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The Volunteer

FOUNDED IN 1937 BY THE VOLUNTEERS OF THE LINCOLN BRIGADE.
PUBLISHED BY THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE ARCHIVES (ALBA)

Luchelle McDaniels (ALBA PHOTO 11-0127, Tamiment
Library, NYU, color by Tina Paterson)



The IB in Color by Tina Paterson & Francesc Torres

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The Volunteer

Founded by the Veterans of the
Abraham Lincoln Brigade

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The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) is an educational non-profit dedicated to promoting social activism and the defense of human rights. ALBA's work is inspired by the American volunteers of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade who fought fascism in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Drawing on the ALBA collections in New York University's Tamiment Library, and working to expand such collections, ALBA works to preserve the legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade as an inspiration for present and future generations.

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Dear Friends,

"Bringing the past alive" is one way to describe ALBA's mission. Everything we do, from our lecture series and film screenings to our publications and educational work, is meant to underscore the relevance today of the historic struggle against fascism—a struggle that, we are convinced, can still serve as an example and inspiration to younger generations who are committed to fight for social justice, racial and gender equality, access to quality healthcare, democracy, and human rights.

Our allies in this effort are many, and they are spread across the globe. Among them are not only activists, scholars, and teachers but artists as well. In this issue, we are proud to feature the work of Tina Paterson, a Madrid-based artist who, for the past couple of years, has produced stunning colorized versions of Spanish Civil War photographs. As Francesc Torres explains (see page 10), Paterson's work appears to erase, in a split second, the eight decades that separate us from the moment when the cameras of Harry Randall and other photographers captured the faces of International Brigade volunteers like Aaron Lopoff, Evelyn Hutchins, or Luchelle McDaniels. The effect is disturbing, to be sure, but also uplifting and poignant. The colorized images, Torres points out, "directly undermine the perception that the Civil War—the most important event in twentieth-century Spanish history—is a remote historical occurrence."

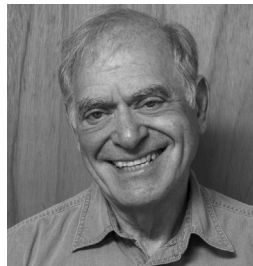
Meanwhile, ALBA's small but dedicated staff and board have kept busy, unfazed by the continued impact of the pandemic. This spring and summer, ALBA offered several well-attended online events—drawing thousands of viewers—as well as our third online teacher workshop (see page 3). In the late summer and early fall, we have several gatherings lined up in the Bay Area, where we'll be joined by the courageous folks from this year's ALBA/Puffin Award winner, *My Brother's Keeper*.

As you browse this issue, be sure to check out the interviews with other ALBA allies. We spoke with Shannon O'Neill, the curator of NYU's Tamiment Library, which houses the ALBA collection (page 4); with the founders of the UK-based Clapton Press, which is publishing a series of compelling books on the war in Spain (page 14); and with the author of a new history of Argentine brigaders (page 9). We're also very pleased to feature a touching report on a mass grave exhumation in Spain by Marimar Huguet (page 6), and excerpts from Professor Joe Butwin's oral history of Jewish American volunteers in Spain (page 16).

The last pages of the issue are, as always, dedicated to our most important allies of all—you, our loyal supporters. We are so grateful for your generous donations, without which none of our work would be possible.

¡Gracias y salud!

Peter N. Carroll and Sebastiaan Faber, Editors



P.S. Use the envelope stapled into this issue to mail your donation or give online at alba-valb.org/donate. Setting up a monthly donation is easy, and a wonderful way to provide ALBA with steady support.

ALBA NEWS

Join Us in the Bay Area—Twice!

ALBA is gearing up for two great Bay Area-based events. Join us for a Gathering at the Monument on Sunday, August 22nd to celebrate the newly restored National Monument to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade on the San Francisco Embarcadero (1:30 PM PDT to 4:00 PM PDT). You'll have a chance to meet June Gipson of *My Brother's Keeper*, the 2021 ALBA/Puffin Award Winner for Human Rights Activism. Light refreshments will be served. To RSVP and for more information go to ALBA-VALB.org.

A month later, on Sunday, September 26, 2021, at 2 PM PDT, a virtual celebration on the Legacy of Hope and Activism will be presented live online. Check in at ALBA's website (alba-valb.org) for details or sign up for our email newsletters.

Susman Lecture Highlights Artist Ralph Fasanella

The Susman lecture this year was delivered by Marc Fasanella, son of ALB veteran and artist Ralph Fasanella, who discussed his father's life and work, including his experience during the Spanish Civil War. Luisais Taveras, a Hunter College undergraduate student, introduced the speaker and led the Q&A session. Luisais had previously interviewed Ralph for a class project. The event was attended live by several hundred viewers.

Third Online Teacher Workshop Offered

This summer, ALBA teaching staff offered the third fully online professional development workshop on "The United States and World Fascism: Human Rights from the Spanish Civil War to Nuremberg and Beyond," together with Rich Cairn of the Collaborative for Educational Services. Some 15 secondary school teachers, from Massachusetts to Washington State, gathered weekly in July and August to develop lesson plans inspired by the legacy of the US volunteers in Spain. The next online workshop is being scheduled for the coming spring. In the meantime, interested teachers may consult a wealth of materials, resources, and lesson plans at alba-valb.org/education/lesson-plans/.

ALBA's Ellyn Polshek Honored

In June, the Stone Ridge Library Foundation honored ALBA board member Ellyn Polshek, along with her husband James and daughter Jenny, for their longtime support of the library.

Conversations about Jewish Communists

About 30 years ago, I spent a long day driving from Long Island to Brandeis and back with two Lincoln vets—Bill Susman and George Watt—when the conversation turned to whether they had gone to Spain in 1937 as Communists or Jews. There was no question what had motivated them, it seemed, as the topic itself led to a series of humorous anecdotes and dirty jokes spoken in Yiddish and that always ended at making fun of the stock character of an orthodox Rabbi.

Fifty years later, however, they weren't so sure of their motives. Both men had grown up in immigrant families with proud traditions of resisting anti-Semitism and the power of pre-revolutionary Russian aggressors.

At exactly that time, a scholar at the University of Washington, Joseph Butwin, embarked on a nationwide tour to interview Jewish Communist veterans of the Lincoln Brigade—including Susman and Watt—about their political and cultural motivation for going to Spain. Some of his work will soon be published in Spain.

As a foretaste, the Sousa Mendes Foundation joined with ALBA on July 25 to present an online presentation by Professor Butwin and with Nancy Wallach, daughter of Lincoln vet Hy Wallach, about the role of Judaism and secular Communism that shaped the identity of one-third of the volunteers in the Lincoln Brigade. Hosting the program were Olivia Mattis of the Sousa Mendes Foundation and ALBA's Gina Herrmann. The talk attracted more than five hundred viewers and is available at ALBA's website (alba-valb.org) and on ALBA's YouTube channel. —Peter N. Carroll

News from the Tamiment

Tamiment will continue being able to serve only current NYU students, faculty and staff through August 31, 2021. We do not know at this point what access will look like in the fall, and are awaiting further information from the University administration, who have set policies on access throughout this pandemic based on safety concerns for the community. In the meantime, we are able to offer some remote reference and research opportunities, as well as reproduction services. If you are interested in these, please let us know by emailing the general special.collections@nyu.edu email address with information as to what you are interested in. We are also planning to resume virtual events in the fall, with the hopes of hosting in-person programs in 2022. Feel free to email us at tamiment.wagner@nyu.edu if you have an idea for an event. —Michael Koncewicz

FACES OF ALBA:

Shannon O'Neill

By Aaron B. Retish

In 2019, Shannon O'Neill became the curator for the Tamiment-Wagner Collections of the New York University Special Collections that houses the ALBA archives. She previously worked at Barnard College, the Los Angeles Public Library, and the Atlantic City Free Public Library.

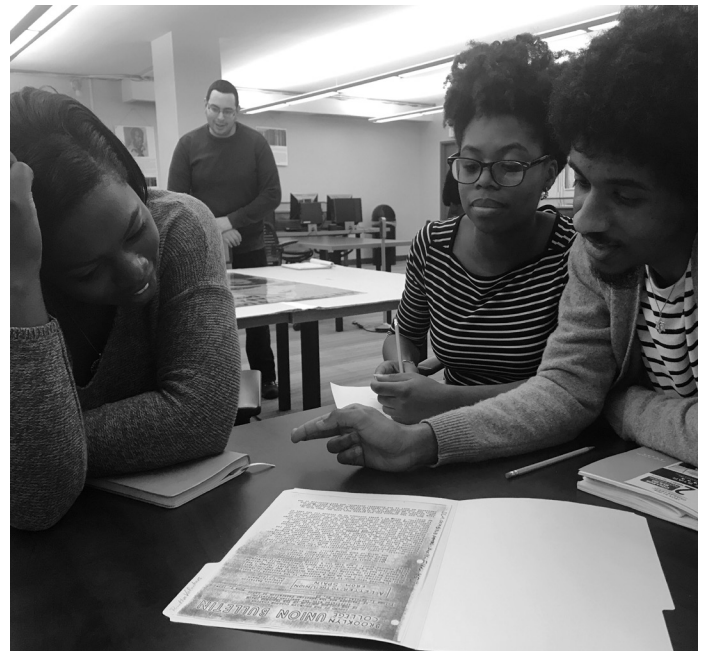
What drew you to the Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Labor Archives?

