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# The Volunteer

FOUNDED BY THE VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

## DREAMERS DEMAND JUSTICE

IMPUNITY IN  
LATIN AMERICA

CHIM IN SPAIN

THE LINCOLNS AS  
IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS



799 Broadway, Suite 341 New York,  
NY 10003 (212) 674-5398  
[www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org)

Editor Print Edition  
Peter N. Carroll

Editor Online Edition  
[www.albavolunteer.org](http://www.albavolunteer.org)  
Sebastiaan Faber

Book Review Editor  
Gina Herrmann

Graphic Design  
[www.eyestormonline.com](http://www.eyestormonline.com)

Editorial Assistance  
Phil Kavanaugh

Manuscripts, inquiries, and letters to the  
editor may be sent by email to  
[info@alba-valb.org](mailto:info@alba-valb.org)

The editors reserve the right to modify texts  
for length and style.

Books for review may be sent to  
Gina Herrmann, 102 Friendly Hall, 1233  
University of Oregon, University of Oregon,  
Eugene OR 97403-1233

[www.albavolunteer.org](http://www.albavolunteer.org)

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## Dear Friends,

The climate of our times is changing—not in the bad way, as in the overheating of the planet, but as new energy arises to help us meet our challenges. As spring comes to the northern hemisphere, we are proud to announce that the winners (plural) of this year's ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism are young people—United We Dream—the famous “next” generation, who will carry our promises of a better society further into the future.

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade also, for the most part, constituted a generation of young immigrants and children of immigrants who stood up against government apathy and social injustice. Like the Lincoln volunteers of the 1930s, this new generation is internationalist in focus, understanding that no society can survive if it pretends to be isolated from the rest of the world. We welcome them into our ranks.

ALBA's mission has long focused on the young, especially students in our public schools and the teachers who guide them into the responsibilities of adulthood. Our teaching institutes continue to draw educators concerned not only with the facts of history, but with the ethics and moral issues that students need to learn. Together with these professional mentors, ALBA teaches human rights.

What could be more important for a young person to learn than the value of moral choice, the value of developing moral convictions and standing up for them? Long after they've forgotten the “facts” of social studies and algebra, students will remember what they learned in school about ethics and social justice.

That is why ALBA needs your support now. Your contributions enable us to create opportunities for educating the teachers and students who represent our future.


As our teaching programs expand around the country, involving schools in New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Illinois, Florida, Washington, and California, we know we can do even more. Teachers are thirsty for the kind of education we offer and eager to bring our models into their classrooms.

Please take this opportunity seriously. Give generously to support our important work for the future.

Cordially,



Sebastiaan Faber  
Chair of the Board of Governors



Marina Garde  
Executive Director

P.S. Giving now will ensure new programs for teachers not only for the Spring term, but for the following school year as well! Thank you.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear ALBA,

On behalf of the Broggi family (Dr. Moisés Broggi was my wife's grandfather), I want to thank you for the thoughtful obituary published in *The Volunteer Online*. . . . We want you to know how pleased we are he is remembered in such a fitting space. As you know, the IB experience was a turning point in his medical career and his political awareness. He recalled that experience often, with clarity and precision, thanks to the prodigious memory he enjoyed till his very last days. It was a long anticipated departure, but he will be missed nonetheless by the family and beyond because of the civic example he offered us.

Cordially,  
*Antonio Monegal*



# Undocumented and Unafraid:

## DREAMers Network Tapped for Human Rights Award

By the editors



Photos of United We Dream members  
by Jassiel Pérez taken at different local actions



**UNITED WE DREAM**, the national network of youth-led immigrant activist organizations that fight for the rights of millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States, has been selected as winner of the 2013 ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism. The United We Dream Network (UWD) will receive the award at ALBA's annual event in New York City on May 5.

The organization strives to achieve equal access to higher education for all people, regardless of immigration status; to address the inequities and obstacles faced by immigrant youth and their families; and to develop a sustainable, grassroots movement, led by immigrant youth, the children of immigrants, and their allies.

United We Dream builds on years of activism by a great number of organizations. The network was created in 2008 as a result of efforts among key national advocacy groups, led by National Immigration Law Center (NILC), with the goal of forging a nation-wide coalition to promote equal access to educational opportunities for young immigrants. NILC has been instrumental in calling the attention of policymakers to the circumstances and inequities faced by undocumented students, which led to the introduction of the Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, first proposed in 2001. A decade later, the DREAM was finally brought up for a vote in December 2010. After failing to pass the Senate by five votes, the movement focused its efforts on the executive branch and pushed President Obama to stop deporting undocumented youth by providing them with administrative relief. It was largely the efforts of UWD activists that persuaded President Obama to announce Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2011—a program that would provide relief from deportation and a 2-year work permit to undocumented immigrant youth who had arrived in the United States as children and met a set criteria.

"United We Dream has provided a channel for young immigrants to become politically active and to fight not just for their own rights, but for social justice more generally," said the historian Peter N. Carroll, member of the jury. "Their commitment, energy, and solidarity reflect the kind of activism embodied by the volunteers of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade who risked their lives to stop fascism in its tracks 75 years ago—many of whom were recent or non-legal immigrants themselves."

"The DREAMers are undocumented but unafraid," said ALBA Chair Sebastiaan Faber. "Over the past few years UWD has inspired all of us by showing that individual bravery and collective effort can make a real political difference."

"Coming out publicly as an undocumented immigrant in America today takes tremendous courage," said Michael Ratner, President Emeritus of the Center for Constitutional Rights, who nominated UWD for the ALBA/Puffin Award. "The DREAMers' stories are incredibly moving. They demonstrate that taking risks and putting your body on the line is a necessity in the fight for a moral and just society."

The three-person award committee selected the awardee from among more than thirty nominations. The \$100,000 ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism, one of the largest human rights awards in the world, is given jointly by ALBA and the Puffin Foundation, which provides an endowed fund exclusively for this annual honor. "The award is designed," said Puffin Foundation President Perry Rosenstein, "to give public recognition, support, and encouragement to individuals or groups whose work has an exceptionally positive impact on the advancement and/or defense of human rights. It is intended to help educate students and the general public about the importance of defending human rights against arbitrary powers that violate democratic principles."

At the United We Dream National Congress in Kansas City in early December, UWD adopted a Platform for Change that includes, among other goals, fair treatment for DREAMers and their families and communities, including a roadmap to citizenship for 11 million Americans without papers and an end to senseless deportations and abuses; the elimination of barriers to higher education for immigrant youth by extending state and federal financial aid opportunities, as well as in-state tuition rates to DREAMers available to their peers; access to health care and safe, fair working conditions and equal protection under the law for all; and intensifying efforts to become more inclusive of non-Latinos, LGBTQ communities, different-bodied people, people of faith, and other groups.

The ALBA/Puffin Award is part of a program connecting the inspiring legacy of the International Brigades—the 35,000 volunteers who helped fight fascism during the Spanish Civil War—to international activist causes of today. Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzón received the first ALBA/Puffin Award in 2011. Last year, the prize honored Kate Doyle and Freddy Peccerelli who work on violations of human rights in Guatemala. ▲

**The presentation of the ALBA/Puffin Award will take place at the 77<sup>th</sup> annual reunion honoring the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Sunday, May 5 at the Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University (3 Spruce Street) in Manhattan.**



