Madrid a la que ha venido a ofrendar su vida. . . . Durruti dormía en el suelo como dormían todos. Este era Durruti, el que tantas veces he definido diciendo que era un cuerpo de gigante con un alma de niño. . . . Durruti será el símbolo de todos. . . . Durruti no es Durruti. Durruti no es un hombre. Durruti somos todos nosotros. . . . Antifascistas de todas las tendencias, es la hora de la unidad sagrada.[46]

### The Betrayal of the Spanish Revolution

Goldman, on the other hand, refrained from religious comparisons. Even when she talked about betrayal, she remained strictly in the political realm. In her article "Political Persecution in Republican Spain,"[47] published in December 1937, Goldman expresses her disdain for the Communists. According to her, the Communists used "flagwagging, speeches, music and demonstrations" to manipulate the masses[48] instead of constructively working toward a different society, like the anarchists.[49] When Goldman compares the Communist-led Cheka prison Montjuich with anarchist-led Modelo prison, she describes the first as "terrifying"[50] and the latter as "decent and just,"[51] "as far as prison conditions can be humane." She complains that instead of abolishing prisons, anarchists and revolutionaries would find themselves imprisoned,[52] sometimes even without charges. To prove her anti-communist case,

Goldman writes about the Stalinist murderers of anarchists Camillo Berneri and Francesco Barbieri:

> The report of the foul murder of . . . Berneri and . . . Barbieri, was followed by wholesale arrests, mutilation and death. . . . I decided to go back to Spain to see for myself how far the new-found freedom of the Spanish masses had been annihilated by Stalin's henchmen.[53]

Goldman ends her article by calling out dictatorships in general, referring both to "red and black," that is, Stalinism and fascism: "Since the world slaughter and the continued horror under dictatorship, red and black, human sensibilities have been atrophied; but there must be a few left who still have a sense of justice." Her argument against the Communist Party culminates in this comparison.

In addition to calling out Stalinist violence, the Russian methods of torture, and the assassination of individual anarchists, in her "Address to the International Working Men's Association Congress" (1937–38), Goldman also explains that if there were communist solidarity, the Russians would have given their weapons for free instead of selling them too late and for exaggerated prices.[54] She again compares fascism and Soviet Communism: "it does not seem worthwhile to sacrifice one ideal in the struggle against Fascism, if it only means to make room for Soviet Communism. . . . [T]here is no difference between them."[55] Hannah Arendt would later describe the differences between Stalinism and national-socialist fascism, but Goldman seems to have already identified the comparable traits of totalitarianism during their very implementation.[56]

Since the Spanish Revolution could be considered a failure by the time of this publication (late 1937/early 1938), Goldman tried to defend the CNT, at least concerning its moral stance. The evidence she gives for this statement include a higher volume of anarchist papers in comparison to the communist ones and higher meeting attendance. She also mentions Montseny: "I went to Allecante [*sic*] with comrade Federica Montseney [*sic*] and although the meeting was held in the forenoon, and rain came down in a downpour, the hall was nevertheless packed to capacity."[57]

To avoid undermining the Spanish anarchists further, despite her clear stance against communism, Goldman found herself forced to publicly justify the rapprochement between the Spanish anarchists and Communists.[58] Her "Address" documents this ideological struggle. Goldman starts by criticizing the Spanish anarchists:

> [O]ur comrades in Spain are plunging head foremost into the abyss of compromise that will lead them far away from their revolutionary aim. . . . The participation of the CNT-FAI in the government, and concessions to the insatiable monster in Moscow, have certainly *not* benefited the Spanish Revolution, or even the anti-Fascist struggle.[59]

However, just like Federica Montseny a year earlier, Goldman now also tries to explain their collaboration with the immediate threat of the Francoists.[60] As Porter puts it, "[f]or Goldman, the pact [with the UGT] is a nightmare and poisons her daily existence."[61] After all, it was her life's work that was at stake.[62] Containing her expressions of frustration to private letters, publicly, she maintained intra-anarchist solidarity: "Comrades, the CNT-FAI are in a burning house; . . . it seems to me a breach of solidarity to pour the acid of your criticism on their burned flesh."[63] The formerly committed pacifist Goldman again ends up using the same explanations as Montseny when justifying military training for Spanish civilians:

> True, the tacit consent to militarization on the part of our Spanish comrades was a violent break with their Anarchist past. But grave as this was, it must also be considered in the light of their utter military inexperience. I still feel the same abhorrence of militarism, its dehumanization, its brutality and its power to turn men into automatons. But my contact with our comrades . . . convinced me that some training was certainly needed if our militias were not to be sacrificed like newborn children on the altar of war. . . . We had always condemned war as serving capitalism and no other purpose; but . . . Airplanes bombarding towns and villages and all the other monster mechanisms cannot be stopped by spiritual values.[64]

Instead of dwelling on the intra-anarchist disagreements, Goldman finally focuses on insults that concern the English and Spanish anarchists equally, such as the comparison of anarchists and Communists, which she disputes vehemently: "I fail to see even the remotest similarity. Lenin aimed at a formidable State machine, a deadly dictatorship. . . . [T]he CNT-FAI not only aimed at, but actually gave life to, libertarian economic reconstructions."[65] In contrast to the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, where the war came "from within," Goldman argues that the Spanish also had to fight Hitler and Mussolini in addition to Franco's fascism.[66] In Goldman's understanding, the Spanish Revolution failed because nobody trusted the anarchists—not the bourgeoisie, democrats, Marxists, or liberals: "In point of truth the Spanish revolution was betrayed by the whole world."[67]

Goldman almost excuses Federica Montseny and the other Spanish anarchists who had served in the Largo Caballero government when she calls their entry into the ministries "the least offensive." But she goes back and forth between her principles and a defense of the Spanish comrades:

> No, I have not changed my attitude toward government as an evil. As all through my life, I still hold that the State is a cold monster, and that it devours everyone within its reach. . . . But with Franco at the gate of Madrid, I could hardly blame the CNT-FAI for choosing a lesser

> evil—participation in the government rather than dictatorship, the most deadly evil.[68]

She ultimately finds conciliatory words, reminding her comrades of their past bravery and evoking a glorious future:

> I know the CNT-FAI have gone far afield from their and our ideology. But that cannot make me forget their glorious revolutionary traditions of seventy years. Their gallant struggle—always haunted, always driven at bay, always in prison and exile.[69]

Goldman's final judgment here seems like a review of her own lifetime, her own seventy years, her own struggle, and her own time in prison and exile. But despite the concessions she made in defense of the Spanish comrades, her essays bare so many visionary ideas that they transcend the genre of war reports. Goldman's way of balancing pacifism against military training is just as topical today, much like her ideas on carceral abolitionism or her arguments for abortion[70] and LGBTQI rights.[71] Federica Montseny's willingness to compromise is exactly what made her a good politician. Emma Goldman, on the other hand, was neither a politician nor a war reporter in today's sense of the word. She remained what she always was: a timeless visionary activist who wanted to "do away with the misery and suffering of the poor."[72]

## Notes

1 Susana Sueiro Seoane, "Federica Montseny y Emma Goldman: Dos visiones anarquistas sobre la emancipación de la mujer" (unpublished manuscript, 2011), 5.

2 See Catarina von Wedemeyer, "Anarchism and Prison Abolitionism—Goldman and Montseny on Women in Prison" (paper, Untold Stories of the Spanish Civil War: International Workshop III, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, February 21, 2023).

3 Robert W. Kern, "Anarchist Principles and Spanish Reality: Emma Goldman as a Participant in the Civil War 1936–39," in "Conflict and Compromise: Socialists and Socialism in the Twentieth Century," special issue, *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 2/3 (July 1976): 237–59.

David Porter, ed. *Vision on Fire. Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh and Oakland, WV: AK Press, 2006; first published 1983).

4 Ambas rehusaron explícitamente definirse como "feministas" y denunciaron el movimiento feminista como elitista y excluyente de la clase obrera, que para ambas era la víctima real de la sociedad. Consideraban que el activismo de esas mujeres de clase media no hacía sino perpetuar las odiosas instituciones que tenían encadenada a la humanidad: el Estado, la Iglesia y la familia.

(Sueiro Seoane, "Federica Montseny y Emma Goldman," 6)

See also Nuria Cruz-Cámara, *La Mujer Moderna En Los Escritos de Federica Montseny* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2015), 13–38, 151–66.

5 See Vera Bianchi ed., *Mujeres Libres. Libertäre Kämpferinnen*, trans. Renée Steenbock and Vera Bianchi (Bodenburg: Verlag Edition AV, 2019).

6 Goldman published several articles in *Mujeres Libres*. One example is her text "Situación social de la mujer" (1936), originally published in *Mujeres Libres*.

*Semana 21 de la Revolución*. In Mary Nash, ed., *Mujeres Libres: España 1936–1939* (Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1977), 127–31.
See also Sueiro Seoane, "Federica Montseny y Emma Goldman," 31:

> Goldman ofreció encantada su colaboración a Mujeres Libres cuando se la pidieron porque, al contrario que Montseny, creía necesario que las mujeres luchasen contra la opresión específica que sufrían por el hecho de serlo. Por supuesto que, en tanto que anarquista, consideraba que la lucha central debía ser contra la opresión económica de toda la clase obrera, pero no por ello creía que debía descuidarse la lucha contra la discriminación femenina en una sociedad patriarcal.

7 Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman in Exile: From the Russian Revolution to the Spanish Civil War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 30.
8 The FBI files on Emma Goldman have been digitally accessible since January 2023, including an FBI collection of newspaper articles on Emma Goldman. See von Wedemeyer, "Anarchism and Prison Abolitionism."
9 See the letters by Almeda Sperry, for example, in: Jonathan Ned Katz, "Almeda Sperry to Emma Goldman: 1912," *OutHistory*, republished May 1, 2015; and Vivian Gornick, *Emma Goldman: Revolution as a Way of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).
10 See Gloria Espigado Tocino, "Las Mujeres En El Anarquismo Español (1869–1939)," *Ayer* 45 (2002): 64, n. 69: "Federica Montseny encontraba en la maternidad la realisación casi artística, por elevada, de la mujer, llegando a expresar en algun momento que una mujer sin hijos era 'arbol sin frutos, rosal sin rosas.'" In June 1977, the journal *Andalán* included an interview with Montseny in which she considers her post as minister her "biggest error" and also reveals her homophobia:

> Yo respeto la libertad de todo el mundo, lo que me disgusta es que estos seres, los gay, se crean superiores a los demás. . . . La homosexualidad, a mi entender, es un símbolo de debilidad, de decadencia social.

*In* Ramón Rovira, "Federica Montseny: 'ser ministro fue mi mayor error'," *Andalán* 118 (June 17–24, 1977): 12. See also Federica Montseny, "La mujer, problema del hombre," *La Revista Blanca* 97 (June 1927). In contrast, compare to Emma Goldman, "Louise Michel. Letter to Magnus Hirschfeld," trans. James Steakley = id., "Offener Brief an den Herausgeber der Jahrbücher über Louise Michel," *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (1923): 70.
11 In 1920 alone, Montseny published eleven texts: *Horas Trágicas* (1920), *Amor de un día* (1920), *Ana María* (1920), *El amor nuevo* (1920), *El juego del amor y de la vida* (1920), *La mujer que huía del amor* (1920), *La vida que empieza* (1920), *Los caminos del mundo* (1920), *María Magda* (1920), *Maternidad* (1920), *Vampiresa* (1920).
12 For a comparison of anarchist versus communist interpretations of the Spanish Revolution, see Walther L. Bernecker, "El anarquismo en la guerra civil española. Estado de la cuestión," *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea* 14 (1992): 93–95.
13 Emma Goldman, letter to Rudolf Rocker (November 3, 1936), in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 52–53.
14 See Richard Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise: A Biography of Emma Goldman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 301–02: Goldman describes the consolation in a letter to her niece: "the crushing weight that was pressing down on my heart since Sasha's death left me as by magic." *Kern quotes the same letter* ("Anarchist Principles and Spanish Reality," 238).

15 Alejandro Andreassi, *Libertad también se escribe en minúscula* (Barcelona: Editorial Hacer, 1996), 86.
16 Durruti (July 14, 1896–November 20, 1936). Emma Goldman, "Durruti Is Dead, Yet Living," 1936.
17 Emma Goldman, "Our comrade E.G.," *Spain and the World* 2, no. 44 (November 12, 1938); Emma Goldman in *Spain and the World* 1, no. 14 (June 11, 1937).
18 See von Catarina von Wedemeyer, "Broadcasting the Revolution: Federica Montseny, Emma Goldman and Buenaventura Durruti in the Radio CNT-FAI" (paper, Untold Stories of the Spanish Civil War: International workshop II, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, September 12–13, 2022).
19 See Rubén Caravaca Fernández, "La radio de la CNT y cómo la República silenció la voz de la revolución," interview with Ferrán Aisa, *El asombrario*, January 27, 2018.
20 Lucía Sánchez Saornil co-founded *Mujeres Libres*, together with Mercedes Comaposada and Amparo Poch y Gascón. Sánchez Saornil (1901–1970) wrote with masculine pseudonyms such as Luciano de San-Saor, Un Confederado, El Observador. On different anarchist positions on feminism see Mary Nash, "Dos intelectuales anarquistas frente al problema de la mujer: Federica Montseny y Lucía Sánchez Saornil," *Convivium* 44–45 (1975).
21 Iturbe also collaborated with *Mujeres Libres*.
22 See examples of the bulletin at Warwick Digital Collection: "Freedom. Spain: Information bulletin of the C.N.T. and F.A.I.," no. 1; as well as: "Information bulletin. No. 60."
23 Wexler, *Emma Goldman in Exile*, 205.

> I am so full of it all I cannot concentrate on any one impression or say what is more inspiring than the other. More than even last year I wish I could remain with our people right here in this heroic city and share in their struggle and their aspirations. But again I will have to leave much sooner than I want. . . . I only wish all our comrades so ready to judge could come to Spain to see for themselves that whatever the mistakes made they are as nothing compared with the gigantic work already achieved. Whatever happens this [the defense of Madrid in September 1937, cvw] will remain a lasting monument to the valor and the constructive genius of our comrades.
>
> (Emma Goldman, "Madrid Is the Wonder of Centuries," *Spain in the World*, September 23, 1937)

24 But since that could not be, I mean to strain every muscle and every nerve to make known, in as far as my pen and voice can reach, the great moral and organizational force of the CNT-FAI and the velour and heroism of our Spanish comrades.
(Emma Goldman, "Address to the International Working Men's Association Congress," 1937–38, Emma Goldman Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)

25 See Donald Rooum, "Freedom, Freedom Press and Freedom Bookshop. A Short History of Freedom Press," *Information for Social Change* 27 (Summer 2008).
26 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie. Buenaventura Durrutis Leben und Tod* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).
27 One had to see it to realise its tremendous courage and spirit regardless of the danger surrounding it, regardless of what the city and the people have already endured at the hands of fascism. Greater still is the faith of our people who go on building, creating and labouring not for the hour but for all times. One can not help but set aside all doubts and all superficial criticism in the face of such wonderful manifestation of human endurance and determination to win come what may.
(Emma Goldman, "Madrid Is the Wonder of Centuries," *Spain and the World*, September 23, 1937)

28 Ethel Mannin, Letter, Warwick Digital Collection, October 1938.
29 Emma Goldman, "To the Comrades of Spain and the World," *Spain and the World*, March 18, 1938. An overview of finances and activities is followed by a direct plea:

> We want membership and anything you can give out of the fullness of your heart to the SIA. If you do not yet know we wish to inform you that the SIA is covering tremendous ramification in the way of succour and support to the thousands of thousands of refugee women and children, and to the care of our heroic fighters at the front and to the wounded at the rear. Surely a commendable undertaking. Will you respond? If so please send us contributions to the English section of the SIA. We beseech you comrades and friends to do your utmost in your efforts for the SIA. Fraternally, Emma Goldman.

