

The Volunteer


FOUNDED BY THE VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

Hands Off the Madrid Monument!

A SPANISH TRUTH
COMMISSION?

THE LINCOLNS' SINGING
DUTCHMAN

IMAGINING IMMIGRATION
REFORM



A LOS VOLUNTARIOS DE LAS
BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES
22-X-2011

*Sois la historia, sois la leyenda,
sois el ejemplo heroico de la solidaridad
y de la universalidad de la democracia*

Dolores Ibarruri (1-XI-1938)

The Volunteer

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Dear Friends,

Milton Wolff, last commander of the Abraham Lincoln battalion, marveled that it took him more years to write his memoir of the Spanish Civil War (*Another Hill*) than it took him to fight in it. For a “little war” (both in duration and scope) that war has had immense consequences and attracted immeasurable interest.

Besides the general scholarly attention to the conflict, three major authors are currently involved in researching aspects of the war: Richard Rhodes, author of several prizewinning books about the atomic and hydrogen bombs, is working on a history of medical care during the Spanish Civil War; Adam Hochschild, most famous for *King Leopold's Ghost*, is writing a narrative history of American journalists and volunteers; Giles Tremlett, former correspondent of the British *Guardian*, has committed to a project on the International Brigades.

The controversies surrounding the Spanish Civil War also continue. In Madrid, a newly-built monument to the International Brigades, has provoked a legal battle, not yet resolved. (See Page 14.) Efforts to resuscitate legal cases against those responsible for mass murders during the Franco regime have prompted Judge Baltasar Garzón and others to call for a Truth Commission to bring reconciliation. (See Page 5.)

This renewed interest in the Spanish Civil War gives ALBA an opportunity to expand its educational activities. (See Page 7.) Teachers and students at the high school level are eager to learn more about the events leading up to World War II, as well as to make connections between Spain and current world events. Viewing the bombing of civilians and the treatment of refugees during the Spanish Civil War through the lens of human rights, ALBA brings a new ethical and moral dimension to the regular high school classroom.

And this inevitably leads to a broader reevaluation of our history. Teachers and students alike are surprised to learn that the Lincoln Brigade was racially integrated long before the U.S. Army and the Red Cross were obliged to desegregate their ranks (and their blood supplies).

ALBA's work, as ever, depends on your support. If you are wondering how to get more involved with ALBA, we invite you to connect with us via Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or visit our website and blog for more information about our public programs.

We can't thank you enough for your support.

Cordially,



Sebastian Faber
Chair of the Board of Governors



Marina Garde
Executive Director

p.s. Our success in reaching the younger generations requires considerable time and money. You already know that. But now as we are achieving more than ever, please help us to do even more.

Spaniards Call for a Truth Commission on Franco's Crimes

By Eilís O'Neill

A broad coalition of organizations, including both ALBA and Baltasar Garzón's new foundation, is calling for a commission to establish, once and for all, the truth about the crimes of Francoism. Will they be successful? And if they are, what can a truth commission actually accomplish?



Judge Baltasar Garzón at the 2011 ALBA event in New York.
Photo Nancy Tsou.

“**I**N SPAIN...THE FRANCO REGIME MASSACRED THOUSANDS, but the people are not aware of what occurred here,” says Jordi Gordon, an advocate of the new Truth Commission Platform, which aims to persuade the Spanish government to investigate the crimes committed under Francisco Franco. “What happened is not taught in an open, clear, democratic way. No one talks about the kidnapped babies. No one talks about the disappeared persons. No one talks about the people who were executed. No one talks about the concentration camps and forced labor camps. No one talks about any of this.”

ALBA JOINS TRUTH COMMISSION PLATFORM

On July 3, ALBA became the first organization from the United States to join the *Plataforma por la Comisión de la Verdad sobre los Crímenes del Franquismo* (Platform for the Truth Commission about the Crimes of Francoism). This initiative is the first step toward creating a United Nations Truth Commission in pursuit of justice for the families of victims of the involuntary disappearances that took place in Spain during the 1936-1939 civil war and the ensuing Franco dictatorship. The Platform aims to expose and remedy the situation of legal and political defenselessness that families of victims of enforced disappearances are still suffering.

“We are proud to be a part of this important project,” says ALBA Chair Sebastiaan Faber. “Over the past 20 or so years, truth commissions—provided they are set up properly, with sufficient resources and legitimacy—have proven to be a very effective tool for societies to come to terms with the legacies of civic violence while strengthening their democratic culture and establishing a permanent record of the crimes committed.”

The Platform intends to produce a comprehensive collection of evidence on the disappearances of tens of thousands of people and the mass graves that still remain, as well as on the obstruction of investigations into these crimes by Spanish authorities, which breaches the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/133 of December 18, 1992, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, signed by the Spanish State. This information will be presented to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in September 2013, as well as to the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

The impact of a truth commission depends on the strength of a country's civil society. A democratic state in Spain can only be truly democratic if it recognizes what Francoism was.

The Platform is comprised of over one hundred organizations, including all the primary historical memory associations, the International Baltasar Garzón Foundation, the Association of Friends of the International Brigades, and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (see sidebar). They've banded together to demand that Spain investigate Franco's crimes, open the country's mass graves, and include the ugly truth of the dictatorship in the history textbooks used in Spanish schools. An amnesty law prevents Spanish judges from investigating these crimes, and the disbarment of Judge Baltasar Garzón in 2012 left victims without the possibility of seeking recourse within the Spanish judicial system. Furthermore, the Spanish government has consistently intervened against Argentine judge María Servini's attempts to carry forward a case opened by Franco's victims in 2010. And the country's Historical Memory Law, passed in 2007, “has led to nothing,” according to Gordon.

The Socialist Party (PSOE) and the United Left (IU) have agreed to draft a parliamentary resolution calling for a truth commission that would be presented to the Spanish Congress, but the conservative Partido Popular (PP), which has an absolute majority, is unlikely to support it. The presentation of the resolution, in September, will coincide with a visit to Spain by the United Nations' Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Over 40 countries have employed truth commissions after violent dictatorships or civil wars, not always with satisfactory results. Successful truth commissions include those of Perú, South Africa, and Argentina, but other countries, such as Uganda, created commissions without giving them the necessary resources to fulfill their mandate.

“In terms of what a truth commission can accomplish, so much depends not on the commission itself but on the political, economic, and social environment in which it operates,” says Eric Weibelhaus-Brahm, an associate instructor at Florida State University who has been studying truth commissions for over a decade. Brahm draws a distinction between success and impact: The success of a truth commission depends on factors such as who is chosen to



Monument commemorating the victims of Nationalist repression in the mass grave at the San Salvador Cemetery in Oviedo, Spain.
Photo Pablo G. Pando. CC BY 2.0.

be on the commission and what resources the commission has to investigate, but the impact of the commission generally depends on the strength of a country's civil society. Brahm thinks that if Spain were to establish a truth commission it could likely be successful, but its impact would depend on its reception by Spanish society. Nonetheless, Brahm says, "if [a truth commission in Spain] helps a substantial number of victims, survivors, family members..., that, to me, is sufficient reason for going ahead with the investigation."

Adriana Fernández, the granddaughter of one of Franco's victims and a plaintiff in the stalled Argentine trial of crimes committed under Franco's rule, says that for her a truth commission isn't enough—but it is a move in the right direction. "At least a step is being taken towards finding the truth," she adds. "Later, it will be possible to demand justice, when Spanish society has more awareness about its history."

Organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch agree that, ideally, prosecutions follow on the heels of truth commissions, says Brahm, "if you read between the lines" of their published material on the topic. But both Brahm and Jordi Gor-

don are not optimistic about the possibility of widespread prosecutions in Spain. Perpetrators and witnesses are dying, and evidence is fading as the years pass. In fact, a Spanish truth commission would be "pretty historical" and, in that sense, "unique compared to what other countries have done," Brahm says.

Though perhaps historical in nature, a Spanish truth commission would hopefully have an immediate impact, maintains Gordon. "Spain has a blot on its entire democratic trajectory, which are the crimes committed under Francoism. A democratic state in Spain can only be truly democratic if it recognizes what Francoism was." ▲

Eilís O'Neill is a freelance journalist currently based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She works in print and radio with a particular focus on social issues and the environment.