Working at the Tamiment is something of a return for me. I was an undergraduate at NYU and had an assignment where I had to utilize the archives in my coursework. As a first-generation student, I spent a lot of time just figuring out how to navigate the university; I had no idea what a Bursar was or how to effectively use office hours. No one prepared me for any of that. I recall feeling so intimidated by the assignment. I wasn't even quite sure how archives operated. Maybe it's because I come from a union family (my dad was a part of the Sheet Metal Workers' Local 27 that also supplied me with a generous scholarship for my studies), or maybe it was because I was politically active as a teenager, but I felt at home in the Tamiment. Following my research in the collections, I decided I wanted to be an archivist. It's a real honor to take up the torch of continuing to care for these collections, especially considering that they completely changed my life.

As you have gone through the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives collection, has there been a set of documents that has stood out to you? Have you found any surprises in the collection?

The women of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade are endlessly inspiring, especially Salaria Kea. I am really grateful to have learned about her story through working with the ALBA collections. The ALBA collections' documentation of her life and work during the Spanish Civil War are some of my favorite materials to bring into the classroom. As far as surprises go, we have both a rifle and a medic's stretcher in the collection which are two objects that I didn't necessarily expect to see. What's unsurprising, and incredibly humbling, is the community that

exists around these collections. Though I've only been at the Tamiment for a little less than two years, the majority of which has been under quarantine conditions, I've been grateful to meet so many family members of those who served in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, so many supporters and advocates for the collections, and so many researchers whose work is enriched by the documentation. It's been a real joy to be introduced to this community, and I'm excited to continue our conversations and collaborations.



Hunter College students research the ALBA Collection at the Tamiment Library (NYU), April 2018. Photo María Hernández Ojeda.

"The women of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade are endlessly inspiring. I enjoy meeting with people and hearing about their histories and sharing ideas with one another about how to best preserve those histories."

Is the collection still being developed?

Absolutely! We've had a pause collecting since the outset of the pandemic; however, we are slowly beginning to resume our regular workflows. There are a few collection development conversations that were placed on hold in the last year, and I'm looking forward to reaching back out to folks to restart those discussions.

You became curator for the Tamiment Library in the fall of 2019, which means that you had about six months of normalcy. What is it like curating an archive during a global pandemic? Are there things that you are doing now that you'll continue to do after the pandemic?

To be honest, it's been really hard. I want my work as a curator to be relational and not transactional. I enjoy meeting with people and hearing about their histories and sharing ideas with one another about how to best preserve those histories. I want people to be supported and affirmed in their choices to place their documentation in an archive. For those who don't want to place their collections in an archive, I want to share resources for how they can archive their materials themselves or within their communities. It's been difficult to do this remotely, though I've found ways to keep in touch with folks. Much of the work I've been doing over the last 15 months has focused on digital collections and digital preservation, and I'm eager to think about how that work might extend to the ALBA collections.

I've really enjoyed reading social media posts from the Tamiment. What are other ways that people can engage with the collection?

We have an exciting slate of public programming that is an important extension of our collections. We host dialogues, book talks, forums, and workshops on historic and contemporary issues related to social movements, politics, the Cold War, anti-fascism, labor, and histories of immigration and migration. Though reopening plans are still in progress as of July 2021, our collections are accessible to the public. I encourage folks to reach out to us as special.collections@nyu.edu to ask about how they can utilize the collections. While I'm unsure what in-person access will look like come the Fall, we have been offering a range of remote options for the last year and a half. My colleagues and I are looking forward to continuing to support engagement and access to the collections.



You have written about the heavy hand of the archivist who has the power to erase marginalized peoples from history. How are you counter-acting that power? Does it relate to your interest in community-based archiving?

Thank you for this question! On a personal level, I reflect often on my positionality as a white, queer, middle-class, cis-woman. How does my identity impact or inform the way in which I come to this work? Archives are not neutral spaces, and curatorial work is not impartial. I see it as one of my responsibilities to uplift and amplify stories that have been marginalized. I think critically about the resources I have access to at an institution like NYU and how those resources are shared and distributed. Additionally, I've been doing an in-depth analysis of our processing backlog, and I am making progress on creating a fully prioritized backlog which pushes collections that are by and about people of color, queer people, disabled people, and poor people to the top of the queue. This work very much aligns with my interest in community-based archiving. Communities should have agency and authority over their records, and my work aims to support this. ▲

Aaron Retish teaches at Wayne State University.

EXHUMING INJUSTICE: A MASS GRAVE IN MANZANARES

By Marimar Huguet-Jerez

When people think about mass graves in Spain, most relate them to the war years. Yet an estimated 50,000 victims were executed after the war. This spring, I visited a cemetery where the ARMH are exhuming the remains of some of these victims.

“I often remind my 91-year-old mother to hang on a bit longer and not to go yet because her two uncles will be unearthed soon,” a tearful Manuel Gallego told me on July 5, 2021 in Manzanares (Ciudad Real, Spain). This past May, the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH in Spanish) exhumed 34 of 288 victims of Franco’s regime from two mass graves in the town’s cemetery.

When people think about mass graves in Spain, most relate them to the war years. Yet an estimated 50,000 victims were executed after the war. Walking around the dry and desolate terrain of the Manzanares cemetery, one is reminded of what Franco said shortly after the war: “Those whose hands are not stained with blood will have nothing to fear.” The victims in this cemetery are here because they made the mistake of believing those words. Executed before the cemetery walls between 1939 and 1940, they were buried in two distinct areas: 14 mass graves within the cemetery (reserved for those who were administered the last rites) and two outside of its walls (for those who refused). The bodies that were recently exhumed belonged to this latter group. It was not until the 1980s that the original wall dividing the secular from the religious cemetery was finally torn down. The victims are from Manzanares and other small towns in the area. Sentenced to death in cynical show trials, they were found guilty of adhesión a la rebelión (support of the



rebellion), the ironic phrase with which the regime described the resistance to Franco’s 1936 revolt against the Republic.

During my visit to the exhumation site, I spoke with several of the victims’ family members, including Pedro Alises Núñez and Inmaculada Camacho Serrano of Memoria Histórica Manzanares (MHM), a local nonprofit. Inmaculada had arrived that morning after a four-hour car ride from her home in Valencia. They took me to

what used to be the outer section of the cemetery (the secular side), where they showed me the recently exhumed mass graves: a small patch of now loose gravel, not much bigger than my living room, where 34 bodies had been piled up callously (most likely dumped from a cart) in two unusually deep ditches—about 20 feet—that made the excavation that much harder. Some of the bodies appeared upside down, but others were lying in a fetal position, leading experts to believe that they were alive when they were thrown into the ditch, trying to protect themselves while being shot from above. (Some Mauser shells were found on site.) Pedro’s grandfather was one of the victims exhumed in May. For several days, Pedro witnessed the bodies being delicately gathered, one bone at a time. He is still awaiting DNA results. Inmaculada’s grandfather may be unearthed sometime in the fall or winter, when the archeologists open the mass graves located in the religious section of the cemetery. They are estimated to contain about 255 bodies.

This recent exhumation finally brought a degree of closure to the families of these 34 post-war victims. The exhumation process brought about a mixture of anger and sadness, some of the family members told me. Justice will not feel complete until the trials are fully nullified. Last September, the Spanish government approved a draft Law of Democratic Memory that includes such a nullification, although the bill is still awaiting its parliamentary debate and

vote. In the meantime, just in the small town of Manzanares alone, at least 255 more republican victims are still waiting to be exhumed. I had the opportunity to interview the family members of five victims. These are their stories:

Pedro Alises Espinosa

Affiliated with the trade union UGT, Pedro actively participated in the collectivization of land and buildings in the area and was elected to the Manzanares town council. During the war, he joined the Republican forces in November of 1936 as a quartermaster sergeant. He was captured at the end of the conflict, executed on July 20, 1939, and dumped in mass grave number 1 outside of the cemetery, together with 30 others. He left five children and a widow, who was forced to pay fines for years after (a common punishment). Pedro was 45 years old when he was killed. Among the volunteers that has helped unearth his remains is his great-grandchild.

Agustín Camacho Fernández

A barber from the town of La Solana (Ciudad Real), he was accused of being affiliated with the socialist party, and

"It was not until the 1980s that the original wall dividing the secular from the religious cemetery was finally torn down."

for patrolling the streets of his town as a corporal, supposedly killing six nationalists during the war. He was later captured, beaten, and dragged through the town plaza, tied by hands and feet. When his wife found his disfigured body, which was missing pieces of flesh and skin on his back, she fainted and then left him for dead. His granddaughter Inmaculada later discovered that he recovered from his wounds and spent an additional three months in prison. On July 20, 1939, he was executed. His body lies inside the cemetery, in mass grave number 4, together with 13 others. He left a widow and a three-year-old. He was 28 years old when he was killed.