30 George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), ch. 5 (n.p.):

> So, roughly speaking, the alignment of forces was this. On the one side the C.N.T.-F.A.I., the P.O.U.M., and a section of the Socialists, standing for workers' control: on the other side the Right-wing Socialists, Liberals, and Communists, standing for centralized government and a militarized army.

31 *Spain and the World*. Vol. 2, no. 44, p. 3, November 12, 1938.
32 *Spain and the World*. Vol. 2, no. 44, p. 4, November 12, 1938.
33 *Spain and the World*. Vol. 2, no. 44, p. 4, November 12, 1938.
34 Emma Goldman, letter to Rudolf Rocker (September 1936) in: Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 52.
35 To Milly and Rudolf Rocker, Goldman restates her critique of Montseny. Ironically, this letter is written on the very day (5/4/37) when, in the midst of Barcelona clashes between anarchists and their statist "allies", Montseny herself gave a radio appeal to anarchists to lay down their arms to preserve the coalition.
Porter then quotes said letter (5/4/37) by Goldman to Rocker:

> Only blind zealotry will deny that [Federica Montseny] among all the comrades is the most willing to compromise. I hope you understand, dear Rudolf, that I have no personal reason to say that Federica has gone more to the Right than any of the leading CNT-FAI members. Not only that but she is as dogmatic against any critical expression on the part of comrades in the FAI as anyone else.
>
> (Emma Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 53)

> You condemn me for not being critical of our comrades in Spain, and Nettlau condemns me for having dared in my statement published in the Fr. Arb. St. 54.
>
> (Emma Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 115).

See Kern, Anarchist Principles and Spanish Reality, 244, on this quote.
36 Emma Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 52.
37 Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 53.
38 Federica Montseny, "Alocución para toda España desde Radio Madrid" (November 11, 1936), in Ferrán Aisa, *ECN 1 Radio CNT-FAI Barcelona. La voz de la Revolución* (Barcelona: Entre Ambos, 2017), 444–45.
39 In the *Boletín de Información C.N.T. i F.A.I.*, March 4, 1937.
40 There would have been no revolution if we had not prepared the people. This is our triumph and the most precious prize that we anarchists have. . . . Without the anarchist philosophy having been rectified, we have been able to adapt ourselves to the circumstances.
(Author's translation; Federica Montseny, "El anarquismo militante y la realidad española," *Boletín de Información C.N.T. i F.A.I.*, March 4, 1937)

41 Emma Goldman, letter to Mark Mratchny (2/8/37), in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 53.

42 A true united front was needed . . . to oppose an insurmountable barrier to international fascism, . . . now this people that is defeating the fascists, is advancing socially, creating a new concept of life, a new society. Tell me if what we are doing is not great? Once we contemplate the hours we are living, we will be astonished at ourselves.

(Author's translation; Montseny, "El anarquismo militante y la realidad española")

She argues against the socialist centralism:

> Federalistas hemos de ser todos. Federalistas han de ser los socialistas, a pesar de su tendencia centralista, que ha tenido como consecuencia el espíritu autoritario de Marx, que ha de ser rectificado. . . . Hasta hoy España es una cabeza monstruosa con un cuerpo raquítico. A Madrid afluye toda la riqueza del país.

43 Nosotros, los anarquistas españoles, . . . hemos seguido una linea de conducta, cuya finalidad tendía a que no se repitiera lo que ocurrió en Rusia, donde el anarquismo, a pesar de su potencialidad, fué desplazado de la dirección de la revolución por una organización minoritaria.

(Montseny, "El anarquismo militante y la realidad española")

See Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 234–36.

44 The Spanish people, in fighting against fascism, fight at the same time against social inequalities. . . . It is not a civil war. It is the war of the people, of the workers against the lordly, against the military, against the parasite.

(Author's translation; Montseny, "El anarquismo militante y la realidad española")

Montseny emphasizes the proletarian future, aiming toward an abolition of authority in general, and argues for decentralization, federalism, and liberty:

> Si en España no se ha podido destruir la autoridad en absoluto, se van mermando sus prerrogativas con federalismo primero, y después enseñando al hombre a vivir sin que nadie le mande para el cumplimiento de sus deberes, creando en él el sentimiento de la libertad dentro de los principios anarquistas que continúan siendo las esencias del liberalismo.

45 It was only after the Communist Party, together with other reactionary forces, had well-nigh brought about the collapse of the anti-Fascist forces that it finally realized the necessity which the CNT had propagated for eighteen months. Particularly was this the case after the c. P. had penetrated into the UGT, had bored from within and had filtered through this organization by its own Communistic venom against the CNT. Now it has come forward with a number of propositions as stated in the negotiations published in Spain and the World. The readers will be able to judge for themselves how far the present state of the UGT can be called revolutionary, communist or truly democratic.

(Emma Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 128–29)

46 Federica Montseny, "Recuerdo póstumo al camarada Durruti," November 1936, in Aisa, *ECN 1 Radio CNT-FAI Barcelona, La voz de la Revolución*, 470–76.

47 Emma Goldman, "Political Persecution in Republican Spain," *Spain and the World*, December 10, 1937, 5, in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 154.

48 It seemed to me then that the Spanish comrades had little understanding of mass psychology which needs flagwagging, speeches, music and demonstrations—that while the CNT-FAI, however, were concentrated on their constructive tasks, and

fighting on the various fronts, their Communist allies made hay while the sun shone. They have since proved that they knew what they were about.

(Emma Goldman, "Political Persecution in Republican Spain," 5, in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 154)

49 On my first visit to Spain in September 1936, nothing surprised me so much as the amount of political freedom I found everywhere. True it did not extend to Fascists; but outside of these deliberate enemies of the Revolution and the emancipation of the workers in Spain, everyone of the antifascist front enjoyed political freedom which hardly existed in any of the so-called European democracies.

(Emma Goldman, "Political Persecution in Republican Spain," 5, in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 154)

50 Goldman gives a description of individual prisoners and their charges, including handing money from the churches to the Catalonian Generalitat—which in the anarchist logic is the opposite of a crime. She comments, "It takes the perverted Communist mind to hold a man in prison because in 1922 he had illegally left Russia" (Emma Goldman, "Political Persecution in Republican Spain," in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 156). While, according to Goldman, the prisoners did enjoy basic political privileges in the Modelo, the Cheka prisons showed the communists' true face:

> As far as prison conditions can be humane, the Modelo is certainly superior to the Cheka prisons introduced in Spain by the Stalinists according to the best party examples of Soviet Russia. The Modelo still maintains its traditional political privileges such as the right of the inmates to freely mingle together, organize their committees to represent them with the director, receiving parcels, tobacco, etc., in addition to the scanty prison fare. . . . My next visit was to the women's prison, which I found better kept and more cheerful than the Modelo. Only six women politicals were there at the time.
>
> (Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 157)

51 During my stay of three months I visited many of the collectivized estates and factories, maternities and hospitals in Barcelona, and last but not least, also the "Modelo" prison. This is the place that had harbored some of the most distinguished revolutionaries and anarchists in Catalonia. Our own heroic comrades Durruti and Ascaso, Garcia Oliver and many others had been cell neighbors of Companys, the new President of the Generalitat. . . . The director gave me free access to every part of the prison and the right to speak to any of the Fascists without the presence of guards. Among the few hundred admirers of Franco were officers and priests. They assured me in one voice of the decent and just treatment they were receiving from the management in charge of the place, most of whom were CNT-FAI men.

(Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 154)

52 The possibility that Fascists would soon be replaced by revolutionists and anarchists was far removed from my mind. If anything, the high water mark of the revolution in the Autumn of 1936 held out hopes that the stain of prison would be wiped out once Franco and his hordes were defeated.

(Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 155)

53 The report of the foul murder of the most gentle of anarchists, Camillo Berneri and his roommate, the anarchist Barbieri, was followed by wholesale arrests, mutilation and death. They seemed too . . . incredible to be true. I decided to go back to Spain to see for myself how far the new-found freedom of the Spanish masses had been annihilated by Stalin's henchmen.

(Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 155)

54 Russia has more than proven the nature of this beast. After twenty years it still thrives on the blood of its makers. Nor is its crushing weight felt in Russia alone. Since Stalin began his invasion of Spain, the march of his henchmen has been leaving death and ruin behind them. Destruction of numerous collectives, the introduction of the Tcheka with its "gentle" methods of treating political opponents, the arrest of thousands of revolutionaries, and the murder in broad daylight of others. All this and more, has Stalin's dictatorship given Spain, when he sold arms to the Spanish people in return for good gold. Innocent of the jesuitical trick of "our beloved comrade" Stalin, the CNT-FAI could not imagine in their wildest dreams the unscrupulous designs hidden behind the seeming solidarity in the offer of arms from Russia. Their need to meet Franco's military equipment was a matter of life and death. The Spanish people had not a moment to lose if they were not to be crushed. What wonder if they saw in Stalin the savior of the anti-Fascist war? They have since learned that Stalin helped to make Spain safe against the Fascists so as to make it safer for his own ends.

(Goldman, "Address")

55 Goldman, "Address."
56 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), xxvii.
57 Goldman, "Address."
58 See Emma Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 130: "I am torn into a thousand directions. I want to help our comrades and yet I feel that my silence is a sign of consent of all the dreadful and useless compromises our comrades are making."
59 Goldman, "Address."
60 "Yet closer contact with reality in Spain, with the almost insurmountable odds against the aspirations of the CNT-FAI, made me understand their tactics better, and helped me to guard against any dogmatic judgment of our comrades" (Goldman, "Address").
61 Emma Goldman (4/5/38) letter to Rudolf Rocker in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 129. Porter comments:

> She finds the final CNT agreement with the UGT a tragic collapse of the CNT position. As if to prove it, Luis Urteil Araquistáin is gleeful about the CNT change. For Goldman, the pact is a nightmare and poisons her daily existence.

62 The Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalist and Anarchist movements until very recently have held out the most glaring fulfillment of all our dreams and aspirations. I cannot therefore blame those of our comrades who see in the compromises of the Spanish Anarchists a reversal of all they had held high for well nigh seventy years. . . . Also, I fear that the critics too are very much at fault. They are no less dogmatic than the Spanish comrades. They condemn every step made in Spain unreservedly. In their sectarian attitude they have overlooked the motive element recognized in our time even in capitalist courts. Yet it is a fact that one can never judge human action unless one has discovered the motive back of the action.

(Emma Goldman in Porter, *Vision on Fire*, 303–04)

63 Goldman, "Address."
64 All these factors directing the course of the CNT-FAI should be taken into consideration by the comrade critics, who after all are far removed from the struggle, hence really not in a position to see the whole tragic drama through the eyes of those who are in the actual struggle. I do not mean to say that I may not also reach the painful point of disagreement with the CNT-FAI. But until Fascism is conquered, I would not raise my hand against them. For the present my place is at the side of the Spanish comrades and their great struggle against a whole world.

(Goldman, "Address")

65 For the economic situation, see Bernecker, "El anarquismo en la guerra civil española."
66 In other words, while the Russian Revolution and the civil war were being fought out on Russian soil and by Russians, the Spanish revolution and anti-Fascist war involves all the powers of Europe. It is no exaggeration to say that the Spanish Civil War has spread out far beyond its own confines.

(Goldman, "Address")

67 "The Spanish revolution, . . . just because its leaders are Anarchists, immediately became a sore in the eyes not only of the bourgeoisie and the democratic governments, but also of the entire school of Marxists and liberals." Goldman summarizes all compromises the Spanish anarchists had agreed to in the course of the war, naming, quote: "participation in the government, all sorts of humiliating overtures to Stalin, superhuman tolerance for his henchmen who were openly plotting and conniving against the Spanish revolution" (Goldman, "Address").
68 Goldman, "Address."
69 This makes me think that the CNT-FAI have remained fundamentally the same, and that the time is not far off when they will again prove themselves the symbol, the inspirational force, that the Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalists and Anarchists have always been to the rest of the Anarchists in the world.

(Goldman, "Address")

70 Goldman argued for birth control instead of abortion: Emma Goldman, "The Social Aspects of Birth Control," in *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2001), 134–39. See also Candace Falk, "Emma Goldman: Passion, Politics, and the Theatrics of Free Expression," *Women's History Review* 11, no. 1 (2002): 13.
71 Goldman, "Louise Michel. Letter to Magnus Hirschfeld." See also Clare Hemmings, "Sexual Freedom and the Promise of Revolution: Emma Goldman's Passion," *Feminist Review* 106 (2014): 43–59.
72 Goldman, "Durruti Is Dead, Yet Living."

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# 12 *Milicianas*

## Female Combatants on the Screen—Oblivion and the Recuperation of Memories

*Gabriela Jonas Aharoni*

Documentaries involve a specific point of view, embodying the subjectivity of creators who express themselves through their camera lens; in that sense, they have a moral purpose. Following authors like Rabiger or Nichols, documentaries thus serve an intrinsic social function of respecting ethical values.[1] Due to their subject matter, historical documentaries have been associated with the expository mode, often due to the use of an unidentified omniscient voice-over narrator.[2] This is how *Milicianas*, a 2019 documentary by filmmakers Tania Balló, Jaume Miró, and Gonzalo Berger, begins. In fifty-two minutes, they use a photograph to reconstruct the execution of five volunteer nurses from the Red Cross on the island of Mallorca.[3]

The film intermingles features of a historical documentary with techniques of historical research. It adapts its language to reach both expert and non-expert audiences without rejecting new perspectives on some historical events that build a bridge between the past and the time of the film's production, even though some have already been discussed in previous documentaries.[4] I am referring to the debate that began in Spain in 2000, when people began asking new questions about the history of the civil war and demanding the recognition of its victims, especially after the approval of the Law of Historical Memory in 2007.[5] This new sensitivity toward historical memory was complemented by the introduction of the issue of gender equality into the political agenda, with several laws and measures initiated to promote it; this in turn favored the support and financing of projects to recover the memory of women—projects like *Milicianas*.

### MILICIANAS: WOMEN IN THE LINE OF BATTLE

Part of the significance of the *Miliciana* phenomenon lies in its uniqueness in Spanish history. While a limited number of Spanish women had participated in combat prior to the Spanish Civil War, this war was the first time that many women not only took up arms but also became part of the fighting force on an equal footing with men, at least in the early stages of the conflict. However, the *Milicianas* stirred mixed feelings within the Republican side and among women themselves. They were accused of going to the front as

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prostitutes, assuming male roles that were foreign to them, disguising themselves as *Milicianas*, and adopting a working-class aesthetic while wearing high heels and makeup with their uniforms.[6] There are several distinctions between the *Milicianas* who fought on the front lines and those in the rearguard, and Lines has therefore discussed these topics separately.[7]

The *Milicianas* on the front lines were, save for a few exceptions, part of the Republican fighting forces as members of mixed-gender combat units. There were some all-female combat units, such as the Female Combat Unit of the Fifth Regiment of the People's Army, and there were even women who were integrated into the regular army once the militias were reorganized. The *Milicianas* in the rearguard were integrated into combat units made up exclusively of women who were trained in to use weapons in case they were needed on the front or had to defend their cities, such as during the defense of Madrid in November 1936.