Bay Area ALBA Reunion, October 6 JOIN US!

This Land is Our Land: Internationalism, Citizenship, Resistance
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Music by Bruce Barthol, Images by Richard Bermack. Directed by Peter Glazer

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Teaching a New Generation

By Peter N. Carroll



The new Common Core Standards provide ALBA with an opportunity to help more high school teachers introduce the Spanish Civil War into their classes.

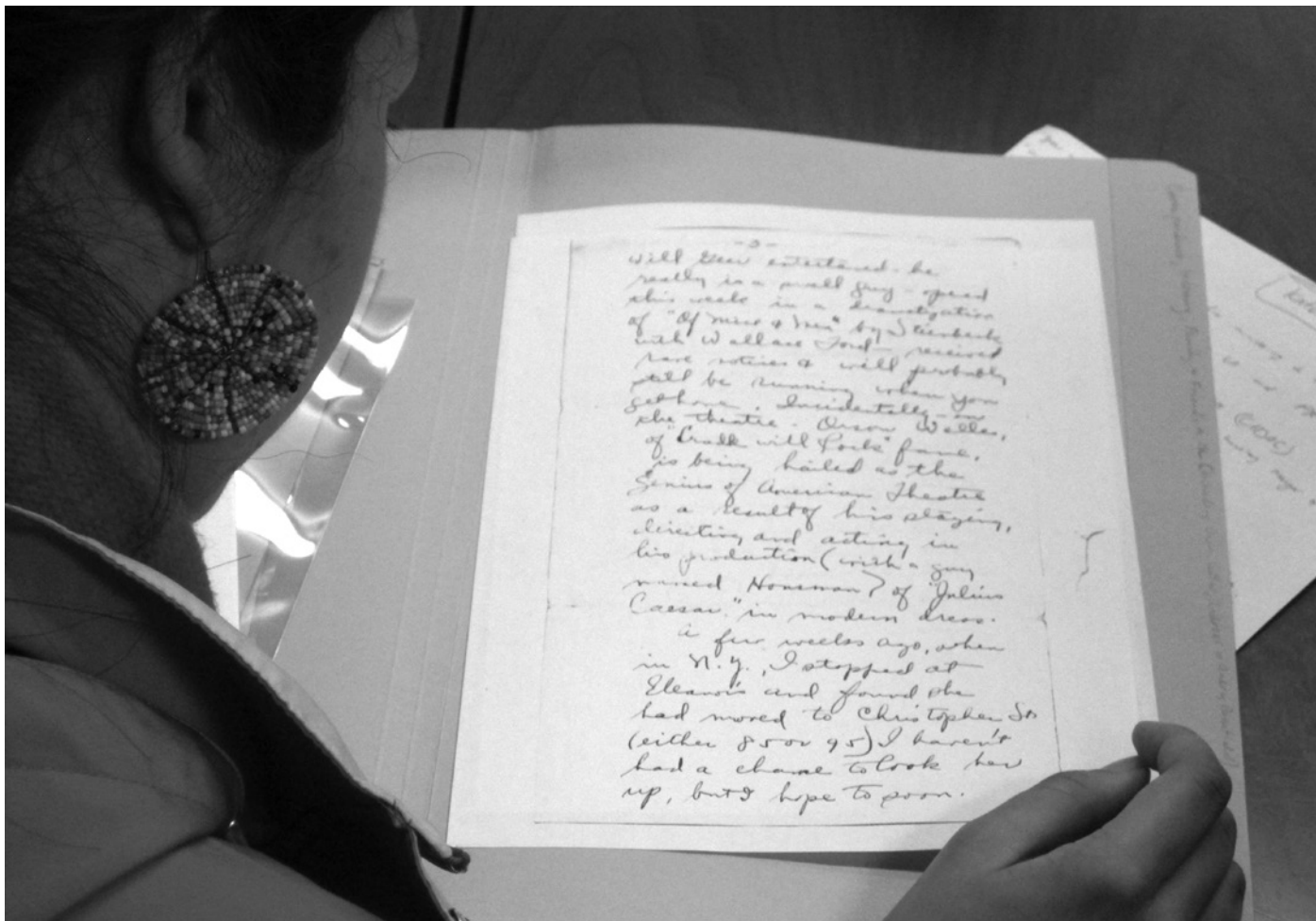


THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY ITALIAN PHILOSOPHER, **BENEDETTO CROCE**, claimed that each generation writes its own history because each generation asks fresh questions about the past. In the early 21st century, we may say that each generation writes its own history, in America at least, because the educational establishments—Boards of Education, curricula experts, parents, and bureaucrats—devise ever new ways of improving the learning process, seeking to make the classroom experience relevant to current events and expectations.

Whatever the reasons, these changes are not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, a Department of Education-supported initiative to establish “Common Core Standards” to be used in all regions of the country (over 40 states have signed on to the program) promises to change the way students in every grade learn to think and write. In social studies classes, students will study history—not by rote or memorization, but by confronting directly original primary documents and attempting to explain what they meant when they were written and what they still mean.

This approach to studying history and social studies (as well as language arts and other subjects) reinforces ALBA’s efforts during the past five years to introduce issues related to the Spanish Civil War into the secondary schools through the use of primary sources drawn from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives collection.

Letters by Lincoln Brigade volunteers serve to raise questions about current events, such as intervention in other countries' civil wars.



High school students from Bergen Academies, NJ, explore the ALBA collection at NYU's Tamiment Library. Photo Juan Salas.

At a moment when the basic strategies of teaching social studies are being re-evaluated, key aspects of the Spanish Civil War assume a new value and relevance as teachers and students seek appropriate material to study the past.

Since September 2012, ALBA has directed a series of professional development days in California, New York, New Jersey, Florida, and Ohio. Typically, these programs introduce secondary school teachers in social studies, Spanish, and English to key documents suitable for classroom use. ALBA's instructors help teachers contextualize the sources and create questions and assignments suitable to various levels of student ability.

Letters written home by volunteers in the Lincoln Brigade, for instance, provide not only commentary about U.S. policies of neutrality and non-intervention during the 1930s, but also serve to raise questions about current events, such as intervention in other countries' civil wars. Such letters can be mixed with visual source material. A letter by Lincoln volunteer Boleslaw Sliven in 1937 describing the bombing of civilians can lead to a discussion of Picasso's *Guernica* or a poster that appeared on the walls of Madrid. And vice versa, a visual source—photograph, poster, work of art—can lead to discussions of political choices. In addition, a high school

Spanish teacher can use a single poster—for example, *¿Qué haces tú para evitar esto?*—to show uses of the present tense, the interrogative, the imperative, and the infinitive. The same poster enables a social studies teacher to inquire why this poster was widely translated into French and English, and thereby raise questions about isolationism versus interventionism in the Spanish Civil War.