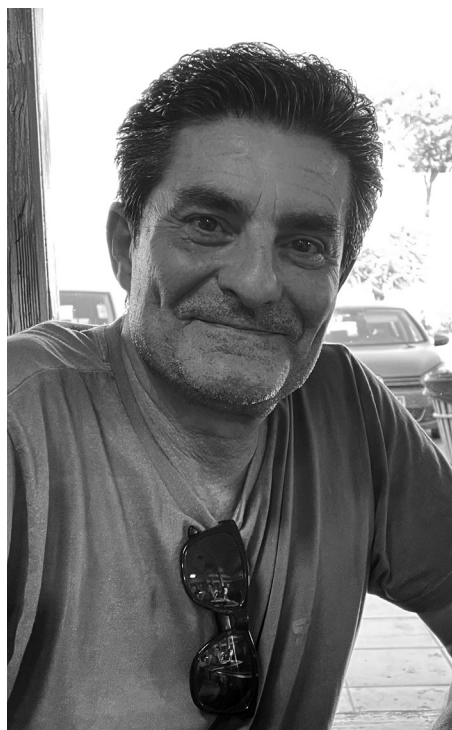
Alfonso Fontiveros Muñoz

A peasant and strong advocate of peasants' rights, Alfonso was a member of

the trade union UGT from 1928 to 1938, but ended up joining the labor union CNT and becoming president of a peasant's association in the area. Soon after the war, a neighbor denounced him for belonging to CNT, forcing him to flee to Valencia with his two sons, José and Miguel, who were in their twenties. José managed to flee to France, and Miguel somehow ended up in Barcelona. Alfonso was eventually captured in June 1939, and executed on July 20, 1939, together with 23 others. He was 52. His body was exhumed from cemetery's secular section in May. His son José would stay in Toulouse, where his girlfriend from Manzanares went to meet him. They married there and raised four children.

Francisco Martín Carnerero Alcarazo

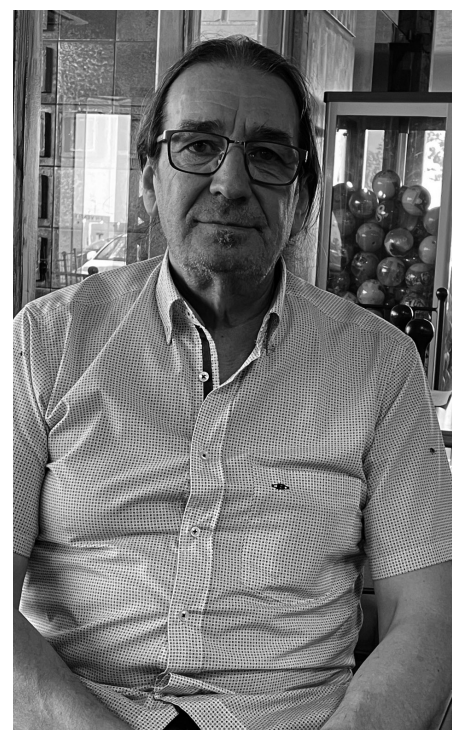
Recently unearthed together with Pedro's grandfather, Francisco was a socialist and municipal police officer who belonged to the trade union UGT and participated in several peasant strikes. Because of his job, during the war he detained two nationalists who would later be executed. After the war, Francisco was charged with their deaths. He was also accused of being present during a church burning; however,



Pedro Alises Núñez, grandson of Pedro Alises Espinosa. Photo Huguet.



Francisco Martín Carnerero.



Manuel Gallego, grandson of Francisco Martín Carnerero Alcarazo. Photo Huguet.



Some of the bodies appeared upside down, but others were lying in a fetal position, leading experts to believe that they were alive when they were thrown into the ditch.

as a police officer, he was responding to the burning, not participating in it. Contrary to the charges, he was, in fact, helping several nuns escape the church, and brought them to safety. He was imprisoned nonetheless soon after the war ended. His daughter, María, roughly 10 at the time of his imprisonment, would often bring him food. On one of those visits, she was asked why she came, did she not see the list on the blackboard outside? She climbed on a rock to read the board and realized the names on the list were those of the executed prisoners from the night before. Her dad's name was on it. In shock, she fell, hit her head, and lost consciousness. He was just 36, leaving a widow and two children. One of his brothers and a brother-in-law also lay in one of the mass graves inside the cemetery. His wife spent seven years in prison for speaking badly about the killers. María, now 91 years old, was recently able to witness the exhumation of her father's remains, pending DNA results.

Esteban Santamaría Espinosa

A Manzanares train switchman, Esteban was nicknamed "the train gentleman" because of his habitual fancy attire and tidy appearance. His membership of the town's "Comité de Defensa" (a leftish and clandestine military organization), caused him to be imprisoned for almost a year right after the war. While in prison, he earned a reputation for helping feed those most in need, including old or sick prisoners who were not given food because their executions were imminent. His granddaughters Rosario and Charo think he must have had some schooling because, despite his frequent misspellings, he expressed himself well and in a very neat manner, as can be seen in the many tiny hidden notes written on cigarette paper that he would pass to his wife during her visits. He was executed in May 1940 together with 19 other prisoners, leaving a widow and three children. He was 36

years old. His body lies in one of the mass graves in the religious side of the cemetery waiting to be exhumed. ▲

As I walked out of the cemetery on July 5, I thought of a famous quote from don Luis in the play *Las bicicletas son para el verano* (Bicycles are for the Summer), by Fernando Fernán Gómez. Talking to his son at the very end of the war, don Luis warns him: "What has arrived is not peace, but victory." Manzanares helped me understand the truth of that sentence. Hopefully, some peace will finally come to these victims and their families.

Marimar Huguet-Jerez is an associate professor of Spanish at the College of New Jersey.

“HISTORIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES HAVE FOCUSED TOO MUCH ON EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA”

Jerónimo Boragina has published a new biographical dictionary of Argentine volunteers in Spain

By Sebastiaan Faber

It has taken him twenty years, but the book is finally here. The *Diccionario biográfico de los voluntarios de Argentina en la Guerra Civil Española* (Biographical dictionary of Argentine volunteers in the Spanish Civil War), by the historian Jerónimo Boragina, has just been published in Spain by the Friends of the International Brigades (AABI).

Boragina is the author of several books, including one on Jewish volunteers from Argentina (*Voluntarios judeoargentinos en la Guerra Civil Española*, 2016). He also did the research for the documentary *Esos mismos hombres* (*Those Same Men*, 2008), and currently directs the Archive of Argentine Volunteers (AVAGCE) in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

Why this book?

There are many well-known studies of the English-speaking volunteers. One of my obsessions is to overcome the Eurocentric focus that has dominated so far and to do justice to the important role played by Latin Americans and others.

What, in your mind, is the function of biographical dictionaries such as this one?

The effort to rescue the names and life trajectories of the individual men and women who helped shape history, I believe, is just as important as providing a global vision of a particular event or movement. Of course, it's not always possible to recuperate every name and life. In the case of Argentina, my archival work has allowed me to identify some 1,100 volunteers. The dictionary contains the 962 individuals whose participation I have been able to confirm.

How many Argentines were listed in early studies, such as the classic history of the IB by Andreu Castells?

Between 90 and 100.

That's a huge difference!

That's right. We've seen something similar happen in the case of the Cuban volunteers. The most recent research suggests there were more than 1,200.

What explains the relative invisibility of the Latin American volunteers?

For one, many of them preferred to join the Spanish mixed brigades. Others were encouraged to do so by the Republican high command, which sought to camouflage the presence of foreigners with an eye to the League of Nations and the Non-Intervention Committee in London. Another reason is that many of the

volunteers who left for Spain from Argentina were immigrants—the country had seen a massive influx since the late nineteenth century—who, once in Spain, joined Italian, Polish, and other battalions. Yet others ended up in militias controlled by the Anarchists or the POUM.

In your earlier book on the topic, *Voluntarios de Argentina* (2005), you make the case for writing “history from below,” inspired by colleagues such as Eric Hobsbawm, Raphael Samuel, or Howard Zinn.

It's a counter-cultural way of writing history that resists professionalization and defies what was long the dominant historiography and that focused not on common people but on institutions, processes, or leading men. Methodologically, it expands its focus beyond the official archive to include oral history, socio-biography, and cultural history. In my case, this methodology was not just welcome but necessary in order to reconstruct the volunteers' biographies.

Why?

For one, because Argentina doesn't have the kind of archival resources that can be taken for granted in Europe or the United States, whether we're talking about municipal archives or scholarly bibliographies. This means that, as a historian, you have to go in search of alternative channels of information that demand other kind of methodologies.

What do you hope your book will help accomplish?

