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The Volunteer

FOUNDED IN 1937 BY THE VOLUNTEERS OF THE LINCOLN BRIGADE.
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Why Did Orwell Go to Spain?

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W.L. Gresham's Newly Discovered War Poems p 16

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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,

We know that many of you are working hard to transform your indignation and disbelief at political developments in our country into the mobilizing energy needed to build a new Popular Front against fascism. At ALBA we are well aware of the small but significant role we play as an educational organization with deep roots in the long tradition of antifascist internationalism. Our three-part mission is clear: teaching history, inspiring activism, and upholding human rights. Now that history teaching, activism, and human rights have come under direct assault, this mission is more urgent and relevant than it has been in a long time. In the years to come, we plan to shape our programming to reflect this urgency—to begin with this year's recipient of the ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism, who will be announced very soon.

We've received many positive reactions to the special *Volunteer* dedicated to Dr. Edward Barsky, and we hope you'll find this issue just as inspiring. Aaron Retish, our board chair, reports on yet another successful year in the George Watt Essay competition, with five wonderful winners across three categories (page 4). James Fernández and Luis Argeo explain how Spanish immigrant communities in the United States mobilized for the Second Republic—and how the memory of that mobilization has transformed since then (page 5). On page 9, we speak with Peter Stansky about the reasons that drew George Orwell to civil-war Spain, while ALBA Chair Emeritus Dan Czitrom pays his own homage to Catalonia on page 14. You can also read about the remarkable life of Leo Fleischman, the first American to die in the Spanish war. G. Connor Salter shares newly discovered war poetry by *Nightmare Alley* author—and Lincoln vet—William Lindsay Gresham. And don't forget to check out our online edition at albavolunteer.org for additional articles!

None of our work would be possible without your generous and enthusiastic help. We can't tell you how proud we are to be able to count on your support. We're in this together.

¡Salud!



Sebastiaan Faber,
Co-Editor



James D. Fernández,
Co-Editor

To the Editors:

Thank you to all those involved in the preparation of the Barsky issue, including Nancy Phillips for her financial support. I always read the magazine with interest, but this issue was of personal importance to me. Dr. Barsky was a close friend of my father, Dr. Benjamin Segal, an OB-GYN who delivered many of the "red diaper babies" in New York City and worked with Dr. Barsky on various medical and political projects. (I donated my father's papers to NYU's Tamiment Library, so I cannot now refer to specific organizations in which they were both involved.)

When my father's passport was revoked by the U.S. State Department, in the 1950s, my parents vacationed in Mexico since, at that time, no passport was required for Americans to travel there. I joined them in Cuernavaca in the summer of 1954, where I became acquainted with exiles from Franco's Spain and with some of the "Hollywood 10" who had settled there.

Mimi S. Daitz

ALBA NEWS

ALBA and Puffin Foundation Poised to Announce 2025 Human Rights Award

As this issue is going to print, ALBA's Human Rights Committee is hard at work to finalize the process of selecting this year's winner of the ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism. Keep an eye on your email and social media for an announcement.

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 sustain the legacy of the experiences, aspirations, and idealism of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. It supports contemporary international activists and human rights causes. A philanthropist and visionary, the late Perry Rosenstein of The Puffin Foundation created and established an endowed fund for this award in 2010. Since then, the annual award has been granted fourteen times. (See the inset for an overview of award winners.)

The award ceremony will be held in New York City in early May. Those interested in attending may contact the ALBA office at info@alba-valb.org.

ALBA/Puffin Award Winners

2011	Baltasar Garzón
2012	Kate Doyle and Fredy Peccerelli
2013	United We Dream
2014	Bryan Stevenson
2015	La Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica
2016	Lydia Cacho and Jeremy Scahill
2017	Proactiva Open Arms
2018	The Coalition of Immokalee Workers
2019	The Immigration Justice Campaign
2020	No More Deaths
2021	My Brother's Keeper
2022	Life After Hate
2023	Indigenous Women Rising
2024	18By Vote

Grandchildren of Vets Gather in Tribute

On Saturday, December 7, the ALBA community gathered in Lower Manhattan for "A Grand Tribute", an event focused on first-person video testimonials of the grandchildren of the antifas-

cist volunteers who fought fascism in Spain. The centerpiece of the event was the world premiere of the film based on their videos, also entitled, *A Grand Tribute*. Over seventy friends and family of the Lincoln Brigade veterans attended the celebration of their legacy. Shantha Susman, the granddaughter of Bill Susman, helped to plan the gathering and served as MC, while Rich Rothman and Kate Hendrickson led the panel discussion. Shantha and her mother Sue Susman led the audience in a moving rendition of Spanish Civil War songs. The 18-minute film, produced by Peter Miller and Amy Linton, can now be viewed on ALBA's YouTube channel.

ALBA's Film Workshops Continue

In April, ALBA's successful online film workshop series will feature two sessions. On April 2, we'll discuss Ken Loach's award-winning—and controversial—film *Land and Freedom* (1995), with Lisa Berger, a Barcelona-based researcher who was part of Loach's production team. On April 22, we'll revisit a Spanish Civil War classic: Sam Wood's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943), based on Ernest Hemingway's novel of the same name, starring Ingrid Bergman and Gary Cooper. The discussion will be led by Alex Vernon, a Hemingway scholar at the University of Arkansas. As always, those who register for the event will receive access to an introductory film prepared by the discussion leader, and are expected to view the film itself on their own before the online meeting.

As part of the same series, this past January 22 ALBA's board member Steve Birnbaum led a discussion on *Five Cartridges (Fünf Patronenhülsen)*, a 1960 film about the International Brigades by the legendary East German director Frank Beyer, whose *Jacob the Liar* (1975) was the only East German film ever nominated for an Academy Award. The discussion is available for viewing on ALBA's YouTube channel.

Dr. Edward Barsky Honored

On February 11, the fiftieth anniversary of his death, ALBA honored Dr. Edward Barsky (1895-1975), who was also the subject of a special issue of *The Volunteer*, in an online roundtable discussion. The participants included Margo Feinberg, a labor lawyer whose mother, Helen Freeman, served as a nurse with Dr. Barsky in the Spanish Civil War; longtime public health activist Charlie Clements, MD, former president of Physicians for Human Rights; Reed Jenkins, a medical student who has researched Barsky; and ALBA's Sebastiaan Faber. The event and the special issue were made possible through a generous donation from Nancy Phillips.

Merriman Monument to be Installed on Berkeley Campus

The crowdfunding for the installation of a plaque honoring Robert Merriman, the legendary commander of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, has reached its goal. The plaque, which will be affixed to a boulder and placed at the center of campus near Memorial Glade honoring Berkeley veterans of World War II, is a copy of one installed since April 2018 in the Catalan town Corbera d'Ebre, close to the spot where Merriman went missing in April 1938. When he left for Spain, Merriman was pursuing a PhD in Economics at UC Berkeley. The crowdfunding effort was led by Claude Potts, the UCB librarian for Romance Language collections, and Donna Southard, who teaches in UCB's department of Spanish and Portuguese.

WATT ESSAY PRIZE RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING STUDENT WRITERS

By Aaron B. Retish

The Watt Essay Prize committee was excited to receive 45 submissions this past year from students from the United States, Western Europe, and Latin America with an especially robust number of submissions from undergraduate and graduate students.

This year, the Watt Committee awarded three prizes for wonderful pre-collegiate student submissions. Taryn Cunningham's historical fiction in three parts tells the story of a child in Civil War Spain who was taken by the church at birth and handed over to wealthy religious parents only to learn her true identity just before her communion. It is a deeply emotional telling of the baby-trafficking carried out under Franco. Yvana Martínez submitted "Papá Antonio," a historical fiction piece about a grandson who takes his grandfather to see Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* soon after it was returned to Spain. In a wonderful example of historical memory, the grandfather, who lived through the bombing of the city, recounts what happened to him for the first time. Finally, Jangwon Yoon used a sweeping range of sources, including primary documents found on the ALBA website, to discuss African American soldiers serving in the International Brigades, showing how their participation expanded the American civil rights movement.

Members of the Watt Committee were thrilled to get a chance to meet and hear presentations from the undergraduate and graduate recipients of this year's award. Natàlia Espachs, who wrote her essay "Anarchism in Barcelona on the eve of the Civil War: Understanding the Social Revolution through Social History" while she was an undergraduate student at the University of St. Andrews, discussed the unique socio-economic conditions in specific neighborhoods of Barcelona that drew people to the Anarchist movement. She also documents the change of Anarchism in the 1930s in the city and corresponding anarchist violence. Natàlia was drawn to this work in part because she is from the region.