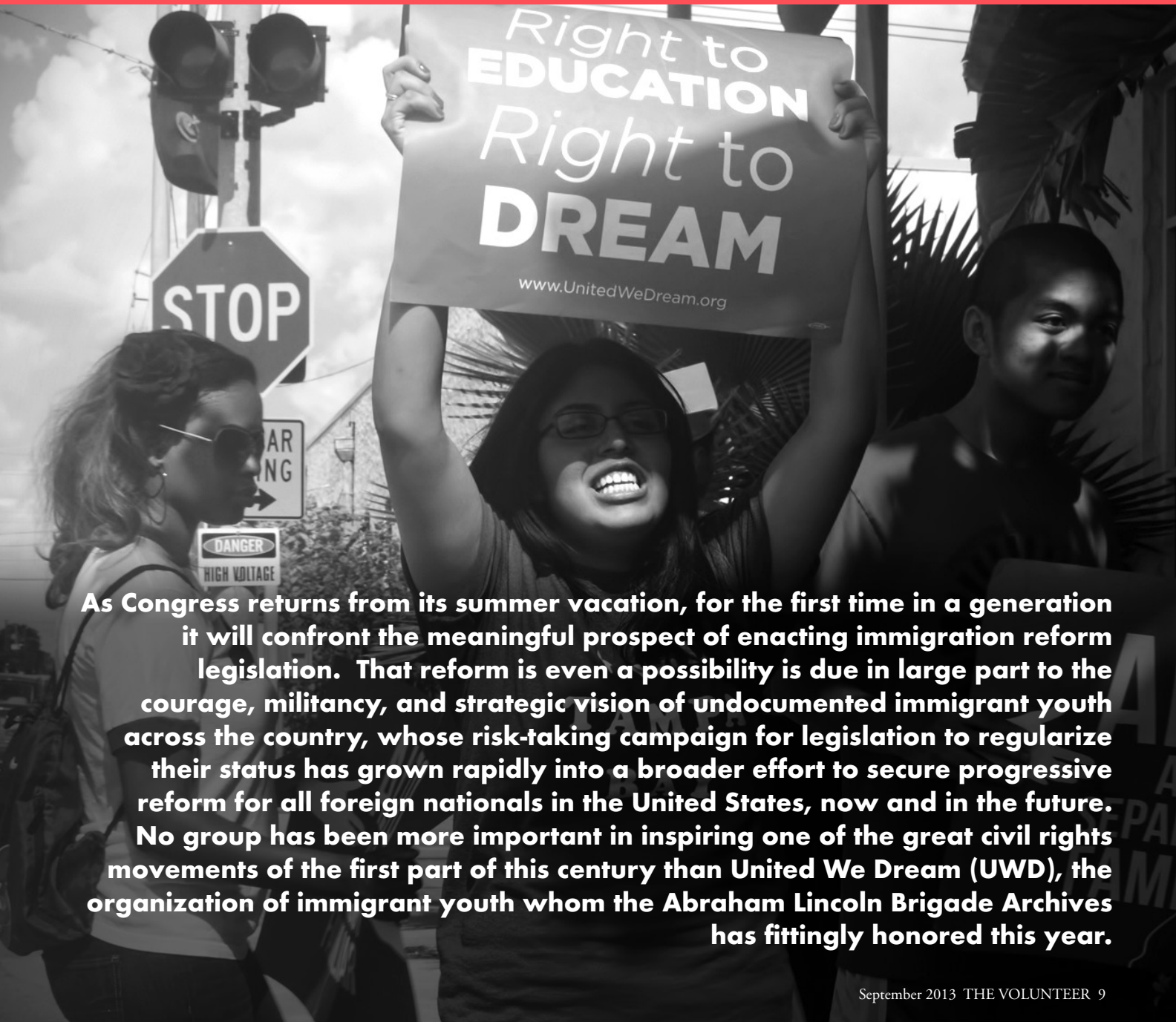
With more school districts committed to the Common Core Standards, moreover, ALBA has drawn on its “alumni” from previous professional teaching institutes to align the Spanish Civil War documents to specific requirements of the standards. Last June, a network of teachers in Ohio developed a series of lesson plans (some extending for several days' instruction) to show how Spain's Civil War provides a critical stage for the coming of World War II, a subject widely taught in U.S. and World History classes.

Heading into the new academic year, ALBA will provide workshops this fall in New York City, Bergen County, New Jersey, and Western Massachusetts. Additional districts will be added for the winter and spring as ALBA works to fulfill its goal of reaching a new generation with a new type of history. ▲

Peter N. Carroll chairs ALBA's subcommittee on teaching.

DREAMS OF OUR CHILDREN: IMAGINING IMMIGRATION REFORM IN 2013

By Michael J. Wishnie



As Congress returns from its summer vacation, for the first time in a generation it will confront the meaningful prospect of enacting immigration reform legislation. That reform is even a possibility is due in large part to the courage, militancy, and strategic vision of undocumented immigrant youth across the country, whose risk-taking campaign for legislation to regularize their status has grown rapidly into a broader effort to secure progressive reform for all foreign nationals in the United States, now and in the future. No group has been more important in inspiring one of the great civil rights movements of the first part of this century than United We Dream (UWD), the organization of immigrant youth whom the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives has fittingly honored this year.



Whether or not Congress enacts a legalization measure, there will continue to be a population of undocumented immigrants in this country, which will be subjected to unprecedented, police state-type enforcement.

Prof. Michael Wishnie. Photo courtesy of Yale Law School.

What should the nation expect this fall? For years, the smart money has bet against immigration reform, even popular measures like the DREAM Act with support in both parties. Given the deep partisan divisions in Congress and the often transparent nativism of a number of Republican legislators, it is entirely likely that the do-nothing House will confirm its reputation as among the worst Congresses ever.

On the other hand, earlier this year the Senate passed a comprehensive bill, with nearly 70 votes. Granted, the Senate bill is deeply flawed. It contains billions to further militarize the southern border, intensifies punitive immigration enforcement programs in the workplace and throughout state and local criminal justice systems, and promises only an extraordinarily-drawn out possibility of legalization for merely some of the more than eleven million undocumented immigrants in the country. The Senate bill also includes a swifter path to citizenship for some immigrant youth and agricultural workers, and a raft of more modest progressive and regressive technical changes to the immigration statutes.

This fall, it may be that the House passes one or more discrete, enforcement-only bills, agrees to a Conference Committee, and something broader emerges – perhaps adding some of the more mean-spirited House provisions to the

basic structure of the Senate bill, for instance, or even worse, eliminating the path to citizenship contained in the Senate bill – in other words, condemning millions of people to a permanent second-class status, with work authorization but no possibility ever of enjoying security of residence or formal membership in the national community. The permanent guest-worker approach to immigration policy has been disastrous in Europe, and there is no reason to expect anything more than the entrenchment of a lower caste of primarily Latino and Asian families in this country either.

While the public and many progressive advocates are properly focused on the legislative fight of the moment, it is worth considering several dynamics that will be present regardless of the outcome of the current debate. Some of these circumstances may prove even more important, in fact, than the details of the contemporary fight over legalization, border militarization, future flows of new migration, and so on.

First, whether or not Congress enacts a legalization measure, there will continue to be a population of undocumented immigrants in this country. This inevitable truth is rarely mentioned in the political speeches promising that the nation may at long last “fix” its broken immigration system. This continuing undocumented population will include those excluded from

The future of immigration law and policy will depend on the solidarity and sustainability of the collective mobilization currently underway.

whatever legalization program Congress enacts, if it even does: persons who arrive in the United States after the cut-off date; those who have disqualifying criminal history; those who cannot afford the steep application fees or the obligation to pay back years of taxes; those who cannot meet the Senate bill requirement to stay constantly employed; and those who cannot pass whatever English-language, civics, or other tests are finally imposed. And the future undocumented population will also include persons who arrive for the same reasons that people have migrated for millennia—those fleeing war or seeking refuge from persecution, but who are wrongly denied political asylum, as well as those who cannot access new worker visa programs and instead migrate unlawfully, seeking employment and a better life for themselves and their families.

This future undocumented population may not exceed the current population of eleven million, but it will be subjected to unprecedented, police state-type enforcement by an ever-larger group of immigration agents wielding ever more invasive investigatory and arrest powers. Subjected to such hyper-enforcement, this “super-undocumented” population may come to resemble historic “outlaws,” persons living as secretive and fearful a life as humanly possible, denied the most basic civil and human rights, vulnerable to arrest, mandatory detention, and swift deportation at any moment. Even in the most hopeful scenarios for legislative action this fall, the nation will inevitably confront the reality of a continuing undocumented population.

Second, no matter the resolution of the legislative debate, much vital immigration policy-making will continue to occur at the state and local level. The formal power to regulate immigration is granted by the Constitution exclusively to the federal government, but for decades many of the political decisions most important to the daily lives of foreign nationals have been made sub-federally. It is states, counties, and municipalities that primarily regulate the workplace and fund and organize school systems, hospitals, libraries, police departments, and many other civic institutions with which all U.S. residents interact on a daily basis. Some local

Michael Wishnie at the ALBA event in New York, May 2013. Photo Nicholas Chan.



jurisdictions will no doubt continue to try to deploy their regulatory powers to exclude undocumented residents and to drive them out of their communities through police profiling and harassment, discriminatory enforcement of housing codes, denial of vital anti-poverty benefits, and similar measures. Other local jurisdictions, by contrast, will pursue more integrative approaches, striving to ensure that all local residents have access to education, health care, libraries, driver's license, safe workplaces, and so forth, regardless of their formal immigration status. It is certain that the struggle between exclusionary and integrative policies towards new immigrant households will continue in cities and towns across the country no matter the outcome in Congress this fall.