## HUMAN RIGHTS COLUMN

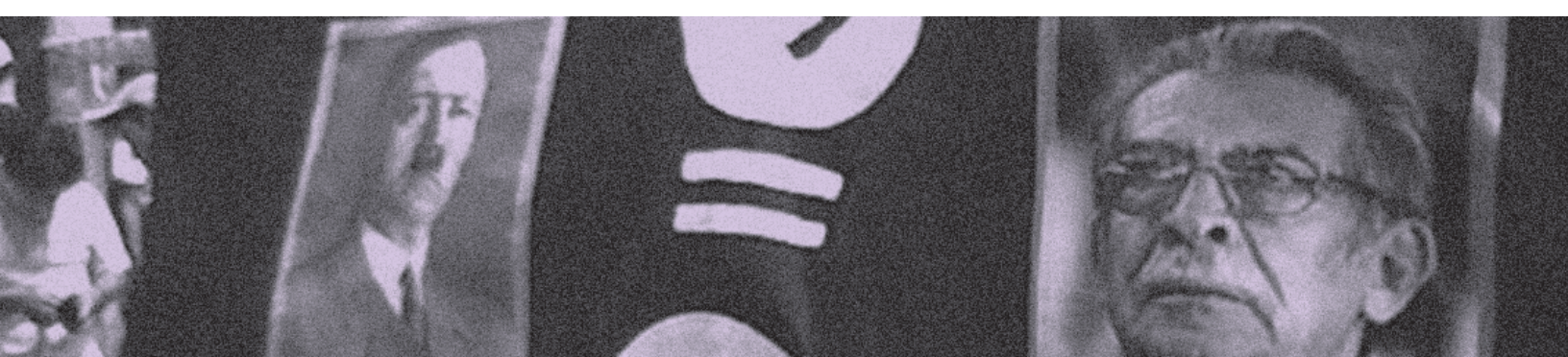
# IMPUNITY AGAINST THE ROPES: Latin America Dispatch

By Daniel Wilkinson



**T**HE STRUGGLE TO END IMPUNITY for state violence has been a central concern of the human rights movement in Latin America for decades. Efforts by victims, rights advocates, and justice officials to promote accountability have been determined, and in many instances heroic. The results have been mixed. Many human rights abusers who once seemed untouchable are behind bars, yet others continue to live entirely beyond the reach of the law.





The countries that have made the most progress in prosecuting past atrocities include Chile and Argentina. In Chile, more than three-quarters of the 3,186 documented killings and “disappearances” during the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990) have been heard by courts or are pending before the courts, and more than 800 former state security agents have been charged or convicted. In Argentina, more than 250 former military and police personnel have been convicted and sentenced for “dirty war” crimes—including the former de facto president, Jorge Videla (1976-1981)—and hundreds more are facing criminal prosecution.

Elsewhere in the region, progress on prosecuting past abuses has been more limited. In Peru, for example, former President Alberto Fujimori and his intelligence chief, Vladimiro Montesinos—as well as several former army generals and members of a government death squad—are serving lengthy prison sentences for killings and “disappearances” committed in the early 1990s. Yet there has been virtually no progress in prosecuting the many serious abuses against civilians under Fujimori’s predecessors.

Brazil has only just taken its first significant steps toward addressing grave abuses during the country’s military dictatorship (1964-1985). Last May, a national truth commission began investigating abuse cases from that era. And in August, a federal judge ordered the first trial of former state agents for their alleged roles in enforced disappearances in the 1970s.

For some countries in the region, the challenge is not merely confronting the past, as serious abuses continue to occur today. In Mexico, for example, security forces waging the country’s “war on drugs” have committed widespread human rights violations, including killings, disappearances, and torture. A major reason these abuses persist is because the soldiers who commit many of them are never investigated or prosecuted by civilian authorities. Instead their cases go to the military justice system, which has consistently proven unwilling or unable to prosecute them.

In August 2012, the Mexican Supreme Court ruled that the use of military jurisdiction to prosecute a human rights violation was unconstitutional. Nonetheless, the military has stated that it will continue to claim jurisdiction over cases of alleged abuses until the Military Code of Justice is revised, and efforts to reform the code have met with stiff resistance in Mexico’s Congress.

Military justice is also a problem in Colombia, the one country in the region still plagued by an internal armed conflict. For years, Colombian law held that military abuses should be tried in civilian

courts. However, the administration of President Juan Manuel Santos recently won passage of a constitutional amendment that will allow the investigation and trial of military abuses by the military justice system. The amendment could lead to the transfer of past cases from civilian prosecutors to the military justice system.

Of particular concern are the hundreds—and possibly thousands—of cases from the past decade in which military personnel murdered civilians and reported them as combatants killed in action, apparently in response to pressure to boost body counts. Civilian prosecutors have opened investigations in more than 1,700 such cases (involving approximately 3,000 victims), but have obtained convictions in fewer than 10 percent of them. If the remaining cases wind up in military courts, it is very unlikely justice will be served.

Perhaps nowhere have the obstacles to accountability been more daunting than in Guatemala. According to the country’s truth commission, as many as 200,000 people were killed during the country’s internal armed conflict, most of them civilians killed by security forces, who carried out hundreds of massacres and acts of genocide. Yet only a handful of these cases have been successfully prosecuted—and these successes have come at a considerable cost. Prosecutors have been driven into exile; witnesses have been murdered.

Despite the risks, however, victims, rights advocates and justice officials have pressed forward. Last year, Efraín Ríos Montt—a retired general who led the military regime from 1982 to 1983 that carried out hundreds of massacres of unarmed civilians—was charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. The former general is under house arrest. The progress made in this case—and in the few others that have been prosecuted—has marked a dramatic break from the climate of absolute impunity that reigned in Guatemala for decades. ▲

*Daniel Wilkinson is the Managing Director for the Americas at Human Rights Watch.*

# The Lincolns: A Battalion of Anti-Fascist Immigrants

By Fraser Ottanelli

*Editors' note: In granting the 2013 ALBA-Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism to the young activists of United We Dream, we recognize a direct connection between the young women and men who volunteered to serve in Spain in defense of the elected Spanish government and to protect the rights of individuals threatened by anti-democratic forces. A random survey of Lincoln veterans made in the 1980s noted that fully 80 percent of the surviving volunteers were immigrants or children of immigrants to the United States. Many had participated in the mass migrations before World War I but as Fraser Ottanelli shows in the following article, written specifically for The Volunteer, many were relative newcomers who could be classified as "internationalists" rather than nationals.*

THE VOLUNTEERS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE, taken collectively, constituted a disparate combination of old stock Americans, first and second generation immigrants and African Americans whose primary familial, political, and even "legal" connection (as citizens or permanent residents) was with the United States. While in Spain, the members of this group were open about their decision to join the antifascist struggle and described their experiences in letters to friends and relatives back home. Many who returned from Spain continued to document their life stories for decades after the war. This wealth of information is available to researchers at the Tamiment Library or in other repositories around the country. Unfortunately these documents tell only one part of a complicated experience.

A survey conducted during the Spanish Civil War of international volunteers who had traveled from the United States showed that they descended from over 70 different ethnic and national groups. Clearly then, in addition to antifascists reared in the United States, this contingent was also composed of hundreds who had migrated before World War I as well as many who entered the United States during the 1930s. A majority of Polish, Italian, Hungarian, Yugoslav, Latinos, Chinese and even the sole Japanese volunteer who traveled from the United States to Spain were recent immigrants who left their countries of birth for economic reasons and to flee the political repression that followed the defeat of revolutionary experiments and the rise of right wing and Fascist governments around the world. In most cases they were margin-

ally incorporated into multi-ethnic and multi-racial "American" radical organizations or unions. Their cultural and political world continued to be shaped primarily by experiences and events that had taken place before emigration. To paraphrase the words of a prominent Italian-American anarchist leader, they were individuals whose "body" was in the United States but whose "heart" remained in their country of origin.

Many of them had no family in the United States, a country which, in many cases, they had entered illegally during the 1920s and early 1930s. To circumvent discriminatory U.S. immigration restrictions it was not unusual for immigrants to enlist on merchant vessels in foreign ports, often with the help of sympathetic seamen, and then to jump ship once they reached the United States. However, having fled repression in their country of origin, they did not find reprieve on the American side of the Atlantic. Pervasive anti-immigrant, nativist and anti-radical sentiment from local, state, and federal authorities meant that immigrants were forced to lead a semi-clandestine existence. They tried not to call attention to their presence in the United States by using pseudonyms and by blending into a familiar and supportive ethnic community.

Not surprisingly many recent immigrants, who had experienced Fascism in their countries of origin, once offered the opportunity to fight it arms in hand, were among the first to travel to Spain. However, their status as illegal immigrants created additional challenges to make the trip across the Atlantic. Several retraced their steps back by again enlisting on merchant vessels and jumping ship in European ports. Others used forged papers to obtain a U.S. travel document. Most, however, were issued Spanish passports by the Republican consulate in New York.

