

# The Volunteer

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

Barthol in 2007. Photo Richard Bermack

## The Musical Conscience of Bruce Barthol (1947-2023)

Indigenous Women Accept ALBA/Puffin Award p 3

Faces of ALBA: Michael Koncewicz p 5

90 Years of Peat Bog Soldiers p 15

# 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,

The present is confusing because we don't know what the future will look like. It may sound obvious—but it's all too easy to forget when we study the past. In fact, this is one of the ideas we emphasize in our ongoing work with students and teachers. Looking backward from 2023, it's easy to be surprised by the fact that, in the mid-1930s, many were charmed by Nazism, not just in Germany and Western Europe but in the United States as well. In this light, the prescience of those who did recognize the dangers of fascism early on—including nearly 3,000 individuals from the U.S. who volunteered to defend the Spanish Republic—is even more remarkable.

Still, even in the confusing present some things are crystal clear. Do you support groups that seek to gut school libraries from books that discuss the complexities of US history, racism, or human sexuality? Or do you stand with those who defend public education and its teachers? Do you support those who are trying to turn back the clock on reproductive rights, one state at a time, or with those who defend pregnant people's hard-fought bodily autonomy? To quote Florence Reece: *Which Side Are You On?*

At this year's moving ALBA/Puffin Award Ceremony in New York City, Indigenous Women Rising was recognized for its brave work on behalf of the reproductive rights of indigenous people and other marginalized populations (p. 3). Present, too, were our previous two award winners: Life Against Hate and My Brother's Keeper. Although these three organizations do very different work, in our eyes they honor the legacy of the Lincolns, including their valor and prescience. All three engage in high-risk, often controversial work that helps strengthen this country's defenses against the growing threat of the far right.

At ALBA, we're well aware of what we're up against. Yet if the stories in this issue show anything, it's that we also refuse to lose hope. As Michael Koncewicz explains on page 5, young generations have a new-found interest in the history and relevance of antifascism. In fact, take a moment to skip to page 4 and read about Iago, an award-winning high school student: it will warm your heart.

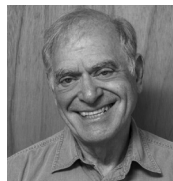
As always, we also take time to mourn the losses to our ALBA family. Harry Belafonte's appearance at the ALBA/VALB reunions were always electric, as Dan Czitrom and Jo Yurek recall (p. 22). And our celebrations will not be the same without the music of Bruce Barthol, to whom Michael Gene Sullivan pays a powerful tribute (p. 9). The 90-year history of the song Peat Bog Soldiers, which Bruce sang like no one else, is told by Fietje Ausländer (p. 15).

We have several exciting programs planned for this spring and summer (see p. 3), but we're also preparing for the fall, when we'll have a special online event to honor the Lincoln veterans. Stay tuned to our online event calendar and, if you haven't yet, subscribe to our email list (write to [info@alba-valb.org](mailto:info@alba-valb.org)).

Thank you for your ongoing support of ALBA's work. It's your generosity and conviction that keeps us going.

¡Salud!

**Sebastiaan Faber & Peter N. Carroll, Editors**



PS: You may use the envelope in this issue to make a donation or, if you prefer, go to [alba-valb.org/donate](http://alba-valb.org/donate). Recurring donations are most helpful because they allow us to plan ahead. ¡Mil gracias!

## To the Editors:

Wonderful to see a photo of Irving Fajans and to read about him. He was a marvelous human being. In 1963, I hired him to be an instructor in production at the Film School, School of Visual Arts in New York City. He was an admired and respected faculty member, where his classes were popular with students who recognized Irving's deep experiences in both film and life.

— **Everett Aison**

Co-founder, with Silas Rhodes, of the Film School, School of Visual Arts



# ALBA NEWS

IWR's Rachael Guerra Cordero and Nicole Wallace with Mark Wallem and Neal Rosenstein



## Indigenous Women Rising Receives ALBA/Puffin Award

At a moving ceremony in New York City on May 6, Rachael Guerra-Cordero de Lorenzo accepted the 2023 ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism on behalf of Indigenous Women Rising (IWR). "Indigenous people's rights throughout the world have been trampled by colonialism, disrupting our connections with each other, our children, our land and all other living beings," they said. "Our work is built on our own traditional Pueblo and Apache values that our matriarchs are powerful and our children are the future. Abortion has always been a part of our story and our right to our own bodies is the most sacred thing we have." IWR is committed to honoring Native and Indigenous People's inherent right to equitable and culturally safe health options through accessible health education, resources, and advocacy.

"The Supreme Court's deplorable *Dobbs* decision that stripped away federal privacy and reproductive rights is yet another horrifying setback for those seeking to manage their own bodies and health," said Neal Rosenstein, President of The Puffin Foundation. "But the impact of such decisions has always fallen hardest on marginalized populations. That's why the work of Indigenous Women Rising is all the more impactful and important to support."

Jack Mayerhofer, chair of ALBA's Human Rights Committee, led a panel discussion featuring representatives from the three most recent award recipients, IWR, Life Against Hate and My Brother's Keeper. ALBA Vice Chair María Hernández-Ojeda welcomed the guests and asked for a moment of silence to honor friends of ALBA who have passed in recent years, including Perry Rosenstein, Harry Belafonte, Bruce Barthol, Jim Skillman, James Polshek, Manus O'Riordan, Freda Tanz, Corine Thornton, Gwendolyn Hall, and Andrea Sender. Brown University student David Parsard and ALBA board member Nancy Wallach gave moving tributes to Native American vets and to Ruth Davidow, respectively. Stay tuned for notifications to watch the video footage.

One of the largest monetary awards for human rights in the world, the ALBA/Puffin Award is a \$100,000 cash prize granted annually by ALBA and the Puffin Foundation to honor the nearly 3,000 Americans who volunteered in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) to fight fascism under the banner of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

## Two Dozen Teachers Attend ALBA Workshop

This April and May, ALBA once again offered its online workshop for teachers, along with the Massachusetts-based Collaborative for Educational Services. About two dozen teachers spent five weeks learning about the Spanish Civil War and designing curricular materials based on primary sources to address questions about history, activism, and human rights.

## Film Panel Discusses Transitional Justice in Guatemala

On April 18, filmmakers Pamela Yates and ALBA board member Paco de Onís, of Skylight Pictures, joined an online panel to discuss their 2011 documentary *Granito*, which features 2012 ALBA/Puffin Human Rights Award recipient Kate Doyle. See the video on ALBA's website and YouTube channel.

## Workshop on Women in War

On March 8, International Women's Day, ALBA board member Jo Labanyi taught a lively workshop on Women and the Spanish Civil War as part of the Perry Rosenstein Cultural Series, which seeks to engage the general public in small-group discussions that delve into the important questions prompted by historical materials.

## Virtual Tour of the Archive

To introduce newcomers to the ALBA archive collections, the Tamiment Library held a Virtual Tour of its holdings on May 17, guided by Danielle Nista, Tamiment head Shannon O'Neill, and ALBA's Peter Carroll and Sebastian Faber. See the video on ALBA's website and YouTube channel.

## Sacco and Vanzetti Film Screening

On August 23, the 96<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, ALBA will screen and discuss the documentary *Sacco and Vanzetti* (2006), by ALBA Board member Peter Miller, a film that tells the story of the two Italian immigrant radicals executed in 1927 to shed light on present-day issues of civil liberties and the immigrant rights. Join the ALBA email list and keep an eye out for the invitation to register for this online event.

## ALBA Welcomes New Board Member

At its annual board meeting in early May, ALBA welcomed its newest member, Steve Birnbaum, a Bay Area labor attorney specializing in workers' compensation under the Longshore and Harbor Workers' Act. Steve has long been fascinated with the history of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and will be a welcome addition to the board.

## ALBA Honoring the Volunteers at Fall Event

In the past three years, ALBA has honored the Lincoln Veterans during its online spring gala. This year, ALBA's board is striking out in creative new directions to pay tribute to the Vets, engage the community, and honor the annual ALBA/Puffin Human Rights Award recipient at a special event in the fall. Stay tuned to ALBA's social channels for dates and further details.

# Story of the Lincolns Sweeps the National History Day Competition

By Cole Stallone

Iago Macknik-Conde, a high school student from New York City, performed his new one-man play, *The Abraham Lincoln Brigade: The First Desegregated American Fighting Force*, for the National History Day competition this spring. He won 1st place for Senior Individual Performance at the New York City Regional and New York State Contests, moving to the national competition on June 11-15.

ALBA spoke with Iago and his mother, Susanna, to learn more about his personal connection to Spain, including two great-grandparents who served on opposite sides of the Spanish Civil War. Having immigrated from Spain in 1997, Susanna recalled her early memory of Franco's death and Juan Carlos's coronation. She also discussed the failed coup attempt of 1981 to explain why family members had been hesitant to discuss the family history, particularly those who fought on the side of the Republic.

Susanna's paternal grandfather, Ildefonso Martínez-Conde Cantera, was a *practicante* or nurse in Republican Spain. After the war, he was arrested by Franco's police for alleged communist leanings. Some say he was involved with union organizing and that he was arrested because someone else reported him to the police. He was sentenced for a brief time, then served a long jail sentence. His partner, and Susanna's future grandmother, fled to France to avoid persecution. She was held at a concentration camp there with harsh living conditions, though even less was known about her experiences. When Ildefonso was eventually pardoned, he lost his job and was forced to work as a coal trimmer. By the time he was offered his old position, he was ready to retire.

Susanna's maternal grandfather, Enrique García Casal, survived the sinking of the SS Castillo de Olite. Originally conscripted into the Spanish Army, his company was captured by the rebels and was drafted into their army, where he served for three years. He recalled this dramatic finale to his service under Franco in a diary he kept during the war. Advancing with a broken radio, Enrique's group was unaware that the Republi-



cans had been able to retake the city. He described how unprepared they were for the battle soon to come: they were celebrating, drinking wine and eating chocolate. The Republicans didn't want to just sink the ship initially but eventually started shooting at the ship as they failed to heed their warnings. Enrique remembered how his crew believed the gunshots were rebel planes celebrating their arrival or that they were mistaken for "reds." Out of the 1,500, only 600 survived the largest naval disaster involving a single boat in the history of Spain, including Enrique.

With such a rich family history on both sides of the civil war, it's no surprise that Iago has found inspiration in the story of the Lincolns. For this year's National History Day theme, Frontiers in History, his play features two soldiers discussing how the Lincolns were the first racially integrated American military unit. Embodying multiple characters and switching seamlessly between accents, Iago's performance clearly impressed the judges, who awarded him first place. Regardless of the trophies and accolades, Iago's play is a fitting tribute to the Lincolns who dedicated their lives to passing on their stories to the future generations—as Susanna has done for Iago, and as Iago is doing for his peers. No doubt the Lincolns would be deeply touched by his moving portrayal of their important role in breaking new frontiers of history.