As said, one of my goals is to counterbalance a historiography that has been excessively focused on Europe. The war in Spain was fought primarily by the Spanish people, of course, but they were helped by volunteers from around the world. Focusing on Europe elides the extent to which events in Spain were shaped by, and had an impact on, individuals and collectives involved in revolutionary processes elsewhere—including in Tucumán, Río Negro, Córdoba, and Buenos Aires. These were people who left behind their land, job, house, or family to serve the cause of human progress. ▲

Sebastiaan Faber teaches at Oberlin College.

THE MEMORY OF THE PAST OCCURS IN THE PRESENT

ON TINA PATERSON'S COLORIZED PORTRAITS

By Francesc Torres

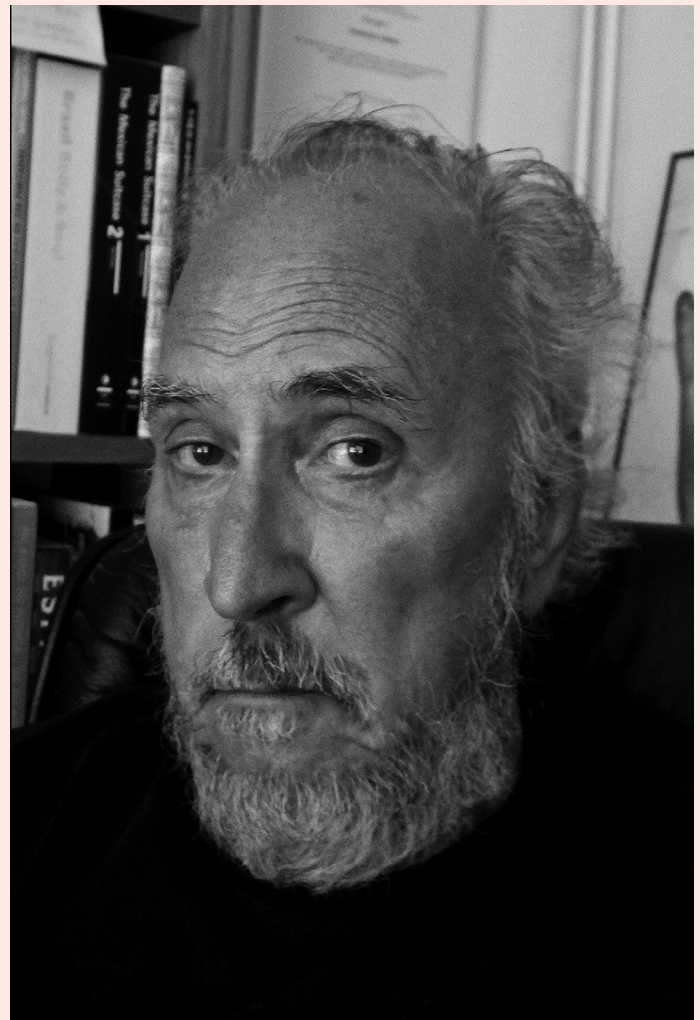
When a friend first pointed me to Tina Paterson's colorized portraits of International Brigade volunteers, I was skeptical. Yet the images are disturbing and strangely powerful. Throwing time out of joint, they undermine the idea that the Civil War is a remote historical occurrence

Some years ago, while working on *Dark Is the Room Where We Sleep*—a project in which I photographed the exhumation of a mass grave from September 1936, with 46 civilian victims, at Vilamayor de los Montes in Burgos—I was struck by a sudden revelation: Although I was born nine years after the end of the Civil War, I am a clinically pure product of that disastrous historical event, which signaled the end of the only moment in the twentieth century—the five years of the Second Republic—in which Spain found itself on the decent side of things.

All of us, of course, are a product of the past and of History with a capital H. But not all in the same way. Speaking for myself, the realization that the most fundamentally determining factor of my life had occurred almost a decade before my birth made me furious, although it also helped explain many things that until then had been unclear to me.

I was furious because I felt it was extremely unfair. It's one thing to live a particular historical moment and to have the opportunity to intervene, to help determine its outcome in some way. Even if you end up losing, the fact that you did not stand by passively can be a source of pride. Not having had that opportunity, however, made me feel cheated. Worse, I felt I'd been defeated without ever having had the chance to defend myself.

Here I should point out that my grandparents were persecuted by the Franco regime. I now understand that my work, which has returned to the Spanish war time and again, has been an attempt to fuse the emotional intensity of my own family history with the historical event that shaped it. What I've tried to do, I think, is to eliminate that decade of historical distance and make the war physically, literally mine. Of course, it's an aspiration that's bound to fail. What it reflects, nonetheless, is the need for some kind of symbolic mediation. To satisfy that need, art—visual or literary—can be an efficient tool.



"I felt I'd been defeated without ever having had the chance to defend myself."

Several weeks ago, a friend on Facebook pointed me to a set of colorized photographs of International Brigade volunteers. Originally shot in black and white by the great Harry Randall, these portraits are part of the ALBA collection at NYU's Tamiment library. They were colorized by a Madrid-based artist who goes by the name of Tina Paterson. Over the days that followed, I began posting the images to my wall. To my surprise, they sparked forceful reactions.

I must confess that I was skeptical at first. To be sure, there are early color photographs going back as far as World War I. Yet the visual history of the first half of the twentieth century has largely come to us in black and white. It's that monochromatic varnish that gives that part of history its authenticity, so to speak. Until the appearance of digital processing, a colorized photograph was simply a black-and-white image retouched with color paint, more or less successfully—mostly the latter. Not something to take seriously.

Yet Tina Paterson's work is different. Its quality is evident, for example, in the portrait of Rupert John Cornford, the British volunteer who was a poet and grandson of Darwin and who fought first with the POUM and then with the IB's Dumont Battalion in Aragón and defending Madrid. He died at Lopera (Jaén) on December 28, 1936. What makes his colorized portrait so powerful is that you don't "see" the coloration. The image's patina is of the present, not of the past. It appears to be a photograph shot today. Looking at the image, it's as if we'd been chatting with Cornford over drinks just last night. That gives it a quality I can only describe as disturbing.

Something very similar occurs in the portraits of Williams Mitchell Digges, a lieutenant in the XV Brigade who was born in New Orleans and who died under vague circumstances in 1938, and of Caroline Bunjes-Rosenthal (1918-2016), a Dutch IBER and photographer known as Lini, who fought in the "Joven Guardia" Battalion. Eighteen years old in November 1936, she poses for the camera—not Harry Randall's this time, but Hans Guttman's—with her arm in a sling, recovering from an injury. Then there's the portrait of Aaron Lopoff (1914-1938), a Jewish-American writer who arrived in Spain in 1937 to join the Lincoln-Washington Battalion, where he made company commander. He fell in battle in September 1938, during the Battle of the Ebro.

The portrait of Robert Merriman stands in a different category, at least for me. I've been fascinated with Merriman ever since I learned about him many years ago, reading his wife Marion's memoir. In 2018, I agreed to serve as staff photographer on a fieldwork project organized by historians of the University of Barcelona who went in search of Robert's body, which was said to have been buried on private land in Corbera d'Ebre, in the Tarragona province, nearby the Ebro battlefield.

Merriman disappeared in 1938, while serving as the Lincoln Battalion's commander. His death has always been shrouded in mystery. The most recent version of the story claims that Merriman,

while retreating in precarious circumstances from the Segre front along with some fellow soldiers, had the misfortune of running into a Francoist army unit. According to this account, Merriman would have been taken to Corbera for interrogation, only to be shot a couple of hours later, in his underwear. What would have happened to the other soldiers is unclear.

The researchers on the team had done their homework. In fact, they seemed to have hit on an unprecedented piece of evidence: nothing less than an eyewitness account. An old man who had been sixteen at the time said he'd been forced to bury Merriman. And what's more, he remembered where. Yet as happens so often, neither the geo-radar scan nor excavating a broad area yielded any results. We literally found nothing—nothing at all. This was strange. Since the area had been a battle zone, we expected to run into sediments of all kinds. Yet all we found were pieces of Roman ceramics—not a single machine-gun or rifle bullet. This suggested that, at some point in the past, the area had been carefully cleaned up. I shuddered at the thought that all the human remains here had been systematically cleared in the 1960s, when Franco ordered victims' bodies from all over the country to be transported to the Valley of the Fallen. The mere idea that Merriman's bones could have ended up there (something we'll never know) was almost too hard to bear.

Today, recalling that experience in the face of the radical immediacy of Harry Randall's portrait of Merriman, colorized eighty years later by Tina Paterson, throws time out of joint. Past and present overlap into a single emotional frame, at once inside and outside of historical, diachronic time. The frame that emerges instead is synchronous. It belongs to a time that's not circular but spheric, without beginning or end, mythological. Here, then, is the paradox: an image from the past that seems to be from the present lifts us out of history to plunge us in myth. It's extraordinary.

This, I think, is the virtue of Tina Paterson's best work. The images directly undermine the perception that the Civil War—the most important event in twentieth-century Spanish history—is a remote historical occurrence. They belie the official, distorted narrative that claims that the war no longer has any bearing on the country's normalized, democratic presence. The truth is, of course, that the war continues to loom large in Spain's social fabric. Even Spanish politics is still divided along the same ideological paradigms of the 1930s, albeit in a postmodern guise.