Finally, it is safe to predict that the future of immigration law and policy will depend on the solidarity and sustainability of the collective mobilization currently underway. If the social movement that immigrant youth like those of United We Dream has sparked endures, then regardless of legislation enacted this year, future Congresses will have no choice but to smooth off some of the roughest edges of any 2013 bill. And if that movement fades, then the immigration statutes will remain regressive in operation, and likely only worsen. The veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

recognized that to realize a progressive vision of our future, it is insufficient merely to argue. Sometimes one must fight, even at great personal risk.

The members of UWD understand this lesson. They live it every day. And my money's on them. ▲

Michael J. Wishnie is the William O. Douglas Clinical Professor of Law, Yale Law School.



Michael Wishnie and the leadership of United We Dream at the ALBA event in New York, May 2013. Photo Nicholas Chan.

Faces of ALBA-VALB

Meet the members of the ALBA community.



Josie Yurek (right) with ALBA board member Nancy Wallach at ALBA's reunion, May 2012. Photo Richard Bermack.

Josephine Nelson Yurek ALBA Board Member

You are the daughter of Lincoln Brigader Steve Nelson. How did you first learn about the Lincoln Brigade and what kind of impact did your father's experience have on you growing up?

For as long as I can recall, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade has been a part of my life. I remember marching in a parade with the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade up Fifth Ave right after World War Two ended. I attended nearly all of the public events with my family and our home was constantly visited by the vets, journalists, students and others. During the McCarthy era trials the support of the vets enabled us to raise the money to fight the case up to United States Supreme Court. *The Volunteers*, which was written by my father, told the story of his experiences in Spain. This book had worldwide distribution thanks to the efforts of the vets and the profits made were used to pay for the defense. In addition, during a court approved cross country fund raiser we visited many vets in cities across the country to raise funds for the trials. These contacts continued for many years.

My father's experiences impacted on everything we did from where we lived, what schools we attended, who our friends were, and even what camps we attended.

After my father died I realized that I had to support ALBA because its goal and my goal was the same: To ensure that another generation continues to appreciate the contribution of men and women from the thirties who saw that it was the right

time to fight fascism. As the veterans died during the 1990s and early 2000s I went to many of their memorial services.

What have you learned through your long involvement in education? Has your philosophy on childhood education changed?

The union had a profound positive effect on the schools in NYC. It raised the morale of the teachers, their salaries and codified the rules. By the inclusion of paraprofessionals in a career ladder minorities were able to join the profession. All of this had a positive effect on the children during the teaching-learning experience because a better prepared group of educators entered the system.



Andrew Plotch at ALBA's 2012 event. Photo Richard Bermack.

Andrew Plotch Recipient of the 2012 ALBA/Puffin Student Activism Award

When did you hear about the Lincoln Brigade for the first time?

During sophomore year of high school I took a class called "Political Activism and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade." It included an inspiring hands-on experience at the archives.

What kind of impact did the story of the Lincolns have on you?

The Lincolns were willing to fight injustice no matter the odds. They have inspired me to be a more politically active part of the world around me.

You received the 2012 ALBA/Puffin Student Activism Award Recipient. What impact did the award have on you?

That was the first time I spoke publically about my commitment to activism. At the reception after the ceremony I felt like a superstar. Everyone wanted to talk with me about my work, shake my hand, or even take a picture with me. I then realized that ALBA was a family and I was a part of that family.

What causes have you been involved with since then?

I created and run a campaign at my school called “Fight Apathy,” in which students have the opportunity to speak out on any issues they care about. I worked with an organization, the Junior Statesmen of America, to lead the campaign. During the first year more than 600 students identified causes they cared about ranging from Marxism to Jesus, sparking discussions in the hallways and the cafeteria. This coming year I will bring Fight Apathy to a national level. By the end of the school year 40,000 students will have worked together to bring awareness to our generation.

You are a young adult and are already committed to different causes. What would you tell a person of your age who feels detached from the world we live in?

One day pick up a newspaper, read it until you find something that you think should change, then get involved— write letters, sign petitions, and call policymakers. Over time you will grow as an activist.

What are your interests, or is there something else that you would like our readers to know about you?

This past summer I spent a month backpacking, kayaking, and ice climbing the Alaskan backcountry. I also am proud of my two useless talents- I can solve a Rubik’s Cube and I’m a great juggler.

--Aaron B. Retish

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The Volunteer

Spanish Court Threatens Monument to International Brigades

By Almudena Cros

A Madrid court order to remove the recently installed monument honoring the foreign volunteers who supported the Republic during the Spanish Civil War has sparked worldwide outrage. Spain's Friends of the International Brigades (AABI) report.

THE MADRID MONUMENT to the International Brigades was designed by the Faculty of Arts in the Complutense University in Madrid and was funded by the Spanish Government, with contributions from different embassies, organizations such as ALBA, IBMT and FFALB, and public subscription. It was inaugurated on October 22, 2011, in a ceremony which was presided over by four veterans from the International Brigades. Two days before the inauguration Mr. García Jiménez, a Spanish citizen, filed a complaint at the Court for Contentious-Administrative Proceedings in Madrid. This member of the public was later interviewed by the Fundación Francisco Franco, which praised his patriotic determination and "bravery." In this interview, Mr. García Jiménez declared his belief that the monument should be dismantled. However, he did not consider that the memorials and street names associated with the fascist side should be removed.

On three different occasions, the University requested permission for the erection of this monument. Moreover, the Regional Government in Madrid (Comunidad de Madrid) approved the installation once the archaeological report requested by the AABI confirmed that such installation would not interfere with the preservation of historic sites on the Campus. Yet the Town Hall never bothered to reply to the requests.



In 2012, the TCAM (Madrid Court for Contentious-Administrative proceedings) ruled that the monument was illegal under planning laws, and the University replied by filing an appeal with the TSJM (Madrid High Court) in April 2012. In December 2012, the Madrid High Court ruled in favor of the TCAM, which resulted in the resolution in late May 2013 which ordered the removal of the monument within two months after the university was served with the judgment. On July 15, the president of the university spoke at a rally to defend the monument and stated that the University had not been officially notified of the court decision.

Thanks to immediate and clamorous reaction from around the world to this threat, the local authorities seem to have been disarmed and taken by surprise. ALBA and FFALB from the USA, IBMT

from the UK, AICVAS and ANPI from Italy, ACER from France, KFSR from Germany, FIBI from Ireland, and numerous other sister organizations poured in their support through letters, websites and by endorsing the AABI petition at change.org. In the UK, 56 MPs signed an Early Day Motion noting the threat and calling on the British government to follow the issue, since it involved British citizens. In the USA, FFALB encouraged relatives of American brigaders to secure an interview with the Spanish diplomatic legations and Embassies in Washington and New York to discuss their concerns, and obtained a positive reply from the relevant diplomats.

The University is defying the court decision because they had not been officially notified, and, at this point, a slow process might be heading to a full halt. We encourage people to sign the petition online, and to write letters to the relevant Spanish representatives in your community or city, to inform them of the relevant and heroic role that some American citizens played in defending Spain from the threat of Fascism.

We shall keep you updated. ▲

Salud!

Born in Madrid and educated in the UK, Almudena Cros is Professor of Art History at Suffolk University, Madrid, and a member of AABI.

American Cinema and the Popular Front: The Spanish Civil War as a Common Cause

By Sonia García López

The broad progressive coalition against fascism known as the Popular Front helped shape the way documentary filmmakers told the story of the Spanish Civil War to a U.S. audience. Their main message: the American and Spanish people are fighting the same fight.

ON JULY 25, 1937, THE *NEW YORK TIMES*' JOHN T. McMANUS interviewed Joris Ivens, a young Dutch movie director who had just arrived in the United States. What sparked the interview was the premiere of *The Spanish Earth*, a documentary about the Spanish Civil War financed by a handful of American intellectuals that included John Dos Passos, Dorothy Parker, Lillian Hellman, and Dashiell Hammett. The film, Ivens later explained, had three main objectives: direct political and ideological action (changing the U.S. policy of neutrality toward Spain); direct material action (raising money for ambulances); and leaving a testimony for the future.