Lines highlights that women had to bear a double burden: performing tasks considered feminine such as sewing, cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes while also caring for the wounded.[8] Gutiérrez Escoda explains that the establishment referred to the women incorporated into the Republican forces as *Milicianas*, which falsely implied that women continued to be part of a voluntary fighting force rather than the regular army.[9] Most of the Catalan *Milicianas* were members of the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) and the General Union of Workers (UGT). Gavina Viana was one of the leaders and organizers of the Female Militias. On August 16, 1936, the first century of the Female Battalion left the port of Barcelona for Maó, a town located east of Menorca in the Balearic Islands. The fighters were organized into three groups: Rosa Luxemburgo, Bolxevic 31, and Aida Lafuente.[10] During the civil war, a series of documentaries was produced highlighting the role of women as heroines of the rearguard. This was a form of propaganda to inculcate its viewers and exemplify the role of women in the war, propaganda that, according to the communist ideology, preferred to highlight this role and not that of women fighting on the front lines.[11]

Beginning in the 1990s, television and film documentaries significantly contributed to both the debate on the memory of Franco's oppressive regime and to the shaping of democratic identity.[12] At the start of 2000, various documentary films began to highlight the active role played by foreign women in the International Brigades. This is the case for the film *Mika, Mi guerra de España*,[13] based on the 1976 autobiography by Mika Feldman Etchebere, the only woman with military rank during the civil war and the only Argentine woman who fought on the battlefield. The documentary focuses on the figure of Mika Feldman Etchebere, and the story is reconstructed by members of her family and by Mika herself from archival material of recorded interviews. The format of the film is circular and follows the tradition of the documentary road movie. The film leads the viewer through the different stages of Mika's life and transforms them into sites of memory. These *lieux de mémoire* are like memory workshops for the reconstitution of the past,

understood as social products with particular cultural and political contents, where memory materializes and results in specificity. However, in contrast to Pierre Nora, the sites of memory, or stops, in this road movie are constructed and materialized not from the institutional but from the personal and subjective, representing a particular worldview dictated by the commitments and ideology of the subject of analysis.[14]

Another film is *Into the Fire: American Women Into the Spanish Civil War*, directed by Julia Newman, which reconstructs the story of eighty women, nurses, writers, and journalists who, defying the US government, joined the International Brigades. In this film, sixteen of them reconstruct their personal history, part of an unwritten story about the role these American volunteers played in the Spanish war. The film is a traditional documentary that reconstructs historical events from interviews with the protagonists, archival documents, photographic and audiovisual material, and "voice-over" storytelling from writers such as Josephine Herbst and the journalist Martha Gellhorn. The film gives voice to persistent criticism of the USA and its position of "neutrality" in Spain. This criticism becomes more intense as the war lurches toward its tragic (from a loyalist and anti-fascist perspective, at least) conclusion. Newman chooses to narrate *Into the Fire* exclusively through the words of the women volunteers. There is no third-person perspective or detached, omnipresent voice to tell the audience what it all means. There are contemporary interviews with the featured women, but the film mostly relies on recitations from articles, letters, notes, and diaries written at the time. The interviews and recitations are illustrated with archival photographs and film footage, as well as original artwork by Mildred Rackley, one of the volunteers. Narrating the film in this way articulates the diversity of the experiences among the American women who went to Spain and resists the temptation to consolidate those experiences into a single, authoritative story that could easily be isolated and put into its so-called proper historical place—on the sidelines of the "real" fight.[15]

Unlike the two documentaries mentioned earlier, *Milicianas* focuses the story on the identity of these five Catalan women executed in Mallorca. It goes on to tell the story of their movement based on photographs, testimonies of the victims' families, images from audiovisual archives,[16] epistolary documents, interviews with historians (mostly Catalan experts on the matter), newspaper and periodicals libraries, local and national archives, and other sources.

## Context

On September 5, 1936, dozens of Republican *Milicianos* and *Milicianas*, including five volunteer nurses from the Red Cross, were arrested by Franco's troops on the beach of Sa Coma. The "Balearic Column," led by Captain Alberto Bayo, had retreated to Valencia a day earlier, leaving dozens of them on the island to be shot by Franco's forces.[17] The photographs that show the

*Milicianos* and *Milicianas* before their execution are particularly striking: nameless faces and forgotten memories that *Milicianas* seeks to recover.[18] The five nurses were raped, tortured, and publicly executed in the town of Manacor. These acts of physical violence that degraded and humiliated the sexual identities of female bodies in wars were constant and almost regular practices during the civil war. These vicious practices arose from discourses on violence conditioned by national culture, by feelings of belonging, by the experience of the war, and by the manifestation of ideological, political, social, or sexual identities. What is more, they were cultural constructs that determined how their contemporaries perceived reality at the time.[19]

A diary kept by one of these women, which describes the campaign in Mallorca, and a photo of the group taken shortly after the women's arrest are the starting points of the investigation, which aims to recover the identity of these anonymous women whose memory has been forgotten. The diary begins on August 16, 1936, with the departure of the group from the port of Barcelona and ends on September 4 of that same year, their last day alive in Mallorca. The manuscript reveals the names of four of the executed women: sisters Daría and Mercè Buxadé Adroher, eighteen and twenty-two years old, respectively; María García, approximately fifty-three years old; and Teresa, whose last name is unknown. The filmmakers arrive at the name of the diary's author almost by a process of elimination. It is interesting to note that the diary was published in a Manacor newspaper, *Arriba*, perhaps with the intention of showing the criticism of its author toward the ideological inconsistencies within the Republican forces. Titled "Diario de una Miliciana Marxista" (Diary of a Marxist *Miliciana*), it was published together with "warning statements" urging readers to minimize all criticisms toward the national troops.

## The Documentary: A Construction of History?

In audiovisual productions, historical discourse can be approached through both fictional and documentary works. *Milicianas* is a documentary, as it is a form of discourse aiming to depict reality through original historical, photographic, cinematic, and video images, relying on testimonial memory, written documents, direct sound, and voice-over narration.[20] In this way, the documentary genre reconstructs reality from its constituent elements, not only basing its discourse on history but also adding new meaning to it through its own features (shot selection, camera angles, movement, framing, and editing). History is rewritten through multiple and diverse interactions between family and official archives and between space and memory.[21]

The opening scene of *Milicianas* is not particularly communicative or explanatory: a pan across the shelves of an archive, interspersed with interviews with relatives of the protagonists. The camera lens slides out of focus over the photos but stops on the faces and the bodies of the photograph that becomes the starting point of this historical documentary and journalistic

investigation. This investigation will bring together the pieces of this puzzle, the pieces of memory, that were forgotten and hidden from the relatives and descendants of the young women who knew nothing about the details of this story: their story.

I stop at the photograph taken before the execution of these five women, standing in a row, aware of their fate: four of them look in different directions, their glances filled with sadness, resignation, and even apathy. The defiant look of the *Miliciana* on the far left of the photograph stands out. It is a *punctum*, according to Barthes, or that which draws attention in an image, like a sting: it "is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)."[22]

The identification of the Buxadé sisters, the letters sent by Daría and Mercedes to their families, and the testimony of their nephew Joan reveal their membership in the Female Militias, an organization that "not only sought to assign Catalan women to the rearguard, but also had a section dedicated exclusively to fighting on the front lines."[23]

The photographs Joan shows to the filmmakers, which depict everyday events in the lives of the Buxadé sisters before they became *Milicianas*, demonstrate how the use and meanings of family albums have changed through history and allow us to reflect on the later lives of these images that, on the one hand, uncover their affective dimension,[24] and on the other hand, prove to be of documentary value to the filmmakers.

The departure of the Battalion is portrayed in various photographs that include the women of the iconic photo, the starting point of the documentary. The picture published in *Life* magazine on November 23, 1936, a close-up of Mrs. García, the oldest of the five *Milicianas*, stands out. It was taken by Hungarian scientist, writer, and activist Edith Bon, who traveled and documented different battlefields. Bon went to Spain in 1936 with her friend Felicia Browne to take part in the International People's Olympiad, an event held to protest the 1936 Olympics but canceled due to the outbreak of the civil war. Bon, a member of the English Communist Party, participated in establishing the Unified Party of Catalonia and documented the action on several fronts in the war as an amateur photographer.[25] The training of these women was also portrayed by renowned photojournalists Gerda Taro and Robert Capa; their pictures can be found at the International Center of Photography in New York. As Susan Sontag explains, the Spanish Civil War was the first war to be "covered" in the modern sense: by a corps of professional photographers at the lines of military engagement and in the towns under bombardment, whose work was immediately seen in newspapers and magazines in Spain and abroad.[26]

After confirming that the five women who were shot were *Milicianas*, the filmmakers visit the National Archive of Catalonia in search for new clues regarding the identities of the two remaining women in the photo. At the archive, they find more than 19,000 documents pertaining to grants given by the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias to the families of the militia

members as a kind of salary.[27] After months of searching in the archive, the filmmakers confirm the identity of María García Sanchis and identify two more women: Amalia Lobato Rosique and Teresa Bellera Cemeli, from the town of Roda de Isabena in the province of Huesca Aragón. It was in Roda de Isabena where Josefina Bellera, Teresa's sister, and Angelita Ballerín, a childhood friend, confirmed that the young woman was a *Miliciana*. In the old, now uninhabited family home, the filmmakers find an old portfolio with letters that Teresa sent to her family after enlisting with the Republicans. "We didn't know anything about Teresa until you came," admitted Josefina, revealing how her family had "practiced" oblivion for over forty years.[28] This practice was the result of a specific political determination to prevent the recovery of memory in the future. There is also another aspect of oblivion: silence. It is this enforced silence, like the one imposed by Franco's dictatorship, that productions such as *Milicianas* seek to disrupt and transform into a source of living and meaningful memories.[29] Thus, memory and oblivion come together in a fragile balance regarding the changing interpretations of the past, which ultimately always respond to questions of the present and projections of the future.[30]

María García's story reveals her coherence and commitment to the cause. The grant records reveal not only where she lived but also that she was married to Agustín Alfonso Castells and had a son, Florían, who also enlisted as a *miliciano* and died in the war. Descendants of the Paniagua family, who shared a home with María and her family in the town of Sabadell, remember that María used to read books: "she did nothing at home," organized rallies, and knew a lot about politics. She and Agustín "were very revolutionary, very involved in politics," recalls Josefa Villa Paniagua, daughter of María's close friend.

The faces of the four identified women match the names of the *Milicianas* recorded in the diary. This indicates that the fifth woman, who remains to be identified, is none other than the author of the diary, the one looking defiantly into the camera without fear or despair. However, after cross-referencing the information, the filmmakers confirm that the fifth woman in the photo is not Amalia Lobato Rosique, as they had thought. And another clue leads them to the family members of Ramona Soldevila Cirés, who believe they can identify her in the photo taken before her execution. Ramona was a correspondent for the newspaper *La Vanguardia* and was later hired by the City Council of Manresa. The documents found confirm her ideological commitment: "she defended the rights of workers against despotism," was affiliated with the Republican Left of Catalonia party, and was a member of the board of the women's secretariat of the city. All these qualities and activities describe a personality matching the one expressed by the writer of the diary that the filmmakers found. However, this was debunked by an unexpected turn in the investigation, since Ramona Soldavilla's name appears on the city council's payroll until 1938. The identity of the fifth woman, the author of diary, is still unknown. However, the filmmakers' research saved

from oblivion hundreds of *Milicianas* who had been sent to Mallorca. They will no longer be part of the anonymous combatants murdered during the first months of the war; they will have names and last names, photos of their past, and a clear place in family and collective memory. The final words of the documentary's narrator are remarkably eloquent and underline that the work in the archives made it possible "to identify hundreds of women who were silenced and forgotten in the graves, a task that becomes even more difficult as time passes."

## Conclusion

*Milicianas* is part of a group of documentaries that reconstruct a part of recent Spanish history. In my view, it complements the work of historians and highlights the importance of both archival documents (minutes, letters, articles, etc.) and audiovisual documents (photographs, documentary films, and testimonial interviews). As part of the untold stories of the Spanish Civil War, the film reconstructs the identities and names of women who were shot and buried in mass graves, unmarked and forgotten. It reveals the policies of "dismemory," of not remembering, and of the different forms and functions of oblivion,[31] including conscious amnesia, enforced for political reasons. It also engages with the memory processes applied by the Spanish state over the years. During the transition, a period in the Spanish political system that began in 1975 after the death of Francisco Franco and ended in 1978 with the creation of the current Spanish Constitution, a pact of silence was reached regarding issues related to the civil war and the dictatorship. Therefore, this period is seen as being marked by social amnesia. At the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, descendants of victims murdered during Franco's regime began to seek concrete answers and formed a social movement outside of political parties that demanded reparations for victims and the adoption of memory policies. On December 26, 2007, the Historical Memory Law was passed, recognizing and expanding rights and establishing measures in favor of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and dictatorship.[32]

*Milicianas*, as a cultural production, thus contributes to the formation of a historical memory that, based on the accounts of different witnesses—brothers, nephews, close friends—guarantees the continuous transmission of that memory in the future, referred to as postmemory by key theorists in this field. Using this concept, Hirsch analyzes the transgenerational inheritance of memory and trauma in children of Shoah survivors. In this way, the photographs and stories that circulate within families, as well as the modes of relation between generations, can strongly connect grandparents, children, and grandchildren through time. Even if they are second-hand memories, the memories of the ancestors are transmitted to the descendants with such vivid emotion that they have the value of memories themselves. But since the connection with the past occurs indirectly, the distance must be bridged through

imagination, projection, and creation. In this sense, the past can also be an oppressive burden for the children and even grandchildren of the victims, who feel so committed to the past of the parents that they run the risk of setting aside their own lives in favor of theirs.[33]

*Milicianas* is part of cultural memory: the memory that is no longer transmitted through the accounts of direct witnesses but rather through cultural recreations based on the preserved accounts of witnesses, which in turn ensure the continuous transmission of that memory into the future. And since the documentary is free to watch on the internet and is part of a larger project like the Virtual Museum of Women in War, the film reinforces cultural memory, generating a series of temporal disjunctions that make it possible to reinterpret the past, articulate the latencies of memory, and challenge the hegemonic versions of history.[34] At the same time, the analysis of archival materials as well as the interviews with indirect witnesses, historians, and experts on the matter allow for metahistorical and metamemorial reflection on the (re)construction of memory and historical "truth."[35]

## Notes

1 Bill Nichols, *La representación de la realidad. Cuestiones y conceptos sobre el documental* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1997); and Michael Rabiger and Courtney Herman, *Directing the Documentary*, 7th ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).
2 Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 1st ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
3 Three years later, in April 2016, the play *Comte Rossi*, written and directed by Antonio Palerm, premiered in Mallorca. It was based on the testimonies of the townpeople of Son Servera, research by historians, and the diary of one of the *milicianas*. Laura Corcuera, "Las cinco rosas de Mallorca," *Diagonal*, June 17, 2016, www.diagonalperiodico.net/culturas/30610-cinco-rosas-mallorca.html.
4 This agenda characterizes the work of Catalan historian Gonzalo Berger, who, apart from being one of the screenwriters of *Milicianas*, helped create the Virtual Museum of Women in War (Museo Virtual de la Mujer Combatiente), and in 2020, published a book of testimonies by women who were on the front lines and the rearguard during the Spanish Civil War aimed at "showing how women participated in one of the most significant events in Spanish contemporary history, the war that devastated the between 1936 and 1939." Gonzalo Berger, *Milicianas: La historia olvidada de las combatientes antifascistas* (Madrid: Arzalia Ediciones, 2022), 11–12.
5 Marije Hristova, "La lucha por la memoria histórica en España: más allá de la genealogía y de las generaciones," *Por la Paz* 38 (May 2020): 1–8.
6 Shirley Mangini, *Recuerdos de la resistencia. La voz de las mujeres de la guerra civil española* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1997).
7 Lisa Lines, "Female Combatants in the Spanish Civil War: *Milicianas* on the Front Lines and in the Rearguard," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 10, no. 4 (May 2009): 168–87.
8 Lines, "Female Combatants," 180.
9 Esther Gutiérrez Escoda, "Las mujeres militares en la Guerra Civil española. Política, sociedad y Administración Militar de la II República (1936–1939)" (PhD diss., Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2022), www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/674262#page=1.