In fact, it's profoundly revealing that the solution to Spain's monumental problem has been left to biology—to the hope that, with the gradual death of those who lived the war and the immediate postwar years, there will be no one left to ask questions, to demand historical or political accountability, to make clear that it's not true that "we all carry some blame," as the new democrats on the right like to claim.

Yet some of us are still around. People like me, old as we may be, continue to be indignant, up in arms, over the fact that something we did not live shaped us, made us who we are. ▲

Francesc Torres, born in Barcelona in 1948, is a New-York-based visual media and installation artist whose work has been featured in museums around the world. His books include Memory Remains: 9/11 Artifacts at Hangar 17 (2011) and Dark is the Room Where We Sleep (2007). Translation by Sebastiaan Faber.



From the ALBA 11 Photo collection at Tamiment Library, NYU: Philip Detto and Leonard Lamb, Sept. 1937 (11-0713), right page, top right; Clyde Taylor, Nov. 1937 (11-0009), left page, top right; Irene Goldin, Oct. 1937 (11-0841), right page, bottom right; Aaron Lopoff, Apr. 1938 (11-0149), right page, top left; Robert Merriman, Dec.



1937 (11-0634), left page, bottom left; William Digges, Jan. 1938 (11-0944), right page, bottom left. Photo Oliver Law, left page, bottom right: ALBA Photo 184, b1, 34. Photo Caroline Bunjes, left page, top left: Juan Guzmán/Hans Guttman. Color by Tina Paterson.

“MANY ARE BLISSFULLY UNAWARE OF THE PARALLELS BETWEEN THE 1930s AND TODAY”

The Clapton Press has been publishing a remarkable series of new and out-of-print memoirs related to the Spanish Civil War

By Sebastiaan Faber

Simon Deefholts (London, 1958) and Kathryn Phillips-Miles (Cardiff, 1958) are the driving force behind the Clapton Press, an independent publishing outfit in the United Kingdom that has been issuing “Memories of 1930s Spain,” a book series that includes both previously unpublished memoirs and new editions of books that were long out of print.

Deefholts and Phillips-Miles both studied Spanish at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth—where they met—and later at Birkbeck College, University of London. They have worked in education, translation, lexicography, and finance, and spent several years living and working in Spain. In addition to running The Clapton Press, they also continue to work as translators.

What gave you the idea to create “Memories of 1930s Spain”?

The 1930s was a critical decade not only for Spain but across Europe as a whole. The fight to defend the Republic was seen by many outside Spain as their first opportunity to take a stand against increasingly aggressive right-wing ideologues. It attracted a whole range of people from different backgrounds who provided support in a variety of ways. Many of them wrote vivid accounts of their experiences that have now been out of print for more than eighty years and can only be accessed in specialist libraries or at vast expense for collectors’ copies. Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell’s great book *My House*

in Málaga, for example, has been out of print since 1938. A mouldy old copy will cost you close to \$140 plus postage.



Tell me about the titles published so far.

We started by republishing four very different books from the period that were out of print. *Boadilla* is a memoir by Esmond Romilly, Winston Churchill’s nephew, who was one of the earliest volunteers to join the International Brigade. *My House in Málaga*, which we just mentioned, was written by an eccentric octogenarian. Mitchell stayed on in Málaga when the Civil War broke out to “look after his house and servants” and became an avowed anarchist. Elizabeth Lake, the author of *Spanish Portrait*, an autobiographical novel, was living in San Sebastián in 1934 when she fell in love with a Spanish artist. She returned to Madrid in 1936 to pursue her research on the Golden Age poet Góngora—as well as her love affair. *Some Still Live* is by F.G. Tinker, jr., a US mercenary pilot who became the Republic’s ace aviator. After we’d published these four books, Paul Preston, who Kathryn had worked for back in the days when he was first setting up the Cañada Blanch Centre at the LSE, suggested we also look at some previously unpublished memoirs. He

came up with a raft of ideas and put us in contact with other Hispanists who have generously provided introductions, afterwords, annotations, and reviews. So far, we've published four of these memoirs: *Firing a Shot for Freedom* by Frida Stewart/Knight, who drove an ambulance from the North of England to Murcia (foreword by Angela Jackson); *Never More Alive* by Kate Mangan, who worked in the Republican Press office (foreword by Paul Preston); *The Good Comrade* by Jan Kurzke, a German refugee who tramped round the south of Spain in 1934 and returned in 1936 to join the International Brigade (introduction by Richard Baxell); and *The Fighter Fell in Love* by James R. Jump (foreword by Paul Preston and a preface by Jack Jones). Finally, we have also continued to republish earlier works, including *Struggle for the Spanish Soul & Spain in the Post War World*, two essays on Spain written in the 1940s by Arturo and Ilsa Barea (foreword by William Chislett) and *British Women and the Spanish Civil War*, a revised version of Angela Jackson's classic work.

Have you run into any unexpected challenges?

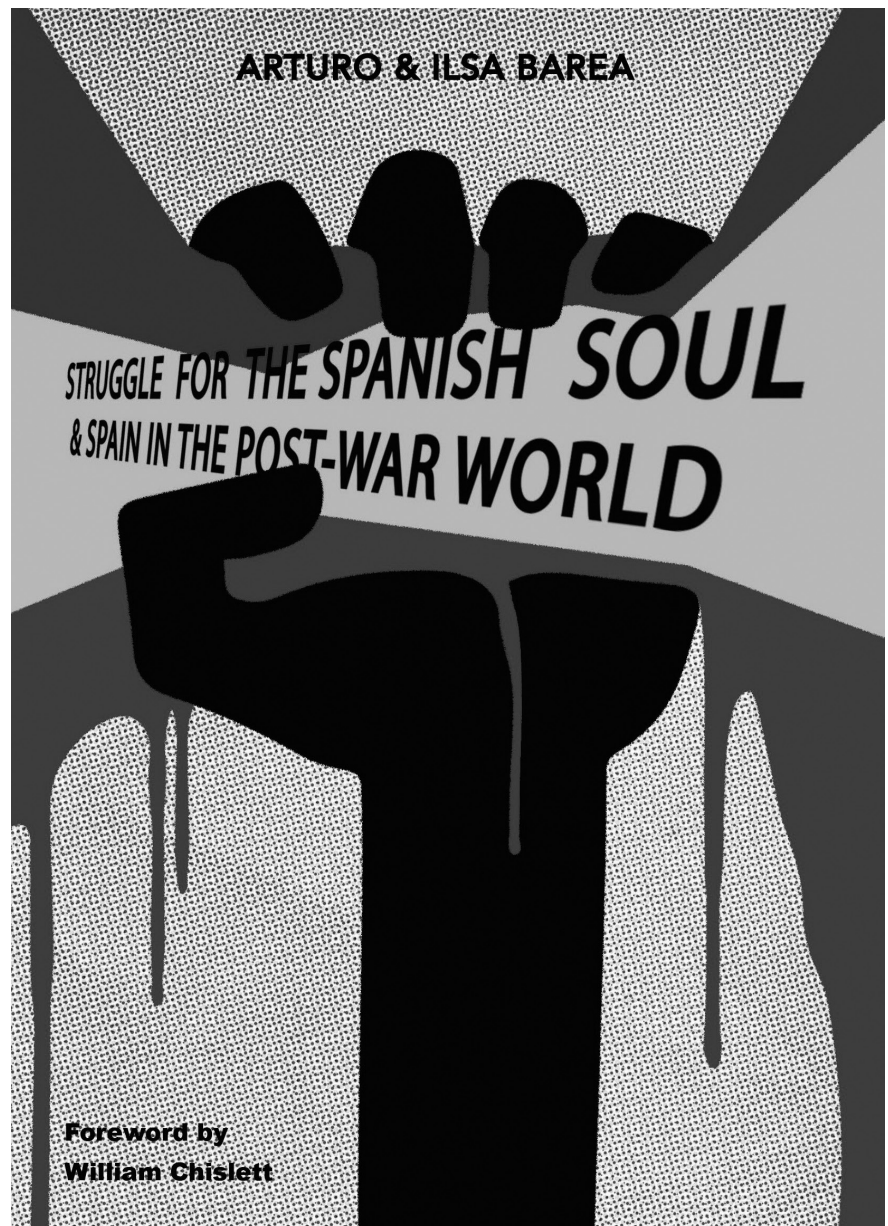
Copyright issues can be a real headache, especially in the USA owing to successive changes in the law. In a number of cases tracking down present-day copyright holders has proven impossible. We have had to abandon several projects, including *Red Spanish Notebook* by Mary Low and Juan Brea, which was first published in 1938 and republished in 1979 by City Lights, in San Francisco—but out of print since then. Some proposals we have looked at involving previously unpublished material have turned out to be just too much of an editorial challenge.

The historical memory of the 1930s has been quite controversial, politically, in Spain in recent years. Is the same true for the UK?