ALBA wishes him the best of luck as he continues onto the national competition. ▲

*Cole Stallone is ALBA's Communications Associate.*

# Faces of ALBA

By Sebastiaan Faber

## Michael Koncewicz: “It’s Become Easier to Get Students Interested in Antifascist History”

For close to ten years, the historian Michael Koncewicz, the Michael Nash Research Scholar at Tamiment Library, worked with the ALBA collection on a daily basis. In April, he left the library to become Associate Director at NYU’s Institute for Public Knowledge.



**T**he author of *They Said No To Nixon: Republicans Who Stood Up to the President’s Abuses of Power* (2018), Koncewicz is currently working on a biography of Tom Hayden, a key figure in Students for Democratic Society (SDS). A co-author of the Port Huron Statement and a prominent anti-Vietnam-war activist, Hayden was one of the Chicago Seven, husband of Jane Fonda, and, starting in the mid-1970s, active in California State politics.

*You came to the Tamiment from the Nixon Presidential Library. That’s quite a transition.*

I must say I ended up at the Nixon Library more or less by chance. I’d started my Ph.D. at UC/Irvine in 2008, right when the economy was collapsing. It spurred me to look for summer employment. I’d always been interested in public history and education work. My advisor, Jon Weiner, took our Cold War class on a trip to the library, where we met the director, Tim Naftali. The connection was quickly made. I first did an internship and then became assistant to the director. After Naftali became head of Tamiment in 2014, he suggested I apply to run the Cold War Center here, alongside [Professor] Marilyn Young.

*Still, you wrote your dissertation and first book about Nixon.*

To be precise, it’s about the figures in the Republican Party who stood up to Nixon. When I first got to Irvine, I’d planned to work on antiwar journalists during the Vietnam era. That project eventually became an article. While preparing the Watergate exhibit at the Nixon Library we kept running into stories of Republicans who said no to Nixon. Jon Weiner and I figured there was a book there.

*Over the past 15 years, you’ve moved back and forth between writing about the Left and the Right. Do those histories feel very different to you?*

The archives are certainly different, even if the issues surrounding those archives have some similarities. In my experience, people on the left are more eager to talk in greater detail about their histories. Only a few of those I reached out to for the Nixon book were willing to talk to me. For the Hayden book, it’s a different story altogether.

*In both cases, though, you’re steeped in the 1960s and ‘70s.*

Absolutely. Of course, Nixon and Hayden were dramatically different characters. What links them, though is that they were both political strategists who were defined by the New Left, albeit in very different ways. Both books, in the end, are about people who are conflicted about their own political identity. The Republicans who stood up to Nixon were in favor of a more diplomatic approach to New Left social movements that Hayden represented. They were trying to figure out what the relationship of the state to these movements should be. Hayden, from his end, was trying to figure that out, too.

*A biographer, I’ve been told, enters into a special and often intense relationship with her or his subject. When I interviewed Richard Evans about his Hobsbawm biography, he told me that, when he’d finished, his wife was happy to finally get rid of their live-in dead roommate...*

(Laughs.) Yeah, my wife is certainly sick of my trying to squeeze in a conversation about Tom Hayden when our six-year-old is demanding our attention. But the truth is that I’ve always admired Hayden. I met him only once, when he gave a book at talk Irvine in 2011. He’d brought his own books to sell, in a bag, and not only gave me a deal on them because I didn’t have enough cash on me, but stuck around to talk with me and a fellow grad student about our own experiences with student activism. I’d been an antiwar activist as an undergrad at Central Connecticut University, a small commuter school, from 2002 to 2006, and Hayden was very interested to hear about our group dynamics. It was a great conversation. When I first talked to Tom’s last wife, Barbara, and his son Troy, they were visibly relieved to hear that my encounter with him had been a nice one.

*Had they expected differently?*

Well, he had a well-deserved reputation for grumpiness. But their reaction prepared me for handling Hayden’s many complexities—not only his own personal demons and flaws, but also how he was seen by those who worked with him, from SDS and the broader antiwar movement to people in the California state legislature. Their relationship to Hayden tells us a lot about the way people on the left view leadership, and about Hayden’s lifelong quest to be an insider and an outsider at the same time.



### *How critical of Hayden will your book be?*

When I first talked to Al Haber—who's 86 and still lives in Ann Arbor—he asked me if I planned to write a puff piece. He'd heard that this was going to be an authorized biography and that I was working with the family. I said: "No, that's not my goal," and gave him my pitch. "That sounds good," he said. "Tom deserves a lot of puff—but don't give him a puff piece." The family knows what I'm going for. They are supportive of an independent, critical biography.

### *There's been a certain nostalgic fascination with the 1970s of late. I'm thinking of miniseries like Ms. America, about the Equal Rights Amendment, and Aaron Sorkin's The Trial of the Chicago Seven. How do you feel about that?*

Sorkin's movie has some very serious flaws. But I'm glad it's out there, because helps people understand what I'm writing about and makes for a nice entry point to conversations. In general, it's great that there is a mini boom of interest in the period. And I am encouraged by the fact that some projects—not Sorkin's, but other documentaries and podcasts—are less reliant on memoirs and more focused on social movements.

### *Hayden was also something of a celebrity.*

Yes, he's part of American popular culture, and not just because he was married to Jane Fonda. There are few figures from SDS who get brought up in an episode of *The Simpsons*! (Laughs.) Seriously, there's something unique about Hayden's own life and his network. It's one of a kind. So far, I've interviewed more than 70 people. On the same day, I may talk to a former gang member whom Tom mentored and then brought into his state Senate office to work for him, and then to a Hollywood actor who was one of his close confidants. Then, the next day, I may speak with someone who was at Port Huron, and the day after that, to someone who was part of the Weather Underground. It's crazy.

### *As you said earlier, he straddled different worlds.*

Exactly. It also shows how the New Left influenced American culture and politics, even if in the end they lost out to the neoliberal turn in the Democratic Party.

### *Will you be tempted in your book to draw political lessons for the present?*

Yes, I think I will—and I'm being encouraged by several people to do so. Those lessons are there, both in things that Tom did and that, if he were alive, he'd probably admit he would do differently. I think recent work on the New Left has been too quick to dismiss it for its rejection of the Old Left and its focus on individual rights, which—the claim is—helped pave the way for the rise of neoliberalism. There's something to that argument, but anyone who's a bit more knee-deep in this history knows that is a little too neat of a story, if not a caricature. If you go back and reread the Port Huron statement, for example, you'll see that the line between the Old Left and the New is murkier than most people assume. The statement is much less anti-union than it's made out to be. Plus, there's a reason people are mad at the unions in the 1960s. I mean, should SDS have supported the war in Vietnam, as the unions did?

### *At the Tamiment, you've been knee-deep in the Old Left every day. How have these ten years changed your views of the 1930s and its legacies?*

That's a good question. I'd say my views have improved. On the other hand, it could hardly be otherwise: if you're working with these materials on a daily basis and your own politics are leftist, you're going to be predisposed to just liking these people and organizations. Having said that, I was never one to pick sectarian fights, even as a student activist in Connecticut. I took pride in that and I still do. That also means I never really had any generational anger towards the Old Left, the New Left, or the current left. That's just not who I am. So while my respect for 1930s left wing-history certainly increased as I learned more about it at Tamiment, it was not some sort of dramatic shift for me. I'm very interested in figures, moments, and movements that take a big-tent approach to organizing. That's perhaps one of the reasons I was recruited to do the Hayden project. Hayden was never above picking fights with certain groups and pissing people off, but in the end he was committed to that big-tent approach as well. I mean, for all the differences between the Old and New Left, the SDS kids in 1962 were protecting a Communist so he could attend their meeting! As much as they criticize the Old Left, they actually wanted to preserve the space that existed in the 1930s.

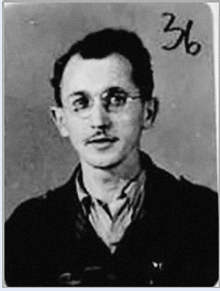
Another lesson to draw from Tom Hayden's life relates to the importance of institution building. As much as he was known as being someone who was in favor of horizontal organizing and decentralization, he was one of the few figures from the New Left who really prioritized institutions, particularly in his later years. Given what's happened on the left over the last several years, what I'm struck by is that younger people are not really interested in this debate about whether or not you should have an inside or outside strategy. Instead, more people are willing to try both. Hayden's work in California is an example of that, but the Tamiment archives also show that there were also plenty of radical activists in New York, say, who tried to maintain a relationship with Albany, so to speak.

### *Why should people twenty years younger than you be interested in the history of the Left, Old or New?*

That's a big question. Over the past ten years, I've taught in traditional classroom settings at CUNY and NYU, but also a lot in the Tamiment classroom spaces when groups come to visit the archives. When I started doing that, in 2014 or 2015, it was a challenge to get students to care. That changed in 2016-17, when it suddenly became a much easier sell to get students interested in antifascist movements. This is especially evident with the ALBA collections. I saw it continue to expand, even during the pandemic when we're teaching online classes.

### *What does that tell us?*

I think present-day events are doing a lot of the work to get students to care—whether it's the Old Left or the New Left or any sort of movement or organization that has fought for worker rights, fought against fascism, and fought for a better world. I have seen students making clear links between the past and the present and looking through journals of activists from 110 years ago and understanding their concerns and seeing how it's relevant today. ▲



# HUGO HEURICH'S CONVICTIONS

By Chris Brooks

Lincoln veteran Hugo Heurich (1908-1982) was born in Germany and had emigrated to the US in 1929. He arrived in Spain in March 1937 and returned to the US in December 1938. In November 2020, his great-nephew, Armin Heurich, contacted ALBA in November 2020 looking for additional information to include in his great uncle's oral history, *These Are My Convictions*, which includes a series of interviews conducted by Dr. Bert Riesterer in October 1980. Armin Heurich edited the work and added footnotes and illustrations to contextualize the interviews.

The excerpts below are from the 145-page manuscript, which covers Heurich's entry to the United States, work history, entry into Spain, and service in the International Brigades. In Spain, Heurich served as a driver carrying supplies, casualties, and passengers across Republican Spain. The full text details the bombardment of Almería, Heurich's battle with typhoid, interactions with the Spanish people, and his life after returning to the US. One of his more unique experiences included transporting a Spanish filmmaker who was documenting the war. As the driver, Heurich was ever-present during the filmmaking, which landed him the opportunity to appear in the documentary. For more excerpts, visit *The Volunteer's* online edition at [albavolunteer.org](http://albavolunteer.org).

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**BR: Did you have to give up your passport at Figueres when you crossed over, did they take it away from you?**

HH: Our passports were handed over to the authorities from the International Brigade. I myself kept it as a personal object, which was very dear to me. I always had it on my chest, connected with a little rope, string, always underneath my shirt. I carried that as long as I...

