

The Volunteer

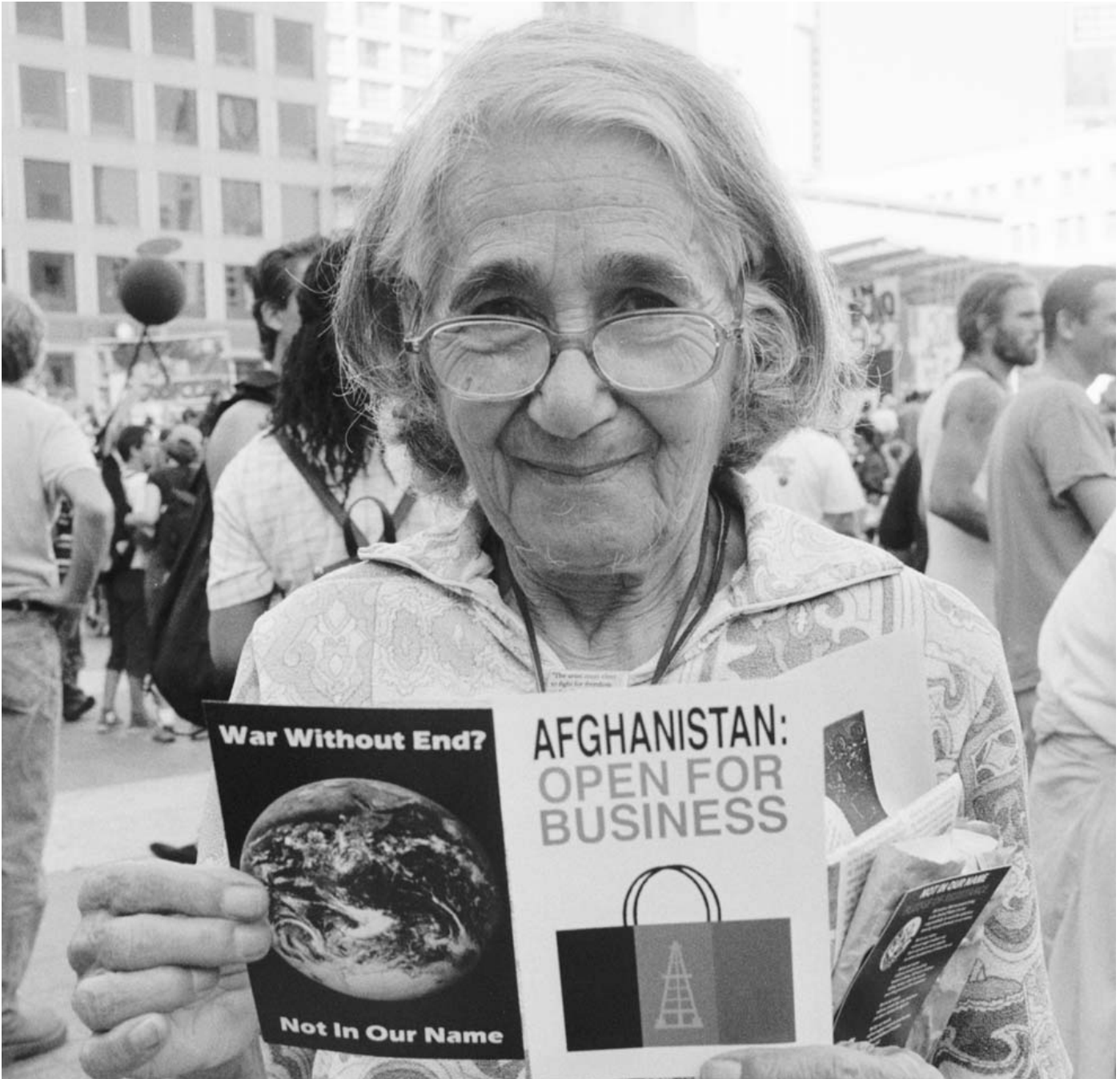
"...and that government of the people,
by the people, and for the people,
shall not perish from the earth."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

JOURNAL OF THE VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

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VALB has joined a veteran's coalition that includes Veterans for Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Black Veterans for Social Justice, and the Military Families Network. VALB members such as Hilda Roberts marched in demonstrations in San Francisco and New York. See stories page 6. *Photo by Richard Bermack*

Letters

Dear Peter Carroll and Lou Gordon,

I do not want to leave this world without thanking you for the joy and pride you brought to my heart. Mr. Carroll made me cry several times and with Mr. Gordon I laughed with that wonderful sense of humor last Saturday at the Centro Asturiano in Tampa.

I was born in Madrid in 1934 -my grandfather died in Jaca Aragon in this war- my father was at the Batallon Alpino close to Madrid, and I remember the worst years after 1939 too.

All my life I have heard about you and in my heart there are no words to thank the Abraham Lincoln Brigades and The International Brigades. Viva los Brigadas Internacionales, Viva las Brigadas de Abraham Lincoln.

We Spaniards will not live long enough to thank you, and that is why I pass it on to my children and grandchildren.

Thank you,
Manolita Pinto (de la Cuerda)
Tampa, Florida

Dear Volunteer,

It is difficult to write about someone so unique as Bill Van Felix. Having gotten involved with the VALB through the Amigos event of 1996, I am certainly not the person who knew Bill the best, but I do feel compelled to share what I know about the man and his life.

Bill was a radioman, both at war and peace. It is fair to say that his experience in Spain was unique as he swam into Spain and then walked out of it, months after most Ibers had gone home, with the fascists hot on his heels. He was on the Ciudad de Barcelona when it was torpedoed off the Catalan coast in 1937 and swam much of the way to shore before being picked up by the local fishermen. Prior to the sinking, when the order was given for all volunteers to go beneath decks, Bill's survivor instincts sent him instead to the radio room where he was talking to the crew when the torpedo hit, thus he was able to escape while many others were trapped below.

The ALBA Listserv

Readers of the Volunteer are invited to continue the debate on the ALBA sponsored Internet Discussion List. To become a member simply send a blank e-mail message to the address: join-alba@forums.nyu.edu or go to the ALBA website www.alba-valb.org and click on the "Dialog" button.

See you on the web!

He once claimed to having been sent to Spain to set up a direct radio connection between the US and Spain, but when the equipment never arrived, was put to work repairing Belgian field telephones. He eventually ended up in the Mac-Pap "transmisiones" company, which is where he obviously learned a bit of Spanish, perfected over the years. Whenever the subject of field telephones came up Bill would invariably mimic his wartime activities with a loud "Probando, probando. Oiga, oiga". Transmisiones was a good place for him as he was a natural communicator. He told of knowing John Cookson, the head of Lincoln transmissions, and of appreciating how he looked after his men.

Bill had been a boy scout. His father thought it was a good way for a Brooklyn kid to get out of the city, a fact that saved his life during the Great Retreats when he used the North Star to navigate his way to the Ebro, despite a comrade's insisting the way out was in the opposite direction.

Bill also had a favorite donkey story. At one time during the Ebro, he found a mule and loaded it up with telephones and wire. The animal was cooperative and carried the load, but when Bill tried to ride the mule, the latter would have nothing of it and refused to move. He liked to joke about the "burro fascista" who wouldn't allow him to rest his weary feet. He also joked about a more serious matter, when he was gravely wounded in the backside during the latter part of the Ebro campaign.

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The Volunteer

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Novelist Doctorow Highlights 5th ALBA-Susman Lecture



By Anne Taibleson

E.L. Doctorow's name evokes awe for almost any fiction reader of the past forty years. So, his presentation at the fifth annual ALBA-Bill Susman lecture on Friday evening October 18 was highly anticipated, and I believe I can speak for everyone there that few in the audience were disappointed. The title of the lecture was "Literature and the Spanish Civil War," and the novelist focused on two works that were inspired by the Spanish Civil War: Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and André Malraux's *Man's Hope* (*L'Espoir*). Doctorow also spoke a good deal about the sad and frustrating situation we are all facing at present.

The author of *The Book of Daniel*, *Ragtime* and *Billy Bathgate*, to name only a few of his novels, and the winner of a multitude of prizes, including the National Book Award for *World's Fair* and the Pen/Faulkner Award, Doctorow spoke in a quiet, laconic style, but packed a huge punch. He said he does not consider himself a historical novelist; he is a novelist who writes

about the past, about historical events important to him, and to humanity. He is gentle and scholarly in his deliverance, especially considering the time and topic of this particular event; yet you sense instantly that his commitment is unbreakable and one can't help but feel that in his quiet, calm way, this gentleman cannot and will not suffer fools.