Not really. With regard to 1930s Spain, there appears to be little awareness beyond the version of events popularized by George Orwell and Ken Loach. Many seem blissfully unaware of the parallels between some of the politics of 1930s Europe and features of present-day politics in the UK.

What's the best title from the series to start with?

Never More Alive by Kate Mangan. To



quote Paul Preston, it is “one of the most valuable and, incidentally, purely enjoyable books about the war . . .” because of its “sheer wealth of fascinating information and insight provided in brutally honest yet beautiful prose”—not to mention Mangan’s keen observation and wry sense of humour. *My House in Málaga* is also a great read; it unfolds at the beginning of the war and the action takes place in a city that is familiar to many.

What's in the pipeline?

In July we are republishing *In Place of Splendour* by Constanca de la Mora, who headed up the Republican Press Office. This is a really engaging and informative memoir that has been out of print in English for eighty years. Our new edition

will have an introduction by Constanca’s biographer, Soledad Fox Maura. And then in September we’ll be launching the first ever edition of *Wild Green Oranges*, a semi-autobiographical novel by Bob Baldock, who as a young man was one of the only US citizens to go out to Cuba and fight alongside Castro, in 1958. It’s a fascinating read! ▲

Visit the online edition at albavolunteer.org for a longer version of this interview, as well as Richard Baxell's new introduction to Jay Kurzke's memoir *The Good Comrade*.

SALUD Y SHALOM: AMERICAN JEWISH VOLUNTEERS IN SPAIN

By Joe Butwin

Thirty years ago, I traveled around the United States equipped with a cheap tape recorder I spoke to 39 Jewish-American veterans of the Spanish Civil War. When they went to Spain in 1937, very few of the people I spoke to would have invoked their Jewishness for putting their lives on the line.

Nearly one third of the Americans who went to Spain to defend the Republic during the Civil War were Jews. Comparable percentages describe the composition of all of the International Brigades in Spain. Thirty years ago, between 1992 and 1994, I travelled around the United States from New York to Florida, to Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle equipped with a cheap tape recorder. A stack of cassettes and a list of addresses (and a modest subvention) provided by the Vets themselves. At that time, I spoke to 39 men and women. Their median age was 80.

The Cold War had officially ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December of '91. I spoke to men and women who had grown up with the Revolution of 1917. Some, in their childhood, had witnessed the Revolution first-hand; most were the children of immigrants from Czarist Russia; many of them were raised in a tradition of Jewish—and Yiddish-speaking—socialism before they joined the Communist Party in the 1930s. Nearly everyone I spoke to had left the Party long since, but this was the time for reckoning and reflection. We knew that there wasn't much time.

When they went to Spain in 1937, very few of the people I spoke to would have invoked their Jewishness for putting their lives on the line. They were "internationalists"; they were "anti-Fascists." Half a century after the fact they were not likely to revise the rationale for going to Spain, but given the chance to talk about their entire lives many were ready, as George Watt explained, to "come out of the closet"—as Jews. Watt had been moved recently by an exhibit at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Israel, to assert that Jews had resisted Hitler before the partisans of Vilna or the ghetto-fighters in Warsaw did so in the early '40s. What the members of the wartime resistance in Poland and Russia had in common with brigadistas in Spain were the movements that had animated their parents and grandparents in the Czar's old empire. Immigrants from Eastern Europe brought that spirit to the Jewish enclaves of American cities.

George Watt, Bill Susman, Irv Weissman, Mike Bailin and others were nurtured in the Yiddish, Socialist shuln—the secular equivalent



of the Hebrew schools that trained other children in traditional piety. George Watt lit up with pride as he told the story of his grandfather, Avremele der Iamden, Abraham the Learned One, who was a leader in the first strike of Jewish workers in the textile factories at Łódź in 1902. "It was part of our family tradition." Bill Susman showed me a picture of himself as a boy in Bridgeport, Connecticut, perched on the lap of the poet Morris Winchevsky, the zeyde or "grandfather," of Yiddish socialism. When Bill said, "I was born to go Spain," he was referring to a way of life that began before his birth and in another country.

Israel Kwatt (otherwise Kievkasky) went to Spain as George Watt and Bill Susman went as Bill Ellis as members of a Communist movement that encouraged its members to shed the ethnic distinctions that had defined their youth and, for many, their political orientation. "We wanted to hide our Jewish identity," Watt explained, "and that was really in response to anti-Semitism, feeling that people would not follow us. . . . We sort of went into

"Bill Susman showed me a picture of himself as a boy in Bridgeport, Connecticut, perched on the lap of the poet Morris Winchevsky, the zeyde or 'grandfather' of Yiddish socialism."

the closet. How do I say it? I was very much raised in a Jewish tradition, but I wasn't the only one. That was the trend at the time. I feel bad about it at this time." Abe Osheroff, who never changed his name, explained what he considered the ambivalence of the Party around what they always called "The Jewish Question":

In practice [the Party] established a Yiddish newspaper and a few journals that were the instruments of the Communist Party, but in some ways, it was a two-faced policy. On the one hand it did everything it could to organize Jewish workers; on the other hand, there was a constant pressure on Jews in the Party, particularly those who were rising to leadership, to give in to the pressures of assimilationism, which the society in general was doing, because "Aby Osheroff" can't work with the steel workers.

The CPUSA had an "Americanization" policy of its own—with respect to its Jewish adherents, at least—that mimicked a common approach to patterns of immigration in the United States. At the same time, the "internationalism" of the Popular Front against Fascism set out to erode national, and thus nationalist, distinctions that might divide the Front. One result was to minimize the kind of distinctions that would emerge in our conversations half a century after the fact.

Currently two friends—Tony Geist and Ed Baker—and I are preparing five *Conversaciones* for publication in Spain. George Watt, Celia Seborer, Ed Bender, Sana Goldblatt and Bill Susman. We derive our title, *Salud y Shalom*—familiar greetings in Spanish and in Hebrew or Yiddish—from the habitual valediction in letters that I received from another one of the Vets, Ed Lending. Ed had adapted an older formula—*Salud y Victoria*—that many of his comrades used in letters home from Spain and later from Europe and the Pacific where many of them served in World War II. By 1994 he wanted to accommodate his Jewishness (and his first language) in our discussion. And that, in the end, is where many of the Vets wanted to go; that is, we spoke not only of Spain but of entire lives, of parents and grandparents, the shtetl, the ghetto, the old neighborhoods and the aftermath. *Salud y Shalom*. *Conversaciones con excombatientes judíos de la brigada Abraham Lincoln* will return the excombatientes to Spain, in Spanish. In the next step we will add several names and bring them back to America, in English.

The excerpts printed here are from conversations with Israel Kwatt, previously Kievasky, who went to Spain as George Watt and with Bill Susman, who went as Bill Ellis. For both, the masquerade was thin. When George Watt wrote home to his parents from Spain, he wrote to them in Yiddish. ▲

Joseph Butwin recently retired from the English Department at the University of Washington where he also taught courses on Jewish-American Literature and Culture in the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies. Selections of his interviews with Jewish Vets can currently be seen and heard on a website in Jewish Studies at the UW: <https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/american-jews-spanish-civil-war/>.



Susman in 1938



Susman in 1992. Photo Butwin.

GEORGE WATT (1913-1994) NORTHPORT, LONG ISLAND. APRIL 1992.

JB: I'd like to go back to what you call your own secular Jewish background.

GW: The most important influence on my life was my family values and education in the Jewish Socialist milieu. My father and mother both saw themselves as Socialists. He was a worker. He worked as a silversmith, jeweler and electro-plater; a metal polisher. He trained in the old country, I mean trained and apprenticed in Europe, in Poland. Łódź was our original city and we were raised in the tradition of Jewishness, but secular. In other words, they were atheists, both my parents were atheists although their parents—my mother's side was pretty orthodox Jewish. My father's also, my grandmothers were all religious Jews. But my father had already assimilated Socialist and atheist ideas even in Poland but was never very active. But here they read the Forvartz, The Jewish Daily Forward, and we saw ourselves as Socialists. Ever since I was a kid of six years old, I had visions of a beautiful world—

brotherhood and sisterhood of man, no exploitation and peace and the workers living in a form of Utopia. But there was something else in the family. As long as I can remember there was a legend in our family around my grandfather, my father's father. My father's father was a textile worker, a weaver, in Łódź and he worked in a factory which was owned by a Jewish boss. His factory was the place where they had the first strike of Jewish workers—Łódź—in 1902 at the Wiślicki factory in Łódź. And ever since I was a kid my father told a story which was part of our family tradition. He was not a rabbi, but he was considered very learned and was called Avremele der lamden, Abraham, the learned one, and he was one of the elder workers in the plant who became active in this strike and he was one of the leaders of the strike. Not the leader but one of the leaders. And my father always told this story and he said how they were arrested by the Tsarist police because this was Russian Poland then. And

he described how he as a six-year-old boy watched his father being taken in shackles. The punishment in those days was they forced you to walk on foot back to your village of origin. See, many of the people living in Łódź had immigrated from the smaller outlying surrounding villages into Łódź where you had industry and they became workers and so on. And he had to move back to his home shtetl in kaytn, in chains. And this was the story I always remembered. And so that was part of our tradition. In other words, my grandfather, the pride that we had, my grandfather had led the first strike of Jewish workers in Łódź. 1902. That was around the time leading up to the 1905 revolution. So that's part of our tradition. ▲

George moved from Socialism to Communism in the early '30s, ceased to be a student at Brooklyn College in order to work full-time in the National Student Union where he was charged with channeling young recruits for Spain. And then he recruited himself.