The interview took place at the Rockefeller Center's Luncheon Club, towering more than 60 stories over mid-town New York. "Below us," McManus wrote

... lay Central Park, stretching two or three miles to the north. Mr. Ivens walked to the parapet and indicated 110th Street. "From the Telefónica (Madrid's eighteen-story skyscraper), the Fascist line in University City appears right up there," he pointed. His arm swung in an arc, as if preparing to point out something else. It found a distant Broadway street car. "There,

over there," he said, "the street car. Five minutes to the front line."

Ivens's brilliant use of the familiar New York landscape to explain graphically the situation in Madrid was as simple as it was effective. In fact, it was a frequent strategy among American supporters of the Spanish Republic who tried to raise awareness of the Civil War among their fellow citizens. They were convinced it was necessary to show the close ties between the plight of the Spanish people and America's struggle to overcome the Great Depression.

The image of Spain that had dominated American travel literature and Hollywood film was rife with stereotypes: sun, fiestas, gypsies and bullfights. But political developments in the 1930s were so far reaching that even the most superficial of Hollywood movies registered their impact. The Spanish Civil War was the backdrop to two romantic dramas from 1937, for example: both *The Last Train from Madrid* (James P. Hogan, video) and *Love under Fire* (George Marshall) were set during the evacuation of Madrid. A year later, when the WPA's Federal Dance Project staged *Guns and Castanets*, an adaptation of Prosper Merimée's *Carmen* (first

The image of Spain that had dominated American travel literature and Hollywood film was rife with stereotypes: sun, fiestas, gypsies and bullfights.



published in 1845), it was again set in Civil War Spain. The novel's female protagonist is a gypsy dancer in a café, while Don José is a Republican fighter pilot and Escamillo, the bullfighter, flies planes for the Francoists.

We cannot understand the presence of the Spanish Civil War in U.S. media without appreciating the impact on the American left of the Popular Front movement—the broad coalition against fascism that was ratified by the Third Communist International at their Seventh Congress in 1935. For the next 10 years, capitalism was no longer public enemy number one, while Socialists and Communists postponed their revolutionary aspirations, joining forces with liberals, pacifists and progressives to quell the global rise of fascism.

In the United States, Popular Front politics developed two important lines of action, one domestic and one international. Internationally, Popular Front organizations fought fascism through political activism, humanitarian action, and the recruitment of volunteers for the frontlines of struggle. After Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, Spain became the central battle field, and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was the most salient example of the internationalist initiatives undertaken as part of the U.S. Popular Front.

Response to the superficial, romanticized Hollywood versions of the Spanish Civil War, U.S. filmmakers associated with the Film Front—specifically the production company Frontier Films—produced two outstanding political documentaries with a humanitarian theme: *Heart of Spain* (Herbert Kline and Geza Karpáthi, 1937) and *Return to Life* (Henri Cartier-Bresson and Herbert Kline, 1938). Both focus on medical help for victims of the war. *Heart of Spain* featured the innovative mobile blood transfusion units created by the Canadian physician Norman Bethune and led by Dr. Edward Barsky from New York. *Return to Life* dealt with the revalidation of wounded International Brigaders in Republican hospitals on the Mediterranean coast. By showcasing the mutual support and sympathy between the Lincoln volunteers who risked their lives to fight fascism on Spanish soil and the Spanish people who in turn gave their blood to save the lives of the wounded, both films articulate a clear notion of international solidarity based on social and political commitment.

The second line of Popular Front action was domestic and focused on the efforts to overcome the devastating effects of the Great Depression. The Popular Front helped create collaborative networks with New Deal government projects like the Works Progress Administration, linking the need for progress and recovery

with the idea of social justice. Popular Front organizations united liberals and radicals, but they also brought together politicians with artists and intellectuals—the so-called Cultural Front. The first real Popular-Front political adventure in California, the novelist Upton Sinclair's 1934 EPIC campaign (End Poverty In California), was a failure. Sinclair lost the race for governor but the campaign contributed to the success of the New Dealer Culbert Olson, who landed a seat in the state senate and became governor in 1938. The Cultural Front also helped create wide popular support for Roosevelt's three Rs (Relief, Recovery, Reform) by producing radio documentaries like *Triple-A Plowed*, books like *You Have Seen their Faces*, or movies like *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (video).


Filmmakers who supported the Loyalist cause in Spain managed to combine what they had earned over the preceding decade of avant-garde experimentation with the great momentum of the new American documentary, embodied by figures such as Paul Strand, Dorothea Lange, and Pare Lorentz. Ivens's *The Spanish Earth* (1937, video)—shot in Spain by a Dutch director with funding from American artists and intellectuals—showcased the Popular Front's international dimension, but it also paid close attention to the immediate, domestic concerns of the American public.

The Spanish Earth tells the story of the people of Fuentidueña de Tajo, a small town on the main road leading from Madrid to Valencia, whose strategic location makes it a vital support point for the troops at the Jarama front. The film underscores the urgent need to irrigate the recently collectivized lands, which until then had been left fallow by absentee landowners. In scenes that echoed Hollywood's *Our Daily Bread* (dir. King Vidor, 1934), Ivens's villagers' successful irrigation project brings life to the Spanish earth and allows the farmers to produce food for the town and the front. Ivens said he did not set out to make a film about ideologies but about men and women who work and fight for "melons, tomatoes, onions." For an American audience, the connection with the rural crisis in the United States was impossible to miss. The message was clear: the struggle was a shared one. ▲

Sonia García López teaches Film and Television Studies at the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid. Her book *Spain is US: La Guerra Civil Española en el cine del "Popular Front" (1936-1939)* came out earlier this year with the Universitat de València.

The Singing Dutchman of the Lincoln Brigade: Bart van der Schelling

By Yvonne Scholten



The wandering Dutchman Bart van der Schelling painted with Willem de Kooning, sang with Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, fought fascists in the Lincoln Battalion, and is credited with the lyrics to “Viva la Quince Brigada”—yet much of his life remains shrouded in mystery. Yvonne Scholten investigates.

A LONGSIDE Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and Ernst Busch on the cover of the legendary *Songs of the Spanish Civil War* (1961-62) stands a lesser known name: Bart van der Schelling. The liner notes don't tell much about him. They include a photo of the man in front of a 1930s microphone, singing; one can't help notice the heavy metal brace under his chin. They also reveal that he was born in Rotterdam in 1892 and fought in Spain with the Lincoln Brigade. More intriguing is the fact that the text credits van der Schelling with the lyrics to *Viva la Quince Brigada*. Inspired by an old Spanish folk tune, the song was made famous in the English-speaking world by Seeger and the Almanac singers. It's never overlooked

at a reunion of the Lincoln veterans.

Who was this Dutch singer and lyricist? How did he end up in the company of Seeger and Guthrie? Why is he unknown today, even in his home country?

An internet search did not lead to any van der Schelling songs but to a painting offered for auction from the estate of Elaine de Kooning, late wife of the painter Willem de Kooning. Like Bart, de Kooning came from Rotterdam. Another click brought me to *A Gathering of Fugitives*, a memoir by author Diana Anhalt who tells the story of left-wing Americans who lived in Mexico during the 1940s and '50s to escape anti-Communist campaigns. They were a lively and eccentric bunch that, in addition to a good number of Hollywood

directors and scriptwriters, included Bart van der Schelling and his American wife Edna Moore.

Anhalt's book offers a slightly more of Bart's biography:

Dutch-born Bart van der Schelling had been a circus clown, a political visionary, an opera singer, and an officer in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. Fearing deportation from the United States, he arrived in Mexico in 1950, where he tuned pianos for a living until a heart attack forced him to retire. Although more than 50 at the time, he started painting, achieving some recognition as a primitive artist.

He was a hero of my childhood. All of us in Mexico rather worshiped him, as a romantic figure and standard-bearer of good causes.

Van der Schelling's wife, Edna Moore, as music teacher.



Bart (second row, third from the bottom) at a dinner of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Date unknown.

Anhalt's main source was Bart's widow, Edna, whom she interviewed in the 1990s. Having grown up in Mexico City, Anhalt met Bart as a young girl. I managed to track her down, and she, in turn, put me in touch with others who knew Bart when they were children. They were smitten with him. "He was a hero of my childhood," says Linda Oppen. "I think all of us in the exiled group in Mexico rather worshiped him, as a romantic figure and standard-bearer of good causes." Everyone who knew Bart recalls him singing, always and everywhere. Particularly memorable was his booming version of "Freiheit," also known as "Die Thälmann-Kolonne." Although U.S. political persecution reached into Mexico, causing Bart's wife Edna to lose her job at the American School, it appears their time in Mexico was a happy one.