10 Museo Virtual de la Mujer Combatiente. www.mujeresenguerra.com/.
11 Fernando Roncero Moreno, "La visión de la mujer republicana en el cine documental de la Guerra Civil Española," *Quaderns* 5 (2010): 85–92.
12 Isabel M. Estrada, *El documental cinematográfico y televisivo contemporáneo: Memoria, sujeto y formación de la identidad democrática española* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2013).
13 *Mika, mi Guerra de España*, directed by Javier Olviera and Fito Pochat (Buenos Aires: Motoneta Cine and INCAA, 2013).
14 Gabriela Jonas Aharoni, "*Mika, mi Guerra de España*: Ideology and Commitment," in *Armed Jews in the Americas*, ed. Raanan Rein and David M.K. Sheinin (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 81–95.
15 Gabriela Jonas Aharoni, "Women in the Civil War: Ideology, Compromise, and Courage" (paper presented at the International Workshop "Untold Stories of the Spanish Civil War," Freie Universität Berlin, May 12–13, 2022) and Shaoun Huston, "Into the Fire: American Women in the Spanish Civil War," *PopMatters*, July 7, 2002, www.popmatters.com/into-the-fire-american-women-in-the-spanish-civil-war-2002-2496232555.html.
16 Photographs and video footage of these women training before leaving for the battlefield. Among these are the photos taken by Catalan photographer Josep Brangulí Soler, which document the day in which the female militias were formed. In those photos, the filmmakers identify Mercedes Buxadé and Dona García, two of the five *milicianas* who had been shot (*Milicianas* [21:42]).
17 Corcuera, "Las cinco rosas de Mallorca."
18 Comte Rossi's real name was Arconovaldo Bonaccorsi. He created the Dragons of Death, a group of young Falangists who repressed and murdered about two thousand Republicans in the island of Mallorca in early 1936. Joan Pla, "I conde Rossi (retrato de un fascista)," *Memoria Civil* 36 (1986), www.fideus.com/memoria%20-%20rossi%20-%20pla.htm.
19 For further information see Maud Joly, "Las violencias sexuadas de la Guerra Civil Española: Paradigma para una lectura cultural del conflicto," *Historia Social* 61) 2008): 89–107.
20 Nilda Bermúdez Briñez, "El documental histórico: una propuesta para la reconstrucción audiovisual de la historia petrolera del Zulia," *Omnia* 16, no. 2 (2010): 113–31.
21 Mariano Veliz, "Archivos, familias y espectros en el documental latinoamericano contemporáneo," *Culturales* 8 (2020(.
22 Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
23 *Milicianas* (20:41), testimony of historian Gonzalo Berger.
24 Andrea Torricella, "De viajes teórico-metodológicos y mapas. Bitácora de una travesía entre la noción de representación visual como reflejo hacia la de práctica y su aplicación en un caso de estudio con fotografías familiares personales," *Empiria. Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales* 40 (2018(: 41–64.
25 *Milicianas* (25:44) and Edith Bone short biography, LibraryThing, www.librarything.com/author/boneedith.
26 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003).
27 The National Archive of Catalonia was created in 1980 by the restored government of the Generalitat. Its mission is to "protect the Catalan documental heritage." The institution keeps national and Catalan administration records that can be accessed by all citizens who wish to read them or research various topics. See https://anc.gencat.cat/en/coneix/Qui-som/.
28 Even for some of the victims' relatives, like Teresa's sister, it is a sort of "profound oblivion," which erases past events and processes and thus seems to be final and

which reappears in her testimony to the makers of *Milicianas*. To read more about the concept of profound oblivion, see Elizabeth Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno editores, 2001(.

29 José F. Colmeiro, *Memoria histórica e identidad cultural. De la post-guerra a la pos-modernidad* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2005).

30 Gilda M. Waldman, "La 'cultura de la memoria': problemas y reflexiones," *Política y Cultura* 26 (2006): 11–34.

31 Jelin, *Los trabajos*, 2001.

32 Juan Luis Porcar Orihuela, "Políticas de Memoria en España," *Barataria, Revista Castellano-Manchega de Ciencias Sociales* 20 (2015): 61–77.

33 Marianne Hirsch, quoted by Karen Saban, "Memorias colectivas y culturales. El trauma y sus representaciones," in *Trauma y memoria cultural. Hispanoamérica y España*, ed. Roland Spiller, Kirsten Mahlke, and Janett Reinstädler (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020); and Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

34 Ute Seydel, "La constitución de la memoria cultural," *Acta Poética* 35, no. 2 (2014): 187–214. It is also worth mentioning the research project "Memorias en segundo grado" (Second-hand memories), directed by Laia Quílez Esteve, which proposes an interdisciplinary comparative study of literary, visual, and audiovisual works as narratives and practices of postmemory in digital media. Some of the interviews conducted by the researchers can be found on the project's website. See https://posmemoriadelfranquismo.wordpress.com/el-proyecto/.

35 Wilfried Floeck, "Representaciones escénicas de la Guerra Civil española y del franquismo," in *Trauma y memoria cultural. Hispanoamérica y España*, ed. Roland Spiller, Kristen Mahlke, and Janett Reinstädler (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020).

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Museo Virtual de la Mujer Combatiente. www.mujeresenguerra.com/.

# 13 Textual Intervention during the Spanish Civil War

## Voices of Solidarity from Turkey

*Esra Akkaya*

Shortly before the *Golpe de Estado en España* in 1936, Turkey established itself as a republic in the 1930s. Its new government not only signed the non-intervention agreement but also actively tried to stop people from Turkey from becoming volunteers in the International Brigades.[1] The Turkish government adhered to a non-intervention policy until the end of the Civil War. The question of whether to become involved in the Spanish Civil War or adhere to a non-intervention stance was not only a matter of discussion within the Turkish government but also a topic among many intellectuals and writers in Turkey. While the government mainly acted out of national interest in a recently founded republic, several writers chose a mode of textual intervention in the Republican cause to counteract the non-intervention approach. The following chapter addresses this paradox by arguing that these texts also contain untold stories of the Spanish Civil War.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out, the Turkish government demonstrated support to the elected government and backed the decision of the League of Nations. Turkey never questioned the legitimacy of the Spanish popular front government. Thus, the acting Spanish ambassador remained in his post in Ankara as the official representative of Spain until the end of the Civil War. The Turkish government adopted the principle of non-intervention in Spain and declared:

> [I]t would prohibit the direct or indirect export or re-export of all arms, munitions and war material, as well as all aircraft, assembled or dismantled, and all warships from its territory to Spanish territory; the prohibitions would apply to ongoing contracts; it would inform the other governments involved in the understanding of the measures taken to implement the prohibitions.[2]

The Turkish government adhered to its non-intervention policy: even when the Valencian government made substantial offers to purchase all of Turkey's obsolescent munitions, Ankara denied that request. However, this stance was not entirely motivated by ethical views. Turkey's military power at that time

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was, compared to other European militaries, relatively weak, and it therefore could not risk any tensions, especially on its surrounding seas. When more and more conflicts began erupting on the Mediterranean Sea and commercial ships were under threat, the Turkish government was both alarmed and felt exposed. In September 1937, a conference was held in the city of Nyon in Switzerland to address the rising attacks on international shipping in the Mediterranean Sea during the Spanish Civil War. The conference was convened in part because Italy had been carrying out unrestricted submarine warfare, although the final conference agreement did not accuse Italy directly; instead, the attacks were referred to as "piracy" by an unidentified body. Italy was not officially at war but supported the putschists in several ways, as did Nazi Germany. The conference was designed to strengthen the non-intervention policy during the Spanish Civil War. The United Kingdom and France led the conference, which was also attended by Bulgaria, Egypt, Greece, Romania, Turkey, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia. Turkey signed the Nyon Agreement, which also stated that any submarine that attacked a ship in a manner contrary to the rules of international law should be counter-attacked, or even destroyed.[3] Turkey's decision to sign and abide by this treaty was not appreciated by everyone in the country. While Turkish President Atatürk was in favor of improving relations with Britain, the then Prime Minister İsmet İnönü considered the Nyon Agreement confrontational and an alignment with the wrong side in the Spanish conflict.

While there is awareness of the many Western intellectuals who took up the Republican cause, there is little research on the engagement of Turkish writers in this matter. When neither speaking nor acting is permitted, only writing is left as a way to take a stand. And many Turkish authors did exactly that: they offered in-depth representations of the suppressed events, and they shed light on historical memories. Using the written word, they tried to amend what they saw as failures in realpolitik, because writing allowed them to experience aesthetically what could not be accomplished in practice.

The magazine *Yeni Adam*[4] (The new man), whose founder and editor-in-chief was İsmail Baltacıoğlu, a well-known intellectual, academic scholar, and politician, included an article on the Spanish Civil War in most of its issues—until it was censored by the Turkish government in 1938 after the magazine had repeatedly criticized and condemned Nazi Germany. After its reissue in 1939, *Yeni Adam* no longer included international political events and only focused on domestic politics. It is no coincidence that Baltacıoğlu was the editor of this critical magazine: while a supporter of the Republican cause, the scholar was also vocally critical of the government and opposed its path of laicism.

In August 1936, the magazine printed an article with the title "İspanya'da Yurddaş Savaşı" (Civil war in Spain) and reported on what was happening in the country. Here the author N. Gürgen[5] expresses full support for the socialists and especially the youth of Spain. This chapter includes an illustration

of Largo Caballero, the leader of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español.[6] In another article from 1936, the author Hüsamettin Bozok, a journalist and writer who played a key role in public debates, deals with economic and social issues in Spain. In "Ökonomik ve Sosyal Bakımdan İspanya" (Spain from an economic and social perspective), the author emphasizes that the Spanish Civil War is essentially about class struggle.[7] In particular, he distinguishes between the "bourgeoisie in the cities" and the "peasantry in the countryside." He also points critically to the role of the church, which benefits the most economically and claims capital for itself, while the people in the countryside and the working class are left with nothing.

The following year, Bozok dedicated an article to the Spanish woman in the Civil War. In "İspanyol kadını" ("The Spanish woman"), the author criticizes the misogynistic reception of women in Spain, especially abroad, and states vehemently that all genders are now equal in Spain and that Spanish women are not subordinate. They are in fact quite the opposite: women in Spain are essential in the fight against fascism. He writes the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| İspanya şehvetli rakkaselerin değil, Dolores Passionaria'ların, Margarita Nelken'lenn, Frederica Montseny'lerin İspanya'sı—kısaca Jeanne Dark'ların İspanya'sıdır ![8] | Spain is not the Spain of sensual dancers, but the Spain of Dolores Passionarias, Margarita Nelkens, Frederica Montsenys—in short, the Spain of Jeanne d'Arcs! |

All articles dedicated to the Spanish Civil War in *Yeni Adam* support the Republican cause and the rights of workers. The magazine takes a clear stand against the non-intervention policy of Turkey and intervenes through forcefully worded articles advocating for the Republicans. In doing so, the issues also reflect on the reception of the Spanish Civil War in Turkey. For example, in a 1937 article, writer and historian Hüseyin Avni reflects on the coverage in other Turkish newspapers and magazines and denounces each author and paper that has not condemned Franco and Spanish fascism. The magazine thus clearly positions itself against anyone not in support of socialism, anarchism, and the rights of the people of Spain. *Yeni Adam* includes texts not only by Turkish authors but also by authors such as André Gide and Ilja Ehrenburg, who both reported on the Spanish Civil War and advocated for the socialist fight.

While the magazine *Yeni Adam* offered journalistic intervention in the context of the non-intervention stance of the Turkish government, other authors chose poetic intervention. A prominent example is the poet Nâzım Hikmet, who published several key texts for this case study. In 1937, he published the poem "Karanlıkta kar yağıyor" (It's snowing in the dark), in which the lyrical speaker reminisces over the fate of the young soldier who is guarding the gates of Madrid. While expressing empathy for the young soldier, whose youth and innocence are emphasized repeatedly, the lyrical speaker refers to actual historical events. The poem is a powerful expression of despair in the

face of the non-intervention policy, the impossible passiveness, and helplessness that it caused. While treaties and agreements reflect interests of power and politics, the poem embodies an impulse toward humanism, solidarity, and empathy.

Hikmet's "Karanlıkta kar yağıyor" begins with the following verses:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ne maveradan ses duymak,<br>ne satırların nescine koymak o<br>"anlaşılmayan şeyi,"<br>ne bir kuyumcu merakıyla işlemek<br>kafiyeyi,<br>ne güzel laf, ne derin kelam . . . | Neither to hear a voice from far away,<br>nor put in the prose of the lines that<br>"unintelligible thing,"<br>nor with the curiosity of a jeweler<br>crafting the rhyme,<br>nor beautiful words, nor profound<br>thoughts . . . |

The lyrical speaker opens the poem by referring to a cause that seems impossible to explain. The subject of this poem is something that has not occurred before, and the lyrical speaker is searching for a different way of expressing this extraordinary situation. They are therefore consciously choosing poetic discourse as a mode of expression. It continues with:

| | |
|---|---|
| Bu akşam<br>bir sokak şarkıcısıyım hünersiz bir<br>sesim var;<br>sana,<br>senin işitemeyeceğin bir şarkıyı<br>söyleyen bir ses. | This evening<br>I'm a street singer with an unskilled<br>voice;<br>for you,<br>a voice singing a song you can't<br>hear. |

Rather than speaking at a distance or using traditional rhymes and phrases, the lyrical speaker chooses the voice of a street singer as a mode of expressing their empathy for the addressee. By choosing the image of the street singer, the lyrical speaker uses the perspective of an "ordinary" person, someone of the people, who is not following a political cause as such but might be characterized as an "unskilled" laborer. However, the lyrical speaker is also pointing out that even though they are speaking like a street singer with an untrained voice, their song will not be accessible to the addressee. This last verse of the stanza is a reference to the uncrossable route between Istanbul and Madrid. Despite this obstacle, the lyrical speaker wishes to express their solidarity.

| | |
|---|---|
| Karanlıkta kar yağıyor,<br>sen Madrid kapısındasın.<br>Karşında en güzel şeylerimizi<br>ümidi, hasreti, hürriyeti<br>ve çocukları öldüren bir ordu. | It's snowing in the dark,<br>you're at the gates of Madrid.<br>Against our most beautiful things<br>hope, longing, freedom<br>and children being killed by an army. |

While the actual route from Istanbul to Madrid is not crossable, the poetic voice can bridge the Mediterranean. The beginning of the poem offers the scene of a snowy night, maybe in Istanbul, and the third stanza begins at the gates of Madrid on a snowy night. Here the lyrical speaker is able to see everything; they are "above all of them." Addressing the person standing at the gates of Madrid, the lyrical speaker points to the most beautiful things they have: "hope, longing, freedom," and, in stark contrast, "an army that kills children." The last verse is the first mention of violence and direct reference to the Spanish Civil War, which opens the transition to the next stanza.