Kathleen Brown, a graduate student at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) who is completing a doctoral dissertation in American Studies, presented her essay "The Fight of the Retaguardia: US-American Social Workers Committee



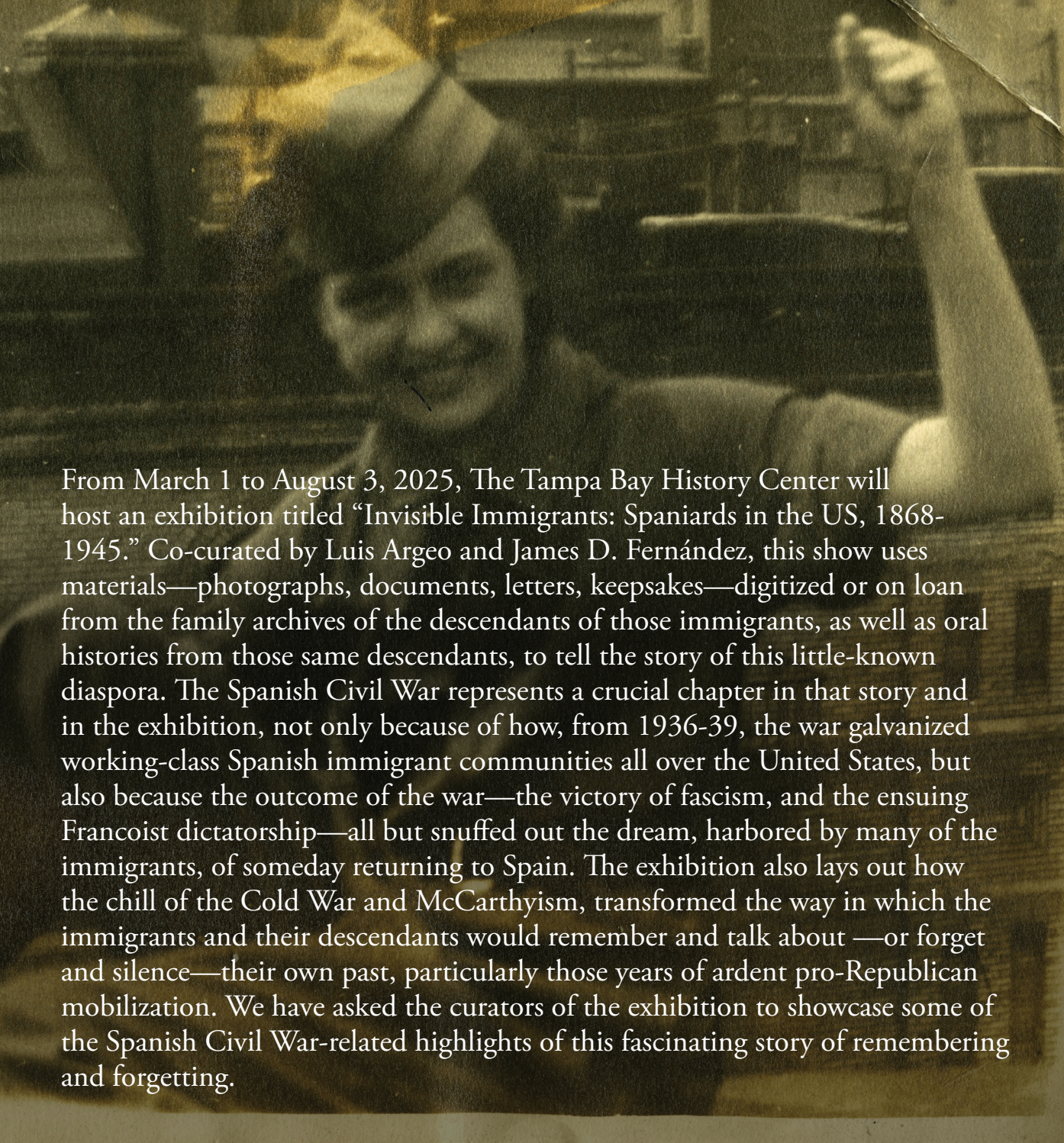
to Aid Spanish Democracy and Colonias Infantiles." Brown described her fascinating research on support for children's colonies and refugees that included sources from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives housed at the Tamiment Library at New York University. The committee applauded Espachs' and Brown's valuable research of these two scholars in advancing our understanding of the Spanish Civil War. The full-text versions of the winning submissions in all three categories are available at alba-valb.org/education/essays/.

The jury for the 2024 George Watt Memorial Essay was comprised of Robert Coale (Université de Rouen), Angela Giral (Columbia University), Joshua Goode (Claremont Graduate University), Jo Labanyi (New York University), Aaron Retish (Wayne State University), Shantha Susman (writer and movement strategist), Josephine Yurek (New York City Public Schools), and Nancy Wallach (New York City Public Schools). The Watt award honors the memory of Abraham Lincoln Brigade veteran George Watt (1914-1994), a social worker, writer, and lifelong activist central to the creation of ALBA. The personal correspondence between George and Ruth Watt during the Spanish Civil War was made into a play, whose the script and performance by actors Vero Maynez and Nathan Payne can be found on the ALBA website. The play, written by Dan and Lynn Watt and titled *George & Ruth, Songs and Letters of the Spanish Civil War*, can also be purchased in book form at your local bookstore. ▲

Aaron B. Retish, the chair of ALBA's board, is a professor of Russian history at Wayne State, where he also oversees the Abraham Lincoln Scholarship program.

How Did Spaniards in the US Experience the Civil War?

By James D. Fernández and Luis Argeo



From March 1 to August 3, 2025, The Tampa Bay History Center will host an exhibition titled “Invisible Immigrants: Spaniards in the US, 1868-1945.” Co-curated by Luis Argeo and James D. Fernández, this show uses materials—photographs, documents, letters, keepsakes—digitized or on loan from the family archives of the descendants of those immigrants, as well as oral histories from those same descendants, to tell the story of this little-known diaspora. The Spanish Civil War represents a crucial chapter in that story and in the exhibition, not only because of how, from 1936-39, the war galvanized working-class Spanish immigrant communities all over the United States, but also because the outcome of the war—the victory of fascism, and the ensuing Francoist dictatorship—all but snuffed out the dream, harbored by many of the immigrants, of someday returning to Spain. The exhibition also lays out how the chill of the Cold War and McCarthyism, transformed the way in which the immigrants and their descendants would remember and talk about—or forget and silence—their own past, particularly those years of ardent pro-Republican mobilization. We have asked the curators of the exhibition to showcase some of the Spanish Civil War-related highlights of this fascinating story of remembering and forgetting.



INVISIBLE ¹⁸⁶⁸/₁₉₄₅ IMMIGRANTS SPANIARDS IN THE US

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In the roughly five decades leading up to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), tens of thousands of working-class Spaniards migrated to the United States. They were but a drop in the vast wave of the millions of migrants who left Spain for the Americas in those same years, though the majority of this diaspora would end up in Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba, Mexico, or other parts of the Spanish-speaking world. Those who chose to come to the US settled in tight-knit enclaves scattered all over the country, from Maine to California, from Hawaii to Florida. Many of these migrants were from Spain's northern Cantabrian coast (Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, Basque Country), though Spaniards from all over the peninsula and its islands took part in this diaspora. Like most migrations, this one too was driven primarily by the search for opportunity—that is, better salaries, better working conditions, more social mobility. If the Spanish migrants were lured or pulled toward the US by the promise of better employment, they were at the same time pushed out of Spain by endemic economic and political injustice—*oligarquía y caciquismo*, in the shorthand of the time—and by a mandatory military service requirement that was perceived by many as a virtual death sentence, especially during the intermittent colonial wars that Spain waged in North Africa in the early twentieth century.