Hemingway and Malraux: one American, one European, each man was passionately dedicated to the struggle for democracy and social justice, yet Malraux was committed to the loyalist cause, and did not hesitate for a moment when it came to expressing his views and outrage. Hemingway was not as open about his feelings; either he was afraid or he simply did not want to be defined as a communist. Hemingway was concerned up to a point, whereas Malraux believed in all or nothing. Here Doctorow unapologetically stated that Hemingway's reticence was an unfortunate American trait, though one that absolutely did not apply to the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Moreover, the vet-

erans' dedication to the cause of fighting fascism in Spain put them in a category and class all their own. That Americans and Europeans so differently articulate political convictions, it is this fact that makes our American veterans so admirable.

Of course Doctorow, the lecturer, preached to the choir and oh what an impression he made. Though he did not conceal his admiration of Hemingway's talent, he admitted the novelist was a literary genius with limits. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, with its accurate depiction of fascist inhumanity, is basically a romance, and while not lighthearted, certainly does not come close to Malraux's intense commitment and involvement that is unabashedly evident in *Man's Hope*.

A few minutes into his lecture, Mr. Doctorow lamented that two recent and best-selling 20th century reference manuals, one by the late renowned historian Stephen Ambrose, the other by news broadcaster Tom Brokaw, make not a peep about the Lincoln Brigade volunteers

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(l-r) ALBA board members Dan Czitrom, Julia Newman, Fredda Weiss, Fraser Ottanelli, Peter Carroll, E.L. Doctorow, Bill Susman, and NYU's former president John Brademas.

Spain in the Heart of Tampa

By Maura Barrios

With a passion and fervor reminiscent of the struggles of the 1930s—including the nighttime vandalism of the new monument dedicated to the Florida volunteers in the Spanish civil war—the Spanish immigrant community of Tampa paid homage to their anti-fascist heritage in a rousing tribute to the local veterans. This very special event held on Saturday, November 2, highlighted the centennial year of El Centro Asturiano de Tampa, a mutual aid society founded by local cigar workers. The Centro, in partnership with the University of South Florida and the Florida Humanities Council, organized a day-long recognition of the area's support of the Spanish Republic.

Young and old gathered in the three-story social club located in the heart of Tampa's Latin Quarter. In



Installing the 3,000 pound rock.

the building's cantina where men still gather to play gin and dominos, in the hallways crowded with visitors, and in the old auditorium which heard the voice of Enrico Caruso in the 1920s and hosted women veterans Evelyn Hutchins and Ruth Davidow in 1939, the community's collective memory of solidarity with the Republic dominated conversations.

At 1 p.m. our hosts, President



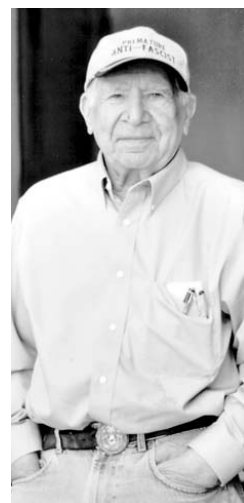
Defaced monument, photo by Jeannette Ferrary

Elvira Garcia and William F. Garcia of Community Relations, led the group, numbering several hundred, outdoors to the corner garden on Palm and Nebraska Avenues.

President Garcia welcomed the guests crowding the sidewalk at the busy corner on a hot and clear Florida afternoon. A giant, aged yellow, red and purple flag of the Republic dressed the building's façade. Ines Pujana delivered La Pasionaria's moving farewell to the International Brigades and the crowd sang to an old recording of "No Pasaran" (written by a Tampa cigar-maker). Spanish and Tampa leaders presented three memorials to permanently record a lost history. They then unveiled a plaque dedicated to peace and to the many Tampeños who joined the International Brigades. In addition, the Asturian regional government donated a plaque to honor the Tampeño community that aided the Spanish Republic with medical equipment, ambulances, and supplies.

Then, in a moment of great expectation, William Garcia moved beyond the low wrought-iron fence and lifted a large plastic covering to reveal "the rock"—weighing over 3,000 pounds and shipped all the way from Corbera de Ebro Zaragoza. The rock, splattered with white paint in a nighttime attack by unknown vandals, stood firm in the corner gar-

den: a reminder to all future and present generations that the men and women who risked their lives in a foreign country to fight fascism will be remembered, even when others prefer to "whitewash" the truth or forget.



Vet Milt Felsen

Following the dedication, the crowd moved inside to the Centro's restored theater for a rousing historical lesson by ALBA Chair Peter Carroll. In his talk, Carroll shared stories of many Americans who

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Vet George Sossenکو talks with USF student

joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, emphasizing the connections to our present moment. He received a standing ovation from the crowd.

ALB veteran Lou Gordon spoke for the many vets about their involvement in Spain and in World War II. Vets Milt Felsen of Sarasota and George Sossenko of Atlanta also attended the ceremonies.

The day ended with a feeling of satisfaction, pride, and renewed commitments to anti-fascist struggles. ■

Maura Barrios is Assistant Director of the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of South Florida and an ALBA Associate.

Doctorow

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and their courageous fight in Spain. Is this glaring omission one of ignorance or merely a dress rehearsal to a World War - something so utterly unimportant to these reporters of American history? Obviously in Mr. Ambrose's case, we will never know. And I heard (I was eavesdropping) that to date Lincoln vet Abe Smorodin has received no response to his letter to Mr. Brokaw, asking simply, why?

Doctorow closed by saying the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade "ride history as a surfer rides the waves." Well put, beautifully put. ALBA has made tremendous strides in its efforts to awaken public consciousness about the Spanish Civil War and will continue to do so. This is an exciting and remarkable time for us all.

My latest fantasy is that we are all inhabitants of a perfect world, and E.L. Doctorow's next project is a novel about the men and women who risked their lives to fight against fascism in Spain in the 1930s, written in his inimitable style, with grace and compassion. How is that for further awakening public consciousness? ■

Anne Taibleson is a freelance writer who lives in New York.

News of the IB Vets

By Moe Fishman

The Veterans and Friends of the Spanish Republic held its annual convention on September 7-8 in Berlin with 43 participating members from Germany. Chair Harold Wittstock reported that the organization's quarterly magazine goes out to 250 subscribers. Its major project is the fight for peace, against Germany's participation in the U.S. effort to make war on Iraq.

Foreign delegations to the convention came from Denmark, Israel, and Sweden; Ana Perez and the Mayor of Corberra came from Spain, and Moe Fishman represented VALB.

The Mayor of Corberra reported that his town and four others nearby had financed a museum and

approached the national government to designate it a national park to mark the Battle of the Ebro. Ana Perez reported that the Amigos plan to hold an international reunion of the IB at the site in 2003.

The Friends of the International Brigades in Catalonia (ADABIC) presented a lecture on John Cookson on October 25 in Barcelona, followed by the annual tribute to the I.B. at the statue of "David and Goliath" in Barcelona.

Finns in the SCW

In 1939 the Finnish Workers Federation, USA published a small 80-page book in Finnish, a compilation of articles that had appeared in the Finnish language newspapers as

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Civil War Exhibit Opens in Israel

By Rajel Sperber

An exhibition of photographs, documents, and artifacts, "Jewish Participation in the International Brigades: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939," opens on February 18 at the Jewish and National Library of Jerusalem. Organized by the division for Latin America, Spain and Portugal of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the shows introduces the Israeli public to the international volunteers: who they were, what their ideological world was, what the war in Spain meant to them, and how the soldiers experienced the war. The project emphasizes the participation of Jewish volunteers, but their experiences are placed in the context of the units they fought in.

The exhibition, which includes the continuous projection of a video situating the Brigades in their historical context, will be supplemented by

parallel activities such as lectures given by specialists and films followed by round table discussions. The exhibit brings together documents, books, publications, objects found on the battlefields, and broadly representative personal stories, articulated around the following themes: the Structure of the International Brigades; Arrival in Spain; Life on the Front; Amusements and Activities during periods of Rest; the Jewish Company named for Naftali Botwin; Volunteers from What is Today Israel; Women Volunteers; Volunteers in Anarchist and POUM (non-Stalinist Communists) Militia Units; Aviators; Health Services; Relations between Internationals and the Spanish Population; the Retreats; Internment Camps in France and North Africa; Prisoners of Franco; Volunteers Remember (autobiographies and autobiographical novels); Retrospective and Homages. ■



As part of a coalition of veteran's groups, New York Lincoln Brigade members Moe Fishman, Len Levenson, and Harry Fisher marched with banners in Central Park to protest war against Iraq. The demonstration organized by Not In Our Name drew 15,000 participants. The Veteran's Coalition for Peace also held a protest meeting and speakout against the war with Iraq and in defense of constitutional rights on November 10 in New York City.c

Father Roy Bourgeois (center) took a moment off from demonstrating against the School of the Americas to picnic with VALB members Hon Brown, Corine Thornton, Nate Thornton and Hilda Roberts. More than 70 people attended the annual picnic September 29, at Live Oak Park, in Berkeley.