The lyrical speaker continues imagining a young man at the gates of Madrid in the dark night in the snow. As the speaker thinks of him, they wonder what if the young man, with ice cold feet in the snow, gets shot by a bullet "right here." And if this happens, then the young man will see neither snow, nor wind, nor the night again. The poem continues with:

Kar yağıyor
ve sen böyle "No pasaran"
deyip
Madrid kapısına dikilmeden
önce
herhalde vardın.
Kimdin, nerden geldin, ne
yapardın?

It's snowing
and you're like "No pasarán"
saying it
while, before you stood at the gates
of Madrid
you probably existed.
Who were you, where did you
come from, what did you do?

*No pasarán*: "No passage," "they will not pass." This was the closing phrase of an address by the legendary Spanish anarchist leader Durruti. It later became the slogan of the anti-fascist struggle. Hikmet's poem uses the phrase as a concrete historical reference while wondering what people's lives were like before the Spanish Civil War. Here the lyrical speaker shows deep empathy with everyone involved in this violent conflict rather than reducing everyone to "a side," wondering about each person's individual history. Unsettling political decisions and categories, the lyrical speaker addresses the human aspects of this historical event, which political leaders failed to do. It is striking how the lyrical speaker stresses that the working class and particularly laborers are most affected by this war. After toiling on farms, coal mines, or anywhere else, these individuals are now the ones suffering violence.

Belki "Plasa da Sol" da küçük bir
dükkanın vardı,
renkli İspanyol yemişleri satardın.
Belki hiçbir hünerin yoktu, belki
gayet güzeldi sesin.
Belki felsefe talebesi, belki hukuk
fakültesindensin

Maybe you had a little shop in
Plaza del Sol,
selling colorful Spanish snacks.
Maybe you had no talent, maybe
you had a beautiful voice.
Maybe you were a philosophy
student, maybe a law student

ve parçalandı üniversite mahallesinde
bir İtalyan tankının tekerlekleri
altında kitapların.
Belki dinsizsin,
belki boynunda bir sicim, bir küçük
haç.

and in the university neighborhood
had your books smashed under the
wheels of an Italian tank.
Maybe you're atheist,
maybe there's a thread around your
neck, a little cross.

The lyrical speaker suggests other destinies: Maybe the soldier was just a salesman with a little shop in Madrid, maybe he had no talents at all, maybe he was a good singer? Or maybe he was a student of philosophy or law, and now his books were thrown under Italian tanks? Maybe he is religious, maybe he is not? The lyrical speaker draws a picture of a young man who could be any of us or even someone we know. By later comparing him to a soldier in Dulumpınar (the battle of Dulumpınar was the last battle in the Greco-Turkish War during the Turkish War of Independence) or to Robespierre (a prominent figure of the French Revolution), the lyrical speaker draws historical references and demonstrates that the fate of this young soldier at the gates of Madrid is not a fictional fate but one that will be in history books.

Yüzünü hiç görmedim ve
görmeyeceğim,
adımı duymadın ve hiç
duymayacaksın.
Aramızda denizler, dağlar,
benim kahrolası aczim
ve "Ademi Müdahale Komitesi"
var.
. . .
Ve ben ne yarın, ne dün, ne bu
akşam
onu sevmekten başka bir şey
yapamam.

I've never seen your face and I never
will,
you haven't heard my name and you
never will.
Between us, the seas, the mountains,
my damned helplessness
and there's the "Non-Intervention
Committee."
. . .
And tomorrow, or yesterday, or this
evening
I can do nothing but love him.

In this last part of the poem, the lyrical speaker points at the distance and difference between them and the young soldier: "I have never seen your face and I will never see it and you have never heard of my name and you never will." Between the two are the Mediterranean, the mountains, and, last but not least, the non-intervention agreement. And even though the lyrical speaker knows that the young man's feet must be freezing in this weather, he cannot send him socks. And he cannot send him arms to defend himself. The lyrical speaker expresses utter despair because of their helplessness and finishes the poem by saying that the only thing they can do tomorrow, yesterday, or this evening is to love this young man at the gates of Madrid.

Nâzım Hikmet's poem is a direct response and resistance to the political agenda of Turkey. His poem presents strong expressions of empathy and solidarity, something that many governments had failed to show.

Turkish authors not only produced texts during the war but also wrote to prevent the memory of the victims of Franco's dictatorship from being suppressed and falling into obscurity. The next example represents a group of texts that still await scholarly examination.

Turkish-Jewish author Beki L. Bahar's poem *Rapido'dan bir anı* (a memory from the Rapido) was published in 1965; Bahar wrote the poem while traveling through Spain during that year with her husband and children. This poem, written many years after Hikmet's, exemplifies a different approach to addressing the Spanish Civil War. In Bahar's poem, the lyrical speaker describes a train journey from Barcelona to Madrid and contemplates how everyone around them seems to be delighted by their travels in Spain. However, the lyrical speaker is skeptical of this delight and addresses the ignorance of the complex historical memories of Spain while making references to the Spanish Inquisition. In the last stanza, the lyrical speaker asks a young soldier about Lorca, which again makes the young soldier feel ashamed as he bows his head down.

| | |
|---|---|
| Bir kompartımanda | In a compartment |
| En azından on kişi karşı karşıya | At least ten people facing each other |
| Barselona Madrid yolunda. | On the road from Barcelona to Madrid. |
| Köylü kentli asker subay bir arada. | Peasants and townspeople, soldiers, and officers. |
| En küçük istasyonda dura kalka | Stopping at the smallest station |
| "Rapido" dedikleri posta | The fast track they call "Rapido" |
| Bizlere bir uzun oyun oynamakta | Playing a long game with us |
| Gazeteler dergiler, sigaralar çörekler | Newspapers, magazines, cigarettes, buns |
| Elden ele dolaştıkça, | Passed from hand to hand, |
| Zaman azalmakta kişiler kaynaşmakta. | Time is passing and people are mingling. |

The lyrical speaker watches the environment around them on this train from Barcelona to Madrid. People from all over the world are meeting in this compartment, getting to know each other, and sharing their "newspapers, magazines, cigarettes, and buns."

| | |
|---|---|
| Bir kıta! | A continent! |
| Bir kıta hediye etmenin gururu yüzlerde, | The pride of gifting a continent is on their faces, |
| Geçmiş imparatorluk çakılı kalmış gözlerde | The past empire is stuck in their eyes |

| | |
|---|---|
| Her biri gezilecek bir yer öğütlüyor | Each one recommends a place to visit |
| Tarihten süzülmüş bir de öykü ekliyor. | Adding a story filtered from history. |
| Bütün bir gün yetmiyebilirdi El Prado'ya | A whole day might not be enough for El Prado |
| Uzanıp gitmeliydik Elhambra'ya, Toledo'ya | Should've gone to Allhambra, Toledo |
| Resimleri boy boy önümüze çıkan | In front of us in full-length pictures |
| Gelip geçmiş en büyük matadoru İspanya'nın | Spain's greatest matador of all time |
| El Cordobes'i Arenada görmeliydik, | Should've seen El Cordobés in the arena, |
| Lope de Vega'yı, Cervantes'i kuskusuz bilirdik. | Lope de Vega, Cervantes, we certainly knew. |

The crowd on the train addresses the travelers and mentions places and people to visit. The lyrical speaker distances themselves from these remarks for tourists and draws more attention to the suppressed memories in Spain. References to "a continent" and Alhambra remind the reader of Spanish Colonialism. The speaker addresses another layer of memory when mentioning Toledo, a city in Spain, which was not only a crucial place during the Spanish Civil War but also home to one of Europe's largest Jewish communities before the Spanish Inquisition. While acknowledging the travelers' pride "in their eyes," the lyrical speaker contests this satisfaction by reminding us of the different histories of Spain, histories one cannot feel too proud of. The stanza finishes with a reference to Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote* who is regarded as the greatest writer of the Spanish language. However, this notion is challenged with the next stanza:

| | |
|---|---|
| Daha başkalarını da tanırdık bizler, Örneğin; | We also knew many others, For example; |
| Federico Lorca'can ne haber? | What about Federico Lorca? |
| Subay bunalmış gibi çıktı dışarı | The officer went out as if he was overwhelmed. |
| Başı önüne eğik daldı genç asker. | The young soldier with his head bowed down. |
| Ya ötekiler? Renk vermeyenler? | And the others? Those who gave no response? |
| Belki de duymamışlardı bile adını! | Maybe they hadn't even heard of him! |
| Belki de, bu sessizliğin vardı bir nedeni . . . | Maybe there was a reason for this silence . . . |

From the great pride for Cervantes, the lyrical speaker then directs the focus to Federico García Lorca, a Spanish poet, playwright, and theater director who was murdered by Nationalist forces at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. His remains have never been recovered to this day. The lyrical speaker confronts the officers and soldiers, who look ashamed and try to avoid this confrontation; the other travelers show no response—maybe out of ignorance, maybe out of guilt, or maybe lack of knowledge? This is left open in the poem.

The lyrical speaker is able to establish strong contrasts between the perceived reality of a nation, which is full of pride, and its actual, suppressed history, which is full of violence, injustice, and ignorance.

Both poems were written during different times and therefore address different aspects of the public discourse on the Spanish Civil War in Turkey. However, both express responsibility for the Spanish cause. While the non-intervention policy forbade engagement in the Spanish Civil War, literary writers chose to intervene artistically. Their texts articulate the need for the justice and intervention that the government did not allow. While Hikmet wrote in the historical moment and created poetic counter-discourse to the political realities, Bahar wrote years later to address the suppressed violent histories of the country. These approaches also differ from the texts found in *Yeni Adam*, which are clearly political and aim to report on the situation and educate a Turkish audience.

Of course, this resistance not only represents the history of Spain but also reflects the history of Turkey. *Yeni Adam* was censored by the Turkish government, even though the republic had just been founded and had promised freedom and equality. Nâzım Hikmet was a Turkish poet, playwright, novelist, and essayist, often described as a romantic communist. He spent much of his adult life imprisoned for his political beliefs and died in exile. His writings can therefore be understood as counter-discourse in every sense of the word. Born in Istanbul to a Sephardi family in 1926, Beki L. Bahar was a successful writer and thinker in Turkey who created a large body of work, including essays, travel writings, plays, and poems. Her works often engaged with suppressed historical memory in Europe and Turkey.

The Spanish Civil War had repercussions beyond the continent and is significant for Turkish history. The authors of *Yeni Adam* could foresee that the rise of fascism in Europe would be a threat to the fragile republic in Turkey and therefore took a clear stand against it. None of the articles in this magazine chose appeasement—quite the contrary: the publication named the dangers of nationalism, capitalism, and fascism, for which it was censored later on. Both Hikmet and Bahar were part of communities and groups that could not live safely in Turkey and were marked as "marginalized" by others. In their writings, they imagined a transnational community of solidarity and of resistance, both in Spain and in Turkey. The solidarity was demonstrated by the Jewish community, the Alevite community and, of course, the Kurdish community. The century of the Turkish republic has been marked by violence

and discrimination, carried out by the state, against a pluralistic community. Writers, thinkers, performers, artists, politicians, and civilians have lived a vulnerable life, not protected by law and justice. Both Nâzım Hikmet's and Beki L. Bahar's poems work as a prism: through the body of the poetic text, the crystallization of a particular viewpoint, different historical experiences shine through, and we as readers can then clarify or better grasp the distortion of different layers of histories, memories, pasts, presents, and futures through the prism of the poem.

## Notes

1 Yücel Güçlü, "The Nyon Arrangement of 1937 and Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2002): 55.
2 Güçlü, "The Nyon Arrangement," 54.
3 Güçlü, "The Nyon Arrangement," 57.
4 The issues of Yeni Adam can be found in the archives of Salt Research, which is based in Istanbul. I would like to thank Salt Research for granting me access to the records.
5 Unfortunately, the full name was not disclosed, so it is not possible to give further details on the author.
6 N. Gürgen, "İspanya'da Yurddaş Savaşı," *Yeni Adam*, August 20, 1936, 6.
7 Hüsamettin Bozok, "Ökonomik ve Sosyal Bakımdan İspanya," *Yeni Adam*, October 17, 1936, 6.
8 Hüsamettin Bozok, "İspanyol kadını," *Yeni Adam*, April 8, 1937, 12.

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# 14 Echoes of Spain

## The Recruitment of Yugoslav-Canadian Spanish Civil War Veterans and Their Comrades into the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War

*Michael Petrou*

On May 7, 1942, Paul Phillips, a leading member of the Communist Party of Canada, wrote a letter to Colonel S. W. (Bill) Bailey, an officer with British Security Coordination (BSC), an arm of the British Secret Intelligence Service that had been set up at Rockefeller Center in Manhattan.[2] Bailey had earlier approached Phillips with a plan to recruit left-wing immigrants to Canada for secret work in Nazi-occupied Europe. In his letter Phillips pledged full support. "I wish to assure you that my friends and I are eager to cooperate with you in every possible way. . . . Everything we can do will be done to find the suitable 'candidates' as speedily as possible," he wrote, ending his letter with a blue-ink signature and the closing: "Yours for Victory."[3]

It was from the beginning an unlikely partnership. Phillips at the time believed he had an arrest warrant hanging over his head. He avoided the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and tried not to appear in public during the day. The "friends" to which he referred were, like him, Communists, members of an officially banned political party. Phillips, a Jewish Ukrainian immigrant to Canada, was treasurer of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), but his more important role was as a sort of outreach officer to radical members of Canada's various minority communities. Only five years earlier, hundreds of these men had defied Canadian law to volunteer as members of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War of 1936 to 1939. Others had been arrested during the 1930s for strike activity and demonstrations against unemployment. They worked as lumberjacks and miners, their muscles knotted from hard labor and their lungs scarred by silicosis. Their status in Canada was precarious and not helped by their political agitation. Some who had fought in Spain had volunteered to serve in the Canadian Army and been rejected. They were marginalized within Canadian society and distrusted by the country's authorities.[4]

Bailey, in contrast, came from the ranks of the British establishment. Before the Second World War, he worked as a metallurgist at a British-owned mine in Yugoslavia, where he became fluent in Serbo-Croatian.