This positive impression was confirmed when I located a cache of Bart's personal documents, letters to his youngest sister in the Netherlands, written a few years before his death in 1970. After a series of heart attacks, the deficient state of Mexican health care forced Bart and Edna to return to the United States. He hated it. The Vietnam war infuriated him and nostalgia for Mexico wells up in every letter.

Bartholomeus van der Schelling was born in 1892 into a Rotterdam family with socialist sympathies. His father was a stucco worker, and several brothers worked at the slaughterhouse on the same street the family lived. Two of van der Schelling's nieces informed me that life in the Boezemstraat was poverty-ridden. "The floor was bare—yet there was a piano, and everyone could sing." Bart left for the U.S. in 1927, leaving behind his

wife and two young children. It was a domestic drama: he never got in touch again and, as far as his nieces know, he never paid a cent of alimony. "Bart went out for cigarettes and never returned," one of his nieces sneered.

One niece showed a photo of Bart wearing the International Brigades uniform. "I guess there must have been some contact between Bart and his brother Huib, my father," she concludes. She remembers a stack of Bart's letters that she threw out. Just as she threw out the painting that Bart had given to his brother in 1964. "I didn't like it," she says with a loud laugh. Another niece kept her painting as well as letters that Bart sent to his sister between 1964 and 1970. They are touching notes from an old man who longs for family he hasn't seen in many years. "Life for the van der Schelling family was none too rosy as far as material things were concerned," he wrote in late 1967, "yet there was a deeply felt love among us, and that helped a whole lot." His letters deal with the day-to-day. He talks about his intense contentment when UNICEF selects one of his paintings for their annual set of holiday cards, his many ailments, and the high cost of medical care.

In *Willem de Kooning. An American Master* (2004), authors Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan mention van der Schelling as one of De Kooning's closest friends. Yet they provide little information about that friendship. De Kooning arrived in the States in 1926 as a stow-away and moved into the Dutch Seaman's Home in Hoboken. Bart, who left a couple of months later, must have met Willem there. From then until the late 1930s Bart and "Bill"—as de Kooning called himself—"spent so much time together so often they seemed

like brothers," the biographers report. About van der Schelling they write: "Well known for never keeping a job or having any money, Bart was big, charming, and exceedingly attractive to both men and women."

De Kooning worked as a house painter; Bart looked for singing gigs. Together they moved to Manhattan, where Willem found jobs as a set builder and Bart performed in musicals. Willem met Nini Diaz, with whom he maintained a relationship until World War II. Nini's family worked in the circus, which likely explains the story about Bart as a clown. Bart's name reappears in de Kooning's biography in the early 1930s, when the painter rented a summer home in Woodstock, a well-known artists' colony. "Bart... was the cook and I took care of the house," Nini told the biographers. "We had the front room. And we had a ball."

Then the economic crisis hit. Both de Kooning and van der Schelling were close friends with Robert Jonas, who in 1933 helped found The Unemployed Artists' Union, headquartered near Union Square in Manhattan. Naturally, the union leaned left. Jonas was a member of the Communist Party but de Kooning was not. "They never stopped talking, him and Jonas," Nini Diaz recalled. "All about communism. And when they were finished, they just started in again." Bart was more interested in politics than Willem. He was Jonas's roommate and Jonas's influence on him seems to have been much stronger than on de Kooning. Their shared circle included Max Margulis, a journalist for the Communist *Daily Worker*, as well as Max Vogel, a German-born architect.

Bart volunteered for Spain: "I was told not to bring anybody to the docks

when the ship was about to sail. They wanted to make it as *inconspicuous* as possible. An old friend of mine, by the name of Max Vogel, he drove me to the docks, and I went aboard ship. So that I looked like a traveler, I had bought in a second-hand store on Second Avenue a very fine Gladstone bag, and behold, it had on it a lot of tickets, you know, let us say from the Orient Express, and all places in Europe. It was very impressive.” Disguised as a tourist, van der Schelling left New York early in 1937 to join the International Brigades.

Bart recorded the story of his departure from New York: on a set of crackling, hissing reel-to-reel tapes that no one had played in years. I found them among the ALBA collection at the Tamiment Library. But they had not been transcribed and were too fragile to play. They had to be digitized. When the CDs arrived, I loaded one into my computer and suddenly I heard Bart—an old voice speaking English with an unmistakable Dutch accent.

His story starts in the fall of 1936, almost randomly and without introduction. There must have been other tapes covering the years before. Bart tells us he performed in a musical, *Professor Mamlock*, written at a time when “the star of Hitler was on the rise and unfortunate to say 95 percent of the German population followed Hitler’s star.” At night, Bart would join his friends Jonas and de Kooning in a café where the “revolutionists” gathered. A lot of talk, but little action, he concluded.

“By that time nobody knew I had made up my mind and made arrangements to go to Spain and enlist in the International Brigades,” he says. He doesn’t explain why he made that decision. He does allude to problems: he calls himself “an uninvited guest” in the United States. “I was a Hollander who also was not exactly welcome in his own country,” he adds, without giving any details. Yet somehow he managed to get a passport from the Dutch embassy and he left for Spain.

The years from 1937 until the early 1940s are rich with detail. Bart describes the voyage to France; crossing the Pyrenees; his years in Spain, serious battlefield injuries and anger at being declared unfit for action mid-1938, after which he continued the struggle as interpreter. He recalls the train journey back to France with other injured soldiers, whom he cheered

by singing battle songs; and finally his return to the United States as a stow-away. Then, halfway through 1940s, his story stops as abruptly as it had started.

Bart is a laconic, factual narrator. Rarely, if ever, does his voice reveal emotion, not even when he recounts the moment he ended up in a shell hole on the hard Spanish soil, critically injured. His head was out of the reach of enemy fire but his long Dutch legs were not, and were repeatedly hit until he was rescued by a brave fellow Brigader. On another occasion, he was riding in a lorry as it was bombed by Italian planes. The car flew off the mountain road—“all I remember seeing is that large valley, and then nothing.” He woke up days later in the hospital with a neck injury, which would not be properly treated until his return to New York. The incident earned him the unmistakable chin brace in the picture on the Folkways liner notes.



Bart in soldier’s uniform. Date unknown. Courtesy of the Van der Schelling family.

Bart’s voice betrays some despair when he tells how inexperienced and untrained the American volunteers were. He was in his mid-40s and had experience through his military service. He tried to instill discipline in his fellow Brigaders. They called him *grandpa*, which he accepted good-naturedly. Without irony he tells the story of his close friend Paul Block, a sculptor from Ohio, who left for the front with a backpack containing heavy books—including Marx’s *Capital*. “I said: Listen, Paul, you are not going to kill the fascists by throwing *Das Kapi-*

tal at them. Take your rations and throw those books away.” (Block would die from wounds at Belchite.) The International Brigades’ ideological drive was considerably stronger than their military expertise; to make things worse, the enemy was better armed. Bart tells how they would spend weeks waiting for ammunition “that, to make a long story short, we never got.”

Many American veterans remember Bart singing—all the time and everywhere. “Seems like only yesterday that we were swinging thru Tarazona’s timberland to the cadence of Bart’s thundering “We are the fi—ting antifascists,” Ed Lending wrote to Edna. Bart explains that, when he woke up in the hospital after the lorry accident, he first asked about his knapsack which contained his notes of Spanish folk tunes and other songs in many languages that the IB-ers sang. One day in Barcelona, shortly before his evacuation, he witnessed the funeral of 40 miners who had died in a bombardment. *Els Segadors*, the Catalan anthem was played which made an unforgettable impression on Bart. The song would become a fixture in the repertoire with which he would leave audiences across the United States in awe. The Tamiment tapes also feature Bart singing. They are recordings from 1966. His voice seems to have lost some of the force it must have had, but his fierceness is undiminished.