Annual Bay Area Vets Picnic

from Coast to Coast



VALB members and supporters marched in anti-war protest October 26 in San Francisco (left to right) Dave Smith, Evan Chantikian, Don Hill, Ileana Gadea, Andrea Woods, Martha Olson Jarocki, Dmitri Jarocki. Over 100,000 people marched in demonstrations in San Francisco, New York, and Washington. *Photograph by Gerry Jarocki.*

Retrospective Exhibit Honors Chicago Vet Syd Harris, Photographer



PHOTOS BY SYD HARRIS

Photographs by Chicago vet Syd Harris (1916-1989) and his sons, who dealt with postwar labor and civil rights struggles, were featured in an exhibition at Hothouse gallery in Chicago this fall.



From the Archives

By Michael Nash

Since December 2000, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives have been housed at New York University's Tamiment Library, which is among the nation's most important repositories documenting the history of labor and the left in the United States. With the ALBA collection at its core, we hope to make the Tamiment Library a major center for research on the Spanish Civil War.

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives include more than 400 boxes of historical material: 5,000 photographs, 200 full color Spanish Civil War posters, 100 oral history interviews, and artifacts (buttons, badges, uniforms, and at least one rifle). There is correspondence including letters of support from people throughout the world such as Albert Einstein, Langston Hughes, Alvah Bessie, Lillian Hellman, and many others. One of the most exciting parts of the archive are the dozens of collections of personal papers that describe the Spanish Civil War experience through the eyes of the rank and file American volunteer who went to Spain to fight against fascism, and for democracy and social justice. Some of the most fascinating documents are the letters written home that provide descriptions of conditions on the front lines as well as insight into the political commitments of the volunteers and the Spanish people.

The correspondence files of Harry Fisher, who at the age of eighteen went to Spain to fight with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, provide a fine example of these rank and file letters. After returning home, Fisher was a department store worker, a seaman, a labor activist and during World War II was an engineer gunner on a B-26. For many years he was chief of communications for the Tass news agency in New York City. His recently published autobiogra-

phy is titled, *Comrades: Tales of a Brigadista in the Spanish Civil War* (University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

Fisher's March 16, 1937 letter home captured the spirit of the anti-fascist fight:

First I am in fine health. It seems that Spanish foods and wines agree with me.

Right now I see a group of Spanish school children shouting anti-fascist slogans. Its impossible for me to express the spirit of these children and the rest of the people. They will fight fascism to the death. An hour ago we passed a school and all the children raised their fists in greeting. The same in every town. The other day I saw a women's demonstration with the main slogan: "All men to the Front-Women are in the rear guard."

They went from house to house getting all the women to join. Practically every woman in town joined. You can be sure no young man will stay in that town. The women want their men in the

front, not for false patriotic reasons, but because they don't want fascism.

The Tamiment Library is continuing to build the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, and we are looking for collections of papers, photographs, pamphlets, posters, and other memorabilia. If you know of material that should be added to the ALBA Archives please contact:

Julia Newman,
Executive Director Abraham Lincoln
Brigade Archives
799 Broadway #227
New York, NY 10003
212-674-5398
exemplaryone@aol.com ■

Michael Nash is Head of the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University.

The FBI Files Are Coming!

After years of speculation about its contents (some of it blacked out), the FBI's extensive files on the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade will be added to the ALBA collection at the Tamiment Library, probably by the end of 2003, thanks to a formal request by ALBA under the Freedom of Information Act. Meanwhile, we are printing two tidbits taken from a sample of documents recently released by the FBI that claim to reveal links between friends of the Lincoln Brigade and so-called "un-American activities."

On January 31, 1941, for instance, FBI agents in St. Louis, Missouri reported that they had attended a New Year's Eve celebration sponsored by the St. Louis chapter of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade:

During the course of the evening [an agent] mingled and conversed with Communists of his acquaintance, and became friendly with several individuals formerly unknown to him. The Agents, keeping their identity concealed, were introduced and fraternized with many of the other guests....

It was observed that although the affair was a Spanish fiesta for the benefit of veterans of the Spanish civil war, there was little evidence of a Spanish group in attendance. The membership of the former league for peace and democracy was conspicu-

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FBI Files

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ously absent. The hall was decorated with slogans such as 'Long Live the New Year and the New Republic,' 'Send the Ship to Rescue the 1100 International Brigadiers from the French Concentration Camps.' The guests during the evening joined in singing songs, including anti-British and

American Youth Congress members were present, the females of which danced and consorted with several male negroes who were present.

anti-Wall Street parody of the Wiener Schnitzel song.

American Youth Congress members were present, the females of which danced and consorted with several male negroes who were present.

...Inasmuch as the party refrained from un-American conversation in the presence of strangers, no information of value was obtained....

A Lincoln's Birthday Dance, held in Milwaukee the same year, brought the following news to FBI headquarters:

We observed colored fellows dancing with white girls and white fellows dancing with colored girls and that a few of these mixed couples left for home toward the close of the dance.

Stay tuned for more subversive revelations. ■



By David Smith

I have known Bob and Josie Steck for many years and am pleased to write a few words for Bob, a true "forever activist" who is still going strong in Green Valley, Arizona. When living in New York City, Bob was either lecturing or organizing peace groups. Later in Connecticut he was an organizer of the Salisbury Peace Committee, which is still functioning, and he lectured at the University of Connecticut and other schools. He always found time to speak with students of all ages. Examples of what students thought of him follow:

"What you brought to our class in that one hour was amazing. I was mesmerized by your words and very touched by the passion which you spoke with. Thank you" Xochitt Mota

"You are an inspiration. What you did should be held in the highest regard of great and heroic acts in the history of the world. I learned so much from you and only pray that I can one day help

others as you did." David Stein

After Bob gave a presentation at the University of Arizona's History Department in 1999, a professor wrote, "The Lincoln Vets make me proud to be an American and embarrassed at my own timidity in the political-social activist sphere."

Since 1996 Bob and Josie reside in Arizona, where Bob chairs the Green Valley Committee for US and Cuban Relations. He is now program coordinator of the *Green Valley Times* seminars. He has been on the Arizona Interfaith Committee which succeeded in getting Arizona to celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday. He is also the coordinator of the Unitarian Fellowship's lecture series. A reporter from the *Military History Magazine* wrote a lengthy interview with Bob in April 2001 that included many of the Brigade's pictures. I could go on and on as Bob continues the good fight...for many more years. Saludos y con abrazos ■

Roosevelt-Bowers Correspondence

By Anne Gordon

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed journalist and historian Claude G. Bowers as Ambassador to Spain, a position he held throughout the Spanish Civil War. Today, the correspondence between Ambassador Bowers and the White House can be found at the FDR Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York. Bowers' letters are frank and urgent in tone, decrying the lack of aid to the Spanish Republic from the Democratic countries of the world, as well as the unfairness of the Non-Intervention Pact and the U.S. Neutrality Act.

It is likely that Bowers did not realize the extent to which others in the State Department were working against the Spanish Loyalists, doing everything they could to support Franco behind the scenes. Despite his limited influence on Roosevelt's policy toward Spain, the ambassador was unyielding in his defense of the embattled Republic. Freda Kirschwey wrote about Bowers in the *Nation* in 1941, observing that he represented "the best of the New Deal expressed in terms of Diplomacy. By nature, Mr. Bowers is no diplomat. He is a lot of other things, such as historian and newspaperman and old-style Jeffersonian. He is plain spoken and sharp-witted, and I should think, completely irreverent."

When the military rebellion began, July 18, 1936, members of the diplomatic community were in their summer residences near San Sebastian, the Spanish summer capital. The diplomats crossed over to France and settled in St. Jean de Luz to escape the fighting. The United States never opened an Embassy in Republican or Fascist Spain during the War, demonstrating its neutrality. Other nations allowed their buildings in Spain to become refuges for members of the aristocracy, but Bowers refused to permit such support.