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Shortly after war began, he joined the Secret Intelligence Service's Section D, which was tasked with investigating and carrying out sabotage, propaganda, and other covert operations.[5] Bailey, along with other members of Section D, soon moved into the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a body formed in 1940 to encourage resistance among the occupied peoples of Europe—or, as British Prime Minister Winston Churchill defined its task, to "set Europe ablaze."[6]

The SOE had little tinder to work with in its early days. France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and Norway all fell to the Germans in 1940. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union had yet entered the war, so Britain, along with her Empire and allied Dominions, fought largely alone. On March 27, 1941, a British-backed coup in Yugoslavia replaced its regent, Prince Paul, whose government had just signed the Tripartite Pact allying Yugoslavia with Germany, with the pro-British King Peter II. But ten days later, Germany, Italy, and Hungary invaded and quickly overran Yugoslavia.[7] Along with their ally Bulgaria, they annexed some Yugoslav territory and established the puppet "Independent State of Croatia." A rump Serbian state remained under German military occupation.[8] The Germans continued into Greece, where Britain, Australia, and New Zealand had deployed protective forces. Mainland Greece was conquered by the end of April. Greek and Allied forces who retreated to the island of Crete were defeated soon after. Even after Germany attacked the Soviet Union that June, bringing it into the war, Britain faced a bleak situation on the continent. But Yugoslavia, a sprawling and mountainous country well suited to guerilla warfare, at least offered the prospect of violent resistance against Germany and its allies, which could tie down troops who might otherwise be fighting elsewhere.[9]

The British, however, were unsure how they might best confront the Germans there. They had begun their involvement with Yugoslav resistance groups soon after Germany's invasion by backing a resistance group known as the Chetniks. Mostly Serbs, the Chetniks were supported by Yugoslavia's exiled king and government and led by a former Royal Yugoslav Army general named Draža Mihailović.[10] The British knew little about the rival Partisans, a mostly communist outfit led by a former recruiter of Yugoslav volunteers for the International Brigades named Josip Broz, more commonly known as Tito. London made fleeting contact with the Partisans when British officer Bill Hudson slipped into Montenegro by submarine in September 1941, along with three Royal Yugoslav Army personnel. Hudson was tasked with investigating resistance groups and fostering cooperation among them.[11] He reached Tito and the Partisans, but his radio soon stopped working, so for months little was known of him or what he had learned. Another agent, Terrence Atherton, was dropped in to find out what was going on. He, too, reached the Partisans, but then, in April 1942, set off to find Hudson, who had left Tito to look for Mihailović and was murdered along the way.[12] Yugoslavia still appeared to the British as potentially rich ground for

resistance, but clearly, they needed better information. And that required more men in the country.

Although there it was a creation of Britain's ruling class, whose leading members studied at exclusive public schools and universities such as Eton, Oxford, and Cambridge, the SOE was also coolly pragmatic when selecting agents. "The SOE was ready to work with any man or any institution, Roman Catholic or masonic, Trotskyist or liberal, syndicalist or Catholic, radical or conservative, [S]talinist or anarchist, gentile or Jew, that would help it beat the Nazis down," is how M. R. D. Foot, author of the official history of the SOE in France, described its outlook.[13] So, the SOE looked to Canada and to men like Phillips and his friends among the downtrodden and politically radicalized immigrants who lived there.

The cooperation that resulted grew out of clear-eyed recognition on the part of the SOE, the CPC, and the Yugoslav-Canadian recruits that their interests converged on the question of fighting fascism in Yugoslavia. The British would do whatever was necessary to defeat Hitler. The CPC might have sought minor ancillary benefits from their cooperation, notably relief from police harassment, but they, too, appear to have been led primarily by a desire to fight Nazism in Yugoslavia—and, not incidentally, to support the communist Partisans who were also backed by the Soviet Union. As for the recruits themselves, most believed they had been immersed in a global struggle against fascism that had begun long before German tanks rolled into Belgrade. The Spanish Civil War had galvanized many of these men as it bared the world's deepening cleavages between fascism, communism, and democracy. But the political radicalization of the Yugoslav immigrants to Canada who would eventually join the SOE also had its roots in their immigration to and experiences in Canada during the 1920s and 1930s.

## My Brothers, Great Is Our Suffering

Yugoslav immigration to Canada sharply increased during the second half of the 1920s, a result of a more restrictive immigration policy in America that began in 1923 and a gradual loosening of Canada's approach. While only 137 Yugoslavs arrived in 1922, more than 2,000 came in 1924 and 1925, and more than 4,000 in 1926 and 1928.[14] Most were single men or men with wives and children back home.[15] They faced some discrimination in their new home. Canada's immigration policy at the time still favored migrants from northern Europe, especially Britain, over those from southern or eastern Europe, who may have had darker skin. Yugoslavs were a particularly troublesome group to sort out for Canadian immigration officials and recruiters from Canada's two transcontinental railways, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and Canadian National Railway (CNR): some were deemed sufficiently white; others were not. "The pure Slav, Serb, Croat and Slovene can fairly well be recognized as fair skinned, and by other features," CNR

official and expert on central European agricultural F. W. Baumgartner wrote to his boss in 1927,

> but they themselves are not uniformly blond and fair, and in addition there are all degrees of blends to which this centuries' long mixture of races has led, and it is not always easy to decide just where to draw the line, the less as this line does by no means always correspond with agricultural fitness and other qualifications of Canadian immigrants.

He added that since that April, "*absolutely no passenger has been given a certificate* from any part of Southern Serbia or Dalmatia, or of in a slight degree of dark shade."[16]

Baumgartner was trying to reassure Canadian government officials who feared an influx of dark-skinned migrants who could not assimilate. In a November 1926 memo, J. Bruce Walker, director of European Immigration, lamented that transportation companies were trying to pass off as Serbs Macedonians "who are really Turks in origin and custom," among other instances of purported deception. "These emigrants are all of the dark type, and not by any means desirable for Canada. They are themselves willing workers, but leave the hard tasks for their wives while they sit at home and rest themselves."[17] These attitudes might have contributed to the predominance of supposedly lighter-skinned Croatians among immigrants from Yugoslavia for a few years. But such racial barriers facing South Slavs hoping to immigrate to Canada appear to have been dismantled by 1928, and single men poured in from all over Yugoslavia.[18]

These migrants rarely penetrated the mainstream of established Canadian society. They worked in mines and lumber camps and on frontier railways, often in work gangs drawn from the same extended family or village. They lived dangerous lives among blackflies and filth. Edmund Bradwin, writing of migrant railway workers a generation earlier, noted that behind each work camp were typically crosses erected on a hill. "Some Russian is buried there," the living would say, which "usually meant some foreign-born worker of Slav or Balkan extraction."[19]

A Croatian miner in northern Quebec captured what life was like in a free verse poem titled "My God How the Lowly Suffer," published in *Kanadski glas*, a Canadian Croatian-language newspaper:

> My brothers, great is our suffering
> When we have fallen into foreigners' hands!
> Heavy work, we cannot speak the language,
> And you should see how we suffer! . . .

And they were lonely. The miner's poem continued:

> He sends money to his faithful wife
> So that she could take care of home.

> There are good wives, but by God and bad ones too
> For which even a factory could not supply enough cash
> Many women have lovers at home
> While their husbands here suffer in the stench.[20]

And yet, these migrants had left behind worse in Yugoslavia. The country was formed in 1918 out of territory previously in the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was merged with the formerly independent kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro. It was initially called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, a name that encompassed some of its major constituent ethnic groups while leaving out others, such as Bosnian Muslims, Albanians, and Macedonians. Renamed Yugoslavia, meaning Land of the Southern Slavs, by King Alexander I in 1929, its population was divided along ethnic and religious lines. Its parliament, reflecting these divisions, did not function well. In January 1929, Alexander abolished the constitution, prorogued parliament, and established a personal dictatorship, which lasted until 1931, when a new constitution was decreed. Most Yugoslavs were subsistence peasants on land that lacked basic infrastructure and could not provide work for the number of people living on it.[21] Migration was an escape. For all its hardships, Canada offered a reason to be hopeful about the future. Then Canada's economy collapsed, and those who had gambled on starting a new life in it were cast adrift.

The Great Depression devastated Canadians from all walks of life. But it was particularly punishing to new immigrants with little capital and few established connections or support networks outside their own ethnic communities. During the 1930s, thousands of itinerant laborers rode back and forth across the country in or on railway boxcars, sleeping in hobo jungles outside rail yards or grudgingly gathering in so-called relief camps that were established to house and provide work for single unemployed men paid 20 cents per day. Available work outside the camps was dangerous. In June 1930, a barge on the St. Lawrence River exploded and killed twelve men from a single village in Croatia. Eight more Croats were among the forty dead in a mine explosion later that summer near Princeton, British Columbia.[22]

The CPC and affiliated unions seized the opportunity to agitate and spread their message among miners and in relief camps. The camps were especially fertile ground for political radicalization. Party activists did not have to work hard to convince camp workers that capitalism crushed and exploited the poor. That much was self-evident. And while in the 1920s, it might have seemed as though things would soon get better, there was little optimism a few years later. "They see their useful years passing, and are impatient, thinking that radical change offers them more chance of betterment than patient waiting," A. E. Graham, member of a Liberal-government-appointed committee to investigate the camps, wrote in 1935: "Considering them as despairing human beings, can you blame them for their attitudes?"[23]

Immigrants in Canada continued to face discrimination on top of poverty. After a violent and bitter strike in Rouyn-Noranda in 1935, scores of Croatian miners were deported or fired. The local press noted with approval that their jobs were now held by English and French Canadians.[24] These expulsions were part of a broader pattern involving the deportation of radical immigrants during the 1930s. Because Canadian authorities, and many citizens, saw communism as a foreign ideology that threatened Canadian identity and culture, immigrant supporters of the party were particularly vulnerable.[25] Section 98 of the Criminal Code, introduced in 1919 in response to widespread labor revolts and repealed in 1936, was aimed at "unlawful associations" that sought to bring about "any government, industrial or economic change" through the threat or use of force. But as Dennis Molinaro has written, what constituted a threat or force was "ambiguous at best."[26] Section 98 existed in addition to other legislation in the Immigration Act that allowed for deportation for reasons such as "immoral behaviour" and taking unemployment relief. Combined, these laws gave Canadian authorities wide remit to get rid of unwanted migrants. And because deportation was an administrative rather than a judicial matter, those affected had limited legal recourse.[27]

On its surface, the Spanish Civil War had little to do with migrants in Canada facing expulsion, or with the struggles of other poor workers and unemployed young men during the Great Depression. But many of them saw in the cause of the Spanish Republic a reflection of their own fight against camp bosses and strike breakers in Canada. For Yugoslav immigrants, particularly Croatians, the war had added relevance. Italy's Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini was backing the Spanish rebels led by Francisco Franco. And it was Mussolini's forced Italianization policies in Istria, territory awarded to Italy after the Great War, that led to the emigration of tens of thousands of Croats and Slovenes.[28] This fueled resentment of fascism and an attraction to the Communists who seemed its strongest opponents. Fighting in Spain was a chance to act on these convictions. Božo Prpić, who later parachuted into Yugoslavia with the SOE, writes in his memoir of a 1938 meeting in Toronto at which Juraj Krnjević, a leading member of the Croatian Peasant Party, chastised progressive Croatian emigrants for their preoccupation with the civil war in Spain. He was shouted down by audience members who told him: "Croatian workers in Spain are fighting for the freedom of the Croatian people!"[29]

More than one hundred Yugoslav Canadians fought in Spain, of whom at least sixty were Croatians.[30] That so many volunteered reflects the radicalization that had already taken place within a segment of the Yugoslav immigrant community because of the Great Depression and the strikes, hunger, and discrimination they had endured. But Spain also hardened the political convictions of those who fought there and survived, and of those who supported them in Canada. Communists were a minority among Yugoslav

Canadians. But, after Spain, they were a minority that included those committed to fighting fascism abroad. It was to these men that British and Canadian intelligence officers now turned.

**Strange Bedfellows**

William Yull Stewart, a Canadian working for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, pulled his first Yugoslav recruit out of a Quebec City prison in late 1941. Branislav Radojević, a French-Serbian seaman and veteran of the Spanish Civil War, had been detained that September for inciting a strike among the crew of a ship that had sailed from New York. Radojević joined Hudson's mission with Mihailović the following summer. He reportedly made himself unpopular there because of his "complete inability to refrain from political activity," as a postwar note in his personnel file put it.[31] Sent to a British sub-mission with the Chetniks elsewhere, Radojević tried to bribe two soldiers to defect to the Partisans with him. He then undertook a mission with two British officers to negotiate peace between the Chetniks and a nearby Partisan unit. The Britons were captured by Serbian collaborationists and handed over to the Gestapo. Radojević escaped. He eventually managed to join another Partisan group and then disappeared. Although he is identified as a Communist in his SOE personnel file, historian Heather Williams says Radojević had fought with the anarchists during the Spanish Civil War and was likely executed by Partisans, because they thought he was a Trotskyist.[32]

Meanwhile, the SOE was already looking for potential recruits in America. By the summer of 1941, William Donovan, a recipient of the Medal of Honor because of his actions during the First World War, was building what would become the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) intelligence agency. That work put him in touch with Milton Wolff, the tall and well-liked commander of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion of American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. Donovan connected Wolff with William Stephenson, the Canadian head of BSC in New York, who was looking to recruit Balkan immigrants to America. Wolff, with the help of Spanish Civil War comrades Mirko Marković and Tomas Babin, assembled a party of eleven Yugoslavs and three Greeks who were met by Bailey at the end of the year. Logistical and bureaucratic red tape prevented the quick transfer of these men to STS 103, a training school established in farm country east of Toronto. They would eventually be trained at an OSS facility in Maryland and would not reach Cairo until February 1943. The experience soured Bailey on further recruitment in America, and so the British shifted their attention north.[33]

"I request your authority to extend the work of my section to Canada" reads a note from April 9, 1942, to London from BSC in New York, written by Alexander Halpern (Aleksandr Yakovelich Galpern). Galpern was

a former Russian revolutionary who had joined British intelligence and, in New York, worked on issues pertaining to ethnic minorities.

> Canada now has a large number of representative leaders of various nationalities. It has branches of the so-called Free Movements. They should be watched, nursed, and contacted. S.O. [Special Operations] and S.I.S. recruits could be found there if we approach the various racial groups through their recognized leaders. Any recruit we find and train there will have the advantage that we shall not be dependent on the Americans either as regards the training or as regards the incorporation and management of the recruits.[34]

Two weeks later, on April 23, 1942, Bailey was informed that SOE in Cairo had requested he find one or two Bulgarians and one or two Croats to be infiltrated into Croatia and Bulgaria that summer. The telegram said the recruits would be trained in the Middle East and should be sent there as soon as possible.[35]

Bailey was in Toronto by May 2 and returned for another meeting on the seventh. His first contact was with Kosta Todoroff, a Bulgarian Communist and longtime SOE contact who put him in touch with Philipps; Joseph Yardas, a Croatian Communist; and Marko Šikić, a Montenegrin who had illegally entered Canada in 1937 and whose real name was Nikola Kovačević. These three would be Bailey's primary partners in his recruitment efforts over the subsequent months. "From the conversations held it is clear that these three people represent an important section of the progressive movement in Canada—the name under which the communist party is forced to exist there," wrote Bailey in a report of his meetings. "I formed the highest opinion of their political integrity, and of their sincerity. Their desire to help is unquestionable and they, having been engaged in subversive activities for many years, have a very clear impression of our needs."[36]

In a letter that June, Bailey explained to Phillips what he was looking for in recruits. "I know that you realize that they must be greatly superior to those recruited by you a few years ago, both in respect of political and moral integrity, intelligence, courage, and physical condition," he wrote, referring to Phillips's earlier recruitment of Canadians to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Recruits, he added, should be single or at least have no dependents in Canada. Men with organizing experience, "particularly in progressive circles," should take precedence over all others. Family still in the recruits' country of origin might be advantageous. "Previous experience in Spain would be valuable but not essential," he said.[37]

Bailey's new communist colleagues were surely aware of the Soviet Union's needs as well. Historian Mark Wheeler says it is "virtually inconceivable" that the American and Canadian Communist parties would have cooperated with SOE without Moscow's approval.[38] Kovačević, according to Williams, was

in fact a Soviet agent.[39] And Babin allegedly reported to Soviet military intelligence about his recruitment activities.[40] And yet there is also circumstantial evidence suggesting the Soviets were not fully informed about what the British and their American and Canadian recruits were up to. When Canadians Pavle Pavlić and Petar Erdeljac, along with British Alexander Simić-Stevens, parachuted into western Croatia in April 1943, they were met by local peasants and eventually taken to Partisan headquarters for Croatia. There, Tito was cabled and asked what should be done with them. Tito, apparently surprised to get the news, contacted the Communist International (Comintern), a Soviet organization that ran the international communist movement, and asked them to investigate the identity of his guests through the CPC. It took the Comintern a while to reply. When it did, it denied all knowledge of the CPC's involvement in the recruitment of agents and advised Tito to be cautious while establishing the true identity of the parachutists.[41]