**BR: How did you get away with it? That you did not have to give it up when often many of the others had to surrender their passports as soon as they got over?**

HH: I said I misplaced mine, and I could not find it, but had done this on purpose. I felt that this was my only thing if I wanted to come back to America. That I would be able to have a passport and proof because I was actually a German. But I was a naturalized American citizen and that was so dear to me, that thing, I had to keep it, and I kept it. I could not part with it. That was worth more money than anything else. Otherwise, I would not know which country I belonged to anymore.

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**BR: Remember when suddenly in '39, to everybody's surprise, Stalin and Hitler made that agreement, the Stalin Hitler pact in 1939? And shortly after that the Nazis invaded Poland. Many guys who were on the left, CP, or socialists, or whatever, this came as a real shock, a real blow to them.**

HH: I could have fallen into the shitpot.

**BR: I just wanted to ask you how you felt about this when this came, because here your Spanish memory was still very vivid, right? And all of a sudden you get this. What did you think? How did you feel about this?**

HH: I was deadly sick when I heard about that, and I could not understand it. We thought we accomplished something in order to prevent fascism, and then the one power...

**BR: Who had really supported you...**

HH: Shook hands with the power we were trying to defeat. That just did not make any sense to me whatsoever. And I still don't quite understand it at all. Was it stalling for time or what? I am not so intelligent to understand that. And I guess that it was not even understandable for any intelligent man. Because it shook the world, like the Russian Revolution at the beginning for ten days shook the world. So that was a week that shook the world. It could not be understood, what it was all about. What was the intention? I don't recall that we ever found out, what really was behind it.

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**BR: Looking back over your whole life, how do you feel about things now? Do you have any regrets? [...]**

HH: Well I must tell you, there were times where really I felt hurt, or in a way, I just could not believe that anything like that could happen. After all I always felt, like I stated before, that things eventually will happen for the betterment of all people or all mankind. But as far as you ask me here in regards to it all, it really was a disaster at that time, but nevertheless I never gave up. I always remained a stable person as far as my conviction that brought me to Spain was concerned. I still believe in it and I always will. Because through human life, through the history of any person's life, you have ups and downs which was at that particular time when it happened between Moscow and Berlin. It was a total disaster and did a lot of damage for the whole idealist thinking. But I, as a whole, still am the same Hugo that I always was and will be. These are my convictions of the whole period I lived through.

**BR: And you still basically have the same convictions today. That the basic goal that you were striving for to have a better social and economic order for all mankind and ideally bring about a real unity of mankind, you still hold to that?**

HH: Yes, that still is my aim, and I would consider myself a coward if I would have changed or fell into the other line or way of thinking. ▲

# PALESTINIAN VOLUNTEERS IN SPAIN: AN EXCHANGE

## To the Editors:

I've just read Nevine Abraham's article about the Palestinian volunteer Ali Abd el-Khaleq in your last number ("Liberating Palestine in Spain"). I'm very happy you touched this topic and raised a bit of light into this little-known participation. Thanks.

But I'm sorry to say there are some important mistakes in the text as it's basically based on the novel by Hussein Yassin, which mixes reality and fiction. The main issue is that Yassin, while talking about his work, does not make clear which parts of his book are fictional and which are based on proven and verifiable facts and, even if he knows part of what he tells is not true, he explains it as if it was, and misinformation is being spread.

Ali Abd el-Khaleq never fought in Madrid and never was a Naftali Botwin Commander. There is absolutely no proof of that. Botwin's unit has plenty of bibliography where you can check that this unit never fought in the Madrid front. It was constituted in Aragón by the end of 1937, and it only fought in Aragón, Extremadura, and the Ebro. Actually, the documents at the RGASPI archives show that Ali Abdulkhalik died in the battle that took place March 17, 1938, in Sierra Acebuche, in Extremadura, 332 km away from Madrid. According to the different texts, this was his first battle in Spain, as it was also the first battle of the unit. And it was a disaster. The big majority of the members disappeared or died after they were poorly equipped and received instructions in Spanish, which the majority didn't understand. Ali died there. He never was in Madrid nor was a commander. Ali's role in the Arabization process of the PCP, which is also mentioned in the article, is also unclear, and the reasons he traveled to Spain are more complex than the romantic ones Yassin portrays.

Hussein Yassin's book has the merit of speaking of hitherto unknown volunteers, which is something really important—but his book is full of inaccuracies, inventions and incoherences which cannot be taken for truth. I just hope that with all this legitimate romantic enthusiasm about recovering the memory of some volunteers we don't break into spreading misinformation. Thanks for your memorialistic task, which is of great importance.

**Marc Almodóvar | Barcelona**

## To the Editors:

When my father died at 90 in 2006, I was the one of his 6 children, canceling his many, many progressive publications. Among them was *The Volunteer*. He had shared it with me for over a decade and it's the only publication I could not cancel. I took over the subscription instead.

The Spanish Civil War, and the role of the International Brigades has been deep in my family's roots. Our mother Sonia DeVries raised funds as a grade schooler in Amsterdam, the Netherlands for the Republican anti-fascist forces. My aunt, Hennie Steinweg, took me to meet one of the surviving members of the Dutch international brigade when I was in my mid-30s. My father gave me Arthur Landis's book, *Spain the Unfinished Revolution*, in 1979 with this inscription: "If I were asked today, what was the greatest mistake of my life I would

without hesitation, say: 'not going to Spain to join the international brigades fighting against fascism.'"

I'm writing to tell you how incredibly happy I am to see the story by Nevine Abraham, "Liberating Palestine in Spain," about Najati Sidqi and other Palestinians who fought Franco. The issue of Palestine must be central to any liberatory framework in the work for a more just world.

Thank you, ALBA, for making this important connection with Palestine and for all you do.

**Carla Wallace | Louisville, Kentucky**

## Nevine Abraham Responds:

Hussein Yassin's novel is historical fiction, a key component of which is the author's imagination. In fact, when I asked Yassin during my interview how he would like his readers to read *Ali*, he emphasized that he would like them to appreciate the imaginary component of his writing, including Ali's romantic encounters or his flashbacks of the cities where Arab revolts were occurring.

Mr. Almodóvar's claim that Yassin's novel "mixes reality and fiction" or "spreads misinformation" is therefore not pertinent. Yassin, who does not claim to be an historian, has the right to paint Ali as a hero if he wishes to do so, and to present his reasons for travel in any way he deems appealing.

While my essay navigates between the novel's treatment of Ali and contextualizing the story historically, I clearly distinguish between the two.

It's true that Ali Abdel Khaliq never fought in Madrid. By the time my essay was published, I had not yet been able to confirm the place of his death. My archival research since led me to a record that confirmed Ali died at the Extremadura front. Still, some references list Madrid as the city of combat and use Madrid in their titles. This may have led Yassin to believe that Madrid was the arena of battle, as he told me. None of this, of course, changes the fact that Ali volunteered for combat.

While it's correct that Ali did not command the Naftali Botwin Company, in his book *From Madrid to Berlin* (1966), Israel Centner praises Ali's cross-national solidarity and fraternity, political ideas, intellectual acuity, and eloquence, characteristics he describes as "suited for a commander." Yassin told me he envisioned Ali as a hero and a commander in light of Centner's note. Still, it would have been better to write: "he joined the Naftali Botwin Company and was described as someone with traits suited for a commander."

Contrary to what Mr. Almodóvar claims, my essay does not state that Ali had any role in the Arabization of the PCP—a process that, as I point out, was promoted by the Comintern. Mr. Almodóvar's misreading is symptomatic of his obsessive focus on factual detail, which, frankly, diverts attention from—and undermines the literary value of—the novel. Given the absence of an English translation of Yassin's work, my essay sought to inform the readers of *The Volunteer* of its existence and the historical context of Ali's journey from Palestine to Spain to fight fascism. I am grateful to Ms. Wallace for expressing her appreciation for that effort. ▲





# The Musical Conscience of Bruce Barthol (1947-2023)

By Michael Gene Sullivan

**Bruce Barthol, a fixture at the ALBA/VALB reunions, was the unapologetic, rebellious, musical heart of the Tony award-winning, never silent, always revolutionary San Francisco Mime Troupe. With sardonic wit, cutting sarcasm, a vast knowledge of history, and a broad understanding of everything political, Bruce Barthol wrote lyrics that outraged, broke hearts, and inspired. A tribute.**

**B**ruce Barthol was spirited, argumentative, brilliant, contrary and collaborative, cool and cranky, passionately pissed and hysterically funny, laid back, but always a twitch away from launching into an argument about anything and everything. He was the rock-bass-playing radical who became one of the most talented and prolific composer/lyricists in American musical theatre. He was stoned, he was sober, he was high, and he was low—but he was always there for the work of changing the world for the better.

I first saw Bruce when he took me to Golden Gate Park to see a play and there, in the middle of a meadow, was a small funky stage, a band, hundreds of audience members, and a wooden sign—“The San Francisco Mime Troupe.”

But there were no people in black tights who tried to get out of imaginary boxes, walked against imaginary wind, or pulled imaginary ropes! And it was absolutely not silent. Instead it was music, singing, comedy, and best of all...politics! “Factwino Meets The Moral Majority” was a wonderful combination of underground comix, zany cartoons, and passionate politics hilariously skewering the proto-fascistic religious fundamentalists/evangelical con men who preyed on the faithful, promoting prejudice for profit and power. And just when I thought these revolutionary truths and hijinks couldn’t get any better, a new character entered the stage: the two-headed villain behind every throne and presidential handshake, The Creature behind every curtain! Armageddonman—who strode onto stage with vicious glee and outrageous enjoyment, and then sang!



From “Armageddonman” (“Factwino Meets the Moral Majority”):

*Can you guess just who we are?  
One part business, one part war.  
We own the weapons, banks and land—  
Call us Armageddonman!*

*There is less, but want more,  
So we take it from the poor.  
You can't stop us no one can—  
Because we're Armageddonman!*

*Karl Marx predicted our demise,  
But its on crisis that we thrive.  
Find a new market, or a war will do  
And we'll see our historic mission through!  
Even though our race is almost run,  
When we are through you'll all be done.  
And what we don't use up we'll blow  
away—  
On that Armageddon day!*

Actually, it was two guys in a single costume, a couple of artists dedicated to overthrowing the military industrial complex by any means necessary, including farcically embodying it in a duel supervillain suit. Individually, they were Dan Chumley and the composer/lyricist of the Mime Troupe, Bruce Barthol. But together they were the two-headed supervillain: Armageddonman!

Some would say Bruce Barthol was already Rock & Roll Royalty by then. But if that were true, I think he would have immediately fomented a revolution against himself. Bruce was imbued from childhood with a hunger for justice and had developed a generous well of pissed-off-ness he could draw on at any time. Though born in Berkeley, for a brief time he learned about fascism first-hand when his family experienced Franco’s dictatorship in Spain. He then returned to the U.S., where his parents pointed out the fascistic tendencies here at home, along with all our homegrown class warfare, hypocrisy, and violent racism.