What follows are summaries and selections of the ambassador's letters to Washington, offering candid commentary about the course of the war. In December 1936, for instance, Bowers writes to Roosevelt to warn that press coverage is false and misrepresents the sentiment of the people towards the War and especially plays down the amount of men and material provided by Germany and Italy. Although the world press reports that Madrid is being defended by the Russian Army, Bowers is careful to point out that Russia has sent war material, but only a few advisors and none of its Army.

February 16, 1937. Bowers writes to Roosevelt:

This is no longer a Civil War but an International one.

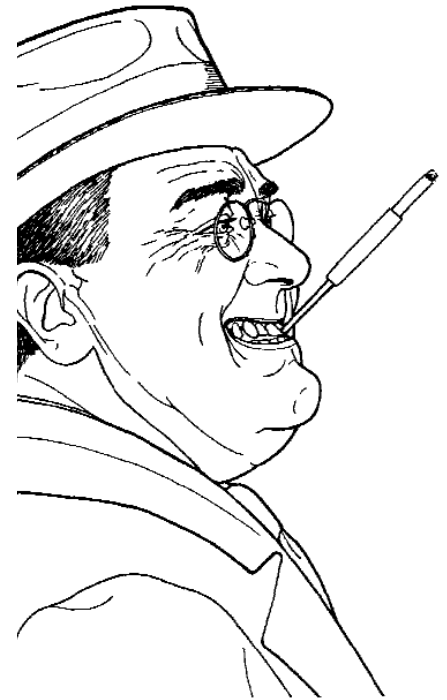
March 31, 1937. Bowers to Roosevelt:

The Italian Army numbers 70,000 men with officers, tanks, and planes. The Italians had the impudence to demand that they alone be entrusted with the capture of Guadalajara and the encircling of Madrid... they did not wish to be annoyed by having the Spaniards about. The result has been the most humiliating rout of recent times... Spanish officers and insurgents are beside themselves with gratification over this set-back to their cause... slapping one another on the back with gratification.

Now for the observation I would not make in public or to any one but you or the Department – this war as I have felt from the beginning is a conspiracy of the Fascist Powers to destroy democracy in Europe... I am giving you my inner thoughts because I am not at all certain that this amazing war in Spain will not in some way determine the future of Europe for some time to come or bring on a European conflict.

July 20, 1937. Bowers writes to FDR his opinion after one year of war:

1. It is clear enough that the rebel-



lion did not come in response to a popular demand for the destruction of the Republic. The primary purpose is to destroy the Republic and all democratic forms.

2. It became a mockery to continue calling the war a real civil war. The war is between the government of Spain against Italy and Germany.

3. Despite having no army in the beginning, and having disputes with factional elements, the government has created a good army with strong leadership. In addition, industry began making war materials.

4. The Non-Intervention Pact prolongs the war. It operated against the government by depriving it of its right to buy arms and ammunition. The decision was made to sacrifice the democracy of Spain to the peace of Europe.

August 8, 1937, FDR responds to Bowers:

....tremendously interesting report (letter goes on to talk of the negative reaction of the press to New Deal programs).

Shows Limits of New Deal Diplomacy

August 11, 1937. Bowers to FDR about the suggestion that the Pope be used as a mediator to end the war. Bowers is amused that the Pope was considered to be neutral:

He is just as neutral as he was in the case of Abyssinia. He is a very loyal Italian always. He has been favorable to the fascist cause in Spain, supported by 70,000 of Mussolini's army, throughout. There are domestic political reasons why it would be better to be associated with any other statesman in the world as a mediator than the Pope – too many repercussions in the U.S.

November 15, 1937. In a personal letter to Daniel Roper, Secretary of Commerce, Bowers writes:

The war goes on in Spain; the Democracy of Spain fighting alone the battle for Democracy throughout the world; opposed by the Fascist International, and hamstrung by the Democracies of Europe under the Tory leadership of the British government. The European Democracies are retreating, hands up in the fascist salute, with Chamberlain writing love letters to Mussolini... History will ultimately write a shameful story, a story of unprecedented heroism on the part of the Democracy of Spain along with unthinkable treachery on the part of the other Democracies of Europe.

It seems to me that Democracy is crumbling like a house of cards before the blowing and bluffing of the bankrupt fascist states. I am very certain that History will record that the cowardice of the Democracies over here in this Spanish affair has convinced the fascist leaders that they may safely continue to treat them with contempt, to steal with abandon, and murder women and children with impunity - even with the blessings of the Church.

I can understand of course that a horror of war has been responsible in a measure for the precipitate retreat or flight of the Democracies, but unhappily the Fascists have no horror of war. With each triumph they proceed to others. On



each prostrate form they rise to greater heights of insolence. Soon the alliance of Fascist powers will be so powerful that it will sweep everything before it in Europe.

February 20, 1938. Bowers to FDR:

In the light of the events of the last 2 years, it must be evident that treaties, gentleman's agreements, international law, etc., are no longer binding on nations and that it has even become bad taste to complain about their violation...

Bowers' comments about Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, range from "brazenly fascist" to "utterly stupid."

March 7, 1938. Memo from FDR to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State:

Will you read this from Bowers together with a copy of my reply and send them back to me? I think this letter should not be handed around in the Department.

March 13, 1938. Bowers continually argued against the Non-Intervention Pact. In March 1938, he writes: "History will record that this pact in its operation, or non-operation, is responsible for the lives of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children." He called the Non-Intervention Committee "stupid, bizarre, droll...A device conceived by England and France as an excuse for not selling arms to the legal government."

April 11, 1938. Bowers to FDR:

The Loyalists will fight on. What a people! The only people in the world in these days of Fascist triumph and bullying who have the spirit and the guts to stand up and fight and die for liberty and democracy. Just now they are literally fighting for democracy against the entire world and I believe they will fight on to the end. In all the tides of time there has never been anything in the struggle for liberty that is in the same class with the fight these people are making.

He describes Chamberlain as "treacherous, anti-democratic, deceptive, hypocritical, and dishonest." These were his comments in just one letter!

August 18, 1938. Bowers to FDR as the war enters its second year:

There has been a radical, almost sensational change in the military prospects in the last three months. The Loyalist army, green, inexperienced, untrained to discipline or in tactics, has, after two years of fighting, become an army of veterans. While it probably has fewer first-class officers than Franco, it has developed, Napoleon-wise, a surprising number of young officers of great skill and audacity; and in General Miaja and General Rojsa it has officers as clever and resourceful as the best that Franco has. The three offensives recently launched by the Loyalists on the Ebro, the Segre, and north of Teruel, have

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How Many Latin Americans Went

By Gerold Gino Baumann

Editor's Note: The following statistical portrait of Latin American volunteers was developed by Gerold Gino Baumann, a self-employed historian who lives in Costa Rica and who has studied the subject for many years. He is the author of *The Latin American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War*, published in Costa Rica in 1997.

CHART: Numbers, names, political affiliation, and deaths of Latin American Volunteers

Country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Argentina	94	406	500	160	20	20	11	11	18	2	3	23	6
Bolivia	14	5	18	12	3	1		1	2	1	2		3
Brazil	41	9	55	45	2	15		5	1	1	2		5
Chile	41	8	70	61	8	10	2	6	1			10	6
Colombia		5	15	11	2	1	1						1
Cuba	136	1050	1200	810	10	84	5	10			3	12	100
Costa Rica		1	2	2		1							
Ecuador	24	6	20	7		1	1	1	1			3	
Guatemala	25	5	32	3		3			1				
Haiti	15	5	22										
Honduras	14	6	22	2									
Jamaica	4	1	5	1									
Mexico	464	250	300	135	17	58	3	17	14	2	2	17	74
Martinique		1	1	1				1					
Nicaragua	12	3	16	3				1					
Panama		2	2	2									
Paraguay	22	8	35	15	2	3		3	1	1			1
Peru	32	18	55	48	5	14	14	17	1	2	2		5
Puerto Rico	16	4	40	34		3		4	1				3
Domin. Rep.	17	8	30	6	1			2					
El Salvador		2	2	2									
Uruguay	22	28	60	54		3	1	1	4				7
Venezuela	144	6	30		1								17
TOTAL	1142	1837	2532	1424	67	160	38	80	45	9	14	65	229

I include a chart that reflects my latest research conclusions referencing the Latin American Volunteers in Spain (Militia, Rear Guard, Medical, Popular Army, International Brigades).

These are not the definitive numbers; they probably never will be known. These are probably as close to the final numbers as might be achieved (unless there is a full-time research grant for a competent Spanish or Portuguese-speaking researcher on the subject with travel allowance to all Latin American countries—a very unlikely case. Survivors practically do not exist any more).