Typically, unaccompanied men from a given village or county, having learned of a concrete employment opportunity in the US, would migrate and establish a foothold in a specific location, and in a specific economic sector. Often, though not always, their jobs in the US were related to the kinds of work they did in their homeland: e.g. Asturian miners and zinc workers in West Virginia; Cantabrian stone cutters in the granite and marble quarries of New England; Basque and Galician seamen in the ports of New York City. If things went well, these trailblazers might then call for male relatives—brothers, cousins, nephews—to join them in the foundry, coal mine, quarry or shipyard. If things went very well, they might then send for their wives or girlfriends. Finally, if that community reached a critical mass, more diverse employment opportunities would emerge within the enclave, as the growing Spanish migrant community favored businesses run by their compatriots: a boarding house for new arrivals, a grocery store/restaurant, a butcher, a shoe repair shop, or a barber shop, for example. This is the general pattern of development that can be found in Spanish *colonias* big and small throughout the US in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: not only in more

likely places like New York and Tampa (Florida), but also in unsuspected locations such as Donora (Pennsylvania), Canton (Ohio), East St. Louis (Illinois), or San Leandro (California).

Most of these Spanish enclaves grew steadily in size and cohesiveness throughout the 1920s. Like many other immigrant groups arriving in a country with no social safety net to speak of, the Spaniards eventually formed all manner of clubs, associations, and mutual aid societies, in order to make common cause and to collectively confront the rigors of living in a foreign and often hostile land. These clubs might have been social, athletic, cultural, artistic, or political in name and original purpose, but the solidarity that they all embodied and the networks that they all wove would become especially crucial in the wake of the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression.

Many of these migrants—peasants or industrial workers—came to the US with a developed working-class left-wing political culture, ranging from anarchism through communism and to socialism; some were further radicalized in the US in the ideological strife and struggles of the Great Depression. Most of them greeted the advent of the Second Republic (1931) with cautious optimism, if not outright enthusiasm. By the time of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July of 1936, there was an archipelago of vibrant and relatively well-organized Spanish *colonias* spread all over the United States. Within days of the outbreak of the war, many of these organizations would repurpose their inward-looking social or cultural or sporting events into fundraisers aimed at helping the Republic defend itself from the fascist onslaught. During the war, scores of these Spanish migrant associations in the US joined an umbrella organization known as the *Sociedades Hispanas Confederadas*, that strived to coordinate the efforts being made by the member clubs in support of the Republic.

As you will see in this selection of items from the exhibition, the family archives of the immigrants' descendants profusely document their intense commitment to the Second Republic, even if the memories of their descendants are often blurry, vague, or even distorted beyond recognition. ▲

James D. Fernández is Professor of Spanish at NYU, director of NYU Madrid, and a longtime contributor to The Volunteer. Luis Argeo is a journalist and documentary filmmaker currently based in Gijón, Asturias, Spain.

SCENES FROM AN EXHIBITION: CHAPTER 4, SOLIDARITY AND STRIFE



This photo of Spaniards attending a picnic in Monterey California is decontextualized because the inscription on the upper right-hand corner has broken off or been removed. Even though a close look reveals a good number of popular front salutes and even a republican flag, many descendants often don't perceive or appreciate the political context of the image. We eventually found an unmitigated print of the photo and learned what the lost inscription reads: "Picnic to benefit widows and orphans of the Spanish Civil War, organized by Acción Demócrata Española, Monterey, California, May 27, 1937." (Courtesy of Roberto Fabián Martín.)



Asturian metalworkers and Andalusian copper miners from Riotinto, Huelva converged in Canton, Ohio in the teens and twenties. The Canton-Cleveland area was a hotbed of pro-Republican mobilization among Spanish immigrants, as evidenced in this extraordinary photo of the Youth Chorus of the Anti-Fascist Committee of Canton, Ohio. (Courtesy of the Pujazón family).

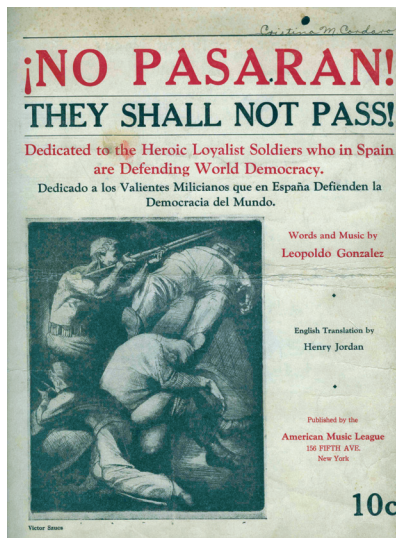


All over the United States, we have seen dozens of photographs like this one, in which Rose Cividanes, the daughter of Spanish immigrants in New York dons the clothes and pose of a Republican miliciana. (Courtesy of the Cividanes family)



Rose Cividanes, 80 years later, poses with the photograph shown above.

Manuel Zapata (RIP) was just a young boy when he put together this astonishing collection of pro-Republican pins produced by a wide range of New-York-based Spanish immigrant clubs and associations. (Courtesy of the Zapata family)



Home to a large population of antifascist Spanish immigrants, Tampa, Florida was without a doubt, one of the most active centers of pro-Republican mobilizations in the US. The tampeño cigar worker, Leopoldo González, composed the song "No pasarán" which would become the unofficial anthem of Spanish immigrant communities who would sing it at rallies from coast to coast. (Courtesy of the Fernández family)



"Spanish women to protest State Department. Washington, D.C., April 4. Three thousand Spanish-born women from large eastern cities, led by the widow of an American killed in Spain's Civil War, marched on the State Department today where they made a formal plea to "revoke the arms embargo against the democratically elected Government of Spain". The widow who headed the delegation was Mrs. Ernestina Gonzales, PH.D. and former Director of the Madrid University Library."

Photo and caption from the Library of Congress

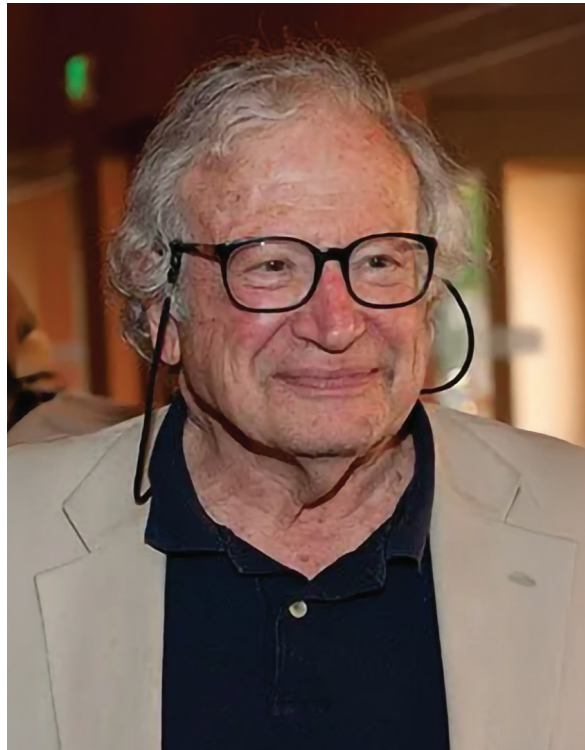
Peter Stansky, Historian: “George Orwell Was Politically Naïve.”

By Sebastiaan Faber

The way we think about George Orwell today was profoundly shaped by the Cold War—and by the groundbreaking work of Peter Stansky, who started writing about him shortly after his death.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in the summer of 1936, Peter Stansky was four years old—and although he lived in Brooklyn, New York, news from Spain was everywhere. Like many children of his generation, what Stansky remembers most is the music. His family, he recalls, played Ernst Busch’s *Six Songs for Democracy*, which were recorded in Barcelona in 1938 as Francoist bombs were falling, and appeared in the US in 1940 as a three-record set of 78s. When Stansky, now 92 and an emeritus professor at Stanford, hears “Die Thälmann-Kolonne” or “Die Moorsoldaten,” he’s transported straight back to his New York childhood.

In his teenage years, Peter became fascinated with the Spanish war, along with English politics and culture. As a senior History major at Yale in 1953, he decided to write his undergraduate thesis on four English writers who were drawn to Spain: John Cornford (Darwin’s great grandson), Julian Bell (Virginia Woolf’s nephew), Stephen Spender, and Eric Blair. The latter, who was better known as George Orwell, had died of tuberculosis in January 1950, just three days after Stansky’s eighteenth birthday.



Orwell’s ghost would accompany Stansky for the rest of his life. In the 1970s, Stansky and William Abrahams co-wrote two groundbreaking studies: *The Unknown Orwell*, which focused on the writer’s younger years, and *Orwell, the Transformation*, which argued that Orwell’s time in Spain marked a turning point in his life. In the 1980s, Stansky edited a collection on the novel *1984*; his most recent book, from 2023, is *The Socialist Patriot: George Orwell and War*.