So, of course, he ended up studying at the University of California at Berkeley. Bruce arrived at UCB just in time for the explosion of the Free Speech Movement. Sit-ins, strikes, occupying buildings—all in the name of educational freedom, of Civil Rights, of teaching real politics and history rather than just corporatist propaganda... You know, all the freedoms of educational thought Conservatives are still at war with.

And it was in that cauldron of revolution that a fellow musician invited Bruce to join him in a jam session with another musician, Joe Macdonald—who went by the nickname Country Joe.

A year later, Bruce had dropped out of Berkeley and was off touring with Country Joe and The Fish, one of the biggest political folk/rock bands of the '60s. Suddenly, he was in the vanguard of artists speaking out against The Vietnam War. Their song “Feel Like I’m Fixin’ To Die Rag” (“1, 2, 3, 4, what are we fighting for? Don’t ask me, I don’t give a damn, next stop is Vietnam!”) was an anthem of the anti-war movement. They performed at protests and in concerts

across the United States and Europe, including the legendary 1967 Monterey Pop Festival. Bruce's love of politics seemed to make him a perfect fit for the musical movement, but his inability to go-along-to-get-along also meant that he couldn't agree with what he saw as fundamentally bad political decisions by the band. So, while it was predictable, it was still a big disappointment when he was voted out of the band for refusing to endorse a denouncement of Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies before the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. (Trust me, it's a long, weird story.)

After a stint in Europe with a new band, Bruce returned to the Bay Area, where the drummer Barry Levitan introduced him to The San Francisco Mime Troupe. Founded in 1959 as a theater "Of, By, and For the Working Class," the Troupe had been performing its particular brand of political musical comedy for almost two decades by the time Bruce became its lyricist.

I couldn't possibly note all the work Bruce did during the Reagan years—just so many wrongs to ridicule and critique—but of particular note were his songs about the United States' habit of supporting any dictator, however brutal, who promises to support Capitalism over Socialism:

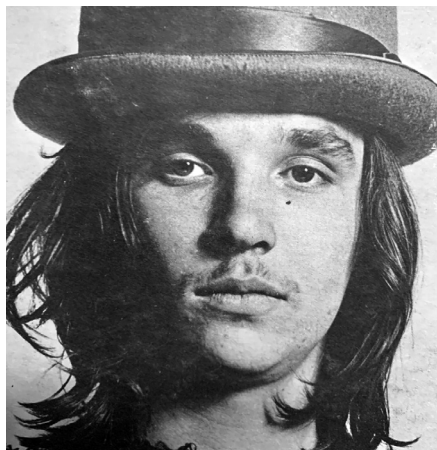
From "The Three Dictators Song" ("1985"):

*Hey, we're glad to see ya, American guy!  
We're the best friends that your money can buy.  
We're fighting for freedom, and getting paid—  
We're Marcos, Mubutu, and Pinochet!*

The struggles of unionism:

*"Standing With The Union," written with Eduardo Robledo ("Steeltown")—*

*Supervisor tell me  
"Rose, you better go on home,"  
I came three thousand miles,  
not they're telling me to go!  
Then Rudy from the union say  
there's one he know,*



*"Rose is working here -  
The rest of you can go!"  
That's why I'm standing with the Union  
Yeah I'm standing with the Union,  
'Cause the union stood by me!*

And his powerful and haunting musical documenting of a massacre of fighters for The Republic by fascist soldiers during the Spanish Civil War:

From "Badajoz" ("Spain"):

*We saw the dust clouds grow large in the distance,  
We shut the strong gates, and we took to the walls.  
But raffles can't hold off a motorized column,  
And rifles are useless when bombs start to fall...*

Bruce wrote for the oppressed, creating wrenchingly personal songs and soaring, inspiring anthems, chronicling revolutions. And he always had a special affinity for those great souls who fought against Franco's fascists during the Spanish Civil War. His admiration for their selflessness and dedication to freedom shone through, not only in his work on that play, but also in his years with the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (VALB) and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA). Each year Bruce worked tirelessly to help organize their annual reunions, sharing with audiences the importance of music for resistance.

In 1989, Bruce wrote one of his most beautiful, hopeful songs, about the struggle for a two-state solution between Palestine and Israel:

From "This is the Year" ("Seeing Double"):

*This is the year of the possibility  
Take a chance, stop the downward slide  
Drop the guns, and take the hand,  
That's reaching out from the other side.*

*You can hear the clock is ticking  
You can see there's not much time  
There is no god in the Holy Land,  
Just people screaming  
I want mine...*

A tragic farce, "Seeing Double" toured for years across the United States, plus runs off Broadway, at the Kennedy Center, and a short run in East and West Jerusalem. Bruce's song was the climax of the show; it brought audiences to tears of hope and heartbreak whenever it was performed.

Bruce knew how to structure scenes to build emotionally and comedically to justify song moments, and how to find the outrageousness in heartbreaking situations in such a way that did not undermine the terrible truths of class warfare.

From "Steal, Murder, and Lie" ("Social Work"):

*It's not just that they're ignorant  
Or that they loot and rob,  
But as rulers of the Earth  
They're doing a very bad job!  
Their arrogance is monstrous  
Their ignorance profound  
But the world will not stand still for them,  
The wheel will turn around—  
They stand on a volcano,  
And they do not even know,  
Unless there is some justice soon,  
The whole things gonna blow!*

*Because they steal, Murder, and Lie!*

Or in our show about the impoverishment brought by Free Trade designed to enrich the wealthiest 20 percent while further impoverishing the already poor 80 percent:

From "80/20" ("Offshore"):

*20 percent live on dry land,  
While 80 percent drift out to sea!*

*20 percent have more than they need,  
While 80 percent have next to nothing!*

*On a good day you will assemble chips,  
On a bad day you'll wash windows and beg  
for tips!  
Or go out to the dump, and pick through the  
trash,  
And scheme and dream of anyway to get some  
cash!*

Anthems were Bruce's specialty. For instance, his song from our play about environmental degradation and food poverty in the name of profit.

From "Rule of the Bottom Line" ("Eating It"):

*I think we all must be from mars,  
Or from some planet circling a distant star.  
That's why we can take the risks we take,  
And why we can make the choices that we  
make.  
We're just visiting, not staying around,  
So we can poison the water, the air and  
ground.  
After all why should we care?  
We know we'll be returning to our home  
out there!*

In 2000, when longtime Resident Playwright Joan Holden retired from The Troupe, Bruce stayed on, fighting the good fight to overthrow capitalism one musical comedy at a time, chronicling the lament of a homeless vet in our play about an America perpetually at war.

From "A Shot And A Bottle Of Beer" ("Veronique of the Mounties"):

*I came back sick from the first Gulf War  
The V.A. said I was fine.  
I punched my commanding office  
When he told me not to whine!*

*Then the Army they cashiered me  
After serving nineteen years  
So come on, Dot, gimme a shot  
A shot and a bottle of beer,*

*I'm an invisible man who sleeps in his van  
I don't know how I got this way,  
But I'm heading down the tubes  
Along with the U S of A.*



Or in the case of our play about the fight for Reason against impending American theocracy.

From "There Are The Times That Try Men's Souls" ("GodFellas"):

*This very life you lead, even you're right to  
be,*

*Comes with intrinsic responsibilities  
You must engage, and to not ignore  
The threat to freedom standing at the door!  
We can see the armies of the night,  
Who's superstitions kill the light,  
Of reason and of liberty -  
Is that the world we want to see?  
Survival is a form of resistance!  
If we die or give up, then they win.  
I don't have a plan or a roadmap, but  
Let's begin, let's begin, let's begin!*

One of his last Troupe songs was, in many ways, a perfect Bruce Barthol call to arms: rebellious, truthful, angrily anti-Capitalist, inspiring, and hopeful.

"Armageddon" ("2012, the Musical!"):

*Armageddon— just a distraction*

*To help the forces of reaction!  
Apocalyptic visions of annihilation  
Breeds more fear, and alienation*

*In the US of amnesia,  
Where it where so many seek anesthesia,  
Crucial to controlling us is that we be  
afraid  
So we don't see how we're being played...*

*Played by the bankers who made the  
economy fail,*

*Who kept what they stole and stayed out  
of jail.  
Played by the media moguls who constantly  
lie,  
Who distract and distort while democracy  
dies*

*Life— just a series of business transactions  
With ever increasing resource extraction!  
The world, sustained, can meet all of our  
needs  
But not when run for corporate greed!  
But not when run for corporate greed!*

*When the people are no longer afraid  
Is when they'll take to the barricades!  
So stride on through the lies and spin  
You just can't let the bastards win!  
We just can't let.... the bastards win!*

Bruce never stopped being an artist, a history nerd, a Defiant Defender of the Left, and the smartest hippie in the room.

And wherever there is a gritty revolutionary trying to rhyme "oligarchical capitalist swine" in such a way that is both important and hilarious, or a band is blaring out a worker's anthem designed to uplift, infuriate, inform, and inspire, I gotta think Bruce will be in the corner, his fist in the air, a sly smile on his face, and his gravelly voice whispering "Right on, brother!"

*Michael Gene Sullivan is an actor, writer, director, and teacher whose plays have been performed around the world. His directing credits include work with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, The San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, and The African American Shakespeare Festival.*



# THE CUP OF FREE SPAIN: A REPUBLICAN MEMORY RESTORED

By Dean Burrier Sanchis



**After a yearslong campaign in the face of official resistance, a working-class Spanish soccer club can finally claim the cup they rightfully won during the civil war.**

**O**n March 25, 2023, *La Copa de la España Libre*, a soccer tournament played during the Spanish Civil War, was finally recognized by the Spanish Football Federation. It had been won in 1937 by Levante, a humble Valencian club born in the heart of El Cabanyal, a working-class port community historically outside of the city limits, made famous by artists like painter Joaquín Sorolla and novelist Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. Known for a stoic fan base and an amazing history of perseverance amid struggles, debts, and disappointing results, Levante finally has its first and only official title to its name.

Echoing the efforts of the memory movement in other areas, this recognition rewards decades of hard work on the part of dedicated club historians in the face of constant resistance from official agencies. (For comparison's sake, the legitimacy of the 1939 Copa del Generalísimo, Franco's first national soccer tournament, has never been called into question.) It's a story of courage and honor, both on and off the pitch, that puts the spotlight on some exceptional heroes behind Spanish football's longest-ignored trophy. It also showcases the way the Spanish

Republic used sports to rally support, as well as the precarious circumstances of players who shared wartime responsibilities on the front with footballing duties on weekends.

In 1937, the Republican government, which had been moved from Madrid to Valencia the previous year, organized two football competitions to bring some normalcy to life during the war: a League (*la Liga del Mediterráneo*) and a Cup (*la Copa de la España Libre*), modeled after the national tournament that had been held before the war, the *Copa de la República*. It's worth pointing out that the national Cup had a greater importance than today's *Copa del Rey*: teams competed through regional groupings—with brutal local rivalries and bragging rights at stake—to gain access via the league table to a national tournament that culminated the season. (Today, all teams qualify into often anticlimactic national pairings and most bow out long before the season even reaches its midpoint.)