In Spain, while some found their place within the Abraham Lincoln battalion as part of a multiethnic and interracial "American" unit, many others who had maintained strong cultural, linguistic, and political connections with their countries of origin preferred to join the congenial and familiar surroundings of the Garibaldi, the Dombrowski, or one of the French battalions. Meanwhile, Spanish speakers, both members of Spain's immigrant communities and various Latin Americans, joined regular units of the Spanish Republican army.

After the end of the war, the stories of surviving international volunteers from the United States are hard to follow. Heroes in Spain, once they crossed back over the Pyrenees they confronted, together with other members of the International Brigades, the harsh reality of the western democracies' policy of appeasement. Volunteers who could demonstrate that they were citizens or legal residents of the United States were allowed to travel back across the Atlantic. In contrast, those who could not prove legal status were denied re-entry in the United States. Some eluded French police and (yet again) stowed away on U.S. bound ships. Others were





allowed to make the return voyage but, upon their arrival were held at Ellis Island and then deported to Chile, Cuba, Mexico or Venezuela. The rest were left stranded in Europe where they faced innumerable challenges and dangers. Most were interned in French detention camps. Their fate was sealed following the fall of France to Nazi Germany in the summer of 1940. Many, along with thousands of Spanish Republicans, were handed over to the Nazis and deported to Nazi concentration camps.

This group of volunteers who combined internationalist ideology with international lives, and who because of their legal status before going to Spain concealed their identities and in most cases did not return to the United States. Accordingly, they did not produce the kind of records that would make their way to the Tamiment archives. Yet they are as much part of the history of U.S. involvement in the Spanish Civil War as those who were le-

gally and personally rooted in this country and, therefore, whose records are preserved in this country. It is important that the life stories of migrant internationalists—whose experiences tested the “national” categories that have traditionally been used to describe international solidarity with Loyalist Spain—not be lost and allow us to reconstruct their experiences and honor their memories. ▲

*Fraser Ottanelli, ALBA Vice Chair, specializes in immigration history at the University of South Florida. He is co-editor of Italian Workers of the World: Labor Migration and the Formation of Multi-Ethnic States as well as the forthcoming Letters from the Spanish Civil War: A U.S. Volunteer Writes Home (Kent State University Press).*





# THIRTY YEARS RECOGNIZING PEACE AND JUSTICE AT WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

By Aaron B. Retish

Detroit's Saul Wellman (l), together with Robert Thomson and David Doran, at Fuentes de Ebro. (The 15th International Brigade Photographic Unit Photograph Collection; ALBA Photo 011, 11-0582. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.)

**I**N 2013, THE WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY Abraham Lincoln Brigade Veterans Scholarship Committee will celebrate its 30th anniversary awarding scholarships to deserving students. It has been a long road that began during the Spanish Civil War when nearly 100 Michiganders joined the International Brigades. Four were Wayne State University students who put their studies aside to fight fascism in Spain. Of the four--Robert Nagle, Marsden Moran, Roy McQuarry, and Joe Rubenstein--three did not make it home. Nagle was the lone survivor.

Nearly 40 years later, Larry Cane, the well-known Mac Pap veteran, put Wayne State University professor Melvin Small in touch with his comrade, Saul Wellman, a local socialist activist and ALBA Board member. Wellman encouraged Small to start a scholarship commemorating the Wayne State Lincoln Brigadiers. In 1982, local veterans and leftist activists wooed Pete Seeger to give a concert in support of the award, an event so successful that it was recognized in the Congressional Record. The committee quickly raised enough money to endow a scholarship for currently enrolled Wayne State undergraduate and graduate students who, through their activities or research promoting peace and justice in social, political, and community engagement, best exemplify the values of the Wayne State University students who fought to defend the Spanish Republic. Since 1982, the Wayne State Abraham Lincoln Brigade Veterans Scholarship Committee has awarded many deserving students and held cultural-scholarly events each year.

Over 40 students have been recognized for their work promoting peace and social justice. Their efforts

have tackled both local and global problems. The first award went to Russell Bellant, a crusading editor of the student newspaper. Subsequent awardees included Evan Dixon, a student who organized against South African apartheid; Richard Winslow, who established free medical clinics; Mary Bloomer, a founder of the pioneering Detroit Focus Gallery, which supports local artists; and Zvezdana Kuric, who provided humanitarian relief to citizens of Croatia during the War in the Balkans. Most recent awards went to Barbara Jones for her social activism to resolve conflict peacefully in Detroit neighborhoods, and Matthew Clark, a law student at Wayne, for his legal defense of local activists and for developing an ordinance preventing water utility shutoffs for Detroit residents who cannot afford to pay their water bills. Other recipients have worked with Central American refugees, provided support to African American AIDS victims, run a progressive music commune; organized unions; and founded a local chapter of Amnesty International.

Past recipients have continued their fights promoting peace and social justice after earning their awards. Some have taken their fights beyond Michigan. Bob Fitrakis, the 1984 recipient, became a journalist and Green Party candidate in Ohio. Anthony Talarico, who received the scholarship for his work organizing residents of the slums of Rio de Janeiro went to graduate school in international policy in Colorado. Other recipients have remained in Detroit to improve social conditions there. Eric Frankie became an employment rights lawyer after his activism fighting for student rights. Barry Johnson, a recent recipient, continues

to beautify the area with environmental work as part of the Greening of Detroit group.

The Committee has also held cultural and scholarly events related to the Spanish Civil War and the history of social movements. Javier Malagón, then the cultural attaché from the Spanish Embassy, inaugurated our annual event in 1983 with an emotional address that ended with him embracing all of the Lincoln Brigade veterans in attendance. Since then, several scholars, including Peter N. Carroll, Douglas Little, and Robin Kelley spoke on recent scholarship on the Spanish Civil War. There have also been very popular film screenings and the ALBA-curated Spanish Civil War poster exhibition, *Shouts from the Wall*.

The Wayne State University Abraham Lincoln Brigade Veterans Scholarship stands as the only student scholarship in the United States honoring the veterans of the Lincoln Brigade. As the lives of the Lincoln Brigadiers in Michigan have turned to memories, this scholarship continues their legacy by championing the next generation of students who go out of their way to fight for justice and make their world a better place. ▲

*Aaron Retish, an ALBA board member, teaches Russian and Soviet history at Wayne State University.*





# CHIM IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: ANOTHER WAY OF SEEING

By Carole Naggar

**D**URING THE THOUSAND DAYS OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, Chim traveled all over Spain and produced almost thirty stories that were featured primarily in *Regards*, the left-wing illustrated magazine published in Paris, but also in *Vu*, *Voilà* and the evening paper *Ce Soir*. Later they were often resold to magazines outside France, such as the *Weekly Illustrated* and *Life*, by Maria Eisner of Alliance Photo. Chim—a pseudonym for David Seymour, who was born as Dawid Szymin in Warsaw in 1911—had been Special Correspondent (*Envoyé spécial*) for *Regards* since the spring of 1936. In fact, it was through his intervention that Robert Capa and Gerda Taro went to Spain, where Gerda would find her death on the Brunete front and Capa would shoot the photo of the *Falling Soldier* that became a symbol of war photography.

Many photographers covered the Spanish Civil War, both foreign and Spanish, professional and amateurs (such as those who worked with the Lincoln Brigade); but Chim's contribution was unique because of his sheer variety of topics and styles. While his friends Capa and Taro were most at ease in action shots, Chim's range was much wider. The Spanish Civil War allowed Chim to hone his skills as a reporter. And although he was interested in carefully constructed, well-sequenced reportages that told the stories in-depth, many of his single images are striking on their own.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not true that Chim never went to the front. Although unlike Capa and Taro he tended to avoid images of dead bodies and the wounded, several of his action shots were taken at great risk right in the middle of battle. Near Madrid, in



**"We are only trying to tell a story. Let the 17<sup>th</sup>-century painters worry about the effects. We've got to tell it now, let the news in, show the hungry face, the broken land, anything so that those who are comfortable may be moved a little."  
—Chim**



October 1936, his images of a firing cannon are drenched in the smoke of combat. Another picture taken in an unidentified location, also in 1936, shows close-ups of Republican soldiers in combat with a cannon and antiquated guns. Near Oviedo, in February, 1937, he took a series of close-up shots of *dinamiteros* ready to set fire to their dynamite charges with a cigarette, before launching them. In the battle of the Ebro river (July 25 to August 3rd, 1938), he shot panoramic close-ups of the soldiers, running and throwing hand grenades in a cinematic style resembling Capa's, the figures blurred by movement. The photographs have been taken close to ground level: the photographer was clearly crouching, and we feel immersed in combat, as if the smoke and dirt of the battle were exploding in our faces.