In the early 1950s, when Stansky was finishing up his degree at Yale, Orwell’s global fame was nowhere near where it is today. Still, his star had been rising fast after the publication of *Animal Farm* in 1945 and the dystopian novel *1984* four years later. In 1952, Harcourt Brace published the first US edition of *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell’s account of his six months in Spain fighting for the Republic, in which he reported in vivid detail on the conflict between the non-Stalinist, revolutionary Left, with which he was associated, and the Communist-Party-supported Republican government—a conflict that came to a head in the so-called May Days of 1937.

Homage to Catalonia had not caught much notice when it first came out in 1938, but it became a bestseller 14 years later—not least thanks to its introduction by Lionel Trilling, the country’s best known literary critic, who described the book as “one of the important documents of our time” that in its “moral tone” was “uniquely simple and true”: “in one of its most significant aspects,” he added, it “is about disillusionment with Communism.” Orwell, for Trilling, is not a genius but rather “a virtuous man” who meets the world “with

Orwell's greatest achievement—one that is often ignored—is his skill as a writer.

simple, direct, undeceived intelligence” and “tells us that we can understand our political and social life merely by looking around us.” Unlike most other intellectuals of his generation, Trilling claimed, Orwell thought for himself and “was interested only in telling the truth.”

The posthumous edition of *Homage* certified Orwell's status as a quintessential anti-communist. Alongside intellectuals like Arthur Koestler, Louis Fischer, André Gide, and Stephen Spender, who had publicly disavowed their Communist pasts in *The God That Failed: A Confession* (1949), Orwell—who considered himself a democratic socialist—became a moral icon of the Cold War.

Today, seventy-five years after his death, it is much less clear what exactly Orwell stands for in political, moral, or literary terms. Yet, somehow, he's read and written about more than ever, while “Orwellian” has become a household adjective. His life and work have inspired hundreds of books, including half a dozen major biographies, and there is no end in sight.

“Orwell's reputation as a virtuous man is in steep decline,” Stansky told me, with a chuckle, when I spoke with him in November. “But curiously, it doesn't seem to have affected the interest in him.”

What was it like to write about Orwell in the early 1950s?

It was great fun, in part because so little work on him had been done. I spent a good amount of time in the Yale library tracking down his essays, which were scattered through a great number of periodicals.

Tell me about the political atmosphere at the time.

Political activity on college campuses was very low. You must remember, this was the quiet 1950s, before the turmoil of the '60s. It was also the height of McCarthyism, so people were very careful.

In what way?

I'll give you an example. I had taken an absolutely fabulous course on ancient Greek theater taught by the great classicist Bernard Knox. Now, as it hap-

pened, Knox was a British veteran of the International Brigades. In Spain, he had fought alongside the poet John Cornford, who had died early in the war. Knox had even contributed to a memorial book for Cornford that was published in 1938. In my junior year, I wrote a paper on Cornford for a terrific seminar taught by the historian Leonard Krieger. It occurred to me to mention that Yale's own Professor Knox had fought with Cornford in Spain. Well, Krieger called me to his office and told me I shouldn't have mentioned Knox. And mind you, this was a seminar paper that no one other than Krieger would read!

But didn't Knox write openly about his experience in the International Brigades and his work for the American OSS during World War II?

Yes, but that wasn't until much later. In fact, in the early sixties, when Billy Abrahams and I interviewed Knox for *Journey to the Frontier*, our book about Cornford and Bell, he still insisted that he be quoted under a pseudonym.

Were you, as a mere undergraduate, treading politically risky terrain? Did you feel pressured to pick a different topic?

No, I didn't. Ironically, I had a very right-wing advisor for my senior essay, William Emerson, who was very demanding in terms of style, but not in terms of content. One of my two outside readers was Richard Herr, the historian of Spain, who did not much like the chapter in which I sketched the context of the war. I guess he thought it wasn't deep enough. But then the essay was sent to the historian L.P. Curtis, who had a very favorable reading. I even ended up winning one of the senior essay prizes.

In the years after his death, Sonia Orwell, his widow, was in charge of the estate. How was your relationship with her?

Billy and I were on very good terms with Sonia to begin with, although she didn't seem all that interested in what we were doing. The Orwell archive at University

College, London, had been established, however, and having access to that was very useful because they had a lot of the fugitive stuff—mostly printed matter, not much of the manuscript material yet. The agreement with Sonia was that we were not going to write a biography, in honor of Orwell's own request to that effect. But we got into a conflict with her because, to her mind, we were doing biographical work. When she insisted on the right to read and control our work, we refused, and she banned us from the archive. At that point, that didn't make much of a difference because we'd already had access to all the important material. But Sonia was so furious about our book that she commissioned Bernard Crick to do the official biography. Then she got into a fight with him, too, and tried to block publication. But Crick had an ironclad contract, and it came out anyway.

How did you relate to Crick and other Orwell biographers like Jeffrey Meyers?

In 1984, Crick, Meyers, and I were all invited to an Orwell conference at the Library of Congress. The books Billy and I wrote had some errors, which both Crick and Meyers delighted in pointing out. That wasn't very nice. But they didn't get along with each other, either. At one point, Crick came up to me and asked: “How about we bury our hatchets... in Jeffrey's skull?” (*Laughs.*) There were plenty of fights like that. In the 1980s, when Norman Podhoretz tried to appropriate what he saw as the right-wing Orwell, Christopher Hitchens fought with him about that. But by the time Orwell's centenary came around, in 2003, Hitchens had moved to the right, and he was appropriating the right-wing Orwell, while Louis Menand and Stefan Collini defended the left-wing Orwell.

It makes one wonder what it is about Orwell that has people so eager to recruit him posthumously to their cause. What makes his cultural capital so valuable?

Two things. First, what Billy and I tried to emphasize in our work was that Orwell was a great writer. An artist. Obviously,

It's exaggerated to claim that Orwell came back from Burma a convinced anti-imperialist.

the politics are tremendously important. But it seems to me that his greatest achievement is his great skill as a writer—an aspect that is often ignored. If you can call him a political thinker, it's because he writes well about important things. Secondly, his evolution to socialism was gradual. That, too, is often forgotten. It's exaggerated, for example, to claim that he came back from Burma a convinced anti-imperialist. He had doubts about imperialism, to be sure. But his leftward evolution was quite gradual. He famously wrote in "Why I Write" that being in Spain made him a socialist. But if you look at the actual quote, there are two important qualifiers. "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936," he says, "has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism, as I understand it." So it's *democratic socialism, as he understands it*. My point is not only that Orwell is a very nuanced thinker, but also that he changed his mind. One thing that people find odd, and hard to accept, is that he came back from Spain a pacifist. During the two years from his return from Spain to the Nazi-Soviet pact, he felt the world war everyone knew was coming would be an imperialist war. He didn't want Britain to go to war. Nor was he as anti-German as others were. In a 1940 review of *Mein Kampf*, he writes about Hitler: "Ever since he came to power ... I have reflected that I would certainly kill

him if I could get within reach of him, but that I could feel no personal animosity" and that he has "never been able to dislike him."

That's certainly an honest confession. Is Trilling right to connect the quality of Orwell's writing to his honesty?

No, I don't think so. When Orwell comes back from Burma, he realizes that he wants to be a writer. But he sees that vocation primarily as a craft. He wants to be a skillful writer of novels and reportage. If he condemns himself to the life in poverty that allows him to write *Down and Out in Paris and London*, it's only partially because he feels guilty about being an imperialist. The truth is that he went in search of material to write about. That was the driving force. In fact, the same was true for his trip to Spain. He did not go to Spain to fight; he went to write. It's only when he arrives in Barcelona that he decides to join a militia. But that wasn't his original intention.

And then the militia that he does join is affiliated with the POUM...

Right. And that is another piece of evidence in favor of the idea that he was more of a writer than a political thinker. He was politically naïve. As he explored ways to get to Spain, he first went to the communists. He tried to get Harry Pollitt, the general secretary of the Communist

Party, to help him. Pollitt said he didn't trust him, and probably with good reason. Only then does Orwell go to the Independent Labour Party, which turned out to be affiliated with the POUM. But all that was quite coincidental. I don't think, for example, that Orwell knew the ILP was semi-Trotskyist. For our book, Billy and I interviewed John McNair, who was the ILP representative in Barcelona at the time. He told us that his first thought was: "Who needs this reporter?" It was only when he discovered that Eric Blair was in fact George Orwell, whose work he admired, that he changed his mind.