In that historic season of 1937, Levante's side featured legendary players like Agustinet Dolz and Gaspar Rubio as they took on Valencia CF in the final, which was played in Barcelona. Both teams had qualified for the tournament via

the Mediterranean League. Although today the Valencian Derby of Levante-Valencia may favor the latter, in those years, Levante was the stronger club, possessing more history, recognition, and regional titles. The game remained tied at zero for a long time, until the 78<sup>th</sup> minute, when Agustinet Dolz delivered the decisive cross to striker José García-Nieto Romero (*Nieto* for short), a 1-0 goal that sealed the score line. As it happened, both players were also famous Republican soldiers, whose efforts on the battlefield won renown to rival their legendary efforts on the football pitch.

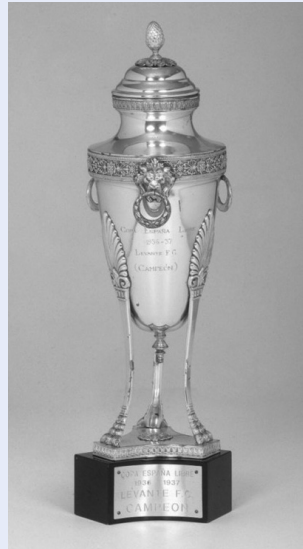
Dolz, from El Cabanyal, was legendary for his assists. He left his impact on football slang in Spain: the phrase “Bombeja Agustinet”—roughly “Launch it, Agustinet” or “Bomb it, Agustinet”—is still used today. Known for having a glove for a foot, Dolz could perfectly place a cross for his teammates to score, his most famous one precisely being the one Nieto used to score that only goal in that 1937 Cup final. Dolz fought in the Battle of Teruel, coming back from the front on weekends to play for Levante. He was later imprisoned and held in a Franco concentration camp. When he finally returned to football, he would only play for Levante, spending the rest of his life connected to the club.

Nieto, the goal scorer, also saw time at the front, serving the Republic in the Battle of the Ebro. He later escaped to France, where he was held in a concentration camp at Argelès-Sur-Mer. A French football club, FC Sète, pulled strings to have him released to sign him for the French League side. He, too, eventually returned to Spain to play for Levante.

Under Franco’s dictatorship, Levante was stripped of the national title and the entire history of that legendary season was erased. The official lie that “football was not played in Republican-Spain” is still repeated in some histories of Spanish Football. Valencia CF, the rival in that 1937 final, has a historical record from the Francoist era that falsely claims that “the club had no official activity” during the war years. These claims have since been completely debunked, as historians have documented well over 400 games played during the Spanish Civil War in Republican-controlled territory alone.

Beyond that erasure of history, the Franco regime attempted to dismantle Levante and all that it had come to symbolize as the darling club of a working-class fishermen community that was staunchly Republican in their sympathies and whose idols were Republican war heroes. Not coincidentally, that same community was the most-bombed area in Metropolitan Valencia by the Nationalists. Between early 1937 and march of 1939, it was hit by at least 400 bombs causing at least 825 deaths, according to historians Felipe Bens and José Luis García Nieves, who also had a role in recovering the history of the 1937 Cup. Bens and García, who have written four massive books covering Levante’s 100-year history, document how Levante FC’s stadium, damaged during the war, was later occupied by Franco’s military, leaving the club without a stadium for its matches, land to sell, or compensation from the seizure of the stadium—a virtual death sentence.

Then, in a dictatorial effort to erode the club’s fervent, leftist base, Levante FC were cornered into a merger with Gimnástico, a right-leaning, city-based club born out of Catholic Youth



organizations—the virtual antithesis of Levante’s roots. What prompted the merger was the fact that Levante had no stadium—which wasn’t true—and that Gimnástico did not have enough players. In any case, the move displaced the club from its maritime roots in El Cabanyal to Valencia proper, and saw the club assume its current name Levante Unión Deportiva (Levante UD).

Once a regional powerhouse with a nationally-recognized youth system and several long Cup runs, Levante withered away, suffering a series of debacles that condemned it to the lower tiers of Spanish football. The club only managed to climb back up to the Spanish First Division in 1963 and did not sustain itself as a consistent First Division club until the 2010s, when it qualified for a European competition for the first time.

Even amongst fans, the distant memory of the moment when “*El Llevant va guanyar una copa*” (Valencian for “Levante won a cup”) was buried during the dictatorship and the years of lackluster results. Indeed, a generation of fans not alive during the glory years were stunned when they first heard of a time when their club were giants and champions. Emilio Nadal was one such fan. Though he now works in a formal role with the club, he spent 25 years researching and laying the groundwork for the recognition of the title, he even managed to find the actual trophy, hidden away in an attic. The recognition was the result of a sustained community effort involving everyday fans, club historians, media, lawyers, and club directors. Fans had been demanding recognition of the cup with banners at Levante matches for many years.

Now, Levante fans feel a sense of relief. As García Nieves explains, “We had normalized the situation of non-recognition. Even when everyone knew the Cup was played, that it was legal, and that Levante won, we had normalized a feeling of inferiority because the official recognition never came. This history of ours was at risk of vanishing like an old lament in a grandfather’s tale.”

Finally, 85 years after winning the title, Levante has honored the legacy of its ancestors and restored its rightful place as one of the 19 clubs in Spain to have won a national title. Descendants of both the 1937 squad and early Levante fans can now properly celebrate that title and the historic and noble effort those players and fans made to bring some level of normalcy and joy to a nation under fascist assault. The Spanish Football federation—which found itself out of excuses and cornered by the 2022 Law of Democratic Memory of 2022—has been forced to recognize the title and present the cup before cheering fans in the Estadio Ciutat de València. The trophy serves as a testament to the resilience of historical memory and the perseverance of those who fight to recover it. ▲

*Dean Burrier Sanchis is a high school Spanish Teacher and Soccer Coach at Elk Grove High School. His Spanish-born grandfather, Vicente Sanchis Amades, was a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.*



# Honoring the Mac-Paps in Azuara, Spain

By Daniel Czitrom



**E**ighty-five years ago a dozen volunteers, part of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion of the International Brigades, lost their lives while providing cover for their retreating comrades in the town of Azuara, in the Aragon region of Spain. In March 1938 they were part of what came to be known as the Great Retreats from the massive offensive launched by Fascist forces against Republican units in the Aragon. This particular group embodied the global makeup of the men and women who came to the aid of the Spanish Republic: 8 Finns, 3 Canadians, and one American.

On March 11, 2023, Azuara hosted a tribute to these long forgotten anti-Fascist fighters, placing a plaque with their names and in memory of all members of the International Brigades. A bouquet of flowers (red, yellow and blue) accompanied a banner with photos of the volunteers. The event attracted coverage from Finnish national television, support from the City Council of Azuara, and its mayor, Joaquin Alconchel, and an enthusiastic audience of about 50 local citizens.

After the dedication, Erik Salvador Artigas led a guided tour of the main scenes of the battle, including various caves below

the hill facing the village. One was an ammo dump, but others were full of civilians hiding from the fighting. One old woman remembered as a child coming out after the battle and having to step over thirteen dead Mac-Paps to go back to her destroyed family house. The group then walked up the hill, with its spectacular view of the village, where the men met their fate.

I was asked to write a tribute to Leo Gordon, the lone American and my father's cousin, which was read aloud at the event. I had vaguely learned about his death while growing up. But it was only when I began digging into his life and his experiences in Spain, that I realized what a truly heroic death he and his Mac-Pap comrades had endured. Nearly a century later, Azuara remembers. ▲

*Daniel Czitrom is Chair Emeritus of the ALBA Board of Governors. Visit the online edition at [albavolunteer.org](http://albavolunteer.org) to read his tribute to Leo Gordon.*



Just back from a mission behind Franco's lines, probably late 1937. From left to right: Bill Aalto, a Spanish guerrilla fighter, Alex Kunslich, and Irv Goff.

## The History and Mystery of a Photograph

This photograph of Lincoln brigadiers Bill Aalto, Alex Kunslich and Irv Goff, with a Spanish comrade, depicts something rare, possibly unique. Aalto, Goff and Kunslich were three of only a handful of Lincolns recruited to operate as part of the Republican guerrilla forces behind enemy lines during the war of 1936-39 in Spain. The photograph appeared in the memoirs of Lincoln vet Milt Felsen, *The Anti Warrior*, published in 1989 by the University of Iowa Press. Yet the photograph was not among the materials of Felsen's donated to the ALBA archive after his death, or among any papers or documentation related to Goff, Aalto, or Kunslich. If anyone has any information about the photograph or if anyone is in contact with Milt Felsen's family, please let us know ([info@alba-valb.org](mailto:info@alba-valb.org)). —Helen Graham





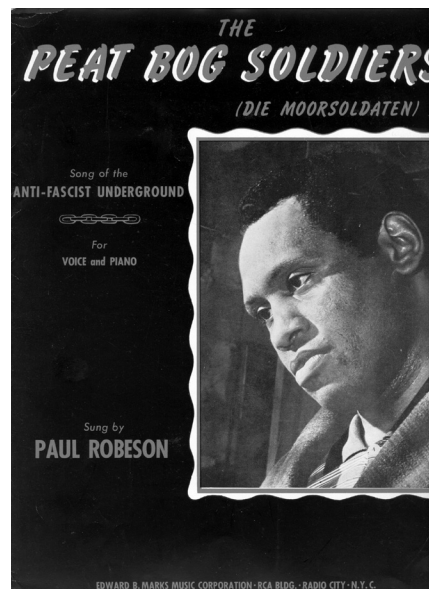
of bog work carried out with the simplest of equipment, the daily routine that is always the same, the painful longing for family, and the life-threatening conditions of imprisonment, culminating in the sixth stanza, which expresses the hope for an end to imprisonment—but which at the same time can be understood as a general expectation of the future: the end of Nazi rule. All of it sung before the camp commander and 60 guards.

The camp song was written by three communists: the miner Johann Esser (1896-1971), the actor Wolfgang Langhoff (1901-1966), and Rudi Goguel (1908-1976), a commercial employee. Langhoff had had the idea, Esser had found the appropriate words, and Goguel had composed the melody. According to various sources, Langhoff slightly edited Esser's text before the premiere. Officially, the song was banned almost immediately. But as a camp and freedom hymn, soon titled "Die Moorsoldaten" or "Lied der Moorsoldaten," it had long since taken root in the hearts and minds of the prisoners. There was no way to stop the song from making its way out of the camp through releases and transfers and then halfway around the world.