These numbers change constantly with the receipt of new information, corrections in the spelling of names, duplications, and various errors. For instance, we know that there weren't 465 Mexicans, nor 149 Venezuelans, in the International Brigades. But there were many in other units. In the demobilization, various non-Brigadists were added in.

Many names were false, noms de guerre used for various reasons, especially among Communists.

From Peru there were 7 members of APRA, 5 from FUHA. From Cuba there were various members of Young Cuba,

the nationalist Cuban party, a centrist party with members both in Cuba and exiled in New York. There were some Nationalists from the Dominican Republic.

Obviously many more than we cite had a political affiliation. We have registered affiliation only where documented certainty existed. We did not consider affiliations established after the demobilization (such as Pablo Neruda, who became affiliated with Communism in the 1940s). ■

1. Latin American participants in the International Brigades, according to Castells. His statistics are inflated at times. The Volunteers frequently came and went without being tracked. They sometimes changed their names. Some were listed several times, as recuperating wounded, repenting deserters, second-time enrollees, or holders of expired licenses. There was also confusion in the spelling of names.
2. Latin American participants in the Popular Army, Militias, Columns, Rear Guard, Transport, Health, or Hospital Services, based on the author's research.
3. Estimate of total numbers of Latin American Volunteers, Republican and Francoist, based on 1, 2, 3, 4, and the "black statistic."
4. Names, Republic.
5. Names, Francoist.
6. Military grade. Republic only. Includes commissars, pilots.
7. Doctors. There were many more for whom we don't have data.
8. Communists.
9. Anarchists.
10. POUM Trotskyites.
11. Socialists.
12. Intellectuals — the most prominent. There were many more. Writers, poets, journalists, historians, artists, propagandists, leftists, liberals, and Republicans.
13. Confirmed dead. There were quite a few more — unknown soldiers, especially among Cubans, Mexicans, and Argentinians.

completely flabbergasted the rebels and hopelessly disorganized their plans...It is admitted by Franco's men with whom I talked that there is no expectation to end the war this coming winter.

Bowers goes on to describe the factions among the fascists—Falangists, Carlists, and especially conflicts between the Spanish, Germans, and Italians:

Another source of anxiety [for Franco] is the increasingly bitter hostility between the Germans and Italians, and between them both and the Franco Spaniards. Not for two months or more have I talked to a Franco man from across the border that has not been open and bitter in his comments on the arrogance and pretensions of the foreigners. The supercilious manner in which the dandified Italian officers presume to look down on the Spaniards, one of whom is worth ten Italians in the field, has made the latter hated and there are frequent brushes. The fact that both the Germans and Italians are acting like burglars in a house, feverishly robbing the Spanish mines and sending the product to Italy and Germany—mostly the latter—has made them hateful...and as often happens, the Italians are put to rout by the Spaniards on the Loyalist side, Franco's own Spanish officers are open in their jubilation.

The one way to bring this criminal war to an end is to restore to the legal, constitutional, democratic government of the Spanish people its right under international law to but arms for its defense. Its infantry is better than Franco's, and the valor of its soldiers, man for man is greater; but the civilized world permits the rebels to get all the planes, tanks and artillery it wants, while combining all its resources to prevent the democratic government to but what it has a right to but under international law. My fixed opinion is that the thoroughly dishonest "Non-Intervention scheme" is responsible for the prolongation of the war and that it is pretty thoroughly caked with human blood—mostly the blood of women and children.

August 31, 1938. FDR replies:

Your resume of the present situation and outlook is most helpful...I am particularly interested in what you say about the situation in rebel territory. Perhaps a little later on—if the Czech situation does not end disastrously—I can make some kind of a move for the purpose of at least aiding in the end of the Spanish War.

October 1, 1938. Bowers to FDR:

The most significant and important development in Spain comes from Dr. Negrin's voluntary offer to send out of the country all foreigners fighting with the Loyalist Army. This he can well afford to do since there are less than 10,000. This clever action of Negrin has proved a great embarrassment to General Franco.

In March 1939, Bowers returned to the United States to make way for an ambassador more to the taste of the new Franco government. As one of his last official acts, he asked the Spanish Secretary of State for the release of American prisoners held at San Pedro de Cardenas.

When he arrived in Washington, he met with FDR. "We have made a mistake," the president said, "You were right all along."

Bowers' book about his wartime experiences, *My Mission to Spain: Watching the Rehearsal for World War II*, though finished in 1941, was delayed in its publication until 1954. It was felt that his comments about British Prime Minister Chamberlain were too harsh and would adversely affect British-American relations during the War. Many of his comments are extremely bitter, but it is obvious that he felt deeply about the tragedy in Spain and the part played by the United States in bringing it about.

Anne Gordon, wife of vet Lou Gordon, expresses thanks for the help provided by the Research staff at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library. The drawing of FDR is used courtesy of Niskayuna

A New Spanish Civil War Diary

By Doug Rogers

A newly discovered diary that describes a visit to Spain during its Civil War has come to light among the 134 items included in the Paul P. Rogers collection of memorabilia in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in Austin, Texas.

This handwritten diary, titled "Spanish Journey," recounts in detail the author's 16-day visit to Spain in August 1937. Rogers, who was a professor of Spanish at Oberlin College for many years, was invited to be an observer of the war by the Spanish Republic. He departed Oberlin on June 8, but was forced to spend nearly two months in Paris waiting for a visa from the United States for travel to Spain, which in the end was never granted, probably because he had been head of the northern chapter of the American League Against War and Fascism, as well as an outspoken proponent of aid to the Republic.

After receiving a visa from the French government on August 8, 1937, Rogers joined an international delegation for aid to Republican Spain, comprised of 13 participants representing 10 different nationalities. Their first destination was Valencia, where they were received at the presidential palace by Manuel Azaña, who expressed "the thanks of Spain for the sympathy of those who sent us and begged that we make clear on returning the nature of the situation here." He said it was incomprehensible that the democracies of the world should refuse to Republican Spain the rights that are accorded a legitimate government." Following a reception by José Giral and Martínez-Barrio, the group went with Dolores Ibarruri to visit what had formerly been an out-of-town residence of the city's wealthiest citizen (Noguer), but which had been

converted to an orphanage for refugee children:

The home now houses 63 children whose fathers were caught in fascist territory, whose parents were killed in the bombardment of Madrid and other towns...they are here given every attention, are taught to be self-reliant and cooperative and to do their own work, such as making beds, setting table, fixing up their rooms, cultivating gardens, attending the flowers, etc. No one could see in their faces any trace of the horrors and sorrows they have passed through—only happiness.

The writer showed himself duly affected by the famous charisma of their guide: "She is indeed a supremely dynamic personality, one of the most remarkable I've ever met."

Rogers' diary entry for August 10 provides one of the lengthier and more interesting passages:

[We] visited Prison of San Miguel de los Reyes. Talked to Italian, Moorish and Spanish prisoners. Most were eager and anxious to talk to us. We were allowed to wander freely among them without being followed or spied upon by our guides or attendants... Some were captured at Guadalajara and others as recently as the Brunete offensive.

First, the Italians:

Asked why they came [to Spain], they gave varied reasons and answers: some that they were going to Abyssinia; others were members of fascist militia and

had to do what they were told, being forced to come; others enlisted for unknown destinations; one was told to come and fight against communism which was killing women and children, etc... But all, except those already in fascist militia enlisted only because they were in the greatest poverty at home... They enlisted to avoid starvation and had no heart for their fighting in Spain. Fascist ideals were nothing at all to them—neither, for that matter [were] the ideals of Republican Spain... Those members of [our] delegation who spoke Italian reinforced my own observations that the mental state of these men was the best proof of the morally disintegrating effect of fascist propaganda in Italy.

"On the other hand," continues the diary, "The Moors and Arabs seemed to be of better stuff. They were not so hopelessly dejected nor so crawling in their attitudes." Through one of them Rogers put questions to the others:

They were captured in Brunete. Insist they are treated well. Have no complaints. Hate Franco, and though they don't mind fighting and little care whom they are fighting for, they unanimously showed an intense dislike of the treatment received on the other side. The Moors, they said, were always made to lead the attack, to go over the top first, to be the ones who took the machine gun bullets in their bodies...

Continued on page 15

with machine guns at their back, and the slightest protest cost them their lives... shot at from in front by the enemy and from behind by the fascists... (At the telling of this they all got excited, and all wanted to talk at once.) All were now happy to be where they were."