BILL SUSMAN (1915-2003) GREAT NECK, LONG ISLAND. APRIL 1992.

BS: Our home was always the place where speakers would stop and stay when they came to deliver speeches. I developed friendships with people like Zayde Winchevsky. I have a photograph of myself in my little Russian blouse, sitting on his lap with my Buster Brown haircut, corduroy pants. . . . My father and mother were both charter members of the Worker's Party of America which later went on to become the Communist party. It was the first split from the Socialist Party on the issue of World War I. I was born in 1915. My recollection of the political world which starts about 5 or 6 years later—1921 perhaps, 1922—was that people would come to our house for meetings and they would engage in hot debates and arguments about who was right—Trotsky or Lenin or Bukharin whom I was convinced and persuaded were all Jews. After all, the reports about what they were saying came through in the Jewish press and they all seemed to speak Yiddish perfectly, so I was persuaded that they were all Jewish. And I was very pleased that there was a country where all the leaders were Jews! In any case, I used

to listen to these discussions and I didn't understand much of what was being said but I would pick out an idea here and there. Through this whole period the picture of Eugene Victor Debs occupied the main spot in our living room and even though he was a Socialist my father felt very keenly that this was the kind of person that he should follow. . . .

JB: A number of people I've spoken to describe something very much like a conversion experience when they explain how they became a socialist or a communist. You know, suddenly they see the disaster of the system. Sacco and Vanzetti, the Depression. It slaps them in the face. Injustice. Eviction. A parent dying for want of medical care. From everything you've said, I don't guess you ever had a conversion experience.

BS: Never did. Other guys were indignant about what was happening in Spain. I was never indignant. I expected it. I thought well, of course, that's how people are. And if you asked me why I went to Spain I would tell you I was born to go

to Spain because with this background there was nothing else in my future but to do precisely that. I wouldn't have been carrying out my program if I had not gotten involved.

JB: What did what you call your "program" look like after you moved to New York? That would have been around 1929, in time for the Crash, right?

BS: Well, I was involved. I became a Young Pioneer. I started in Bridgeport and continued in New York. Boys and girls together. Activities were the same on a younger level as the Young Communist League or the Young Workers League. When May Day came the Pioneers had the slogan, "Down with your Pencils on May First." ▲

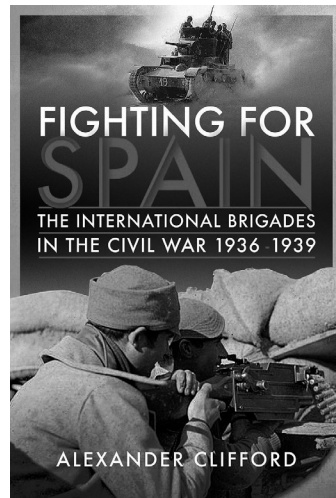
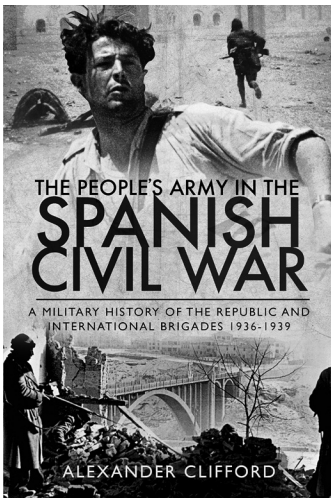
After the Pioneers, Bill joined the Young Communist League, went to sea in 1934 to help organize the new National Maritime Union, then to Puerto Rico as an organizer for the Communist Party. He signed up to go to Spain while he was recruiting volunteers on the Island.

Book review

Fighting for Spain: The International Brigades in the Civil War, 1936–1939, by Alexander Clifford. Pen and the Sword Military, 2020. 264pp.

The People's Army in the Spanish Civil War: A Military History of the Republic and International Brigades, 1936–1939, by Alexander Clifford. Pen and the Sword Military, 2020. 414pp.

Reviewed by Richard Baxell



Few people will look back on 2020 with much fondness, but the year did at least provide some solace for those with an interest in the Spanish Civil War. Giles Tremlett's comprehensive account of the International Brigades was published in November, followed shortly afterwards by Emmet O'Connor and Barry McLoughlin's study of the Irish volunteers. Pipping them both to the finishing line, though, were two studies of the Republican Army by Alexander Clifford. Both are essentially military histories; the first, *The People's Army in the Spanish Civil War* is a study of the army as a whole, while the second, *Fighting for Spain*, zooms in on the International Brigades. I imagine most readers will go for one or the other, rather than both, for there is inevitably some degree of overlap. Nonetheless, they are different books in terms of content and approach.

The People's Army analyzes the role of the Republican army during three offensives in 1937: the battle of Brunete in July, the attack on Belchite during the Aragon offensive of the autumn, and the attack on the remote provincial capital of Teruel in the winter. For Clifford, the crucial exchange was at Brunete when, he suggests, "the war stood at a crossroads." Clifford's summary of what went wrong during the battle chimes with other studies, blaming "inadequate training, a poorly executed plan and a lack of tactical success and timing from commanders." As a telling example of the shortcomings of the military commanders, the author recounts how the Republican General Valentine González, known as *El*

Campesino, was passed a map of the Brunete battlefield: "Without looking at it, El Campesino spread it out on the table, face down, to serve as a tablecloth." Clifford's assessment of the subsequent fighting in Aragon and Teruel is just as critical. Both saw a disastrous loss of troops, *matériel*, and morale—a loss that Franco was able to capitalize on in the spring of 1938, fatally cleaving the Republic in two.

While *The People's Army* limits itself to one year of the war, *Fighting for Spain* follows a more established format, tracing the experiences of the foreign volunteers through the course of the conflict. It begins with a familiar overview of the composition of the Brigades and what lay behind the volunteers' decisions to go to Spain, before turning to an evaluation of their performance as soldiers. Clifford pushes back against some recent criticisms, reiterating that the 11 and 15 International Brigades in particular (together with General Lister's famed Communist troops) were not only the finest units in the Republican Army but, at their best, equal to any of Franco's troops. Yes, the Internationals suffered horrendous casualties—but this was not because they were ineffective or because they were sacrificed as "cannon fodder," but because they were used as shock troops, thrown into the heart of battle.

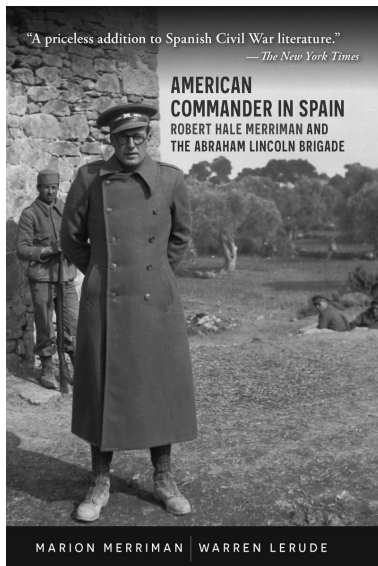
Nonetheless, Clifford is surely right that the Republican People's Army "will not go down in the annals of history as one of the world's great fighting forces." As Peter Carroll has observed, raw courage and a belief in the essential "rightness" of the cause "could not overcome inexperience, poor coordination, and superior military force." Yet the Republicans managed to fight on for nearly three years, even though many observers had written off their chances during the first months of the war. Why did the Republic manage to hold on, when so much was against it? Franco's conservative tactics and obsession with the capture and control of territory certainly played a part, but, Clifford argues, so did the fact that the Republican Army was actually a better fighting force than some historians believe. Despite all the obstacles it faced, he writes, "the Republic developed from being defended by peasants armed with swords and shotguns to having a regular fighting force capable of launching bold combined-arms offensives using modern military hardware and infiltration tactics." His insightful assessment of the Republic's military capacity is likely to be of interest not just to military historians. His analysis of the shortcomings of the *brigadas mixtas*, on which the Republican army was based, is particularly illuminating. Nevertheless, both these volumes are essentially popular military history books, not academic studies. Though the author makes some use of memoir material (in English) and refers to the RGASPI files cited in Ronald Radosh's controversial *Spain Betrayed*, he nonetheless relies primarily on secondary sources. The drawback with this approach is that errors or oversights in previous works can slip through unchallenged. In this instance, Clifford greatly overstates the number of Internationals shot for desertion. He also repeats the longstanding—and unfounded—assertion that the French Communist and Commander of the International Brigades, André Marty, was personally responsible for the execution of five hundred volunteers. Fortunately, he avoids some of the more obvious pitfalls, such as parroting the cold-war denunciation of Republican Spain as a Soviet puppet state. As he writes, "it is self-evident that the volunteers' fight in Spain was an attempt to preserve Republican democracy rather than establish the dictatorship of the proletariat."