### An Anti-Fascist Protest Song

In 1935, meanwhile, Wolfgang Langhoff, who was living in from Switzerland, published his book *Die Moorsoldaten. 13 Months in a Concentration Camp*, in which he describes the song's genesis and the "Circus Konzentrations" in detail. Seven translations followed the same year. The American edition appeared as *Rubber Truncheon* with a foreword by Lion Feuchtwanger. Even before that, the lyrics to the song had been published by several foreign newspapers. From 1936 onward, the song also found its way into many other camps of the Nazi regime, including Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald. In 1944-45 it was also sung by German inmates in the POW camps of the US Army.

Among the exiles from Nazi Germany, the camp hymn from Börgermoor developed early on into an anti-fascist protest song. In early 1935, the composer Hanns Eisler (1898-1962) became acquainted with the song in London, where he arranged the melody for the singer Ernst Busch (1900-1980). With a reduced, three-stanza version of the



song in his luggage, Eisler traveled to the USA, where from February 1935 on, he included it in his repertoire for a longer concert and lecture tour, where it was most often sung by the Jewish baritone Mordecai Bauman (1912-2007), his constant companion on the tour. The song immediately became popular in the anti-fascist and left-wing cultural scene in the USA. Its spread was spurred on by the rapid translation into English, written by Victor Jerome (1896-1965), to whose adaptation all three-verse English-language recordings of the song can be traced back to this day.



In Europe, too, the song's journey continued apace. Ernst Busch traveled to the Soviet Union and sang it on the radio there. In January 1936, he made the first recording of the song in Moscow. In December 1937, in the midst of the Spanish Civil War, he cut another recording in Barcelona. During the Spanish war, the song was sung by the International Brigades and, famously,

Busch's recording made during the Civil War.

by the African American singer and actor Paul Robeson (1898-1976). During his performances in Spain, he sang Jerome's English version, but he often performed the last verse in German, too. As "Chant des Marais," the song found its way into the canon of the French *Résistance* during the Second World War. Adaptations in Italian ("Il Canto dei Deportati"), Dutch ("De Veensoldaten," "De Moerbrigade"), Spanish ("Los Soldados del Pantano") and Yiddish ("Zumpland") are also known.

After 1945, the song became entangled in new controversies. During the Cold War, it was largely suppressed, concealed, or overlooked in West Germany. In the GDR, by contrast, where an anti-fascist thread was constructed from the Nazi concentration camps to the communist resistance and the "real socialist" present, it became part of the national identity. Today, the song is part of the program of commemorative events in Germany; in addition, it continues to be sung as a protest song or functions as a workers', folk, peace, or scout song, depending on its political and cultural purpose.

### Archive and Remembrance

In 1985, the small northwestern German town of Papenburg saw the opening of the "Documentation and Information Center Emsland Camps." It was run by a civil society association founded in 1981, with the ideological support of former prisoners still alive at the time. Not everyone in the region welcomed the new institution. After all, it pursues an unmistakable intention: the reappraisal and mediation of the history of the moor camps, which until 1945 included a total of 15 sites with different functions and responsibilities, but which were forgotten and suppressed for decades. In addition to the search for the remains of the demolished camps, the Center has been engaged in interviewing former prisoners, and inviting them to meetings in Papenburg; collecting written and physical testimonies from the camp period; publishing books and designing educational programs for schools. Due to its national and international fame, the "Song of the Peat Bog Soldiers" has developed over the years into one of the focal points of the archive and its remembrance work.

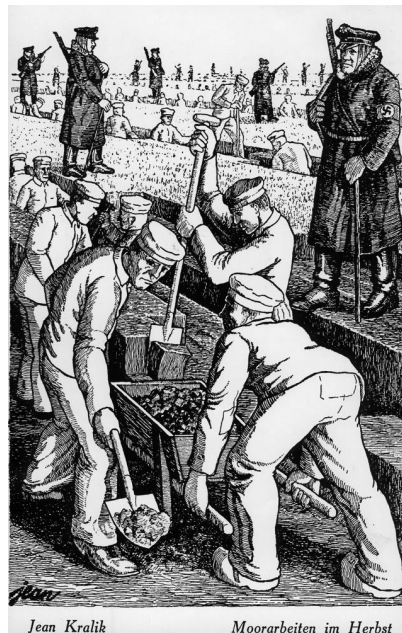
Today the Center, housed since 2011 in the newly built Esterwegen Memorial, has archived hundreds of recordings of





the song, including rarities from private hands, many recordings from the former GDR and, of course, the classics by Ernst Busch, Paul Robeson, Pete Seeger, The Highwaymen, Theodore Bikel, and the Irish Dubliners. Taken as a whole, the collection includes interpretations crisscrossing all musical genres and styles: folk, rock, pop, punk, metal, jazz, classical and avant-garde, soloists, duos, bands, choirs, chapels, and orchestras—everything is represented. In addition to sound-based media (shellac records, vinyl albums, vinyl singles, compact discs, music cassettes, and files), the collection also includes reference books, commemorative literature (for example, all the German-language and international editions of Langhoff's book "Die Moorsoldaten"), songbooks, original and reproduced song sheets, prisoners' letters, and other sources.

Based on its own audio collection, supplemented by recordings from the German Radio Archive DRA (Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv), in 2000 the Center published a comprehensive CD edition on the history of song. It was quickly sold out. Due to constant demand, a new edition followed in 2008. Meanwhile, the artistic examination of the hymn from the Börgermoor concentra-



tion camp has continued diligently with diverse results. In 2022 alone, almost 60 releases were added to the collection, including reissues, but in the majority more recent recordings. Clearly, the song refuses to be treated merely as a museum module. Apparently possessing an inner resistance that prevents its loss of substance, it has been on the move

for 90 years. There is no one legitimate re-interpretation. Today, every new artistic adaptation of the song inevitably enters a wide field of tension between musical genres and canonizations, between historical distance and empathetic approach, between aesthetic analysis and political message. Documenting the experiences of prisoners, affirming the solidarity of the imprisoned and humiliated, and expressing the hope of overcoming their situation while not coming across as a formulaic party slogan, the "Song of the Peat Bog Soldiers" possesses a universal and visionary core that challenges us time and again, even 90 years after it was first written. ▲

*Fietje Ausländer lives in Weener, a small town in northwestern Germany. For 30 years he worked as a historian, educator, and archivist at the "Documentation and Information Center Emsland Camps," where he curated several CD productions, including the edition on the "Peat Bog Soldiers" mentioned in his article. Today he works as a volunteer for the center. More information at [www.diz-emslandlager.de](http://www.diz-emslandlager.de), or write to [mail@diz-emslandlager.de](mailto:mail@diz-emslandlager.de) or [faust135@t-online.de](mailto:faust135@t-online.de). Translation from the German by Sebastiaan Faber.*



# Stuart Christie's Unending Struggle

By Chris Ealham

**Stuart Christie, who died in August 2020, was best known as the 18-year-old Scottish anarchist who, in the summer 1964, was part of an attempt to assassinate General Francisco Franco. It was only the beginning of a long life dedicated to left-wing activism.**

By the time Stuart Christie volunteered to transport explosives for the 1964 plot to kill Franco at the Santiago Bernabeu soccer stadium in Madrid, his acquaintance with anarchism in the UK had been building for some time. As he explains in his entertaining memoir *General Franco Made Me A Terrorist* (2003), he had also been in touch with Spanish exile circles in France. Yet before the attack could be carried out, Christie was arrested by undercover Spanish police.

Born into a working-class family in Glasgow, he had come into contact with local anarchist groups in his earliest youth and began reaching out to libertarians around the world. His association with the Spaniards during the 1960s was overshadowed by the execution in Spain, in August 1963, of Francisco Granda and Joaquín Delgado, anarchists from the Libertarian Youth. He would subscribe to the working-class anarchist tradition for the rest of his life.

The fact that Stuart failed in his attempt to kill the dictator did not spare him from a passage through Spanish prisons. Having dodged the death penalty, he was sentenced to 20 years. In Carabanchel, where he came upon lots of anarchists and communists (though no socialists, as he liked to point out), he worked in the prison print shop, learnt Spanish, and studied for admission to a British university. He was released in 1967 thanks to an international pressure campaign that included, among many others, Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre.

On returning to the United Kingdom, Stuart was in the sights of the British police, who fabricated evidence showing him to be a member of the notorious Angry Brigade. Even though none of the charges could be made to stick and he was acquitted, he spent 18 months in custody in what was one of the lengthiest trials in British history.

Eventually, Stuart would be the first in his family circle to attend university; in the early 1980s he made his way to Queen



Mary College (University of London) where he studied History and Political Science. At the Centro Ibérico, he met the historian Paul Preston, who was then lecturing at that university. His interest in the history of anarchism led, among other publications, to one of the few existing books on the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), *We the Anarchists*, published in Spain by the University of Valencia Press. From very early on, Stuart was concerned at the resurgence of far-right groups across Europe and at the strategies these employed in the 1970s and 1980s. Given the current panorama in Europe and worldwide, his work remains highly relevant.

Stuart's committed activist anarchism prompted him to resurrect the Anarchist Black Cross to defend libertarian prisoners worldwide. Realizing that the best way of spreading anarchist beliefs is through education, and in line there with anarchism's most classical values,

he also committed himself whole-heartedly to the study of anarchist history. In 1969 he launched one of the most significant imprints in the field, Cienfuegos Press, which he ran from the Orkney Islands, in remotest Scotland, due to persistent police harassment in London. In addition to books, he also used newspaper projects as vehicles for his beliefs. Cienfuegos Press was followed by Christie Books, an imprint that he carried forward until his death and that made classics of anarchist history accessible on-line, translated into English by Christie and Paul Sharkey. Later, the Christie Books website would feature the popular Anarchist Film Archive.

Stuart was loyal to an ideal, to a cause, and to his friends and comrades. A highly educated man, he also was a tireless, yet patient publisher, a great lover of words with a belief in their ability to work changes in human beings. With his death, the international anarchist movement has lost a great stalwart. A degree of solace is provided by the Kate Sharpley Library Collective's recent publication of *A Life for Anarchy: A Stuart Christie Reader*, a collection of Christie's writing spanning more than five decades. The KSL editors have included a brief

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## EL CANAL DE URGEL

El Urgel, la hermosa llanura de la Cataluña agrícola, ha recibido la noticia: el canal, para los regantes. Tras la breve orden comunicada por el Ministerio de Obras Públicas palpitante con años de historia regional y el esfuerzo tenaz de varias generaciones.

Esa comarca barcelonesa es orgullo de Cataluña y símbolo de muy admirables afanes por crear un campo próspero y suficiente. Durante un siglo se conjuraron en su bienandanza las mejores llanuras y el más esforzado laborar de las gentes leitanas. La obra había nacido difícil, alta a mediados de la centuria pasada, cuando los españoles de bandos encontrados disputaban a tiros sus divergencias políticas por las tierras del país. Los primeros presupuestos las inversiones iniciales —capital levantado para autos leitanos—, sirvieron sólo para abrir las primeras trincheras de la obra de fátiga. El Estado tuvo que acudir con sus recursos para proseguir la tarea, a pesar de que las arcas públicas sufrían hondos pozos.