In the meantime, Orwell's work is in the public domain, and the flood of editions and books on him shows no sign of abating. If by now he's the embodiment of the canon, you and Abrahams helped make that happen.

That's kind of you to say. I guess it's relative. A friend of mine, the filmmaker Christopher Angel, has been trying to make a movie or a TV series about Orwell for years, and optioned my Orwell work. You'd think people would like the idea, but, surprisingly, he hasn't been able yet to get any funding. ▲

Sebastian Faber teaches at Oberlin College.

To the Editors:

I write to take issue with your description of the MacDonalds as "Trotskyites" in the article "Dr. Barsky and the Paradoxes of Refugee Aid" (December 2024). To do so is to defer to the pejorative used by the CP (or shall we say "Stalinists"?). Trust me, I know, as I was raised by the latter and temporarily became one of the former. In addition, followers of Trotsky (Trotskyists) are communists; followers of Stalin don't have a monopoly on the franchise.

Curious about MacDonald's affiliation, I went to Wikipedia and learned (if it is trustworthy) that "Macdonald, originally a committed Trotskyist, broke with Leon Trotsky over the Kronstadt rebellion which Trotsky and the Bolsheviks had suppressed in 1921. He then moved towards democratic socialism." That jibes with my limited familiarity with him. Perhaps a correction is in order.

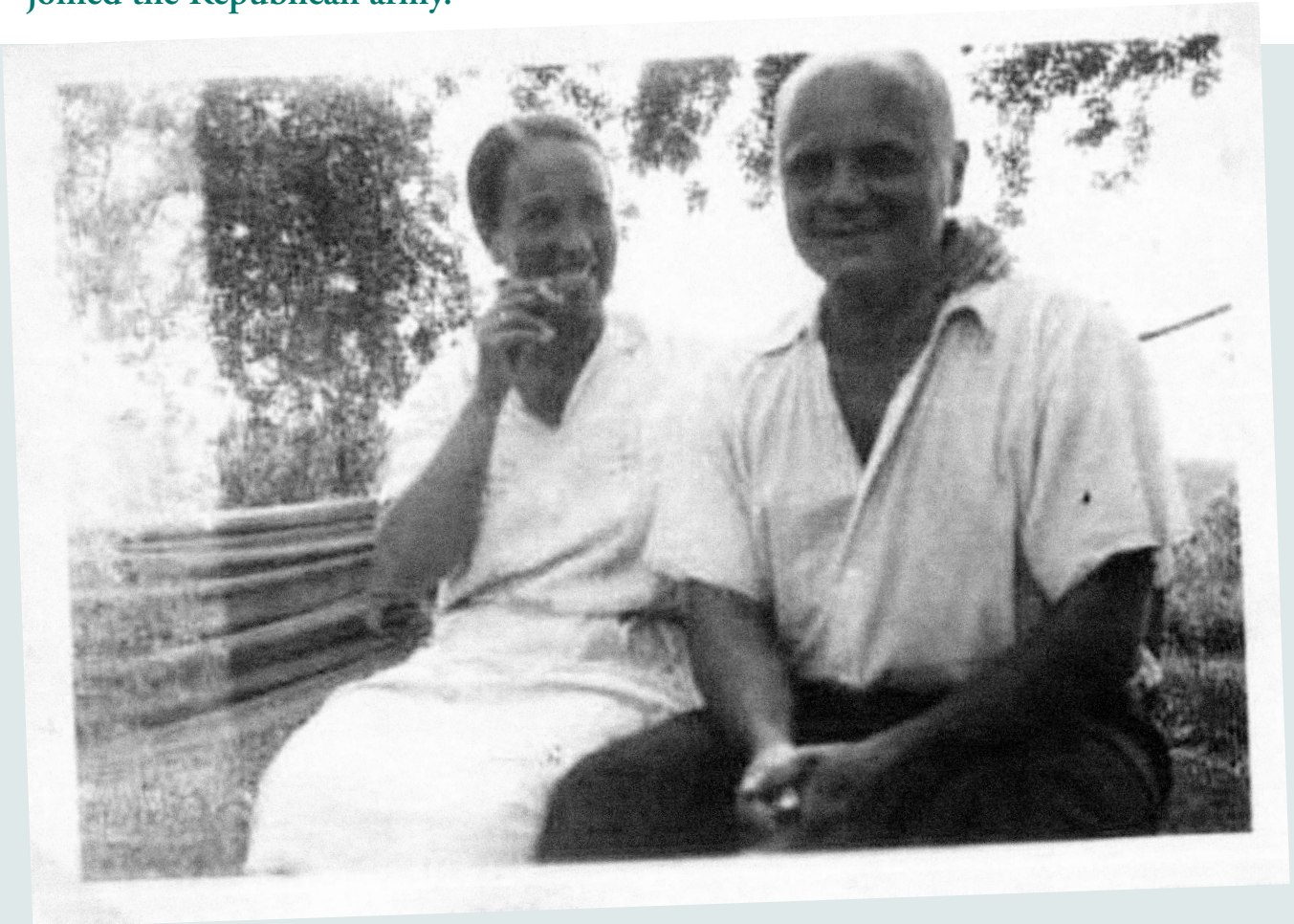
In solidarity,

Frederick Warren

Who Was the First American Casualty in the Spanish War?

By Ana María Díaz-Marcos

The first American to die in the Spanish Civil War was a 47-year-old mining engineer from New York who had married a Spaniard, moved to Madrid in 1933, and covered the 1934 revolution for the US media. As soon as he heard about the 1936 coup, he joined the Republican army.



Leo Edwin Fleischman was born on January 14, 1889, in New York, as the son of a wealthy family with ties to the yeast empire by the same name. His father, Alois Fleischman, was an Austrian Jew who had emigrated to the United States and in 1888 married Pauline Carl, who was born in Missouri, New York, the daughter of a German journalist. After Leo's birth, Alois and Pauline settled on the Upper West Side.

Pauline was a committed pacifist, serving as treasurer of the American Committee Against Aggression. A portrait of Pau-

line's sister, Minnie Untermyer, by the painter James Jebusa Shannon now presides over the main staircase of the Glenview mansion next to the Hudson River Museum, with Minnie (née Carl) posing in a sumptuous silk gown. She was a patron of the arts, an ardent supporter of women's suffrage who married the reputed anti-Nazi lawyer Samuel Untermyer. Leo's uncle Samuel, meanwhile, built fabulous gardens at Greystone, the mansion where they lived in Yonkers. He had founded the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League in 1933, and years later donated a portion

The newspaper Mundo Obrero covered his well-attended funeral, describing Leo as “a great friend of Spain.”

of those gardens to the City of Yonkers. Today, the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy is an idyllic public park.

As a child, Leo Fleischman had a rebellious spirit that led him to run away from home at the age of sixteen. At family gatherings, people often told the story of the young man's disappearance in 1905, when, as a student at City College, he vanished on his way to his algebra tutor. Leo traveled to Philadelphia, where he earned a living working in a restaurant and then enlisted in the Navy under a false identity. His parents offered a sizable reward to anyone with information about his whereabouts and searched high and low to find him. They finally located him seven months later in Virginia wearing a cadet's uniform. Leo confessed then that he was tired of military life and wanted to return home.

The episode gives a good indication of Leo's intrepid personality. In 1908 he enrolled at Columbia to study Mining Engineering but soon sought other horizons. He finally graduated at the age of twenty-five from the South Dakota School of Mines. An average student, he played one term with the Hardrockers, the varsity soccer team, and was known to his friends by the nickname Tubby.

The young Fleischman worked as a foreman in a gold mine in Colorado. During World War I he served as a lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers and a machine gun instructor. He then spent a few years in South America working as a supervisor in mining operations. His social conscience may have been born then when he witnessed the living conditions of the miners; perhaps that is why he left the trade to set up on his own. After learning Spanish in Peru, he traveled the continent, collecting pre-Columbian and colonial art pieces. After his death, Leo's mother and widow donated his collection to the Brooklyn Museum of Art, for which Leo had always had a predilection.