Still, Chim's mind was more thoughtful and analytical than Capa's. Hence his interest in showing life "behind the scenes," focusing on the means with which the war was fought, and the role of women in the war effort. In the Basque country, he chronicles women at work, replacing the factory workers who had gone on to fight. Some are working in missile factories, others are busy in assembly workshops, putting together aeroplanes sent in parts by the USSR. Others are painting bombs or manufacturing shells in a munitions factory. In February 1937 in Langreo, he photographed women working in the mines: surrounded by towering piles of coal, they are shoveling the fuel into wagons. In his photographs, women invariably emerge as independent and strong. able to sustain the war effort.



The Spanish Civil War was among the first, large-scale modern conflicts where civilians were specifically targeted. Well aware of this, Chim focused on regular people, giving the magazine reader a sense of how daily life was affected by war. In a number of locations, his photographs cover a wide range of everyday activities. People sought entertainment to keep their mind off the war: In Barcelona, a crowd cheers on a football match at the Club, a soldier and his girlfriend ride a bumper car in an amusement park, girls show off their new swimsuits to soldiers on a beach. Crowds are amassed inside the Cafe Manacor in Gijón (February 1937), and in Minorca, an island off the Catalan coast, people attend the premiere of a play at the Mahon Theater (1938).

Rather than confirming stereotypes, Chim's photographs unsettled ready-made assumptions. They showed, for instance, how Republicans could also be devout Catholics. In one of his most successful and widely published reportages (1937), Basque soldiers attend an outdoor mass at the front in Amorebieta. Similarly, Republican soldiers, who had been previously accused of destroying works of art, work hard to salvage them at the Monastery of the Descalzas (October 1936) or in Madrid's Palacio de Liria. Life goes on despite the war: in Bermeo, fishermen repair their nets (January-February 1937), and in Minorca, vendors work at a fish market (1938).

Children are often the focus of Chim's photographs, an interest he would pursue in his famous 1948 UNESCO series on *Children of Europe*. Kids are shown receiving milk and food, or writing their lessons on the blackboard in a Barcelona public school (October 1936) and playing with a found helmet in the ruins of Gijón (February 1937). In a Barcelona maternity ward, a woman holds her newborn and reads the *Vanguardia* paper; another writes a letter; and nurses hold four newborn babies (July 1936).

One of Chim's talents was his capacity to build a report with individuals in every walk of life. Even in the middle of war, he managed to have people pose for him. Among his portraits of writers, those of Rafael Alberti and Jose Bergamin are similar: in both, the poet's face is bisected, leaving half of it in the shadow (much like in the Moholy-Nagy portraits that Chim had admired while studying in Leipzig). His portrait of Dolora Ibárruri, La Pasionaria, of April-June 1936, reflects her charismatic and passionate personality with a tinge of tragedy. Some of his best portraits are the series of the Republican soldiers from Asturias (January 1937), posed against the background of the sky. In the faces of the Basque soldiers he portrayed at Amorebieta, optimism and bravery shines through.

Traveling to Das, in the Catalan Pyrenees, Chim went down into the coal mines with the elderly peasants who had replaced the young miners fighting on the Catalan front. Joining the miners for their

outdoor picnic, he shot several portraits. "A ray of sun comes out. We take advantage of it and they line up against the shed, sheltered from the north," wrote the reporter. "There is a nice old guy who is moved to know that his portrait will be published in the paper, just like that of a brave revolutionary fighter. He cannot stop shaking our hands. He has tears in his eyes."

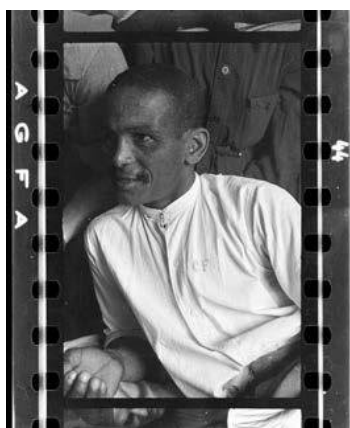
Some of Chim's most extraordinary portraits are those of the *Regulares indígenas*, Moroccan soldiers that Franco had induced to fight for him and who were killed by the thousands. The pictures were taken in prison barracks near Madrid in October 1936. Sober and moving, the images do not pass judgment but have a quality of tenderness and mystery. Looking the "other" in the eye, Chim photographed them with humanity and the

same respect he showed the Republicans.

Finally Chim, attentive to details, managed to compose eloquent still-lives, powerful symbols of war, such as his photographs of a crushed typewriter on a pedestal and of a table laden with bullets in the ruins of Gijón.

Even while covering a war, Chim had an uncanny capacity for slowing down, for reflection in middle of chaos. Twenty years later, in the Suez war, his friend Bill Bradlee described him as "a lone figure, completely calm, clicking away. It was almost in slow motion. He looked at the scene and raised his camera and took [his] pictures very slowly." It was covering that war, on November 10, 1956, that Chim was shot to death. ▲

A photography historian and poet, Carole Naggar has recently authored the lead essay for a book on Christer Stromholm, *Postscriptum* (2012), a text for Chim's catalogue at ICP (2013) and a book, *Chim's Children of War* (2013). She is working on Chim's biography.



The exhibition of Chim's work, *We Went Back: Photographs of Europe 1933-1956*, will be up at ICP until May 5, 2013. The catalogue is published by Prestel.

Illustrations:

- Battle of the Ebro River. July 25-August 3, 1936
- Destroyed typewriter after bombing. (From the Mexican Suitcase)
- Langreo. Women working in the Duro-Felguera mines. February 1937
- A Moroccan prisoner who fought with the "Regulares Indigenas"



# Silencing Dissent in Galicia

By Simon Doubleday



SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a researcher from the small Galician town of As Pontes, participating in the excavation of a mass grave from the Spanish Civil War in the heavily left-leaning region of Asturias, caught his breath as he heard a vitriolic torrent of abuse directed at the *gallegos*.

The Galicians, he was told, were all Francoists, collaborators. The insults left a deep impact on the researcher—a member of the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH)—several of whose family members had been killed following the Nationalist uprising in 1936. He resolved never to return to Asturias.

The myth is deeply entrenched. Yet the widespread representation of Galicia as a bastion of political conservatism silences another narrative: the story of those who fought for democracy and the Republic during the Civil War, who were subject to the first systematic repression of dissent in Nationalist Spain, and who—in their tens of thousands—were imprisoned, tortured, or executed by the roadsides of the Galician countryside. Galicia is no longer a backwater: tourists



Signs for the Spanish Anti-Fascist Committee of Philadelphia (C50/37). Fondo Arquivo Militar de Ferrol, Proxecto Nomes e Voces.

and pilgrims flock every year to the picturesque medieval streets of Santiago de Compostela. But even in tranquil Santiago, beyond this façade lie other, hidden, realities: the mass civil war grave in the cemetery of Boisaca; the dark past of the chocolate store in the Plaza do Toural, which used to be the headquarters of the local Falange, the police building that served as an interrogation center in the months after the military rising.

This other narrative, brought to international attention in the novels of writers such as Manuel Rivas (*The Carpenters' Pencil; Books Burn Badly*), is one that scholars such as Gustavo Hervella

García are desperate to recover and illuminate. At the offices of the “Nomes e Voces” (Names and Voices) research center, hidden discreetly on the second floor of a university residence on the campus of the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Hervella forms part of an avid team of researchers directed by Professor Lourenzo Fernández Prieto. Their mission is to study the effects of Francoist repression during and after the Civil War, and to gather information on all those who suffered some form of persecution as a result of their political beliefs or their defense of the Second Republic. If by “war” one means open conflict between armies, there was no Civil War in Galicia, Hervella affirms, echoing recent scholarship—there was only repression. This repression was brutal, and left deep and lasting scars.