La Junta de Comercio de Barcelona había planteado un canal de agua redada para la navegación. Hizo de artífice el proyecto. Al fin, el tío de Montblanc, el alcaide de Sà y los ciento cincuenta y cuatro

## Detención de dos peligrosos terroristas

SU OBJETIVO ERA DESARROLLAR UNA CAMPANA DE VIOLENCIA EN MADRID Y OTRAS CIUDADES ESPAÑOLAS

Madrid, 15. — Desde hace algún tiempo, la Dirección General de Seguridad mantiene observación sobre las actividades de elementos terroristas españoles en el extranjero, por tener conocimiento de que éstos, en contacto con otros sujetos enemigos de nuestra patria, pretendían desarrollar, en fechas próximas, una campaña de violencia en Madrid y en otras capitales de España.

### UN EXTRANJERO QUE LLEGO HACIENDO «AUTO-STOP»

Prosiguiendo tales investigaciones, se comprobó que un extranjero de nacionalidad inglesa y altamente sospechoso, había penetrado en territorio nacional por la frontera de La Jonquera, desplazándose hasta Madrid por el procedimiento del «auto-stop». Remediado a estrecha vigilancia, fue detenido por la policía en esta capital el citado individuo, Stuart Christie, nacido el 19 de julio de 1946 en Glasgow (Escocia), domiciliado habitualmente en 100 Balder Street (Glasgow), hijo de Olive y de Cristian.

### CONTENIDO DE SU SINISTRO EQUIPAJE

Le fueron intervenidos en su momento, por tanto, cinco paquetes de «plástico» de un peso aproximado de 100 gramos cada uno, cinco detonadores eléctricos, dos eléctricos, una bomba con circuito plástico de un kilogramo y seis francos vacíos con tapón perforado para ácido sulfúrico. En sus declaraciones explicó ampliamente sus actividades y su intención de entrar con otro elemento terrorista.



Stuart Christie

hermano de Fernando Carballé Blasco, nacido en Valladolid el 28 de mayo de 1924, hijo de Antonio y de Concepción, casado, carpintero, con domicilio en Madrid. A este sujeto le fueron ocupados en su domicilio dos bolsas

### PRETENDIAN CREAR UNA PSICOSIS DE TEMOR

Carballé manifestó que con el plástico que ya tenía en su poder y con el que recibiera de Stuart Christie, se

## Ha terminado la estancia del señor Romeo Gorria en Norteamérica

ANTES DE MARCHARSE EL MINISTRO CONDECORO A PARTE DEL PERSONAL DEL PABELLON ESPAÑOL —AL QUE SE CONCEDIO TAMBIEN LA MEDALLA COLECTIVA DE TRABAJO— EN LA FERIA MUNDIAL DE NUEVA YORK

Nueva York, 15. (De nuestro corresponsal.)

Ayer, en el pabellón español de la Feria Mundial el conde de España, don Miguel García de Sástiz, ofreció una cena al ministro de Trabajo de España, don Jesús Romero Gorria.

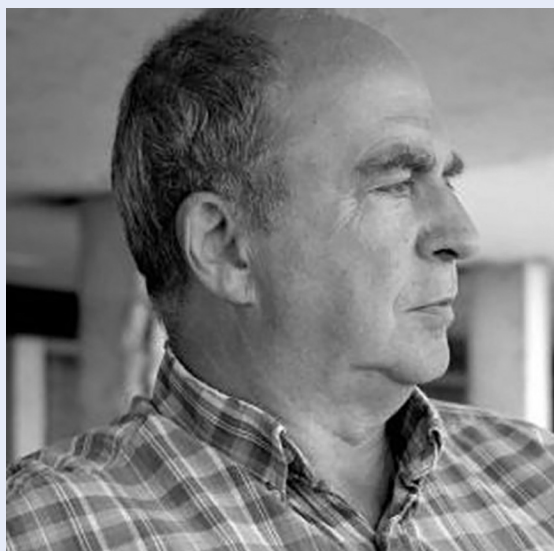
Acompañado al ministro su esposa y a la cena asistieron también los miembros de la delegación ministerial que han realizado con el ministro su viaje por América.

Fue uno de los últimos actos oficiales del ministro durante su estancia en los Estados Unidos. El conde, señor Sástiz, le acompañó durante su visita a las distintas dependencias del pabellón. Después de la cena, el ministro inauguró condecoraciones a los cocineros de los restaurantes Toledo y Granada y la marisquería, señor José Vergara González y Francisco González y Domingo

introduction, a series of instructive footnotes, and a very handy glossary that will be helpful for younger readers and for those less familiar with the history of the European anarchist movement.

Stuart believed in the importance of studying the enemy, witness his book on the Italian neo-fascist Stefano Delle Chiaie. Similarly, in one article, he references Low intensity operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping, a Machiavellian handbook written in 1971 by the imperialist thug General Sir Frank Kitson, designed to allow the defenders of a crisis-ridden state to steady the ship in the face of spiraling dissent. In the UK at the time, this tension played out with rising state and police repression, the erosion of civil liberties, the one judge conveyor-belt Diplock Courts in British-occupied Ireland and bloated Special Branch resources.

Another of Stuart's core attributes—his unflinching humor—comes through in the KSL collection as well, even in the most adverse circumstances, such as during his time in Carabanchel jail. In his inimitable style, we read how he received a monthly money order from the exiled Spanish CNT in Toulouse: “The names of the remitters were, in rotation, George, Paul, John



and Ringo, the only English names known to the political prisoners' support fund, all of which led to the rumor that I had been bankrolled by the Beatles, something which gave me considerable kudos among my fellow prisoners.”

Finally, we see ample evidence of Stuart's love of language and erudition. I was always struck by the breadth of his culture, in his writing and conversation. We worked together on the English-language edition of José Peirats' *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution* for Christie Books. Besides appreciating his qualities as a patient and attentive editor, I was impressed by his

literary references, which ranged from obscure Scottish poetry to popular culture; this was always very natural, lightly worn, in no way jarring or artificial. He always displayed immense enthusiasm and optimism. ▲

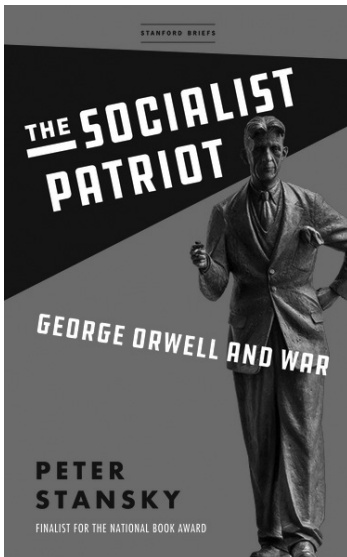
*Chris Ealham is an historian based in Madrid. This text includes parts of two previous publications, both of which appeared on the website of the Kate Sharpley Library; an obituary written in collaboration with Julián Vadillo Muñoz, and a review of the Stuart Christie Reader.*



# Book Reviews

*The Socialist Patriot: George Orwell and War*, by Peter Stansky. Stanford University Press. 150 pp.

Reviewed by Adam Hochschild



During his far too short life, George Orwell produced a remarkable amount of memorable writing: novels, nonfiction books, essays, reviews, radio scripts, newspaper articles, and more. Numerous other writers have selectively picked over this vast trove to conjure up the Orwell they would like to see. For Norman Podhoretz, Orwell was the supreme anti-Communist. For Alexander Cockburn, he was the

traitor to the left who gave the British government a list of pro-Soviet intellectuals. For Christopher Hitchens, he was the man who personally confronted the three great oppressive systems of his century—communism, fascism, and European colonialism. For Rebecca Solnit, he was someone who did all of this but also retained a hands-on connection to the natural world.

In Peter Stansky's insightful new book, reflecting many years of thinking and writing about his subject, Orwell is, among other things, a "Cold War socialist." Orwell himself passionately felt that this was not a contradiction in terms. (Stansky also points out, incidentally, that the writer was the first person to apply the phrase "Cold War" to the tensions between the West and the Soviet Union.)

Those of us who have admired the earlier books that Stansky co-authored with the late William Abrahams, *The Unknown Orwell* and *Orwell: The Transformation*, have hoped for a final volume of that biography. This new book is not exactly that, but it does draw together the themes from Orwell's wide-ranging life, including much that happened after the years covered in those first two volumes.

Stansky emphasizes that despite Orwell's staunch opposition to the Soviets, expressed so powerfully in *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-four*, he in no way had abandoned the democratic socialism he believed in for most of his adult life. "Destruction of the Soviet myth," Orwell wrote, "was essential if we wanted a revival of the Socialist movement." Many older independent American leftists, with memo-

ries of always being asked, "What about Russia?" would agree. Orwell seems to have experienced something similar, because he issued a statement explicitly saying, "My novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* is *not* intended as an attack on socialism or on the British Labour party."

Though the novel was long used to denounce the Soviet Union, Stansky reminds us that it now sells more copies than ever three decades after that country dissolved. Immediately after Trump advisor Kellyanne Conway first used the phrase "alternative facts," he writes, "sales of *Nineteen Eighty-four* went up 9,500 percent." And, of course, the surveillance state that Orwell foresaw in that book has now taken shape in many forms around the world. Facial recognition software and spyware in our phones allow governments—and corporations—to know even more about our activities and whereabouts than *Nineteen Eighty-four's* Big Brother ever dreamed of.

Stansky judiciously discusses a wide range of issues posed by Orwell's life, not skirting the problematic ones, such as that list of names he gave to the British government. That act clearly makes Stansky uncomfortable, although it does not, in the end, diminish his admiration for the man. He also traces the way Orwell was large enough, to change his mind on occasion. The writer first believed, for example, that only through socialism could the Allies muster the strength to defeat the Nazis. Then, by 1943, he admitted that he had underestimated the resilience and staying power of capitalism. Stansky shows us how Orwell was always aware of movement backwards and forwards on that score. During the war, for instance, the metal railings around London's innumerable privately-owned mini-parks were taken down. "Many more green spaces were now open to the public" Orwell wrote, "and you could stay in the parks till all hours instead of being hounded out at closing time by grim-faced keepers." Yet, he noticed in 1944, "railings are returning."

Finally, Stansky reminds us that it was his experience in Spain that truly carried Orwell into the ranks of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's great writers. It was there that he came face to face with Franco's tyranny, backed so strongly by Hitler and Mussolini. And it was also there that he saw up close the long hand of the Soviet Union in ruthlessly suppressing Catalonia's anarchist experiment and then in spreading lies in the Western press about what had happened—and about him personally. As Stansky pithily sums it up, "Because of his Spanish Civil War experiences he was both a premature anti-Fascist and a premature 'Cold Warrior.'"