Regardless of any instructions they might have received from Moscow, it was likely obvious to CPC recruiters that cooperating with the British in Yugoslavia could also help the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of German troops were needed to occupy Yugoslavia, and the more deployed there and elsewhere in the Balkans to battle local resistance groups, the fewer would be available to throw at the Russians on the Eastern Front. Todoroff said as much in a letter of introduction he provided to Bailey for a Bulgarian immigrant and Spanish Civil War veteran named Bojan Nikoloff:

> Dear Boris [sic]
>
> I received your letter. And now I am recommending you for something which I think you will like, which is exceedingly dangerous but of the very greatest importance for Bulgaria. Your wife will be well looked after, so that there is no need for you to worry about her.
>
> The person who will present this letter to you will explain the whole business, and inform you with whom you will be working. Anyway, you have always been a fighter for liberty, and I know you will always fight wherever it may be necessary.
>
> The work is exceedingly [one word illegible] but glorious. You will be working for Bulgaria, for the Allies, and for Soviet Russia. I hope and believe that wherever you may be offered work, you will accept the offer and that you will carry out all the tasks allotted to you in the same way that you behaved over there in Spain.
>
> With warm greetings,
>
> [Signed]
> Kosta Todoroff[42]

Despite their eagerness to help, Phillips and Kovačević did not offer unconditional support. At their first meeting with Bailey, they asked for a number of assurances. It was necessary, they said, that their work be carried out with

the knowledge and tacit approval of the Canadian authorities. They asked that SOE not try to influence the political convictions of any of the recruits and that a recruit's communist convictions would not militate against him during or after his service. They wanted confirmation that recruits who were Canadian citizens would not jeopardize that status through their work with SOE and that recruits would be free to return to Canada at the conclusion of their service. For recruits not yet qualified for naturalization, Phillips and Kovačević asked that service with SOE would count as time spent in Canada. They also wanted assurance that compensation would be paid to dependents if a recruit were killed or disabled. Bailey, in a summary he prepared of the meeting, said he considered all these demands justifiable.[43]

Beyond such requirements, Phillips had other goals he hoped to advance through his involvement in the recruitment process. Party members at the time were continually harassed by the police, he said. Phillips told Bailey the situation was especially bad in Toronto because of someone he identified as a local Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) assistant commissioner by the name of Draper. This was Brigadier-General Dennis Draper, who was not a member of the RCMP but was chief constable of the Toronto Police Department. Draper was a decorated First World War veteran of United Empire Loyalist stock. His efforts to stamp out communism in Toronto a decade earlier included employing a "Red Squad" of officers who physically abused prisoners and the prohibition of public meetings in any language other than English.[44] Phillips told Bailey that Draper had recently attempted to persuade the manager of a hotel to deny "radical elements" accommodation for one of their conventions. "The request was turned down because it was made unofficially and was unfounded in law; but it indicates Draper's attitude towards the people with whom we are now in close contact," Bailey noted in a May 21 report to Halpern.[45]

By cooperating with the SOE, Phillips hoped to win the party some breathing room. "Also, should their collaboration with us yield results of value, they wish to receive due credit at such time as this can be done without jeopardising the secrecy of our operations and the safety of our operators," Bailey continued in the same report, adding: "This seems a natural and reasonable demand."[46]

Phillips had other suggestions regarding additional areas of cooperation, although he did not require that these be met as a prerequisite for his support in the recruiting process. He said he wanted to pass on information about "internal affairs" in Canada, presumably a reference to fascist-supporting groups in the country. He proposed using immigrant "language groups" in Canada to make propaganda directed at those in occupied Europe. And he suggested that propaganda and recruiting activities could be conducted among immigrants in South America.[47]

Phillips made no demands for himself, although he told Bailey he feared getting arrested and limited his travel accordingly. That Phillips was so restricted irritated Bailey for practical and moral reasons. "Another argument

for allowing Phillips freedom of movement . . . is that it is paradoxical for him to endeavour to recruit personnel for our particularly dangerous work 'in the name of democracy' if he himself is being hounded by the authorities for his political views" he wrote in June. "The propaganda value of this situation (adverse to us) is too important to be ignored."[48]

Bailey and his colleagues tried to intervene with Canadian authorities on Phillips's behalf, securing assurances from Norman Robertson, undersecretary of state for the Department of External Affairs, that Phillips could safely travel without fear of arrest. Robertson told them there was in fact no outstanding arrest warrant for Phillips. Herbert Sichel, a colleague of Bailey's at BSC, thanked Robertson, promised Robertson he would not tell Phillips about the lack of a warrant for his arrest, but said he would confidentially let Phillips know he could travel freely.[49] British intelligence appears to have had a less cooperative and transparent relationship with the RCMP. "I made no contacts at all in my hotel, and the interviews were carried out in four different houses, in different parts of Vancouver," Bailey wrote of a recruiting trip in July 1942.

> I do not therefore think that my activities or my connection with Phillips can possibly have come to the attention of authorities there. I mention this point, since it appears . . . that our relations with the R.C.M.P. in British Columbia are far from satisfactory. It would therefore do us no good at all if it came to the notice of officials there that we were dealing with the radicals.[50]

It seems unlikely, then, that Bailey was able to do much to ease RCMP pressure on his communist partners.

Kovačević likewise asked for little in return for his help and despite being over fifty years old seemed primarily concerned with joining those recruits training for infiltration into Yugoslavia. He had not been there since 1928 and since then had lived illegally in various parts of Europe, the United States, and Canada, supporting himself through radical foreign-language journalism. "There is nothing to add to the life history, which speaks for itself of unswerving loyalty to a political ideal, at great personal risk and sacrifice," reads a note in his personnel file, compiled before he left Canada for SOE's Middle East headquarters in Cairo.[51]

Kovačević wanted to conduct his work for SOE using his real name rather than the Marko Šikić alias he had been using in Canada. This presented Bailey with a dilemma that highlights BSC's lack of candor with its Canadian partners. "To allow this, it would be necessary for us to tell the Canadians frankly that he has been in Canada illegally, and ask them to overlook this fact in view of his impending departure," Bailey wrote:

> They may of course in this event object to guaranteeing re-entry, but I think that Shikitch himself would not mind this, as all his ties and

> connections are in Montenegro. If the war comes to a successful conclusion, he will undoubtedly want to stay there. If the war comes to an unsuccessful conclusion, it is extremely unlikely that he will ever be able to leave the country alive. In either case, his eventual return to Canada is most improbable.[52]

Kovačević, it seems, was willing to run that risk because, whatever loyalty he might have felt to the party and the Soviet Union, he also believed in the anti-fascist fight and in the liberation of Yugoslavia from Nazi occupation. Events would prove how dangerous acting on such convictions could be. In November 1942, an enemy submarine torpedoed and sunk the Greek freighter *Andreas*, on which Kovačević was sailing for Egypt, and machine-gunned the survivors. Shot in the leg, Kovačević was too injured to continue with his mission and returned to Canada.[53] When they learned of his injury, Kovačević's friends in British intelligence decided to present him with a portable typewriter so that he might make a living in journalism—almost certainly by publishing in the same radical publications for whom he had worked prior to his recruitment.[54]

### To Help the Fatherland and Fight Fascism

And what of the other recruits, the miners and factory workers recommended by Kovačević and his colleagues? What motivated them to join a British secret organization? The explanation Prpić gives in his memoir is straightforward. He and his fellow recruits, the first batch to leave Canada, had one aim: "to help the fatherland and their nations to fight against German and Italian fascist occupiers and domestic traitors—Ustashas and Chetniks." If military authorities had allowed more volunteers, he adds, there would have been tens of thousands more.[55]

Prpić's professed patriotism was likely genuine, but it is also true that most of the Yugoslav-Canadian recruits to the SOE were already politically engaged and, in some cases, had demonstrated a willingness to risk their lives fighting fascism. Their experiences as immigrants in Canada during the Great Depression nurtured a commitment to the Communist Party and to the broader anti-fascist movement. The uprising in Yugoslavia—like the war in Spain a few years earlier—seemed part of that larger struggle.

British and Canadian recruiters were aware of this perceived connection between Spain and the anti-fascist resistance in Yugoslavia and hoped to profit from it. In August 1943, the BSC tried to locate Edward Cecil-Smith, who had been commander of the Mackenize-Papineau Battalion of the International Brigades, in which many Canadians served during the Spanish Civil War. Alfred Gardyne de Chastelain, a former British oil executive and SOE member then looking for recruits in Canada, wanted to meet him. Tommy Drew-Brook, a Canadian working for BSC in Toronto, wrote de Chastelain on August 27 to say he would ask Phillips about Cecil-Smith. Cecil-Smith, he

said, had a good record in Spain, barring a report that he had intentionally wounded himself to avoid action. A telegram the next day said Cecil-Smith had "lost touch and favour with his former pals of the Spanish war although he himself may still be a good man." There is no evidence that SOE recruiters pursued the matter after this.[56]

What motivated the Yugoslav-Canadian recruits might also be discerned, albeit in filtered form, through observations of their SOE examiners and trainers who recorded their observations in the recruits' personnel files. They saw evidence of patriotism, anti-fascism, loyalty to the Communist Party—and, on occasion, baser and more personal aspirations. One of Stevan Serdar's examiners concluded that regardless of the instructions he was given, Serdar would try to make contact with Russian agents in whatever country he was sent.[57] Peter Erdeljac's examiner worried Erdeljac might try to avenge himself on his wife in Yugoslavia for her alleged infidelity. She had reported him to the police and broke off contact because of his habit of sending their children communist literature. Erdeljac's examiner noted with alarm that one of the children was only ten at the time.[58] The SOE sent both men to Yugoslavia anyway.

However, it is an elemental desire to fight the Germans and their allies and collaborators that emerges most prominently among the Yugoslav Canadians' motivations. "A first class type," reads an examiner's note about Pavle Pavlić. "Intelligent, steady, feels very strongly about the Fascist invasion of his country and keen as mustard to get at the Germans. Deplores misunderstanding between partisans and Mihailovic but only anxious to fight Fascists—let the rest wait."[59]

One examiner wrote of Erdeljac, another veteran of the Spanish Civil War:

> There is no doubt about his melancholy courage and political integrity; he is fully aware of the possible consequences of an excursion, in view of the police records which doubtless still exist in his country of origin, but is nevertheless more than eager to return whatever the consequences.

The same report also drips with class prejudice and stereotypical tropes about stolid and wily Slavs. "Is undoubtedly intelligent beyond his station," it reads. "Is probably crafty rather than clever, with well-developed, native, peasant, shrewdness."[60] Similar references to peasant cunning are scattered throughout SOE reports about North American Yugoslav recruits. Examiners seemed incapable of concluding that these communist migrants, men from frontier bunkhouses and northern gold mines who would be assigned delicate and difficult work, might have been as smart as those who would dispatch them.

If the Yugoslav-Canadian recruits were underestimated during war, they were also overlooked when it was finished. "No one in British authority was ever going to thank them for doing it, of course," wrote SOE Yugoslav

section head Basil Davidson in his 1980 memoir, referring to the contact the Canadian Yugoslavs made with Tito's Partisans, "for they were unimportant persons and were only going, after all, where they had wished to go."[61] Davidson returned to the topic years later after attending the unveiling of a plaque in Westminster Abbey dedicated to SOE casualties. "I do not know if anyone ever thanked those Canadians," he wrote in a 1996 *London Review of Books* article.[62] Clearly, it bothered him.

**A Fight They Chose**

It's unlikely, however, that the SOE's Yugoslav-Canadian recruits were looking for thanks. They wanted to join a fight against fascism in their homeland, and, as Davidson pointed out, they got what they wanted. He remembered them smoldering with impatience in Cairo while awaiting transport to Yugoslavia. They lived on the outskirts of the city near the Mena House Hotel in a villa he said had once been a high-end brothel that serviced discerning pashas. It still housed pink lamps, now covered in dust. They were "craggy men with huge shoulders," he said, "hard of face, their hands clawed with toil, and as stubbornly powerful in their convictions."[63]

They would almost all leave, eventually. Pavlić describes in his memoir the nighttime flight over the Mediterranean, the plunge through the floor of a lone bomber, his parachute catching him in a tree well off the ground, a dawn encounter with the frightened peasant men who find him. He gives cigarettes to the men and his scarf to a young girl who arrives soon after. They bring him to a house that had been burned, possibly during a reprisal attack, roughly repaired with new boards of wood. They feed Pavlić hot milk and ham. Then they take him to a nearby Partisan detachment, where he sees Erdeljac and Simić-Stevens.[64] Others would follow. More than twenty Yugoslav Canadians infiltrated the Balkans as agents of the SOE. Five were veterans of Spain, including Branko Gruić, who was recruited by the SOE but served with the American OSS. At least five died. Two more, Luka Biljan and Emil Vrkljan, perished in the South Atlantic submarine attack before they could get to Europe.[65]

In William Mackenzie's official history of the SOE, written immediately after the war at the invitation of SOE's last chief, Colin Gubbins, but declassified only in 2000, Mackenzie says resistance groups in Yugoslavia contained an "impressive" number of Axis divisions and prevented their deployment elsewhere. He also notes that Britain's contribution to armed resistance in the country was mostly symbolic until the spring of 1944 when it began supplying Tito's Partisans on a large scale, allowing them to dominate their Chetnik rivals and more forcefully confront the Germans.[66] The SOE facilitated this process by "pushing liaison officers to strange places, establishing communication, and following it with supplies."[67] The Yugoslav Canadians who were part of such liaison missions, and often the only members able to communicate with their hosts, therefore contributed significantly to Britain's tactical success in Yugoslavia.

As for Britain's strategic choice to end support for Mihailović and back Tito exclusively, it is unlikely the Canadian SOE agents on the ground had much of an impact. That decision was mainly influenced by the reports and arguments of Britons William Deakin and Fitzroy Maclean, who led missions to Tito, combined with signals intelligence decryption.[68] Some Yugoslav Canadians on the ground certainly tried to push the British toward Tito, however, as is demonstrated in a May 24, 1943, memo from the SOE in Cairo based on telegrams received from Pavlić, Erdeljac, and Simić-Stevens, then members of an SOE sub-mission with the Partisans in Croatia. The memo reads: "Almost the first comment by this sub-mission was 'we think you are badly informed of the whole situation.'"[69] The British were still supporting Mihailović at that time. Jimmy Pearson, head of the Balkan and Middle East section at SOE's headquarters on Baker Street in London, forwarded the memo to a colleague with a dismissive disclaimer:

> When reading this memo you will no doubt bear in mind that the mission consists of three Canadian Yugoslavs who, though intelligent, are biased toward the Left. . . . The telegrams, however, are interesting, and on receipt of further telegrams, we shall be in a better position to judge the relative strength of the forces opposing the Axis in Yugoslavia.[70]

Biased or not, the Canadians' views on Tito and the Partisans and whom the British should support would eventually carry the day in London. For a while, the British sent weapons and liaison officers to both the Chetniks and the Partisans and tried to get them to cooperate with each other. In December 1943, however, after meeting with Maclean and Deakin in Cairo, Churchill declared he wanted Mihailović removed by the end of the year.[71]

Britain's abandonment of Mihailović for Tito remains controversial. Put simply, London concluded that the Partisans were far more active and effective fighters and the Chetniks were at best passive and at worst actively collaborating with the enemy. It might be said in their defense that the Chetniks were motivated in large part by self-preservation. Yugoslavia's Serbs had suffered tremendous atrocities at the hands of the Nazis and Croatian fascists early in the war. Mihailović's Chetniks wanted to avoid triggering further reprisal attacks on Serb villages. They were also conserving their forces for a showdown with the Partisans over who would rule Yugoslavia after the Axis was defeated.[72] The Partisans, for their part, had a revolutionary current to their politics. They were not fighting to defeat those occupying their country and return to the situation that had existed before the war, but for a new world—or at least a new Yugoslavia. They, too, knew a confrontation with Mihailović, who represented that old order, was inevitable. In the meantime, they were enthusiastic killers of Nazis, which was what mattered most to London.