Bart’s illegal return to the United States must have occurred sometime during 1939. He doesn’t mention dates, nor does he explain why he decided to return to New York. His file in the Rotterdam municipal archive contains a note indicating he tried to reapply for a Dutch passport, which he had apparently lost in Spain. In any case, he wasn’t the only one among the American volunteers to return to the U.S. clandestinely. Lincoln vets, often wounded, were helped by the crews on passenger lines, where they would be stowed away in small spaces below the engine rooms. Bart recalls the cold, and the fact that he was handicapped by his tall Dutch physique. “I couldn’t stretch out my legs, and my legs had all the wounds. I got kind of goofy, I guess, and saw all kinds of things moving.”

Well known for never keeping a job or having any money, Bart was big, charming, and exceedingly attractive to both men and women.

He was like a Dutch Woody Guthrie, always moving forward. A gentle giant.

A Greek comrade had joined him on the trip back. Once they got to New York, the trick was to pretend to be regular sailors going out for a night on the town. Bart made it through, but his Greek friend was stopped and sent back to Europe. Bart was paranoid and started walking. After a while to took a cab. “The taxi driver dropped me off at Times Square. I noticed that people were looking at me.” He stopped in front of a shop window with mirrors. “I looked at myself and saw what was the matter. My eyes were very blood-shot and my hair was sticking up like clay. I had a terrific big raincoat, but I had Spanish sandals. I looked like Frankenstein.” At one point Bart ran into someone he knew: “He couldn’t believe his eyes. He took me to his house and from there I went to the house of my friends Robert Jonas and Willem de Kooning.”

To make ends meet, Bart depended on the support of Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He even made a trip to Ernest Hemingway’s house in Florida. When he met Hemingway in Spain, *Papa* had promised to help Bart in whatever way he could, “if we both survive this.” Hemingway kept his word, and got Bart a job on a friend’s boat.

Just before the audio tape ends, and Bart’s recounting the 1940s, he tells how Willem de Kooning helped him get his U.S. papers by arranging a fake marriage to an American woman. “*Eleanor, my wife to be,*” are the last audible words. After that, nothing but crackling and hiss.

The ALBA collection offered another pleasant surprise: an interview with Edna Moore, the American woman who Bart met in Los Angeles in 1944. Edna is interviewed by Manny Harriman, a Lincoln vet who videotaped his former comrades. By then Bart had died. Edna is a petite, slender woman, carefully made-up and quite lively. Edna met Bart through music. An enthusiastic amateur pianist, she was asked by a friend to sit in on a performance by Bart at a psychiatric institution where, it later turned out, Eleanor was being treated. From Edna’s stories it is clear



that even though Bart had married Eleanor to get his papers, he did not abandon his second wife.

Following his doctor’s advice, Bart moved to California to escape the New York cold. In her interview, Edna frequently apologizes for what she does not know. Still, her account fills important gaps. She explains, for example, that in the 1930s Bart had joined the cast of *Show Boat*, the hugely successful musical in which Paul Robeson sang “Ol’ Man River.” Robeson wasn’t allowed into the white actors’ dressing rooms, Edna says. This kind of blatant injustice drove Bart raving mad.

In 1940 Bart recorded an album for the League of American Writers, *Behind the Barbed Wire*, to raise money for European writers suffering from Nazi persecution. From that moment he would regularly perform at Writers League meetings. He also met up-and-coming folk singers. A 1942 headline in the *New York Times* read “*Sizzlers against Nazis*”: “Men fight for their liberties with songs on their tongues as well as with guns, tanks and planes.” It was a story covering a show by the Almanac Singers, including Woody Guthrie. “Most moving,” the *Times* reported, “was the group called *Verboten*. Bart van der Schelling sang ‘*Peat Bog Soldiers*’ (*Lied der Moorsoldaten*), the poignant song of the men in the concentration camps.”

Edna and Bart moved in together soon after they met. Until 1950 they would host weekly *hootenannies* or music parties. Pete Seeger was among the regulars. But then the trouble started. Friends warned them that the FBI was watching them. Later it turned out that this was the case for many “premature antifascists”

who had defended the Spanish Republic. Bart and Edna sought refuge in Mexico, where they ended up in a milieu that fit them well: displaced American leftists, writers, Hollywood directors, Mexican artists. Initially, Bart made a living tuning pianos, while Edna worked at the American School. Later, Bart had a short stint teaching at the conservatory of music.

Midway through the 1950s Bart started having health problems and had to stop working. Edna encouraged him to take up drawing. He quickly developed into a successful naïf painter. It was his art that gave him the opportunity to return to the Netherlands for a 1964 exhibit at the Schiedams Museum. It was the first time in almost 40 years that he saw his ex-wife and children. There was no reconciliation.

“He was like a Dutch Woody Guthrie,” recalls Jim Kahn, son of the black-listed screenwriter Gordon Kahn. “He was always comfortable where he went, he learned the local ways, he could adapt. I never had the feeling he wanted to go back to a former life. He was always moving forward. He was very charismatic. A gentle giant.”

In 1965, Bart and Edna returned to the United States because Mexican medical care was insufficient. By then he had reinitiated contact with his youngest sister. Shortly before his death, he wrote: “Dear, dear Nellie, I would give anything to be with you all. There’s a saying that says: blood is thicker than water. This is what I feel as time moves on and I know that I will not see you anymore before the man with the scythe shows up.”

Bart died in October 1970. ▲

My thanks to Toby-Anne Berenberg, the daughter of Fredericka Martin, who served as a nurse in Spain and did important work to document the activities of the medical volunteers and other vets, including Bart van der Schelling. Dutch versions of this text were first published in De Groene Amsterdammer and broadcast on Dutch national radio (podcast).

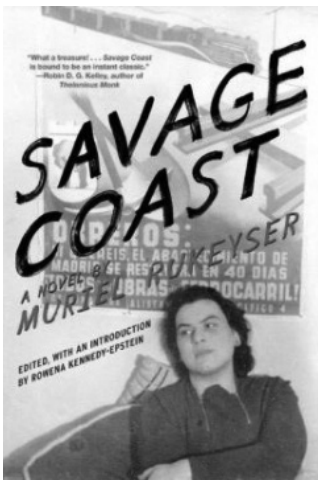
Yvonne Scholten is a Dutch writer and freelance journalist who has worked as a foreign correspondent in Italy and other countries. English version by Sebastiaan Faber.

Book reviews

Rukeyser's "Lost" Memoir Rediscovered

Savage Coast. By Muriel Rukeyser. (The Feminist Press, 2013.)

Review by Amanda Powell



IN 1937, the young but already acclaimed poet Muriel Rukeyser wrote an experimental literary work, *Savage Coast*, set at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. The novel features various unconventional relationships and international encounters of the revolutionary kind, represented with rich sensual imagery and interwoven with allusions to key political events and to female and male authors of the period. *Savage Coast*, now happily rediscovered, opens a window onto a young poet's tangle with self,

strangeness, commitment, and conviction.

The title *Savage Coast* takes the familiar geographical phrase "Costa Brava" and translates it literally, thus re-examining this stretch of map on Spain's Mediterranean north coast, making it new, keeping with Modernist precepts of the period. Likewise, the narrative tells its story obliquely. The reader moves through passages that are deliberately fragmented, a literary montage that aims for—and, for me, succeeds in—making small and large events come to us as in life: piecemeal, liquid, or shattering, aggregative, more often glimpsed than gazed-upon, but shaping us for our next changes.

This transparently autobiographical story turns Rukeyser's experience into poetically rendered fiction. A British magazine sent the author, then a fledgling reporter (like Helen, her 22-year-old protagonist) to cover the People's Olympiad, which was scheduled in Barcelona for July 1936 to counter Hitler's Berlin Olympics. The People's Games never took place, overtaken by the outbreak of Franco's uprising-soon-to-become-war. Helen

falls in love with Hans, a German cabinet-maker and long-distance runner destined for the Games. The relationship is quickly formed, intelligently chosen, compelling, sexually fulfilling, and enormously important to the female protagonist—yet, unusual in fiction and film, then and now, the love affair forms part of her storyline but is not her entire *raison d'être*.

The novel remained unpublished: its frank sexual content met with savage rejection. Its discoverer and editor, Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, observes:

Written immediately upon her return from Spain in the autumn of 1936, the novel [...] was brutally panned in her publisher's rejection letter, from 1937, for being, among other things, "BAD" and "a waste of time," with a protagonist who is "too abnormal for us to respect." This is to say, the first critics of *Savage Coast* discouraged Rukeyser from writing the kind of large-scale, developmental, hybrid, modernist war narrative that she had begun—one that is sexually explicit, symbolically complex, politically radical, and aesthetically experimental—in favor of the gender-appropriate lyric poetry of her first book and the brevity of "small" personal narratives.