During the Second Republic, a statute of autonomy for Galicia—establishing its status as a free state within a Spanish federation—was passed with the support of an overwhelming majority of the population. The fact that this statute is less widely known than its Catalan equivalent speaks volumes



about the politics of memory. Although Galicia fell quickly to the Nationalist forces following the military coup, there was also a vigorous attempt to defend the Republic—and the principles for which it stood—throughout the month of July 1936. The subsequent “cleansing” of Republican resistance was to be a proving ground for political persecution—including summary trials, nighttime shootings, and the rapid creation of political detention centers (which soon witnessed an influx of prisoners from Asturias, Extremadura, Catalonia, and the Basque country). These practices were then exported to other regions of Spain, as Republican forces elsewhere in the peninsula were crushed. No less repressive was the imposition of new cultural norms across Galicia: the restoration of crucifixes in schools, the changing of street names, the building of statues to local Falangist leaders, and the singing of the *Te Deum* whenever the Nationalists won a military victory. These measures were designed in part to bury another political reality, and to judge from the long survival of tropes and stereotypes about Galicia, they have been all too successful. For Hervella, the myth of a uniformly conservative Galicia needs to be punctured, although—he drily admits—the repeated election of an ex-Francoist minister, Manuel Fraga, as president of the Galician autonomous region after the coming of democracy “did not help.”

One cornerstone of the Galician researchers’ work is a searchable database of all the victims of the repression (<http://vitimas.nomesevoces.net>): among them, Francisco Comesaña Rendo, the doctor and Galician nationalist who is the inspiration for the protagonist of

Rivas’s novel—later adapted to film—*The Carpenter’s Pencil*. “Tried in Santiago for treason, resulting in the death penalty,” reads the laconic database entry. “Commuted to life imprisonment as a result of his status as a Cuban citizen. Exiled in Mexico.” A search for the keyword “Comesaña” produces a sizable list of other names: agricultural workers, laborers, a tram worker, a shoemaker, and



Signs for the Spanish Anti-Fascist Committee of Philadelphia (C50/37). Fondo Arquivo Militar de Ferrol, Proxecto Nomes e Voces.

a 15-year-old girl, Peregrina Comesaña Costas, whose head was shaven in a ritual of public humiliation. A special “Nomes e Voces” project, entitled *Vermellas* (Reds), focuses on the political persecution and active agency of women. Meanwhile, the researchers actively compile oral testimonies from close family members of



the victims of repression—they have 513 interviews to date. These oral histories accompany painstaking archival work in locations such as the Archivo Militar in Ferrol—the naval town that was Francisco Franco’s birthplace.

Memory of these atrocities remains a political battleground. The return to power of the conservative Partido Popular in 2009 brought a gradual reduction of the funding which had been allocated to the “Nomes e Voces” project by the previous Galician government (a coalition formed by the PSOE and the Bloque Nacionalista Gallego). By the end of 2010, this funding had been withdrawn, jeopardizing new lines of research such as a promising comparative project undertaken in collaboration with the University of La Manouba in Tunisia. In Tunisia, too, research into the crushing of dissent—under the French colonial regime—remains an urgent concern, whose political importance after the Arab spring needs no comment. It was to Tunisia that some of the Galician leftists had fled as the Nationalists took over. Even in the face of financial crisis, “Nomes e Voces” hopes that the Galician and Tunisian databases can be combined. Meanwhile, the research team relies on limited financing from the provincial government and the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela.

Hervella looks forward to collaboration with scholars and students in the United States and in Latin America, stressing the importance of oral history in recovering the silenced past. “Until now,” he comments, “most U.S. attention on the Civil War period has been focused on the military conflict, and not so much on Francoist repression of ordinary citizens.” Galicia, he says, can play a significant role in changing this picture. ▲

For further details on the Proxecto Nomes e Voces, contact: [emoriaguerracivil@usc.es](mailto:emoriaguerracivil@usc.es) Simon R. Doubleday teaches Spanish history at Hofstra University. Among other recent books he is coeditor of *Why the Middle Ages Matter: Medieval Light on Modern Injustice* (Routledge, 2011).



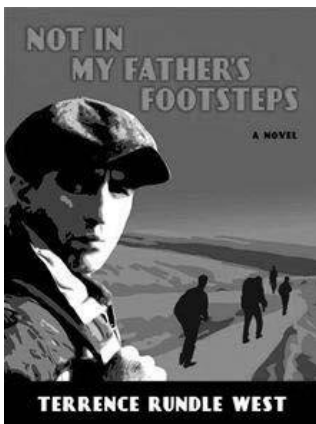
# Book reviews

## Novel Characters of Spain's Civil War

*Not in My Father's Footsteps.* By Terrence Rundle West. (General Store Publishing House, 2011).

*The Road, and Nothing More.* By J.T. Bautista. (Andrea Young Arts / El León Literary Arts, 2012).

Reviews by Lee Rossi



WRITTEN WITH A HISTORIAN'S attention to event and cause, Terrence Rundle West's latest novel, *Not in My Father's Footsteps*, traces the moral evolution of two Canadians during the tumultuous years from 1933 to 1939. Dollard Desjardins is French-speaking, the privileged son of a well-to-do manufacturer who hobnobs with leaders of the Separatist movement. Martin Kellenberger, aka Marty Kelly, is a Jew and, when we first meet him, a medical student at one

of Montreal's French hospitals.

Early in the novel the two protagonists have a brief, bitter encounter, emblematic of the animosities between their two tribes. Later we see them on separate yet parallel tracks, Marty as a hobo and union organizer, Dollard as a reporter for the Francophone press. Eventually they meet again in Spain, partisans of opposing sides. In a critical sequence, the most psychologically complex of the novel, Dollard, a reporter and guest of the Franco regime, is captured by Loyalist forces, the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion of the International Brigades, to which Marty is attached. Marty manages to save Dollard's life, first from the Loyalists and then from Italian troops supporting Franco.



*West shows the social unrest in Canada that fueled the idealism of the Mac-Paps and created a generation of Canadians committed to social change.*

During his time with Marty, Dollard comes to recognize the limits of his world view and the ways in which wealth and privilege have limited his ability to understand the lives of the less fortunate. When Marty is murdered by the Fascists, Dollard's burden of guilt lifts only after he resolves to work for Marty's dream, a world less fractured by differences of language, religion, and wealth.

There are many treatments of Spain's Civil War, but West tells us he wanted to understand why over 1,500 of his countrymen risked their lives in the fight against fascism. There are many familiar elements in his book. The infighting among Communists, Socialists and Anarchists and the brutal repression by the Communists of their erstwhile allies is well known to readers of *Homage to Catalonia* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. But West also shows the social unrest in Canada which fueled the idealism of the Mac-Paps and created a generation of Canadians committed to social change.

There is much to learn from this novel, and indeed the author's pedagogical bent is evidenced in a series of helpful maps, as well as a chronology, an index of historical names,

and a glossary of names and places. Yet for all that, the main characters don't quite come to life. Often they serve more as illustrations of social tendencies than real human beings. Moments are rare when the reader feels an energy in the characters distinct from their role as social types.

Not so with the characters in *The Road, and Nothing More*. They live, they suffer, they survive with indomitable courage and will. J.T. Bautista tells us that her novel began as "a series of stories, comments, and anecdotes about the Spanish Civil War" which she heard from her sister-in-law.

The novel is divided into two parts. Part 1 presents the impact of the Spanish Civil War on a group of mostly working-class characters marginalized by Spanish culture and society. In fact, the book asks what impact do great social movements, like the war and the fervor which engendered it, have on working class women, homosexuals, and the disabled. The answer is that in Spain, the struggle for political and economic freedom had no direct impact on the lives and concerns of these groups. Like everyone else they suffered during the war, but the fight did not concern them.

Part 2 brings the story to the near-present, beginning with Franco's 40 years of authoritarian rule. Again while everybody's physical conditions improved after the war, women, homosexuals, and the disabled continued to be marginalized and discounted by a culture that was patriarchal and homophobic. A particularly brutal form of machismo continued to be the dominant expression of authority within society and the family.