Following a reception at which the group met Juan Negrín, General Miaja, Vicente Rojo, and Indalecio Prieto, they visited the International Brigade House in Valencia. While here the sights and sounds of war become a reality for them:

In the midst of it all, when no one was dreaming of it, came clearly the sounds of cannon fire and the explosions of bombs, sounds unfamiliar to most of us... White puffs of smoke appeared here and there... occasional great flares rising from the ground accompanied tardily by the thunderously heavy detonations of the exploded bombs.

The alarm inside the room was great, but with no physical harm to those gathered in it.

On boarding the bus for Madrid on August 11, Rogers encountered a friend and fellow partisan of the Republican cause, poet Langston Hughes. In a lunch stop at Tarancón, they went together to visit the International Brigade hospital, where American volunteers described to them some of the horrors of the battle of Brunete. Here they also chatted with "the political commissar, a man named Au... formerly professor of language in the University of Hamburg [who] had come recently from Albacete where he had helped to organize things so as to make the life of the soldiers . . . more pleasant."

Rogers described his experiences there:

[He] said when he got there he found the Germans in control and things in general (i.e. relationships

between members and groups of the International Brigade) in a mess. According to him Germans make good soldiers but poor comrades, and in Albacete this lack of comradeship was becoming grave. The French, he said, also did not get along well with the other national groups; they were selfish and always tried, when they could, to get the best of everything for themselves. The Americans, he added (maybe out of consideration for our nationality), got along the best of any of the foreign groups and showed more of a spirit of comradeship than did any of the others.

The diary then depicts six busy days in Madrid, with special atten-

IB Vets

Continued from page 5

well as items and interviews that had appeared in the *Volunteer For Liberty* in Spain. A number of pictures were included.

Finnish-American volunteer, Matti Mattson, active for many years in the progressive movement, particularly with Local 6 of the NYC printers union and the VALB, undertook the translation of this book, now that he is retired. It is a labor of love.

He plans to finance a private printing for the Archives and others who want a copy.

Those interested should call the national office Monday, Wednesday or Friday between 10:30 am and 1 p.m. (212-674-5552).

Vet Harry Fisher has been given a website by his young German com-

Vet Harry Fisher has been given a website by his young German comrades: www.harryfisher.net

rades: www.harryfisher.net. Dedicated to Harry, it goes beyond him to cover many aspects of the

tion to the barricades in the city, the trenches around the University City area, and a review of troops with General Miaja at Alcalá de Henares. On the way back to Valencia, Rogers made a side trip to the International Brigade base at Albacete, where he searched unsuccessfully for Oberlin volunteer Paul McEachron. Finally he visited the "barracks schools" and went to a women's prison, where the diary ends on August 24.

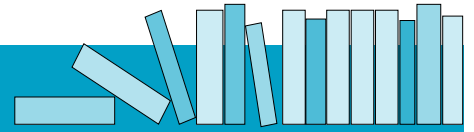
The reader of today will find that the interest of this document lies not so much in new information or insights as in the sense of immediacy contained in this unique eyewitness report. ■

Doug Rogers, the son of diarist Paul Rogers, is Emeritus Professor of Spanish at the University of Texas, Austin.

SCW and has links to articles in Catalan, English, Spanish and French, as well as videos from Germany and the U.S. available for purchase. Harry's book *Comrades* is now available in the office in Spanish and German. Write to the office for copies.

Harry Fisher and Moe Fishman spoke to the History Club in Spotswood High School in Spotswood, New Jersey on Oct. 31. Moe also spoke to two combined Spanish classes at Queens College in New York.

After attending the convention in Berlin, Moe Fishman and Georgia Wever traveled to Ireland, where they visited Michael O'Riordan, the last living Irish veteran. At his suggestion, they viewed the Spanish Civil War collection at the Irish Labor History Museum & Archives, which is somewhat sparse. Those with books on the SCW or the Lincoln Brigade they can spare, are asked to send them to the VALB office earmarked for the Irish History Museum or ALBA. ■



The Selected Poems of Miguel Hernández: A Bilingual Edition

Edited by Ted Genoways
University of Chicago Press, 2001.

By Anthony L. Geist

Poetry and poets occupy a significant and distinct place in Spanish society and culture. Even in today's postmodern world, dominated by the global expansion of U.S. culture, poetry is a part of daily life in Spain. Consider some hard data. Over 1,000 books of poetry are published annually in Spain. By contrast, in 1996, (the most recent year for which I have figures), in the United States (with a population six times the size of Spain's) some 1,200 books of poetry came off the presses.

There are compelling historical reasons for this. Spain in many ways is still close to an oral culture. When the civil war broke out, half the country was illiterate and relied on songs and ballads for information and entertainment. Even today Spaniards routinely sing and take delight in verbal play. National, regional, and local governments promote and publish poetry, and small presses still occupy an important niche. In the U.S., the publishing industry is increasingly market driven, decisions made according to sales potential rather than literary quality, and small presses have been swallowed up by the multinationals or driven under.

Poets are respected public figures in Spain, often participating in civic life. This was especially true during the civil war and the Franco years, when poets turned their art toward the struggle for freedom and democracy. In July 1979, I attended

an homage to Blas de Otero, one of the most important poets of the anti-fascist resistance of the 1950s and 1960s who had died just days before. I joined 40,000 people in the Ventas bullring in Madrid to bid him farewell. Imagine a similar send-off for Robert Frost or Allen Ginsberg in Madison Square Gardens.

During the civil war artists and writers in overwhelming numbers supported the besieged Spanish Republic. Rafael Alberti, Maria Teresa León, Antonio Machado, Emilio Prados, and many others, turned art into a weapon, reading their poetry in the trenches and the rearguard. The Republic looked to its writers to help maintain morale and stiffen resistance. Among the most extraordinary of them was Miguel Hernández. Born the son of a goatherder in 1910 in eastern Spain, Hernández received little formal education before his father pulled him out of school to tend the herd. A village priest, sensing the boy's intelligence, urged him to read the great Spanish poets of the 16th and 17th centuries. Before long Hernández was writing Baroque sonnets as he walked the hills of Orihuela behind his goats.

In 1931 he went to Madrid to try to get his poetry read and published. The established poets gave him a chilly reception and he soon went back to his village. Three years later he returned to the capital and met considerably greater success. Vicente Aleixandre, García Lorca and particularly the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda befriended him. Under the latter's influence, and moved by events in the country, Hernández, like the majority of his fellow poets,

became increasingly politicized, eventually joining the Communist Party. When the war broke out in 1936 Hernández joined a militia unit and fought on the Madrid front for several months before being named Commissar of Culture. For the remainder of the war he maintained a backbreaking schedule of readings and recitals to the troops. He became, along with Rafael Alberti, the voice of the Republic.

When the war ended with Franco's victory Hernández sought asylum in the Chilean Embassy in Madrid but was turned away. He returned home for several weeks to see his wife and infant son, before fleeing alone to Portugal. Once across the border the Portuguese police turned him over to the Spanish Guardia Civil who beat him severely before throwing him in jail. Neruda used his influence from Paris to have Hernández freed. He returned once again to Orihuela to see his wife and child. Within two weeks he was again arrested, this time with a death sentence on his head. His crimes: writing poetry critical of Franco and membership in the Communist Party. Shortly after his arrest the fascist government issued a flyer that read:

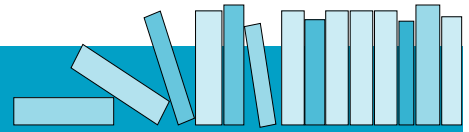
Miguel Hernández, condemned to death.

Crime: Poet and soldier of the mother country.

Aggravating circumstances: intelligentsia.

Death to the intelligentsia.

Hernández would spend the next two years being moved from prison to prison, sharing with thousands of Republican political prisoners the most appalling deprivations, suffering and humiliation. All the while he continued writing on scraps of paper and managed to smuggle his poetry out of jail, com-



pleting perhaps his most powerful work, the *Songbook and Ballad book of Absences*.

Finally, in March 1942, Miguel Hernández succumbed to tuberculosis. He was 32 years old and left a legacy of courage and dignity, of “poetry worth dying for,” to a country that lay in ruins. His short life and tragic death stand as emblems of the Spanish Civil War. On the one hand, the Republic’s commitment to culture and culture’s defense of the Republic, on the other, fascism’s fear and persecution of poetry.