In 1923, Leo founded the Windsor Wax Company to produce varnish and wax, a popular product for polishing wood floors. Documentation of the company's history describes him as “an avid explorer and adventurer and a famed chemist.” Sometime after 1927, Leo—by then a well-to-do American engineer and owner of a buoyant company who resided in a centrally located apartment near Bryant Park—met Ernestina González Rodríguez, a Spanish librarian from Medina de Pomar (Burgos), who had arrived in 1926 in Nebraska to work as a Spanish teacher, but had wasted little time trading the plains for the hustle and bustle of the Big Apple. They were married in Borough Hall (Queens) in 1932, in a simple ceremony.

The following year the couple moved to Madrid. Leo quickly adapted to life in Spain and became close friends with Ernestina's sister, María Luisa González, and her husband Juan Vicéns, both librarians. All of them shared the same democratic and republican ideals. Their strong yearning for social justice brought them into the orbit of the Communist Party. According to *The Daily Worker*, Leo worked as a correspondent for several media outlets during the Asturian Revolution of 1934. He also supported the miners financially. Several letters of Vicéns that

are preserved in the archive of the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid show how the two couples worked to get information to France about the harsh government repression of the revolutionaries. They also point out that Leo accompanied two Asturian refugees who crossed the border into France to seek asylum and testify to what was happening in Asturias.

After the military coup of 1936 Leo enlisted in the Fifth Regiment of the Republican Army and went to work in an arms factory run by a friend of his, the biologist Faustino Cerdón. At the factory he worked alongside the Cuban artist Wifredo Lam and Leon Meabe, whose father had founded the Socialist Youth. In August 1936 Leo, who never hesitated to give financial support to the causes he believed in, lent 490 pounds sterling to filmmaker Luis Buñuel—a good friend of Ernestina and María Luisa—“for the purchase of cinematographic material.” It is not clear if Buñuel used that money to produce a war documentary, but it is certain that Leo did not get to see the film because he died a few weeks later.

On September 30, 1936, there was an explosion at the munitions factory. The young Meabe and Faustino Cerdón's little brother—who was ten years old and was only visiting—died on the spot. Leo was admitted to the Hospital Obrero but died of septicemia in the early morning of October 17. He was 47 years old. The U.S. ambassador sent a cable to his uncle Samuel Untermyer to inform Pauline of the tragic event. The newspaper *Mundo Obrero* covered his well-attended funeral, describing Leo as “a great friend of Spain, an enthusiastic admirer of its people and a loyal companion in the hours of heroism and sacrifice of the Spanish popular masses.” The *New Yorker* would be the first American casualty of the Spanish war, although he had not died in combat but as a worker in the war industry.

Following Leo's death, Ernestina decided to return to New York, where she disembarked on Christmas Eve 1936. The librarian from Burgos lived in Manhattan for almost two decades, devoted body and soul to the anti-fascist and anti-Francoist cause, unconditionally supported by her mother-in-law. In March 1937, David Davidson interviewed her for the *New York Post*. Leo's death, she told Davidson, had not been an accident of war but a sabotage by the Fascists. Her proof for this allegation was that newspapers in Nationalist-controlled Burgos had published the news before the supposed accident occurred.

Ernestina never remarried. She lived in New York until Pauline's death, exiled in Mexico during McCarthyism, and then moved back to Madrid, where she died in 1976. A simple tombstone in the Madrid Civil Cemetery bears the inscription “Ernestina and Leo Fleischman, in grateful partnership.” ▲

Ana María Díaz-Marcos teaches Spanish Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of Connecticut. Translation by Sebastiaan Faber.

Civil War Days in Azuara

By Daniel Czitrom



“The past isn’t dead,” William Faulker famously wrote; “it isn’t even past.” The quote came to mind while attending a remarkable gathering last September in the ancient Spanish town of Azuara, a small community of roughly 500 inhabitants, 40 miles south of Zaragoza (Aragón).

Azuara was transformed by the Spanish Civil War. Over three years the town endured several changes of power, with control alternating between Falangist, Anarchist, Republican, and finally Fascist forces. Incidents of brutal repression accompanied every change in the local regime, including targeted murders, mass killings, expropriation of property, and anticlerical violence. Many families had no choice but to flee to mountains and caves.

In March 1938, Azuara was squarely in the path of a fascist offensive. Republican units faced history’s first “blitzkrieg,” a fully motorized army with heavy artillery, tanks, and German air power. The offensive succeeded in splitting the Republic in two,

routing Republican forces in what became known as the Great Retreats. In Azuara, a dozen volunteers, part of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (the “Mac-Paps”) of the International Brigades, lost their lives while providing machine gun cover for their retreating comrades. This particular group—8 Finns, 3 Canadians, and 1 American—embodied the global make-up of the men and women who came to the aid of the Spanish Republic.

The Azuara gathering, several years in the planning, was led by the 28-year-old Erik Salvador Artigas, who presides over the Historical Recovery of Azuara Association. The event attracted an extraordinary mix of people to commemorate events and

I was stunned and moved to tears upon seeing a large picture of Leo (Mendelowtiz) Gordon, my father's cousin—and the lone American in the group of 12 Mac-Paps who perished there in March 1938.

to celebrate local resistance to the fascist assault. The inspiring turnout of several hundred local townspeople, as well as the communal feeling generated by the various events, made the occasion quite different from the typical academic conference.

On a bright, crisp Saturday morning we visited the original trenches built on the outskirts of town, with dozens of huge wind turbines providing a surreal backdrop. (Locals explained that the rent farmers received for the use of their land far exceeded what they could get for growing olives. Some of us also thought of Don Quixote, tilting at windmills.) Uniformed re-enactors filled the trenches, shouting orders, and simulating gunfire. We then visited the indoor exhibition housed in an old villa and put together entirely by locals. A bilingual text accompanied by enlarged photos recounted how the town experienced the civil war, including the mass execution of hundreds of Azuarans in the summer of 1936 by Guardia Civil units siding with Franco. The Mac-Pap volunteers who helped defend the town during the Great Retreats received a lot of space. I was stunned and moved to tears upon seeing a large picture of Leo (Mendelowtiz) Gordon, my father's cousin—and the lone American in the group of 12 Mac-Paps who perished there in March 1938. A young Spanish visitor from Zaragoza joked that she could tell Leo was an American because he was the only one smiling and he had good teeth. Civil war posters, a display case of small weapons, and a section on food and kitchens evoked the textures of everyday life. We then enjoyed a tasty communal lunch of paella, prepared in one giant pan that fed around 250 people.

After lunch a couple hundred of us toured the caves where many Azuarans were forced to live during the war. In one we watched a recreation of a hospital treating the sick and wounded. There followed a recreation of the battle atop a high cliff where the Mac-Paps had been cut off as the Republican forces retreated from the town. After providing cover for 8-12 hours the men were captured and then executed by firing squad. A large crowd, including many children, watched silently, almost as if in church, as actors dressed in period uniforms and bearing vintage weaponry played Republican and Fascist troops and women dressed in 1930s nurse's garb.

The battlefield re-creations reminded me of the creepy cosplay of neo-Confederates in the American South, but locals said that communities all over Spain consider them a crucial part of educating the young about the civil war. Thankfully, when they portrayed the capture and execution of Leo and the others, we only heard the rifles firing behind nearby trees.

As the events in Azuara invited a cross-section of people to discover more about the experiences and fates of relatives who had volunteered to fight for the Republic, we felt ourselves a modern-day echo of the Popular Front's internationalist spirit. Andrew Johnson and Jane French traveled from Toronto to learn about his uncle, Arthur Johnson, who served with the Mac-Paps

and was KIA at Gandesa during the Battle of the Ebro. The family never knew what happened to him. In casual conversation, Andrew and I discovered that his uncle Arthur and my uncle, Ben Barsky, had been killed in the same battle. Among others, I connected with Martin and Debbie Paivio from Aurora, Ontario; Ben Pratt from rural Maine; Mikko Ylikangas from Helsinki; and Claudia Honefeld from Hamburg. The large Finnish contingent that died at Azuara attracted the attention of Finnish TV, which interviewed several of us, as well as the Finnish Ambassador to Spain, Sari Rautio. Several went on tours of nearby historical sites conducted by Alan Warren, a British expat based in Barcelona who runs the *Porta de la Historia Cooperativa* (SCCL) there. Alan has long been an invaluable resource for people visiting Spain to research the civil war.