Throughout the novel, short essays in social history orient the reader to a context larger than any of its characters comprehend. Nevertheless, the novel's main strength is its characters. In the course of the narrative they become vivid and familiar. The fact that they don't develop or change is not a result of artistic failure but rather a result of their solidity, which in turn is based on their deeply realistic awareness of their place in society. The cleaning lady Señora. Rosa, a character not unlike Faulkner's Dilsey, understands that she is of no value to Spain's masters, be they Fascist or Communist, but she creates value for herself, her daughter, and her neighbors by refusing self-pity and working tirelessly to feed and house her family. Similarly, the upper-class homosexual Dr. Contreras exhibits selfless heroism in his dedication to healing. He goes where he is needed, regardless of his patients' wealth or politics. Although set in the highly politicized world of modern Spain, the novel is not about politics but rather a celebration of "life itself and the living of it." ▲

*Lee Rossi is a poet, essayist, and interviewer. He lives in the San Francisco Bay area.*

## Garbo: The Spy

**A documentary by Edmon Roch (Spain, 2009; US release 2012, distributed by First Run Features, 88 minutes).**

*Review by Alda Blanco*



*GARBO: THE SPY* TELLS THE STORY OF DOUBLE AGENT JOAN PUJOL GARCÍA's role in World War II espionage. A young Catalan who had deserted the Republican army to fight for Franco, Pujol convinced the Nazi intelligence services in Madrid at the onset of World War II to accept his offer of providing information about the British war effort, and in 1941, after five attempts, finally persuaded British intelligence to allow him to become a member of its service. Known to British

MI5 as *Garbo* and to the German Abwehr as *Arabel*, double agent Pujol became a master of deception, one of espionage's key plays. After settling in London, Pujol invented a network of 27 fictional informants who provided him with information about such things as troop movements in Britain and top-secret British military plans that he then relayed to Madrid's Abwehr section in long, detailed, and extravagant dispatches, which were generally deemed to be sufficiently reliable to be sent on to Berlin. What the Germans did not know nor did they ever find out was that the information they received from *Arabel* was, in fact, being provided to *Garbo* by British intelligence. Germany's trust in *Arabel* was such that on July 29, 1944 he was awarded the Iron Cross for his services to the German war effort.

*Garbo's* greatest feat was the key role he played in the success of Operation Fortitude, the elaborate deception created by British intelligence to mislead the Germans about the timing and site of the invasion of the continent. His dispatches convinced the Germans that the expected Allied invasion would take place at the Pas de Calais rather than Normandy, which was where the Germans assumed the landing would occur. Thus, they fortified Calais and withheld sending additional troops and Panzer divisions to Normandy. After the landing on the beaches of Normandy, which took the Germans by surprise, *Garbo's* task was to convince the Germans that this invasion was merely a diversion from the Allies' true mission which was to send its forces across the Pas de Calais and onto the continent. Once again, the Germans were deceived by *Arabel's* false information and prepared to resist the onslaught of the major invasion at Calais. *Garbo's* deception provided the Allied forces with the precious time needed to secure their positions



in Normandy and begin their march towards Paris, which was liberated on August 25, 1944. Again, Pujol was decorated for his masterful deception. However, this time it was King George VI who on November 25, 1944 awarded to him the Order of the British Empire (OBE) even after learning that he had been awarded the Iron Cross. After the war Pujol quietly disappeared only to be heard from again when a British newspaper in 1949 published the notice of his death in Angola.

Another story is told in this excellently made and well-paced documentary by Edmon Roch. It tells how historian and spy writer Nigel West (Rupert Allason) having never believed that Pujol had died of malaria in Angola set out to find Pujol in order to invite him to Buckingham Palace to publicly decorate him with the OBE during the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of D-Day in 1984. For this search West hired a research assistant in Barcelona to comb through the city's telephone directory on a hunch that one of Pujol's relatives might have information regarding his whereabouts. And, indeed, this turned out to be the case. A nephew had received a postcard postmarked in Venezuela, but had never again heard from him. With this lead West was able to find Pujol, who had settled in the town of Lagunillas, become a moderately successful businessman, and had a new family. Although it is unclear whether Pujol ever went to Angola, we learn that after the war he never again saw the wife and two children who had accompanied him during most of his stay in London and who had returned to Madrid. Believing him dead she never told the children who their father was. And, Pujol himself never told his new Venezuelan family about his activities during the war.

Pujol's secret never would have been revealed to each of his families—or to the world—had not West persevered in his search of this elusive character who had continued building a web of deception much like he had done during his years as an agent. While family secrets in particular those having to do with wartime are common, it is nevertheless heartbreaking to watch Pujol's Spanish son Joan Miquel Pujol recount how he discovered that his father was alive and, moreover, his identity.

Edmon Roch's documentary masterfully weaves these two stories together relying on excellent archival footage, including scenes of the D-Day landing and of Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, Carmencita Franco flanked by her parents and prompted by her father addressing German children, and amazing shots of Allied soldiers picking up the fake tanks they had built in order to deceive the Germans into believing that there existed in Britain two landing forces rather than one. Roch also incorporates scenes from Nazi propaganda films: the beautiful and healthy-looking Aryan youth who was to be Europe's future. And at the crossroads of these well told stories is Pujol whose genius as a double agent was to live in the shadows, to be invisible. Thus, there are very few visual traces of the man who successfully deceived the Germans primarily in his writings. Throughout the documentary we see at most two or three pictures of Pujol, although at times we see examples of the dispatches that he sent to the Abwehr. Although the interviews of Nigel West and the other talking heads are informative and necessary for the film, the death of the few who knew him during his years with British Intelligence has precluded the possibility of acquiring first-hand knowledge of this enigmatic character. Therefore, it is quite moving to watch the much older

*Garbo's greatest feat was  
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the Germans about the timing  
and site of D-Day.*

Pujol receiving the medal at the Buckingham Palace ceremony, talking with veterans of D-Day at the commemoration, and touring the beaches of Normandy and the gravesites of fallen soldiers in the cemeteries that are spread throughout the rolling hills of Normandy. My only quibble with this wonderful documentary is the inclusion of film clips from commercial movies such as *Patton*, *The Longest Day*, *Our Man in Havana*, *The Secret Code*, *Mata Hari*, and a few German movies, which create a bit of narrative confusion because they are so seamlessly interwoven with the archival footage that the audience needs to distinguish reality from fiction.

*Garbo: The Spy* does not portray Pujol as a hero nor his deeds as heroic. Rather it presents Pujol as an elusive and complicated figure who was instrumental to the Allied war effort. It was probably Winston Churchill who best captured the spirit of Pujol's life and feats as a double-agent when he said, "In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." ▲

*Alda Blanco teaches at San Diego State University. She writes about the intersection between gender and cultural production in modern and contemporary Spain.*

## ALBA in the Classroom, Brooklyn, New York

Although a large number of Lincoln volunteers came from the borough of Brooklyn, few ever expected to be part of the high school curriculum. But this year Brooklyn's High School for Collaborative Studies brought ALBA into the classroom with an elective course, *Why fight for another's cause? The American Volunteers in The Spanish Civil War, 1936*. The course included a visit to the ALBA Collection at Tamiment Library with an introduction by NYU Professor of Spanish Jo Labanyi, ALBA board member.

For their final project, students selected one of three ways to present their research, ranging from direct reports focusing on the life of one Lincoln veteran, editorial-style writing that made links to contemporary moral issues and questions of ethics, and creative writing that incorporated facts about the Spanish Civil War and social issues of the time presented in letter form in the "voice" of one of the Lincoln volunteers.

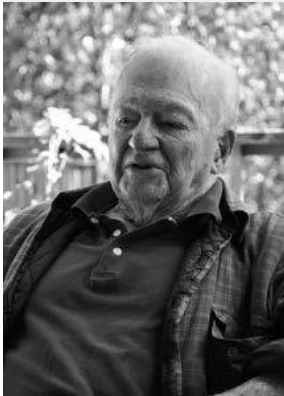
Forty high school seniors attended the final presentation and voted to rank the top three presenters. Each of the participating students received a medal and the highest-ranked student was awarded a trophy by their teacher, Mr. Stephen Simmons.

-- Xochitl Gil-Higuchi

# James Walker Benét

## 1914-2012

Photo Phil Richardson



**JIM BENÉT**, lifelong journalist and veteran of the American Regiment de Tren (Transport) in the International Brigades, died in December near his home in northern California of a blood infection. He was 98.