Writers of Orwell's stature are often premature—and also sometimes change their minds. One way in which Orwell changed his mind is particularly relevant for all of us who care about the Spanish Civil War. In his great memoir, *Homage to Catalonia*, written immediately after he was wounded and then returned to Britain, he spends two long chapters on the tragic war-within-the-war on the Republican side: the Communist-backed suppression of the independent and anarchist Left that he had witnessed personally in the bloody street-fighting of the 1937 "May Days" in Barcelona. But by half a dozen years later, Orwell decided this emphasis was wrong: the main story should be the fight against fascism. In instructions for future editions of *Homage*, he relegated those two chapters to appendices, something that did not unsay anything he had written, but that significantly altered



the book's political emphasis. These changes were made in the French edition, but surprisingly his British publisher ignored his wishes and it is not clear if his American publisher even knew about them. An edition in the form Orwell wanted did not appear in Britain until 36 years after his death, and not in the United States until 2015.

Near the end of Stansky's trenchant study, he quotes a piece Orwell wrote only six months before he died. The novelist speaks of the risks that atomic bombs might be used in the Cold War, and then goes on to say, "But danger lies also in the acceptance of a totalitarian outlook by intellectuals of all colors. The moral to be drawn from this dangerous nightmare situation is a simple one: *Don't let it happen. It depends on you.*"

From Moscow to Mar-a-Lago, Beijing to Budapest, the totalitarians are still with us. And resisting them still does depend on us. ▲

*Adam Hochschild is a member of ALBA's Honorary Board. His latest book is American Midnight: The Great War, a Violent Peace, and Democracy's Forgotten Crisis.*

## Freda Tanz (1923-2023)

Freda Tanz (née Gerson), born in Pittsburgh, PA, died on March 3, 2023, at the age of 99. Freda was married to Lincoln vet Alfred Leo Tanz, who pre-deceased her in 2000, and with whom she shared her love and political activism. Freda was previously married to Gilbert D. Olmstead in Los Angeles in February 1949, one of the first interracial marriages to occur in California, following the California Supreme Court ruling that the prohibition of interracial marriage was unconstitutional. Freda's children of that marriage are Sydney O. Williams (Lance) of Los Angeles and Mark Olmstead, of Hilo, Hawaii. Freda worked for many years as a legal secretary. After searching for her kind of place following Al's death, Freda chose to live in Berkeley, CA.

Freda remained active in ALBA until a few years ago. She always remembered that the Good Fight is never won, and the battle must go on. Her numerous friends admired her unrelenting activism and stalwart understanding of political issues. She suffered no fools. Freda will be greatly missed by many in Northern California. Besides her two children she leaves five grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and nieces, nephews and cousins throughout the country. Her family mourns her loss but celebrates her spirit. May her memory be a blessing.

One of the winners of ALBA's 2022 George Watt Award, Maza Reyes, chose as his subject "Bernard Knox: Soldier and Scholar." Another renowned historian, Peter Stansky, took the opportunity to contact Maza Reyes and added some personal touches to Knox's biography.

Dear Maza,

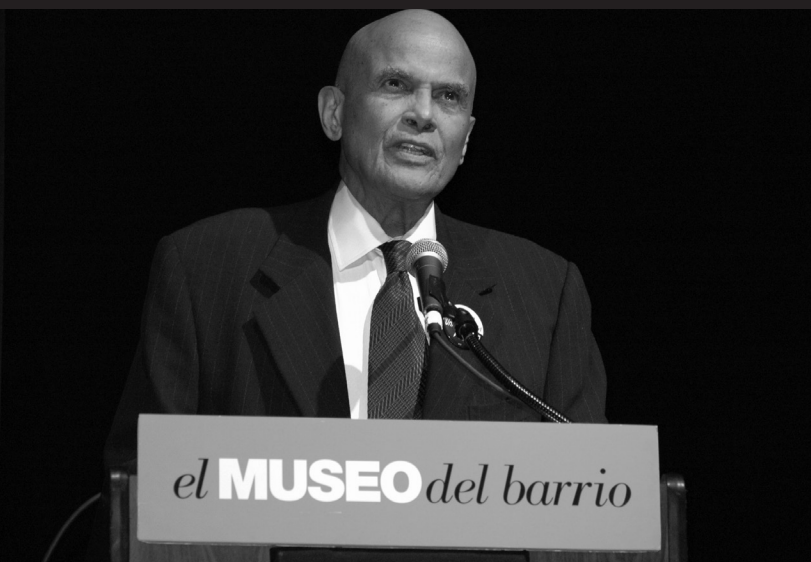
I very much enjoyed reading your essay on Bernard Knox. I knew him to an extent years ago. I took his fabulous course on the Greek plays and still have the books from it. In my junior year I wrote an essay on John Cornford in which I mentioned him. Because of the Cornford memoir, it was no secret that that Knox had fought in Spain and only the teacher of the course would see the mention. Yet he said to me that, in those days of McCarthyism, it was not a good thing that I mentioned his name in my paper. Nevertheless, I wrote a senior essay on Cornford, Julian Bell, George Orwell and Stephen Spender and their involvement in the Civil War. I must have talked to Knox about it as in one essay he wrote he said that a Yale undergraduate said to him "You're my thesis!"—I assumed it was me.

Later, I was in touch with Knox when William Abrahams and I wrote *Journey to the Frontier*, a study of Cornford and Bell, in the mid-sixties. Even then, Knox asked that he be in the book only under a pseudonym. It wasn't until some years later that he was comfortable writing about the war and published some splendid essays about it. Of course, the political climate had changed. But I also think he became more comfortable writing about the war as he himself had become more of a political centrist. I wasn't in touch with him for years, but I did once sit next to him at a dinner at Stanford and my memory—perhaps inaccurate—was that he was somewhat disapproving of the left-wing political activity of the young.

I wanted to thank you for what you wrote and for bringing back to mind how important Bernard Knox was to me both as a teacher and as someone who had fought in Spain.

My very best,  
Peter Stansky

# Harry Belafonte (1927-2023)



**Harry Belafonte, performer and political activist, was a longtime friend of ALBA and the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, as board members Jo Yurek and Dan Czitrom remember here.**

I've heard many stirring speeches over the years at ALBA events, but none surpassed the electrifying address that Harry Belafonte gave at the 2007 reunion—which, as it happened, was also the first one to which my wife and I took our daughters. Belafonte had just turned 80. As we escorted him into the hall, I told him many of us saw him as the true heir to the activist legacy of Paul Robeson. Ever self-effacing, Belafonte brushed me off, insisting he could never compare to his mentor. Moments later, his own words proved him wrong. From the stage, he lauded the Lincolns for their heroism and the remarkable sacrifices they made, turning to themselves for solutions to the needs of the day. "It is your example," he declared, "it is that which you have given us that has helped guide us through some of the darkest times in the history of this nation." He also connected the Lincolns' legacy to various ongoing struggles: for labor rights and civil rights, against colonialism, and for an end to the racist system of mass incarceration. "We defeated Hitler, but we did not defeat fascism," he reminded us. "Fascism is not easily killed, not easily crushed. We still have work to do, we must be vigilant." The Lincolns, he said, and now ALBA, still inspired young people all over the world to fight for social justice.

Belafonte closed by remembering a conversation he had with Paul Robeson in the singer's difficult last days. He asked Robeson whether he felt that with everything he'd achieved, and with all the sacrifices and anguish he experienced, his journey had been worth it. Robeson replied

Belafonte at ALBA's 2007 celebration at the Museo del Barrio in New York.

that it's not the victories we've gained or the losses we may have experienced, but the journey itself that makes the difference. "It is the men and the women and the courageous moments that are revealed to us," Robeson told him, "that makes the journey towards freedom, towards human dignity, a battle and a journey worth taking—and I'm glad I was on it."

The men and women who volunteered to fight in Spain inspired us with an untold number of "courageous moments." So, too, did Harry Belafonte.

*Daniel Czitrom is a Chair Emeritus of the ALBA Board. ▲*

**H**arry Belafonte was the keynote speaker at a Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade event in the mid-1970s. Before more than two thousand people gathered at the New York Statler Hilton, Mr. Belafonte gave a rousing speech describing the lack of progress the United States had made in addressing the inequalities that Black Americans faced despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act ten years earlier. The address was well received by an audience that had been fighting for civil rights long before it had become a prominent issue. After all, they'd gone to Spain as a totally integrated group and returned from Spain still fighting for those principles.

Harry Belafonte was joined by the President of the New York City Council, Paul O'Dwyer, councilwoman Miriam Friedlander, and union president Henry Foner. Although invitation stated that the event was to honor my father Steve Nelson, VALB commander, in reality we celebrated the fact that the VALB had been taken off the Attorney General's list, that some of the Carabanchel prisoners had been freed, that the FBI was beginning to focus on other groups, that J. Edgar Hoover and Joe McCarthy were gone—and that people who for years had been afraid to be seen together could finally meet openly. The presence of a major star like Harry Belafonte and his wife, Julia Robinson, along with political people, was a clear signal to all those who had fought the good fight—their contribution to history was being recognized.

*Jo Yurek is the daughter of Steve Nelson and an ALBA Board member. ▲*

Visit our online edition at  
**albavolunteer.org**  
for video and full text of Harry Belafonte's  
addresses at the 1997 and  
2007 ALBA/VALB reunions.



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## ALBA/Puffin Award for Indigenous Women's Group Defending Reproductive Rights

FEBRUARY 17, 2023  
BY THE EDITORS



Fifty years after Roe v. Wade, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) is pleased to announce that the 2023 ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism will go to Indigenous Women Rising (IWR), which is committed to honoring Native and Indigenous People's inherent right to equitable and culturally safe health options through accessible health education...

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POSTED IN NEWS

## From Guthrie to Database: ALBA Events Draw Hundreds

FEBRUARY 17, 2023  
BY THE EDITORS



ALBA's events in December and January drew hundreds of participants.

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POSTED IN NEWS

## ALBA's Busy Spring Calendar: Workshops, Roundtables, Films

FEBRUARY 17, 2023  
BY THE EDITORS



A preview of ALBA's busy Spring calendar.

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POSTED IN NEWS, EVENTS

## About ALBA

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). Learn more at our website or sign up to receive email updates from ALBA. Support ALBA through a tax-deductible gift! To inquire about a donation, please contact the ALBA office at [info@alba-valb.org](mailto:info@alba-valb.org) or 212-674-5396.



## Blog

### New book on the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)

APRIL 21, 2023



Inspirational and courageous, that was the IWW. Click here then the forward arrow to listen as author Ahmed White talks with former ALBA board member Burt Cohen about White's new book *Under the Iron Wheel: The Wobblies and the Capitalist War on Radical Minutemen*.

Visit the newly redesigned online edition of **The Volunteer** at [albavolunteer.org](http://albavolunteer.org) for additional pieces, longer versions of print articles, color illustrations, and video and audio—including Harry Belafonte's addresses at the 1997 and 2007 ALBA/VALB reunions.



(SCAN ME)

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