Later in the town hall, some of us delivered papers on various aspects of the war in Azuara and the Mac-Paps' experiences, as some 300 people, made up mostly of local citizens, listened intently to what we had to say. Janette Higgins spoke about her father, Jim Higgins, a Mac-Pap veteran whose memoir she recently edited and published. After she spoke, scores of audience members lined up, waiting patiently for Janette to sign Spanish edition copies of her book, *Fighting for Democracy*. My talk was translated into Spanish by Susana Moreno, who, like several others, had graciously volunteered to do it. This was by far the largest and most considerate audience I've ever had for a historical event.

The conference closed with the premiere of *Los Ojos Que Vieron* (*The Eyes That Saw*), a powerful documentary directed by Erik Salvador Artigas and produced by Antonia Fuentes and Jose Lezcano, with support from the Azuara City Council. The film uses interviews with survivors and their descendants, along with found footage from the 1930s, to tell the complex story of one town's civil war. Plans are underway for a more general release and a version with English subtitles.

As I watched the film, screened before a packed house, I wondered if more Spanish towns might produce their own versions of Azuara's astonishing weekend. In the 1930s, tens of thousands of volunteers streamed to Spain to defend the Republic. Today, an increasing number of people and organizations are determined to keep their history alive and educate their home countries. As America faces a resurgent neo-fascist threat at home, digging into the stories of those who resisted Fascism is more urgent than ever. William Faulkner would have understood. ▲

Daniel Czitrom is Chair Emeritus of the ALBA Board of Governors. He can be reached at dczitrom@mtholyoke.edu.

Beyond the “Last Kilometer”: William Lindsay Gresham’s Spanish Civil War Poetry

By G. Connor Salter

Lincoln vet Bill Gresham’s *Nightmare Alley* cemented his fame as a noir novelist. Yet most of his Spanish Civil War poetry was never published—until now.



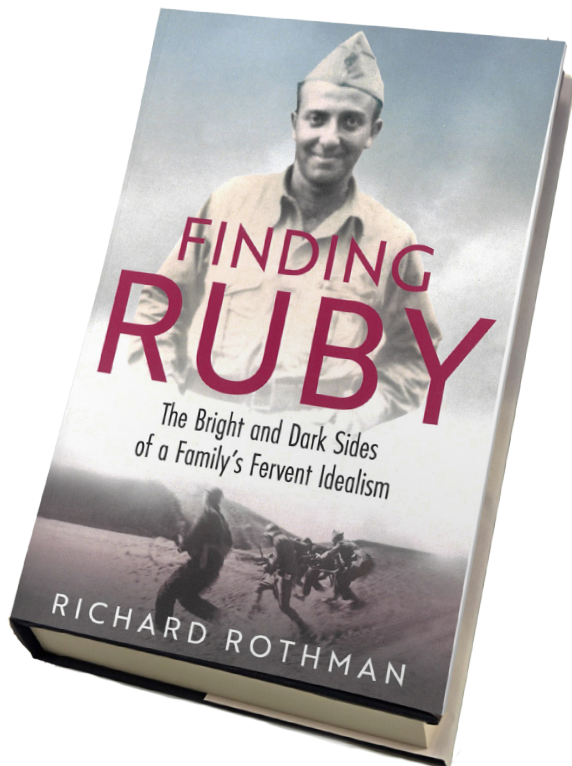
William Lindsay Gresham (1909-1962), the Lincoln Brigade veteran whose bestselling crime novel *Nightmare Alley* (1946) inspired two films, was never the same after the Spanish Civil War. He rarely mentioned it, but all sources agree that Gresham’s many troubles—alcoholism, a psychotic episode, at least two suicide attempts before he killed himself in 1962—came afterward.

As ALBA’s Chris Brooks reports, Gresham was in Spain from November 1937 to February 1938, mostly as a medic on the Teruel and Levante Fronts. Fellow soldier Ben Iceland remembers Gresham writing skits for a Christmas Eve celebration, and spending time with Joseph Daniel “Doc” Halliday, also known as “Spike.” In fact, Halliday’s descriptions of the carnival life, particularly how alcoholics get recruited to play feral chicken-eating men in “geekshows,” inspired Gresham to write *Nightmare Alley*, whose success he was never able to replicate.

Three years after the novel came out, Gresham published his poem “Last Kilometer” in *War Poems of the United Nations*, edited by his then-wife, Joy Davidman. It would be his most direct statement about Spain. Its stark depiction of what it’s like to enter a war zone has been reprinted in several collections, including *The Wound and the Dream* and *The Neglected Poetry*.

While most Gresham fans are familiar with his Spanish Civil War service, “Last Kilometer” doesn’t seem enough to consider him as a war poet. But we now know that he wrote more poems about the war. After Gresham’s third wife, Renée, passed away in 2005, his papers went to the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College. It was there that, in 2023, I came upon a folder labeled “Poems, 1941-1944.”

Along with several transcripts of famous Spanish Loyalist songs, the folder contains at least 10 poems Gresham wrote that were never published. Included below are four of these poems, as well as “Hasta Revista,” a poem Gresham likely wrote. (When I contacted Peter N. Carroll about “Hasta Revista,” he said it could be something Gresham had collected, although he had never seen it anywhere before.)



“In this touching and beautifully written memoir, we accompany Rich Rothman on a bold exploration of his family’s past, as he tries to understand why both his grandfathers, first-generation Jewish immigrants in the United States, enlisted as volunteers to fight fascism in Spain. *Finding Ruby* grants us a revealing glimpse into a forgotten chapter of U.S. history whose relevance is arguably greater today than it has been in a long time.”

Sebastian Faber, author of *Exhuming Franco: Spain's Second Transition*

It may seem strange that these poems haven't been published until now. The sad reality is that little research on Gresham has been done. Perry C. Bramlett and Nick Tosches planned biographies but passed away before finishing their work. What has been published usually connects to Gresham's most popular books, which appeal to different communities. Fans of *Nightmare Alley* or its adaptations discuss Gresham as a hardboiled or noir writer. Fans of *Houdini: The Man Who Walked Through Walls* praise him for writing "the first great Houdini biography." Even when crime fiction and stage magic scholars share ideas, Gresham's limited output can make him a niche subject in each.

Gresham also gets mentioned in discussions about Joy Davidman, albeit not always in a fruitful way. After their divorce, Davidman married the Christian apologist C.S. Lewis. Their romance was adapted into a play and two movies, all titled *Shadowlands*, in the 1980s and '90s. Scholars specializing in the Inklings (Lewis and his Oxford writing friends like J.R.R. Tolkien) often mention Gresham, but rarely as a writer in his own right. Until around 2021, he was mostly seen as a footnote in the Lewis-Davidman story—at most an offstage villain endangering their romance.

Fortunately, Gresham's work is easier to find today than in a long time. Thanks to the 2021 movie adaptation by Guillermo del Toro, *Nightmare Alley* is back in print, while Duncie Books released a limited edition of his nonfiction book *Monster Midway* the same year. The William Lindsay Gresham estate has let me publish two Gresham poems elsewhere: a Norse myth piece called "Rahnchild," and an ode to C.S. Lewis called "The Friar of Oxford." I hope that publishing these Gresham poems about the Spanish war will spark new discussions. ▲

Hasta Revista

(tune: "Spanish Ladies")

In the hot sun of summer we'd camped in a valley.
A motor-bike rider roared up with the news.
Spanish boys with smooth faces come up to replace us.
We gave them tobacco and sometimes our shoes.

(Chorus:)

Farwell and adieu to you fine Spanish ladies,
Farwell and adieu, all you ladies of Spain.
For we've received orders to sail for our homeland
But it's likely that some day we'll see you again.

In Valencia we feasted on meat and canned butter.
We sat under palms and we counted the stars.
We slept on a mattress, we shared every morning

And we drank the last cognac they had in the bars.
We waited and cursed all the fine Spanish weather –
We waited for rain and a few of us prayed.

Then the mist settled down, our tramp steamer was waiting,

And we cast off in the darkness to run the blockade.

(chorus)

We crossed the frontier on the last night of freedom,
The bombers came over to search for our train.
Their Falangist banners were in Barcelona
While we rode through the darkness, remembering Spain.

Farewell and adieu to you fine Spanish ladies,
Farewell and adieu, all you ladies of Spain.