Born in New York to a literary family on both sides—his father was William Rose Benét, a poet; his uncle, Stephen Vincent Benét was a famous author, and his mother was the sister of novelists Kathleen Norris and Frank Norris—Jim was raised in California following the death of his mother during the flu epidemic of 1919. “I think I resented the world for having taken my mother away from me,” he told me in an interview. But he expressed pleasure at having turned his resentment in the right direction—“the ills of society”—when he adopted radical political views during the 1930s.

A graduate of Stanford University in 1935, he went east to forge a career in journalism, writing regularly for *The New Republic*. As a reporter, he covered a major fundraising rally to aid the Spanish Republic in Madison Square Garden in 1936. Sympathetic to the Republican side, Jim and his cousin, Dave Thompson, agreed to enlist in the International Brigades together in 1937. Both ultimately served as truck drivers and saw action in several battles.

After the war, Benét resumed journalism, but expressed uneasiness as the world lurched toward a second world war. “You can be afraid to come home,” he wrote, “and we were afraid, that the folks wouldn’t understand, that we had changed too much or they had, that Hitler and Mussolini had fooled them, that Chamberlain had fooled them, that maybe they just wouldn’t get it, wouldn’t be fighting the way the Spanish do.”

After World War II began, Jim worked as a reporter for the Soviet news agency *Tass* in New York. He was also one of the core interviewees for sociologist John Dollard’s study, *Fear in Battle*, which relied on veterans of the Spanish Civil War to create a template for morale education in the U.S. Army.

Jim returned to California in 1947, joining the staff of the San Francisco Chronicle. He also published two mystery novels.

But his left background caught up with him when the House Committee on Un-American Activities subpoenaed him in 1960. Benét refused to cooperate and managed to avoid any punishment when his newspaper’s management defended his position. He later helped organize the Chronicle’s news staff into the Guild union and participated in a major strike in the late 1960s.

With newspapers shut, Benét became a contributor on local public television and later became a commentator on the station’s award-winning Newsroom program. He also joined the journalism department at San Francisco State University. “He was one of gentlest and most courageous people I have ever known,” remarked Betty Medsger, one of his teaching colleagues, “he influenced hundreds of future journalists.” After he retired, Jim was a regular contributor to the Chronicle section on gardening, a hobby that absorbed his retirement.

“Spain made a man of me,” Benét told reporter Nadya Williams two years ago. “Going to Spain was the right thing to do. You couldn’t have a better beginning in life! We thought then, and I know now, the civil war was a genuine attempt by the Spanish people to defend democracy against the tyrannical and inhuman regimes of Franco, Hitler and Mussolini.”

—Peter N. Carroll

# Moisés Broggi i Vallès

## 1908-2012

Photo KRLS, CC BY-SA 3.0.



**MOISES BROGGI I VALLÈS**, Catalan surgeon who served in the 35th International Division Medical Services, passed away on December 31, 2012. As a young doctor, working in an on call capacity, he provided medical care in the Military Hospital of Barcelona from the first day of the war. In early 1937 he was appointed to the International Brigades Medical Services of the 14th Brigade where he served from Jarama to La Granja. During the battle of Brunete in July 1937, he was transferred to one of the mobile surgical teams operating out of the famous “Auto-chirs.”

Two American women were on Broggi’s team: Esther Silverstein as surgical nurse and Irene Goldin as ward nurse. Broggi continued to serve in the IB medical services and was promoted



to head surgeon of the 35th Division by October 1937. At Teruel Doctor Vallès team was stationed very close to the front at Casas Labradas. He fell ill during The Retreats of early 1938 and was evacuated to Barcelona, where he worked until the city fell to insurgents in January 1939.

Tried by military tribunal shortly afterwards, he narrowly escaped execution and was then prohibited from working in the public hospital system. In order to provide for his growing family, he opened a private practice which became well known in postwar Barcelona. Through the years since Franco's death in 1975, Broggi was widely recognized for his medical accomplishments as well as his social and moral convictions.

In 2006 he said of his experiences, "I took part in the war as a free citizen unaffiliated with any political party. I fought against an evil power that opposed freedom and justice. That struggle was and is international."

– Robert S. Coale

## Sylvia H. Thompson

1924-2012

Photo Richard Bermack



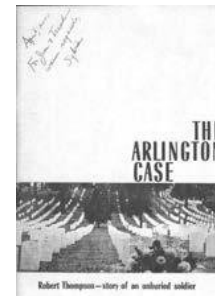
Sylvia Thompson at the 2010 ALBA New York reunion.

**SYLVIA H. THOMPSON**, who spent her life fighting for the poor and oppressed and championing the legacy of the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, died of cancer in December in New York City. A stalwart supporter of both VALB and ALBA, she volunteered countless hours, year after year, organizing VALB's annual reunions in New York.

Thompson was born Sylvia Bernard in 1924 in San Antonio, Texas. As a young woman, she joined the Communist Party and helped launch the Civil Rights Congress in Texas. In 1947, she traveled to North Carolina where she spent more than a year organizing electrical workers to join the union. It was there that she met her first husband, Sam Hall, a district organizer for the Party. The young couple moved to Birmingham, Alabama where, as open communists, they endured constant surveillance, threats and break-ins.

After Hall's death, Sylvia moved to New York City where she worked for the state Party office and met her second husband, Robert G. Thompson in 1957. Bob Thompson had been a battalion commander with the Lincoln Brigade in Spain, and went on to receive one of the highest medals for valor—the Distinguished Service Cross—for his heroic actions in the Pacific Theater in World War II.

When he died in 1965, Sylvia sought and received permission from the Army to have his ashes interred in Arlington National Cemetery. However, when publicity about Bob's previous imprisonment as a Smith Act defendant surfaced, the Army reversed itself and denied the widow's request. Sylvia took the matter to court as well as to the American people, coordinating a campaign to expose the Army's shameful actions. Her efforts included the publication of a pamphlet, *The Arlington Case* (pictured here). In 1968, a federal appeals court ordered the Army to inter Bob Thompson's ashes.



In subsequent years, Sylvia became a mainstay in the VALB office, working with veterans and organizing their annual reunions.

– Trisha Renaud

## WHAT'S YOUR LEGACY?

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives carries on the legacy of the American volunteers who challenged complacency and isolationism. Now you can continue their "good fight" by offering a legacy gift to ALBA. As you make your plans, please consider including ALBA in your will or living trust, or naming us as a beneficiary of your estate. ALBA can accept legacy gifts in any amount, large or small.

Please help us to continue to expand our horizons, and your beliefs, and help us to carry our shared legacy to the next generation and beyond.

If you have additional questions or would like to discuss your choices, please call **212 674-5398** or email **[info@alba-valb.org](mailto:info@alba-valb.org)**

# Lincoln's Fundamental Creed

## Antonio Frasconi (1919-2013)

By Nancy Wallach

ANTONIO FRASCONI, the great graphic artist, illustrator, teacher and humanitarian, created this woodcut of the Lincoln Memorial, which resides in the nation's capitol next to the famous words of the Gettysburg address, "That government, of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth." He titled this 1956 work "The Fundamental Creed of Abraham Lincoln." It was a fundamental creed that expressed the ideals of the artist and the president's namesake, the members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, as well. Just as the ALB defended the democratically elected government of Spain, Antonio Frasconi was an internationalist who used his artwork to raise his voice for social justice both in his adopted country, the United States, and in his various prints on Vietnam, Spain and Uruguay. In a Pratt Institute Printmaking Center catalog, Fritz Eichenberg referred to Frasconi as an artist "who embraces unpopular causes with uncommon compassion."

Words were very important to Frasconi. They not only inspired the woodcut of Lincoln, but appeared in portraits of his heroes, Walt Whitman, Goethe, Bertolt Brecht, Pablo Neruda, Sean O'Casey and Federico Garcia Lorca, artists who, like Frasconi, were engaged with the social issues of their times. These authors and their ideas were so important to him, that he often self-published folios of prints about them without waiting for a commission or contract.

In 1962, at a time when it was not popular to criticize Franco, Frasconi published *Oda A Lorca*, an illustrated book with fourteen lithographs. A fragment of text from the poem by the great republican poet Antonio Machado describes the murder of Lorca by the fascist Civil Guard. Frasconi's hand-designed font results in a page of great calligraphic beauty.