Several Canadian recruits joined the Partisans during the war. A November 23, 1944, memo from Sichel to Drew-Brook quotes a telegram from the

"Mediterranean Area," saying that they are "Endeavouring to liquidate [end relations with] soonest Canadian Croats originally recruited in 1942." The telegram located thirteen of those Canadians in Italy, "and at present unemployed," seven in the field with the 37th Military Mission in Yugoslavia, four believed to be dead or captured, and ten "in field with Partisans having joined Partisan Army but not then unfortunately signed off by SOE."[73] A note the following July, attempting to track the locations of various recruits "about whom we have no definite information," cites unconfirmed reports that Marko Pavičić had been killed after joining the Partisans. Pavičić was dead by then. A note on the same page about Josip Sarić indicates he had joined the "JANL" (Jugoslav Army of National Liberation), adding: "Present whereabouts unknown."[74] Sarić, too, was dead.[75]

Pavlić's transfer to the Partisans was more formal. His SOE personnel file contains a letter from December 16, 1943, to a Commissar V. Bakarić at Partisan headquarters from a British officer who had served with Pavlić in Yugoslavia. "My Dear Commissar," it begins, and then introduces Pavlić as someone whom Bakarić had met when Pavlić was the British officer's interpreter but who now wished to join the Partisans:

> He is prompted to take this step purely because of his loyal patriotism, his love for the cause of freedom for which you are fighting, and because of his own honest character. He conscientiously believes it is his duty to join his fellow country-men in their struggle for freedom.
>
> I wish to point out to you that Sgt. Pavlić has given splendid service while he has been with us and we are sorry to see him go. However, we understand Paul and know that he is not happy unless he feels that he is doing is maximum duty. In that sense we are not inclined to stand in the way of his joining the Partizans. We are consoled by the thought that he is still within the family. We have recommended Sgt. Pavlić for the military medal as a modest token for his bravery and good conduct.
>
> We wish Paul every success and happiness in his most worthy and commendable choice of joining the Partizans and trust that you may well be proud of him.[76]

This letter found its way into Pavlić's SOE file. Pavlić, who stayed in Yugoslavia after the war, brought it to the British consulate-general in Zagreb to complain that he had not been given his pay and allowances when he joined the Partisans three years earlier. The British military attaché at the embassy in Belgrade reported that they had no knowledge of Pavlić's service in the British Army but asked that they be told how much to pay him, if the letter was genuine.[77]

All these lay in the future when Pavlić followed the villagers through the spring dawn toward the Partisans he had prepared so long to meet. We can imagine him with Erdeljac and Simić-Stevens, perhaps in a wooded glen, leaves on surrounding trees small and the bright shade of green that comes

with April's new growth; or packed into a villager's hut smelling of sweat and wet wool. Gathered about them are curious men dressed in an unmatched variety of stolen and homemade uniforms, bedecked with grenades and pistols, almost certainly pressing rakia, a strong fruit brandy, into their hands. A link, tenuous and ripe with possibility, is established between the Partisans and Allied high command by migrants, whom poverty and ambition had driven from Yugoslavia to Canada when they were younger men and who have now found their way back to build something new.

## Notes

1 This chapter is based on the following article: Michael Petrou, "'Melancholy Courage and Peasant Shrewd Cunning': The Recruitment of Yugoslav Canadians for Special Operations Executive Missions in the Second World War," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 29, no. 1 (2019): 39–71.
2 Phillips, who immigrated to Canada from Ukraine at the age of sixteen, was known in Ukraine as Feibush Waksman. He came to Canada with the assumed identity of Feibush Broder, a relative. Source: private conversation with Susan Phillips, daughter of Paul Phillips.
3 National Archives, Kew (hereafter noted as NA) Special Operations Executive Papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," Paul Phillips to S. W. Bailey, May 7, 1942.
4 For the challenges faced by Canadian immigrants who fought in the Spanish Civil War, before and after that conflict, see Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 10–49 and 170–80. David Stafford says that many of the SOE's first batch of Canadian recruits were illegal residents and only a minority had Canadian citizenship. See David Stafford, *Camp X: The Incredible and True Story of Canada's School for Secret Agents 1941–1945* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1986), 173.
5 Heather Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans: The Special Operations Executive and Yugoslavia* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2003), 3. Williams locates Bailey in Belgrade at this time. William Mackenzie, author of the SOE's official history, puts him in Istanbul. See William Mackenzie, *The Secret History of the S.O.E.: Special Operations Executive 1940–1945* (London: St. Ermin's Press, 2000), 15. British intelligence had a substantial presence in Istanbul, but it is probable that Bailey was often in Belgrade as well.
6 David Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance, 1940–1945: A Survey of the Special Operations Executive, With Documents* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980), 20.
7 Elizabeth Barker, *British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1976), 91–95.
8 Williams, *Parachutes*, 39–40.
9 Barker, *British Policy in South-East Europe*, 148–50.
10 On Britain's early support of Mihailović, see Williams, *Parachutes*, 59–81.
11 Williams, *Parachutes*, 56.
12 Williams, *Parachutes*, 65–69.
13 M. R. D. Foot, *SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940–1946* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 64.
14 Anthony Rasporich, *For a Better Life: A History of the Croatians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 251, citing statistics from the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

15 Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 96, cites the 1931 census, which lists 17,110 declared Yugoslavs in Canada, of whom 12,674 were males.
16 Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 97, 100.
17 Cited in Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 98.
18 Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 101.
19 Cited in Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 53.
20 Cited in Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 105–06.
21 L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453* (London: Hearst & Company, 2000), 616–43.
22 Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 136.
23 Cited in Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 141.
24 Rasporich, *For a Better Life*, 143. For broader context regarding state repression of immigrants at this time, including through deportation, see Dennis Molinaro, "State Repression and Political Deportation in Canada, 1919–1936," (PhD diss., University of Toronto, Toronto, 2015).
25 See, for example, Dennis Molinaro, *An Exceptional Law: Section 98 and the Emergency State, 1919–1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 57, 96.
26 Dennis Molinaro, "'A Species of Treason?' Deportation and Nation-Building in the Case of Tomo Čačić, 1931–1934," *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 1 (March 2010): 70. Molinaro's MA cognate essay is a more expansive treatment of the same topic and has good material on the role of the RCMP: Dennis Molinaro, "Deportation, Nation-Building, and Ethnicity in Canada: The Case of Tomo Čačić, 1931–1934" (MA Cognate Essay, Pattern II, Queen's University, 2008). Regarding Section 98 specifically, see Molinaro, *An Exceptional Law*.
27 Molinaro, "A Species of Treason," 70–71.
28 For a more detailed discussion, see John Peter Kraljic, "The Croatian Community in North America and the Spanish Civil War," (MA thesis, The City University of New York, New York, 2002).
29 Božo Prpić, *Preko Atlantika U Partizane*, translated privately by Vanja Kahrimanovic (Zagreb: Izdanje Matice Iseljenika Hrvatske, 1955), 12.
30 Petrou, *Renegades*, 22–23.
31 NA SOE papers HS 9/1224/5, Junior Commander D. I. Gorrum at the War Office in London to Colonel Clarke at the British embassy in Belgrade, July 24, 1946. See Williams, *Parachutes*, 127–30, for a fuller discussion.
32 Williams, *Parachutes*, 127–30.
33 Mark Wheeler, "Efforts to Co-ordinate Yugoslav Resistance," in *Special Operations Executive: A New Instrument of War*, ed. Mark Seaman (London: Routledge, 2006), 103–15; also: NA SOE papers HS 8/70, "America Balkan Recruiting—Part I" and HS8/71, "America Balkans Recruiting—General—Part II."
34 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," D.S.C. to G.400, April 9, 1942. The "G" indicates BSC's headquarters in New York. A separate file, HS 8/981, "SOE Symbols 14," identifies Halpern as G.400, including in a document from April 1, 1943. Files in NA SOE papers HS 8/971, "SOE Symbols 6," have also been consulted to confirm the names of other individuals identified in documents with coded aliases.
35 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," from London S. O., April 23, 1942.
36 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," D/H 2 (Bailey) to G.400 (Halpern), May 15, 1942.
37 NA SOE papers HS 8/77, "America: Balkans Recruiting in Canada—2nd Party," June 20, 1942 letter from Bailey to Phillips.
38 Wheeler, "Efforts to Co-ordinate Yugoslav Resistance," 115.
39 Williams, *Parachutes*, 131.

40 John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 181, cited in Kraljic, "The Croatian Community," 112.
41 Williams, *Parachutes*, 134–36.
42 NA SOE papers HS 8/72, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—General Part I." What is quoted here is the translated letter in the SOE papers. The bracketed "sic" and "one word illegible" are included in the translated letter.
43 NA SOE paper HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," DH/2 (Bailey) to G.400 (Halpern), May 15, 1942.
44 Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Little Band: The Clashes Between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishment in Canada, 1928–1932* (Ottawa: Deneau, n.d. [1982]), 15, 19.
45 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," DH/2 (Bailey) to G.400 (Halpern), May 21, 1942.
46 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada."
47 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada."
48 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," DH/2 (Bailey) to G.406 (Herbert Sichel), June 4, 1942. Sichel's identity code is confirmed in NA SOE papers HS 8/981.
49 NA SOE papers HS 8/72, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—General Part I," G.406 (Herbert Sichel) to Norman Robertson, June 18, 1942.
50 NA SOE papers HS 8/77, "America: Balkans Recruiting in Canada—2nd Party," July 12, 1942 report from Bailey. The SOE worked more closely with the RCMP later, when recruiting Hungarian Canadians.
51 NA SOE papers HS 9/860/5, Kovačević personnel file, undated "Personal History Record."
52 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," DH/2 (Bailey) to G.406 (Sichel), June 24, 1942.
53 Information on the sinking of the *Andreas* and the aftermath can be found in NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I" and NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part II". Regarding Kovačević's injuries, see NA SOE papers HS 9/860/5, Kovačević personnel file.
54 Reference to a gift of a typewriter is made in NA SOE papers HS 9/860/5, Kovačević personnel file, letter from Tommy Drew-Brook to Herbert Sichel, December 23, 1943.
55 Prpić, *Preko Atlantika U Partizane*, 5.
56 NA SOE papers HS 8/65, "America: Balkan Recruiting—General (A. G. G. de Chastelain)." There are several documents in this file from August 1943, including correspondence between Drew-Brook and de Chastelain, indicating interest in Smith and revealing Phillips's help in trying to find him. It is not clear who wrote the telegram saying Cecil-Smith had lost touch with his pals from Spain. Cecil-Smith had by this time drifted away from communism and anti-fascist activism. For a good summary of his life, see Tyler Wentzell, *Not for King or Country: Edward Cecil-Smith, the Communist Party of Canada, and the Spanish Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).
57 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I," "Personal History Record," June 1, 1942.
58 NA SOE papers HS 9/436/8, "Personal History Record."
59 NA SOE papers HS 8/72, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—General Part I," "Personal History Record."
60 NA SOE papers HS 9/436/8, "Personal History Record."

61 Basil Davidson, *Special Operations Europe: Scenes from the Anti-Nazi War* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1980), 86.
62 Basil Davidson, "Goodbye to Some of That," *London Review of Books*, August 22, 1996.
63 Basil Davidson, *Partisan Picture* (London: Bedford Books, 1946), 85.
64 Pavle Pavlić, "Iz Kanade u partizane," in *Četrdeset godina: Knjiga šesta: 1941–1945: Zbornik sećanja aktivista jugoslovenskog revolucionarnog radničkog pokreta*, translated privately by Vanja Karimanovic in 2018 (Belgrade: Kultura, 1961), 281–87.
65 These figures are compiled mostly from NA SOE papers. Not everyone who was recruited made it to Europe. At least two were too badly injured in training or in transit, and two died in the torpedo attack on their way to Cairo. That Biljan and Vrkljan died in the torpedo attack is confirmed, among other places, in NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—First Party (Shipwrecked) Part I." The other men who died were Josip Sarić, Janez Smrke, Marko Pavičić, Mica Pavičić, and Paul Stichman. See Roy MacLaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), 151. The Yugoslav Canadian SOE recruits who fought in the Spanish Civil War were Petar Erdeljac, Branko Gruić, Lazar Jelić, Pavle Pavlić, Steven Serdar, and Anton Simić. Gruić's personnel file indicates Gruić, who had enlisted in the Canadian Army, was recruited by SOE ("Force 133," a reference to SOE in Cairo) and trained at STS 103 in Ontario but was an agent with the American OSS. See NA SOE papers HS 9/628/8, Gruić personnel file. As is noted in the text, Branislav Radojević, also a Spanish Civil War veteran, was recruited out of a Canadian prison and perished in Yugoslavia during the war. He is not included among the six recruited Canadian Spanish Civil War veterans, given his scant connection to Canada.
66 Mackenzie, *The Secret History of the S.O.E.*, 446–47.
67 Mackenzie, *The Secret History of the S.O.E.*, 446.
68 On the impact of signal decryption, see Foot, *SOE*, 344; on that of Deakin and Maclean, see Williams, *Parachutes*, 247–48.
69 NA Foreign Office (hereafter FO) papers 371/37586, "Yugoslavia File No. 2," "The Partisan Movement in Jugoslavia," May 24, 1943.
70 NA FO papers 371/37586, "Yugoslavia File No. 2," "The Partisan Movement in Yugoslavia," Pearson to D. F. Howard, May 25, 1943.
71 Williams, *Parachutes*, 190.
72 For a sympathetic portrayal of the Chetniks by a British liaison officer who worked with them, see Jasper Rootham, *Miss Fire: The Chronicle of a British Mission to Mihailovich 1943–1944* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946).
73 NA SOE papers HS 8/73, "America: Balkan Recruiting in Canada—General—Part II," Sichel to Drew-Brook, November 23, 1944.
74 NA SOE papers HS 8/75, "America: Balkans Recruiting in Canada—General—Part III," J. R. L. to Drew-Brook, July 4, 1945.
75 MacLaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines*, 151. MacLaren describes Sarić as having "disappeared in action." There is no confirmation of his death in his personnel file, but nor is there evidence he survived the war.
76 NA SOE papers HS 9/1156/4, Pavlić personnel file, D. C. M. to Bakarić, December 16, 1943.
77 NA SOE papers HS 9/1156/4, Pavlić personnel file, Major P. K. Wright, for "Colonel, Military Attaché," October 11, 1946. Several other Yugoslav Canadians who had served in the SOE, including Serdar and a former lumberjack and fisherman named Nikola Kombol, also chose to live in Yugoslavia after the war. See MacLaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines*, 151.

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# Index