Until now this important poet’s work has been available to English-speakers only partially and in uneven translations. In this handsome edition Ted Genoways supplements existing translations with his own, offering a generous selection of Hernández’s work that ranges from early verses written under the influence of Spain’s great Baroque masters, to the “poetry of urgency” penned in the trenches, to the moving poems dedicated to his wife and son in the final days of his life. For the most part they are ably rendered in English. Genoways’ introductions to each section make Hernández’s life and works accessible to the American reader, placing them in the broader context of the Spanish Republic and the Civil War. Robert Bly’s foreword presents Hernández’s poetry as an antidote to what he understands as the “necessity of imitation” in contemporary American poetry. The result is an important addition in English to literature of the Spanish Civil War. ■

Anthony Geist, member of ALBA’s Executive Committee, teaches in the Spanish department at the University of Washington.

Lullabies of the Onion

Hernández married Josefina Manresa just after the war began. Their first son, born soon afterward, died of hunger and illness during the war. Their second, Manolo, was born while his father was in prison. Hernández, haunted by the memory of his first child’s death, wrote this poem after receiving a letter from his wife telling him that she had nothing to eat but onions. The following are excerpts from the poem.

The onion is frost
shut in and poor.
Frost of your days
and of my nights.
Hunger and onion,
black ice and frost
large and round.

My little boy was
in hunger’s cradle.
He suckled on
onion blood.
But your blood is
frosted with sugar,
onion and hunger.

A dark woman dissolved
into moonlight
spills, thread by thread,
over the cradle.
Laugh, child,
you can drink moonlight
if you have to. . . .

Your laughter frees me,
gives me wings.
It banishes loneliness,
tears down these walls.
Mouth that flies,
heart that flashes
on your lips. . . .

I woke from childhood:
don’t you ever.
I wear my mouth sadly:
always laugh.
Stay always in your cradle
defending laughter
feather by feather.

You are a flight
so high, so wide,
that your flesh is heaven
just born.
If only I could climb
to the origin
of your flight! . . .

Fly, child, on the double
moon
of her breast;
it is saddened by onion,
you are satisfied.
Never let go.
Don’t ever know what’s com-
ing,
what goes on.

(Trans. Philip Levine)



The Dead Leaves: A Novel

By Barbara Jacobs
Translated by David Unger
Curbstone Press, 1993

By Peter Carroll

Emile Jacobs was a lucky man. Born in New York to a Lebanese family in 1909 and raised in Flint, Michigan, he went to Spain in 1937, where he saw plenty of action with the Lincolns, and returned home in one piece two years later. He worked at the New York World's Fair for a while, then served two years in the US Army during World War II. After the war, he moved to Mexico City with his wife, raised five children, and operated a successful hotel whose motto was, "A Home Away From Home."

Emile Jacobs was also an avid reader, but he wanted to be a writer. "I was going to be the greatest writer!" he said. "I didn't have a book published yet, but I was going to be a great writer. I wrote about theater. What did I know about theater? Nothing! But I wrote about everything and anything: chess, dancing, music!"

Emile Jacobs never did write his book but, as I said, he was a lucky man.

His daughter, Barbara Jacobs, who still lives in Mexico City, has written four novels and published several collections of stories and literary essays. Fifteen years ago, she wrote *Las hojas muertas*, published in translation as *The Dead Leaves*, and it is as fine a memoir as any father

could desire. He is the central character of this family chronicle, a unique, reflective, intense, and romantic personality, who comes to life with all his humor and passion in this fine, gorgeous, lyrical novel. This is a book of love, told with love, and maybe, on second thought, luck didn't have anything to do with it. ■

They Still Draw Pictures

They Still Draw Pictures: Children's Art in Wartime from the Spanish Civil War to Kosovo is a traveling exhibition that was curated by ALBA's Tony Geist and Peter Carroll. The exhibit consists of 78 color drawings created by Spanish refugee children and 22 children's drawings from other wars.

January 15, 2003-March 23, 2003

Zoellner Art Center
Lehigh University
420 East Packard Ave.
Bethlehem, PA 18015.
For information, 610-758-3619.

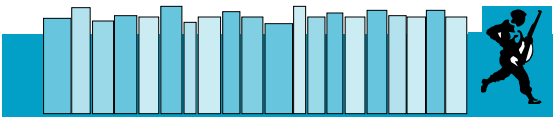
April 5, 2003-June 15, 2003

Hood Museum
Dartmouth College
Hanover, NH
For information, 603-646-3646

August 13, 2003-October 24, 2003

University Art Museum
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL 62901
For information, 618-453-5388





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Added to Memory's Roster



William "Bill" Van Felix 1916 – 2002

Bill reached maturity during the depression. His experiences motivated him to become an activist in the mid-1930s. He joined other young people in fighting against evictions, against racism, for expansion of relief, for unemployment insurance, for social security and for the right to organize in trade unions. He was particularly active in building trade unionism.

Reading the left press, early on he was aware of the danger of the war threat of the fascist powers. When the Spanish people issued a call for a united front of anti-fascist forces to aid the Spanish cause, Bill volunteered in the Lincoln Battalion. He made it to Spain despite obstacles; the U.S. government and having been on a ship on that was traveling from Marseilles to Barcelona, Spain which was torpedoed by Italian submarines. He swam to shore aided by local Spanish fishermen with other comrades, a number of whom drowned.

He fought well as a soldier. His

particular assignment was to maintain communications between headquarters and the various companies. In those days, telephone wires were the method of communication; when those failed, he became a runner and carried the messages by foot.

Wounded in 1938, he ended up in a hospital in Catalonia. Unfortunately, he was not evacuated from that hospital at the time the International Brigades were demobilized. Instead, while the exodus of troops and civilians were crossing the French border from Catalonia, he and a Black American with a foot wound hitchhiked across the French border ahead of the advancing Franco forces. He was rescued from the camp in France through the intervention of an American reporter, and returned home at the end of 1938.

He met and married Florence Marom in November 1939 and started a family—two daughters and a son. Bill worked as a radio operator on freighters on which he shipped, and he was in the union that covered this category of work. He continued working as a radio operator when WWII broke out. His Liberty Ship was torpedoed during an Atlantic run. At the end of the war he continued to ship out as a radio operator in the Coast Guard.

At the beginning of the McCarthy Period, in the late 1940s, the Coast Guard pulled the licenses of all progressive seamen, including Bill's. Forced out, Bill turned to radio repairs as well as the new invention—television. In this period, with the aid of the income that his wife, Flo, brought into the household, they were able to make a down payment on a house on Bleeker Street in New York City. By the mid-1950s, he opened a TV and radio repair shop on the ground floor of their building.

By the 1960s, he discovered that his background qualified him to

teach electronics. There was a boom in trade schools at that time.

Working as a teacher in one of them, he organized his school into a local of the United Auto Workers union. He became shop chairman almost immediately. The school expanded to a workforce of 250. Under his leadership, the shop was able to obtain one of the highest pay scales in the local.

In the early 1960s Bill became a member of the Village Independent Democrats (VID). He immediately became a leader in the club. He successfully initiated a film series on Saturday nights, featuring progressive, labor and Spanish Civil War films, using the growing attendance at these film showings to recruit local people into the VID. He was active in VID until his illness.

Bill helped lead the delegation of Lincoln Brigaders who attended the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Brigades held in Madrid in 1986, as well as the 50th anniversary of the Despidida (Farewell) held in Barcelona in 1988. On one of these trips, he returned to the Catalonian fishing village to thank the fishermen for rescuing him when his ship was sunk in the Mediterranean.

He played the same outstanding role at the 60th anniversaries in 1996 and 1998, and for the 65th anniversary held in 2001. Bill and Sam Walters represented the VALB in 1991 at the dedication of a plaque placed on Liberty Hall in Dublin, Ireland -headquarters of the transport workers union- honoring the Irish veterans of the International Brigade.

Bill led a full and meaningful life. He believed in fighting for the betterment of his fellow men and women—locally, nationally, and internationally. He lived up to his proud membership in the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. We shall miss him.

—Moe Fishman



Added to Memory's Roster



Rebecca Schulman Durem 1911-2002

Rebecca Schulman Durem, who went to Spain with the 2nd Medical Unit in March 1937, died in Claremont, California on August 17, 2002. She was 91.



Before going to Spain, Becky nursed at Beth Israel Hospital in Manhattan where she worked with Dr. Edward Barsky, who told her about Spain's need for the medical service he was organizing. Describing her younger self in an interview years after the war, she said, "I was single, financially independent, liked projects, and liked being with people."