**El Poeta y la Muerte**  
 Se le vio caminar solo con Ella.  
 Y el sol en torre y torre los matillos  
 en yunque yunque y yunque de fragoras  
 le daba a Federico.  
 refueñando a la muerte plateada.  
 Por que ayer en mi verso, compañera  
 sonaba el golpe de tus dedos  
 y desde el cielo a mi cantar y el filo  
 a mi tragedia de luz y de plata.  
 le cantaba la carne que no tienes.  
 los ojos que te faltan.  
 buscabas los que el viento sacudia  
 los rostros al los que le besaban...  
 Hoy como ayer. Ella muere mi  
 que bien contigo a soas.  
 por estas sales de Granada mi Granada!  
 Se le vio caminar... para amigos  
 de piedra y sueño en el Alhambra.  
 un fútilo al poeta.  
 sobre una fuente donde flore el agua.  
 y eternamente diga:  
 el crimen fue en Granada en su Granada!  
 Antonio Machado

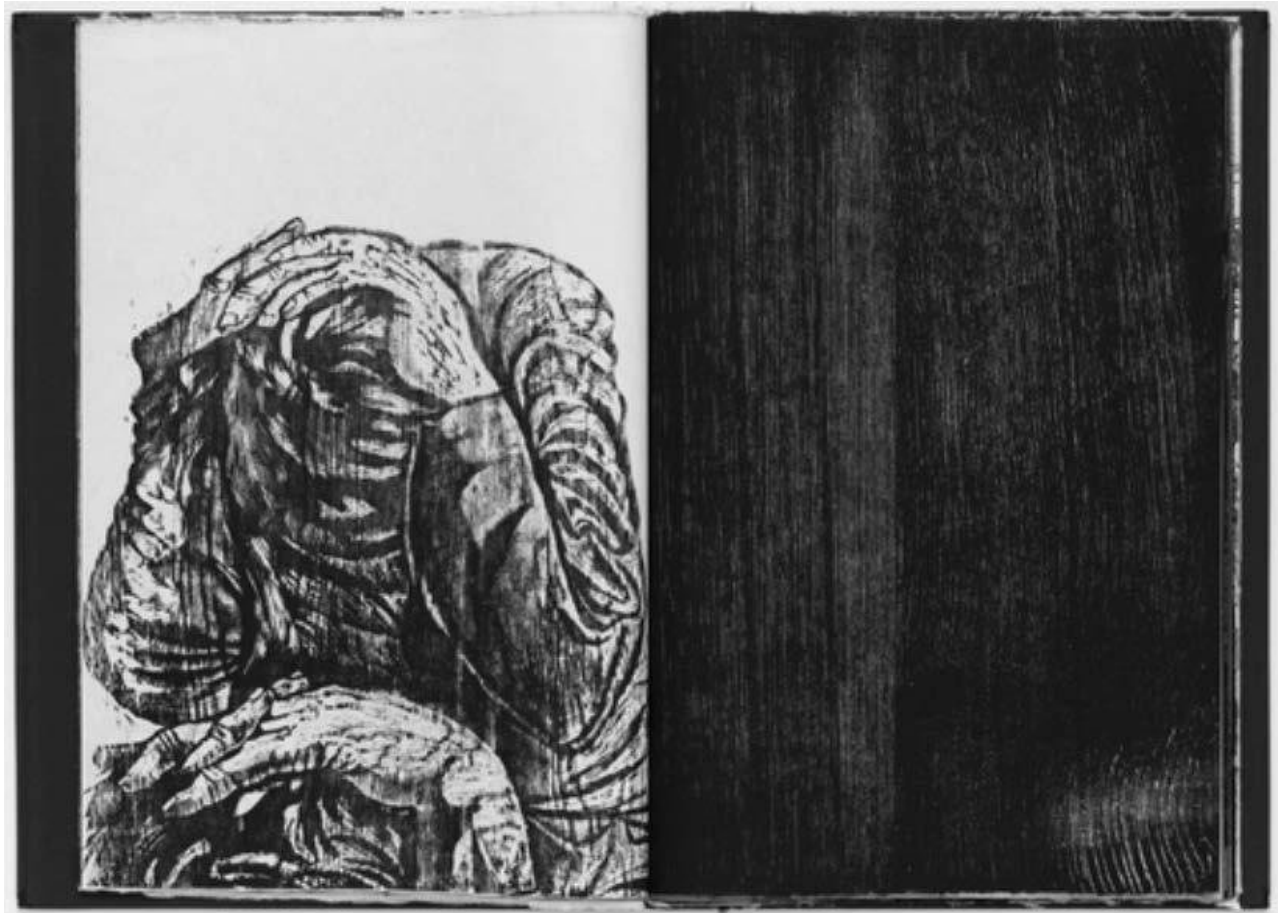


In "Guns," the artist leaves the barrels uninked, their horizontal negative spaces in sharp contrast to the thick black lines, almost daggers to the heart, on the body of Lorca. This alternation of text and visuals throughout the book builds to a strong emotional impact.

The last lithograph from the *Oda a Lorca* is one of three satirical portraits of Franco, in which Frasconi drew upon his early background as a political cartoonist. In the series, Franco is depicted from three vantage points, as if a camera were zooming in, going from a wide-angle view to a close up. In the first print Franco is seen from a distance, a lone figure against a stone wall, standing on the rubble of what is perhaps the civilization fascism has destroyed, a barren landscape suggesting disjointed limbs, military scrap metal and obsolete weapons. Is this the "collateral damage" of the dictatorship? The middle ground shot shown above zooms in to show that Franco's brittle armor seems to be made of barbed wire, bricks and straw, a portrait of an apprehensive man hiding behind the edifice of the church, his crown. Topped with bull's horns, it has a suggestion of the medieval, the antithesis of the forces for progress and enlightenment which Franco was suppressing.

In 1976, Frasconi's work was collected in the book *Against the Grain* a pun on his masterful use of wood in his prints as well as his tendency to go against the grain of the political powers. There is no better example of this than his work in *Los Desaparecidos*, an indictment of the 12-year military dictatorship in Uruguay, where the Argentine-born artist was raised. Frasconi considered this the culmination of his boyhood dreams of becoming a journalist -artist. In the work below the block of wood becomes as malleable as delicate lace, conveying the emotional state of the terrorized victims of the regime through body language, drapery folds and





composition. Here he adroitly achieved his goal of utilizing aesthetic, formal concerns and technique to the greater purpose of serving the content, an expose of the brutality and human suffering under the Uruguayan dictatorship, which had the highest per capita percentage of political prisoners in the world. His subjects have the same common humanity and display the same universality of the human condition as those of another one of his influences, the German Expressionist Kathe Kollwitz.

Frasconi, this artist who has trained such an unflinching, laser sharp focus on the most troubling issues of our times, has said his work “celebrates the joy of living.” His award winning children’s illustrations infused classics such as Aesop’s Fables or Pablo Neruda’s Bestiary with freshly imagined imagery. He also pioneered bilingual language education and promoted the divergent thinking that is a byproduct with his book of first words in four languages, *Look, See, Say*. At a lecture given at the Library of Congress he said he wanted to “show that there



are different ways to say the same thing, that there is more than one nation in our world...I discovered that my work could in some ways introduce a young mind to an understanding of our vast cultures.” He was an educator to all age groups. Perhaps the “joy of living” he referred to came from the optimism engendered by an alignment with the future. His work

reflects a lifetime of empathetic, insightful children’s illustrations and celebrations of those heroes, like the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, who furthered our progress, even at great sacrifice, with their courageous actions, words and ideas.▲

*Homage to Pablo Casals, 1959*  
*Nancy Wallach, member of the ALBA Board,*  
*is the daughter of Lincoln vet Hy Wallach.*



Images from ALBA's End-of-Year benefit dinner on December 10, 2012, at the the Spanish Benevolent Society of New York. From top to bottom and left to right: Frenchy & the Punk, musician and writer Dan Kaufman, ALBA Chair Sebastiaan Faber, Bergen Academies teachers Sergei Alschen and Gabriela Calandra, and their students, Julianne Goodman and Anthony Cruz.

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