Most likely the book's celebration of communist discipline and effectiveness in Barcelona, 1936, plus satirically deflating portraits of bourgeois tourists caught by an unexpected outbreak of "History," contributed to the crushing rejection. The damning critique from her publisher would be the more damaging to the author, given the openly autobiographical nature of her narrative.

This season's welcome publication of *Savage Coast* continues the Feminist Press project of recovering major narratives by women writers whose works have been obscured and written out of the mainstream literary record. Today Rukeyser holds the mixed blessing-and-curse of a reputation as "a poet's poet" (*important*, yes, but difficult and, well, you know, a bit odd). This must have been for her—and remains, for her admirers—starkly frustrating, because she strives everywhere to make language muscular, potent, and accessible, a vehicle for new vision that spurs social change. Smart writing depends on smart readers; brave writing, on brave readers. Read and seen attentively, her work achieves exactly what she wanted.

Poetry lovers and literary buffs, Hispanophiles, and the many interested in the Civil War should race to obtain this work. Readers of *The Volunteer* will find detailed socio-historical interest in what the book reveals about the first hours and days on the ground in Catalonia following the Nationalist rebellion, as the nature of the uprising began to be known. This text sculpts a veering yet light-filled moment in which weightiest matters hang in balance. It brings new clarity to a major writer's thinking and formation. For Rukeyser, Spain was the place "I began to say what I meant." The book likewise illuminates the central importance that the struggle in Spain held for creative thinkers around the world. As Rukeyser remarked when a friend asked, "Why do you care about Spain so much? ... It was so long ago": "Going on now. Running, running, today."

Rukeyser lived her hybrid modernist esthetic and political convictions with rare consistency. Before such terms were current, she offered a truly embodied style, profoundly consistent with the body she inhabited and the experiences she lived.

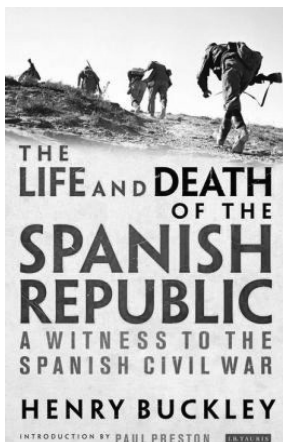
She was physically large, handsome rather than pretty, and her prose like her poetry refuses tidy boundaries or easy beauties. Socially, she was censured for bisexuality and unwed motherhood. By her example, we have a chance to live our own brilliant, messy, visionary lives more truly. ▲

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Eyewitness of Spain: Lost Now Found

***The Life and Death of the Spanish Republic.* By Henry Buckley. (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013). Introduction by Paul Preston.**

Review by Martin Minchom



B RITISH JOURNALIST Henry Buckley wrote *The Life and Death of the Spanish Republic* in 1939, after leaving Spain where he had lived for a decade. This full account of the Second Republic was published in London in 1940 just as German bombs were raining on the city. Its appearance was bitter-sweet, fittingly perhaps in such inauspicious times. A few dozen copies made their way into libraries around the world, but all the unsold copies—certainly the vast

majority, given the edition's later rarity—were destroyed when the Luftwaffe bombed the publisher's warehouse. The book was not exactly blasted out of existence; but it went almost straight from the printers to its afterlife in scholarly bibliographies, without enjoying the usual life cycle of a book that is passed around, read, and discussed. This edition, the first in English since 1940, is a very welcome act of restitution. It comes with an introduction by Paul Preston, and it carries warm recommendations from leading historians on the dust jacket.

The book begins on a personal note with the author's impressions of the country that he encountered when he arrived in November 1929. Soon enough, Buckley was keeping vigil outside the Royal Palace on the last night that King Alfonso XIII spent in Madrid and witnessing tumultuous crowds as the Second Republic was established. These were the first of a long series of historic events Buckley observed, continuously shifting his narrative between History with a capital 'H', and *la petite histoire* of anecdotal episodes and personal experiences. This approach eases the reader's way into the intractable political life

of the pre-war Republic. So we get, for example, an entertaining vignette of the imprisonment of the millionaire industrialist Juan March in 1933, who received cooked meals from the Palace Hotel while he was in jail and made himself popular with other prisoners by handing out cigars. March was to go on to bankroll the generals' coup in 1936.

By living and reporting in Spain under the early Second Republic, Buckley acquired first-hand knowledge of the country that proved invaluable during the civil war. It was not simply that he had already met some of the leading figures like Negrín or understood the language. More importantly, his prior experience, as well as a good reporter's natural skepticism, kept him grounded amid clouds of disinformation. Months after the municipal elections in 1931 spelled the end of the monarchy, Buckley had been shown hundreds of paper bundles of uncounted electoral returns in the Ministry of the Interior. So much for official statistics. When it came to the bombing of Madrid five years later, Buckley did not simply re-use the inadequate figures he was given, he took on the distressing task of going personally to the morgue to count the dead. This was well beyond the call of duty.

Buckley was there, or thereabouts, for nearly all the key events of the Spanish Civil War, which he reported from the Republican side. He was in Madrid during the military uprising in July 1936, describing most the great battles and witnessing the plight of Spanish refugees fleeing across the French frontier in early 1939. The photos reproduced in this edition show him alongside iconic figures like Ernest Hemingway, Robert Capa and Herbert Matthews. (They were all together in the small boat that nearly capsized as they crossed the river during the later stages of the Battle of the Ebro.) Except for one month in Switzerland, when he seems to have spent most of his time compiling newspaper reports on the conflict, Buckley barely left Spain at all. As a practicing Catholic, he was especially concerned by what he felt to be the obscurantism of the Spanish Church and seems to want to set the record straight for English-speaking Catholic readers. Buckley did not attempt to describe campaigns, such as the one in the Basque region, about which he knew little.

It's no coincidence that this splendid book was written immediately after the fall of the Republic. By then the Spanish Civil War was yesterday's news, so it's doubtful that Buckley would have thought of this book as a potential best-seller. (The title, with its apparent nod to Elliot Paul's commercial success of 1937, *The Life and Death of a Spanish Town*, might suggest otherwise.) But if 1939 or 1940 was not the most propitious time to publish a book about Spain, it was the perfect time to write one—close enough to events for them to be freshly remembered and recounted with great immediacy—yet just far enough away for a liberal-minded, level-headed observer like Buckley to achieve a remarkable equanimity that was rarely found (or even sought) in wartime writing. The result of this minor miracle is a book that may have seemed slightly out-of-date to its few readers in 1940. Decades later it reads like the new release that, by a quirk of fate, it actually is. ▲

*Martin Minchom's publications include Spanish editions of Geoffrey Cox, *La defensa de Madrid* (2005), and Louis Delaprée, *Morir en Madrid* (2009).*

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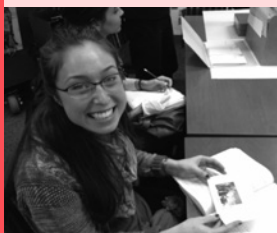
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77th Annual Celebration Honoring the Abraham Lincoln Brigade – Bay Area

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2013

2:00pm – 4:00pm

“This Land is *Our* Land: Internationalism, Citizenship, Resistance”

This year we honor United We Dream, the largest immigrant youth-led organization in the nation
Songs of the Spanish Civil War by Bruce Barthol and Friends

Freight & Salvage Coffeeshouse

2020 Addison Street

Berkeley, California

For tickets and information: www.thefreight.org

Tel. (510) 644-2020

Impugning Impunity: A Human Rights Documentary Film Series – New York

NOVEMBER 22-24, 2013

Pace University

3 Spruce Street

New York, NY 10038

Re-release of the legendary 1940 album “Songs of the Spanish Civil War” with Pete Seeger, Tom Glazer, Baldwin Hawes and Bess Hawes as musicians

NOVEMBER, 2013

Screening of the musical “Goodbye Barcelona” – New York

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2013

Spanish Benevolent Society—La Nacional

239 W 14th St (2nd Floor)

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