Although Becky never described herself as "being very political," she believed in Spain's right to a democratically elected government. She was also restless, adventurous, and yearning to travel, so when Dr. Barsky asked her to work in Spain, she said, "Yes, because they needed nurses and it was to help right a wrong."

Becky's adventures started early. Born in Dayton, Ohio, she was taken by her mother to visit her grandmother in Russia when she was 4 years old. The Revolution trapped them there for about 4 years, during

which time her father was able to send them money to survive. Her family eventually settled in Brooklyn, NY. She graduated from nursing school in 1931 and did both hospital and private duty nursing, until Spain's cause sent her overseas at the age of 26.

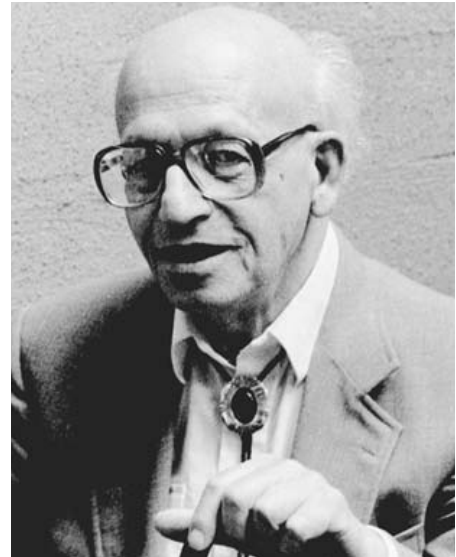
While serving at the American Base Hospital in Saelices, called Villa Paz, she met her husband-to-be, Lincoln Brigade volunteer Ramon Durem, who was recuperating from a leg wound. After returning from Spain, Becky gave birth to their first daughter, named Dolores after Dolores Ibaruri. Becky is survived by three daughters, Dolores, Pilar and Vita, four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Talking about her experience years later, Becky said, "I blossomed in Spain. Everyone was your Camarada. We were all together. Barriers were broken down. It was what life could be like if everyone cared for each other."

—Julia Newman

Robert Klonsky 1918-2002

Robert Klonsky, a native of Brooklyn, NY, died September 7 in Chicago at the age of 84. A lifetime of political activity began when as a teenager in 1937 Klonsky hopped a



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freighter to France. There he crossed the Pyrenees and joined the Lincoln Brigade. Upon his return to the US in 1938, he joined the Communist Party.

Klonsky spent his life as a trade unionist, activist in the civil rights movement as well as organizer against the war in Vietnam. In the 1950s, he became a target during the red scare. Charged and convicted of being part of an anti-government "conspiracy" under the Smith Act, Klonsky served time in prison before the case was overturned by the Supreme Court. For several years he ran a bookstore near the UCLA campus until it was destroyed by arsonists who painted swastikas on the building wall.

A resident of Los Angeles in the 1960s, Klonsky worked with many of the blacklisted Hollywood writers and directors who were also targets

Veterans who died in 2002

Lou Bortz

Bob Klonsky

Frank Lister

Martin Ludwig

Paul Lutka

Harry Mensh

Marion Noble

Perley Payne

Walter Schlekan

Rebecca Schulman Durem

Bill Van Felix



Added to Memory's Roster



of the McCarthy period, and along with others in the film industry, organized opposition to the war and for various civil rights causes.

His first wife, Helen, died in Los Angeles of Hodgkins Disease in 1976. His second wife Peggy died a year ago at their home in Santa Cruz. He is survived by his sons Michael and Fred, along with 5 granddaughters and a great-grandson.

Henri Rol-Tanguy

Henri Rol-Tanguy, former political commissar of the 14th International Brigade, "la Marseillaise," during the Ebro campaign and former commander of the Resistance during the

uprising and liberation of Paris in August 1944 passed away on September 8.

Rol-Tanguy fought in Spain with his real name, Henri Tanguy, adopting Rol as his nom de guerre during World War II in homage to a French IB comrade who was killed in Spain, Théo Rol.

Rol-Tanguy, member of the French communist party from 1927 until his death, made sure to add his name to the surrender agreement between the German commander of the Paris garrison and the Gaullist Free French general Leclerc to officially recognize the contribution of the French Underground, the FFI, in the battle for Paris. Incorporated into the French Army, he participated in

the liberation of the eastern regions of France and retired a colonel in 1964.

Rol-Tanguy headed the French IB delegation during many visits to Spain after the death of Franco, most notably during the "Amigos" sponsored 60th anniversary in 1996. He is survived by his wife of sixty years, Cecile, and several children and grandchildren.

The socialist mayor of Paris, Bernard Delanoë has recently expressed the desire to re-baptize a street of the French capital in honor of this singular national hero.

Homage celebrations were held during the annual, "Fête de l'Humanité," in the outskirts of Paris.

—Robert Coale

Letters Van Felix

Continued from page 2

He had taken cover behind a rock but the shrapnel found a way to his unprotected side.

Hospitalized for a long period with an incapacitating wound, Bill missed the Barcelona farewell celebrations. In fact, he almost missed coming home at all. He woke up one day to find the hospital empty except for an African-American Iber, Johnson, who had lost a leg at the Ebro. Hearing that the fascists were closing in, they headed north as best they could, eventually ending up in a French concentration camp where an American journalist managed to get them freed and sent home.

Like the large majority of IB vets, Bill also served in World War Two. He was a Merchant Marine radio officer, achieving the rank of ensign. He served on the famous liberty ships, was torpedoed again and earned the Merchant Marine Combat Medal and the Atlantic War Zone Medal.

He was a determined activist for

Human Rights and justice as well as a teacher. He served progressives in his neighborhood on the Executive Board of the Village Independent Democrats and was also Chief Steward of Local 2110 of the United Auto Workers Union. He taught building trades in the University of the Streets on the Lower East Side and more recently at Manhattan's Technical Career Institute, the former RCA Institute where he himself once studied. He never retired; he was on medical leave when he passed away.

There was never a more thoughtful or generous host. I had the pleasure of staying at his home on several occasions. There was always a friendly "cup of java" waiting for visitors as well as something tasty in a pot. Bill was a good cook, a passable brewer and an experimental wine maker, all that in downtown Manhattan! Over the years, he always remained faithful to the

Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He attended the 50th, 60th and 65th IB anniversaries in Spain, where his friendship, openness, enthusiasm and sense of humor were always evident. Bill loved to practice his Spanish and often went off to speak to the locals. I doubt he ever missed a VALB gathering. In 2000 he attended the event with his arm in a sling, the result of a fall in the bathtub which gave him a fracture. In 2002, though both he and his wife Evelyn were suffering from the illness which would take them, they nevertheless attended the show. I can still hear Bill's distinct New York voice as the microphone was passed to him: "I am very glad to be with you today, and I hope to be here next year." Though physically he will not be with us next April in New York City, his memory as a dear and generous friend and a determined activist will remain with us always.

—Robert Coale Jacksonville, FL



Contributions



In Memory of a Veteran

Peter Lotto *in memory of Ralph Fasanella* \$75.

Sarah Goldstein *in memory of Irving Weissman* \$50.

Rosaline Guaraldo *in memory of Pio Guaraldo* \$25.

Gabe Jackson *in memory of Bob Colodny & Irving Weissman* \$100.

Thelma Weissman *in memory of Hy Greenfield* \$25.

Herman Warsh *in memory of Ralph Fasanella* \$100.

In Honor of a Veteran

George Harrison *in honor of Moe Fishman's 87th birthday* \$30.

Irving Rappaport Aug.10, 2002, his 92nd birthday \$92.

In Memory of

In Memory of Flora Sherman in memory of Ivy Becker \$25.

Lillian H. Schwartz *in memory of Alice Gardner Josephs* \$25.

Dennis Redman *in memory of Jack Beeching* \$25.

Gloria and Bill Powers *in memory of Alice Josephs* \$25.

Donations

The late Jeanette Sussman \$125.

Sevilla Stroom \$18.

ALBA'S TRAVELING EXHIBITION

THE AURA OF THE CAUSE

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

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

Shreveport, La

January 15, 2003-March 15, 2003

**Meadows Museum of Art
Centenary College**

2911 Centenary Blvd
Shreveport, La 71104
318-869-5226

BRING THIS EXHIBIT TO YOUR LOCALITY

Contact Diane Fraher, ALBA executive secretary:

212-598-0968; Fax: 212-529-4603; e-mail amerinda@amerinda.org



Photograph by Gerry Jarocki.

Save the Date:

Special programs planned for next year

Sunday February 23, 2003, Oakland

Saturday April 26, 2003, New York

The Volunteer

c/o Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives
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New York, NY 10003

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