While both books have their pros and cons, I suspect that *Fighting for Spain* will appeal more to members of ALBA. Although it's less comprehensive than Giles Tremlett's recent work, and less US-centered than the accounts by Peter Carroll and Adam Hochschild, Clifford manages to clearly and succinctly summarize the role of the International Brigades in Spain. In this, he is aided by numerous photos and maps and insets that zoom in on key individuals and weaponry. Readers interested in a more general background, on the other hand, may prefer *The People's Army*. ▲

Richard Baxell is an historian & lecturer and author of Unlikely Warriors. He is the Historical Consultant for the International Brigade Memorial Trust.

American Commander in Spain: Robert Hale Merriman and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, by Marion Merriman and Warren Lerude. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2020. 328pp.

Reviewed by Katherine Stafford



Marion Merriman returned to Spain many decades after the Civil War ended to celebrate and preserve the memory of her husband Robert Hale Merriman, who died in the conflict. Her book *American Commander in Spain*, written together with Pulitzer-Prize winner Warren Lerude, first published in 1986, was reissued in paperback last year.

Merriman's account provides a window into a foreign conflict that

continues to mark and haunt the American consciousness eight decades later. An important, inspiring, and riveting story of a brave man furiously fighting in every sense for his ideals, it reveals much about courage and heroism—but also provokes questions about memory and loss.

From the start, the reader is struck by Robert Merriman's utopian commitment to a better world. His career in agricultural economics clearly sprang from a concern for the plight of desperate Americans in the throes of the depression. In 1935 Merriman, then at UC Berkeley, traveled to Moscow on a research trip to study how the Soviet Union was addressing economic injustice and inequality. He eventually ended up in Spain to fight fascism. "Find better ways to make it a better world," his professor and mentor at Berkeley, Dr. Cross, told his students at Cal. "This is your duty. There are solutions, but you must work hard to find them. The world must improve. Without you, it won't happen. It's that simple. You, the gifted ones with the brains and the energy, you make the difference." How many students who

major in economics today possess this core sense of vocation and conviction? Merriman was a special kind of man, but it was also a different time.

The book recounts the Merriman couple's courtship and their life in a tiny and warm Berkeley apartment on Virginia Street. (Recently, it was endowed with a historical marker through the Berkeley Historical Plaque project.) Their year in Moscow is also retold at length. Merriman ultimately goes to Spain in 1936 not as a Communist, but as a man convinced that he must join the fight against fascism. His tall stature, handsome appearance, and level-headedness, as well as his friendly, fair, and balanced nature quickly ingratiate him to the men in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Before long, he takes a leadership role. Likable, good, committed, and brave, Merriman led troops in Jarama, Belchite and Brunete. (Reportedly Merriman was one of the primary inspirations for Ernest Hemingway's hero Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.) The memoir recounts at length the experiences and battles of the 2,800 Americans who were willing to sacrifice their lives for the greater good, despite a lack of training or resources.

Marion, his wife, comes along for the ride, or that is how she sees it: first to Moscow, and then to the war. She clearly sees herself as the woman behind the man, though the facts of her life suggest a person of equal heroic valor and commitment. This book is not just about Robert, but about their journey together. After her husband is wounded, dedicates her life to fighting fascism through nursing, organizing, and later raising awareness in the United States.

The evident love and commitment of Bob and Marion to each other is striking. They wait until marriage to have sex. Though both attractive and young, neither strays in faithfulness, despite ample opportunities. They are beyond generous in their hospitality to friends, family, and strangers. They write many long letters to one another, and their love speaks to a kind of commitment that goes beyond passion, compatibility, and friendship.

Only at 70 was Marion able to face the pain of returning to Spain and writing Robert's story. Her memoir is important for the values it uncovers. We all love to read accounts by and about Ernest Hemingway in the Spanish Civil War, despite his egocentrism and exaggeration, for the romantic, heroic, and manly Hollywood tint he puts on the conflict. While *American Commander* is in part an embodiment of a real-life heroic Hollywood leading man, there is constant pain, loss, and haunting memory behind the account as well. The experience of fighting for your life and your ideals and then slowly losing everything, including the person you love more than anything in the world, is palpable and personal.

In Jaime Camino's film *España otra vez* (1969), David Foster, an Abraham Lincoln Brigade member, returns to Spain for a medical conference and visits many of his old haunts. A medical expert on pain, Foster's conference talk explains how pain works in the human brain and how it can be stopped. Yet during his visit Foster is struck by another kind of pain, as visual flashback of the war lurk around every corner. After reuniting with many of his old friends and acquaintances, David finds himself in a state of absolute disconnect and alienation. His old friends, alone and sad, want to forget the past. "I never should have come back," David

tells his wife in the end. “You have to live each moment as it comes, you can’t go back to it.”

One can only guess what it cost Marion Merriman to go back in the 1980s. After the war she remarried, raised children, was an activist, and had a successful administrative career at Stanford University. Only in her senior years was she able to tell the story of her life with Robert. It is a story worth telling. ▲

Katherine Stafford is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Lafayette College in Easton Pennsylvania. She is the author of Narrating War in Peace: The Spanish Civil War in the Transition and Today (Palgrave 2015) as well as various academic articles on the Spanish Civil War and Francoism.



Josep Almudéver Mateu (1919-2021)

By Almudena Cros

Last May 23, our dear veteran Josep Almudéver Mateu died in France. At 101 he was, as far as we know, the very last surviving veteran of the International Brigades, and certainly the last one to be an activist until the very end. Josep had wanted to return to his beloved Valencia this summer and died as a consequence of his fervent wish, since he had a bad reaction to the vaccine he needed to travel from France to Spain. Anyone who had the fortune of meeting Josep in person was impressed by his clarity of mind and strong will to defend the truth about the so-called Spanish Civil War. He would always reinforce the idea that it was an international attack on the progressive government of the Spanish Republic rather than a war between brothers, which is the revisionist take on the subject. He was adamant about this aspect, the coldly planned genocide of the defenseless Spaniards at the hands of international Fascism. Josep volunteered in the Republican Army as a French-Spanish national; he was born in Marseille in 1919 to a family of Spanish migrant workers. His maternal grandparents were managers and trapeze artists of an itinerant circus. His anticlerical father worked as a bricklayer. Josep spent his early childhood between France, Morocco and Spain. The family settled in Alcàsser, Valencia in March 1931, just before the proclamation of the Second Republic in April.

Josep, politically committed and cosmopolitan from an early age, enrolled as a volunteer in the Republican Army in August 1936 claiming that he was 19 years old (he was actually 17, legally underage). He saw combat with the Batallón Pablo Iglesias at Teruel and was injured. In July 1937, after convalescing, he requested to join the International Brigades in Silla, and was accepted in the Italian Carlo Roselli Battery. In addition to his combat experience, he was fluent in French. He recalled that his Italian unit included some 30 Italians, three Cubans, one American mechanic, a Swiss doctor, a Canadian, a Yugoslav, an Armenian, and a shell-shocked German soldier.

As the Republican Government demobilized the International Brigades following the disaster of the Ebro, Josep crossed the

border into France in 1939. By February, however, he had returned to Valencia to continue fighting. He ended up captured in Alicante by the Fascists and was imprisoned in the infamous concentration camps “de los Almendros” and at Albatera. He also served time in prisons (Porta-Coeli, Modelo de Valencia, and Aranjuez).

In November 1942, he was released on parole and returned to Alcàsser, but found it difficult to be employed. He eventually returned to bricklaying. In 1945, the Communist Party contacted him to coordinate the local underground section in Catarroja. By 1947, he was one of the links for the Agrupación Guerrillera de Levante, which involved covering and assisting guerrilla freedom fighters. In June 1947, he had to flee to Barcelona. He managed to arrive in France in August, where his wife joined him the following year.

He did not return to Spain until 1965, to visit, and remained a resident in France until his death. His memoir, *El pacto de no intervención. Pobre República* (The Non-Intervention Pact: The Poor Republic), details his life and recounts the political struggles of the anarchists, socialists and communists, denouncing the trigger-happy nature of a lot of anarchists from the early days of the Republic. Some of the readers here will remember Josep from the 80th anniversary trip, in 2016, to Benicàssim, Albacete, Guadalajara, and Madrid, where he attended the unveiling of the Jardín de las Brigadas Internacionales in Vicálvaro. Those who did not have the opportunity to meet him can learn from his determination and strong will through his book, interviews or footage of him at various events. Like ALBA, Josep recognized the importance of education and often gave presentations and lectures at high schools in Valencia, so that the youth of today would understand the tragedy unfolded in Spain. Thank you, Josep, for your resolute defense of the Spanish Republic until the very end. We carry your torch! ▲

Almudena Cros is President of the Asociación de Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales (AABI) in Madrid.

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