For we've received orders – to stay in our homeland
But it's likely that some day we'll see you again.

New Year's Eve: Villanueva de Castellon

Four yellow roses shining in moonlight so splendid
It caught at the breath
In a stillness so deep that the year just ended
Smiled in its death.

They were the last things left in the garden
With its black trees
Where oranges, bitter and shriveled, had started to harden
Through nights like these.

If only the rain had come with a lash of thunder
To roll out the year.
But no -- in the desperate blaze of the moonlight the wonder
Of life stirred here.

And bitter were all the days of the summer just spent
On hillsides of stone;
And the fear of the end, and the sword blade bent,
And the roses staring alone.

Again Rising

There are old battlefields within me
Where the dead crawl out to meet their death again
And the artillery spouts fire
In silence, served by sweaty, silent men.

Towns are bombarded that are dust
And camions roll under a sun gone down.
And hills are ours by blood that's dry
In ditches near a long-deserted town.

In Elche on its canyon edge
The palms still rattle in the moonlight's breath.
(They burned as the town turned,
Long ago, long ago its hot death.)

If I returned I would search the places
And haunt the roads again, looking for a sign.
There is no returning. But in sleep
I reach for the dead fingers and I find them mine.

Compulsion Before Dawn

I must go back when brotherhood has won
its death-lock over destruction's host of hate
to watch an ancient sea lick at the gate
of cities lifting marble to the sun.

I must seek olives where a single gun
chattered its lone defiance hours too late.

I must tread terraces where I scattered fate
and tie up threads of purpose left undone.

Now through their mouths who shared the raw, new wine
the maggots crawl. And through the hollow brain
they twist and dig in tissue rightly mine,
in graves my destiny filled with better men.
there, on the rusting wire by our old line
of trenches, shall find my heart again.

One

Every heaven's creature
Of some earth tastes.
If the bird dies
My labor wastes.

Every bird's fall
Has crushed my bone.
I find my own death
Under a stone,

Blind and white-burrowing,
Ugly I,
Suddenly pitiful:
Cry! Cry!

("One," "Compulsion Before Dawn," "Again Rising," "New Year's Eve: Villanueva de Castellon," and "Hasta Revista" by William Lindsay Gresham. Copyright © by William Lindsay Gresham. Reprinted by permission of The Estate of William Lindsay Gresham and Brandt & Hochman Literary Agents, Inc. All rights reserved.)

*G. Connor Salter is a writer and editor who has contributed over 1,400 articles to various publications, from local news to film studies. His research on Gresham has appeared in the Edinburgh University Press Blog, Fellowship & Fairy dust, Punk Noir Magazine, The Journal of Inklings Studies, Mythlore, and Mystery*File.*

Barbara Dane (1927- 2024)

By Peter Glazer and Richard Bermack



When Barbara Dane accepted the Clara Lemlich award for social activism in 2021, she drew a distinction between singer-activists whose songs deal with injustice, and activist-singers, who

are out there on the picket lines fighting injustice themselves. She was definitely one of the latter.

Barbara, who died at her home in Oakland, California, on October 20, 2024, at the age of 97, was also one of us: She performed many times at the annual VALB reunions and ALBA events with her friend and collaborator Bruce Barthol. An expansively talented singer who broke boundaries both musical and political, her career spanned many genres, including blues, jazz, folk, and standards. Through it all, she refused to compromise her ideals.

In the 1950s, Barbara Dane was one of the first white musicians to cross the color barrier, singing with African Americans including Muddy Waters and Louis Armstrong, who described her as “a gasser.” She was the first white person to appear on the cover of *Ebony* magazine. Jazz critic Leonard Feather called her “Bessie Smith in Stereo. . . The voice is pure, rich, rare as a 20-karat diamond.” Later she produced and toured with the Chambers Brothers.

An active participant in the civil rights movement, in 1964 she went south to participate in the Mississippi Freedom Project. There she met Lincoln vet Abe Osheroff, who was building a community center. They reunited forty years later at a vets’ gathering in Oakland.

Throughout her career, Barbara supported solidarity movements worldwide. She sang in underground concerts in Spain defying Franco, and in Cuba supporting Castro and the Cuban revolution. During the Vietnam War, she performed in GI coffee houses from New York to the Philippines as part of the FTA (Fuck the Army) tours. Her FBI file was the size of a large phone book—a point of pride.

For Barbara, taking a stand for justice trumped commercial success. She refused to perform on the TV show *Hootenanny* when her friend Pete Seeger was barred from the program. Bob Dylan was so impressed that he declared her his hero in a *Sing Out!* magazine article. Dylan’s producer, Albert Grossman, offered to produce her if she toned down her politics. She refused. One of her most successful albums was *I Hate the Capitalist System* (1973). Barbara Dane practiced what she preached.

To learn more about Barbara Dane, see *The Nine Lives of Barbara Dane*, a documentary by Maureen Gosling at jedriffilms.com, and the 2021 Bay Area ALBA event, *A Legacy of Hope and Activism*, which is viewable on ALBA’s YouTube channel.

Shirley Mangini (1946-2024)

By Sebastiaan Faber



Shirley Mangini, a professor emerita of Spanish at California State University, Long Beach, who served as ALBA Board member and *Volunteer* book review editor, passed away on October 11, 2024. Born near Pittsburgh, she lived in Madrid in the early 1970s before earning her graduate degrees at the University of New Mexico. After teaching

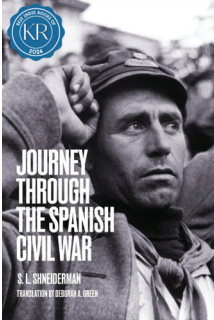
for eight years at Yale, she landed at Cal State Long Beach, where she also directed the Humanities Center. She retired from teaching in 2004 and served on ALBA’s board from 1998 until 2009.

As a scholar of modern and contemporary Spain, Mangini helped rediscover the women who, as intellectuals and workers, helped shape the Second Spanish Republic. This part of her research, which relied on published work, archives, and oral history, culminated in three books: *Memories of Resistance: Women’s Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (1995), *Las modernas de Madrid*, and a biography of the painter Maruja Mallo (2010). Mangini also worked extensively on the poets of the so-called Generation of 1950, who came of age in the early years of the Franco regime and one of whose most well-known members, Ángel González, was briefly Mangini’s husband. A broader investigation into the intellectual opposition to the dictatorship yielded her groundbreaking study *Rojos y rebeldes* (1987).

Book Review

Journey Through the Spanish Civil War, by S. L. Shneiderman. Translated from the Yiddish by Deborah A. Green. Amherst, MA.: White Goat Press, 2024. 139 pp.

Reviewed by Joe Butwin



Flocks of journalists descended on Spain during the Civil War, shipping dispatches off around the world. Some of these reports quickly emerged as books, freezing yesterday's news into durable documents. Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times*, published *Two Wars and More to Come* in 1938; Vincent Sheean's *Not Peace but a Sword* appeared early in 1939.

Shmuel Leyb Shneiderman, who was born in Eastern Poland in 1906 and moved to Paris in 1933, held press passes from Yiddish newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic. (He emigrated to the United States in 1940.) His book *Krig in Shpanyen*, now translated by Deborah A. Green as *Journey through the Spanish Civil War: The Hinterlands*, was first published in Warsaw in 1938. Although an introduction to the original Yiddish edition identifies Shneiderman as “the first Jewish war correspondent in Spain,” he was not the only one. Marion Greenspan, who wrote as James Hawthorne in the *New Masses*, arrived early in August 1936; Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times*, also Jewish, arrived in November. Jacob Soifer (Joe North to readers of the *Daily Worker*) came later. Still, none of these wrote as Jews to a Jewish audience in a Jewish language, as Shneiderman did.

The Hinterland of the subtitle (the word is the same in Yiddish) suggests the land “behind,” or away from a coastal metropolis. But in his dispatches, Shneiderman writes almost entirely from two cities, Barcelona and Valencia, both enlarged by the rush of refugees from Spain and elsewhere in Europe. *The Hinterlands* was supposed to be followed in 1939 by a second volume that would take the reader into combat. It never appeared.

In this volume we remain on the periphery of military action, but close to what Shneiderman regularly calls “the revolution.” He notes the difference in manners, clothing, popular education, religious practice, and services offered to refugees, from what a recent newcomer cautiously calls “the other side.” The observant journalist records the patterns of continuity and change that characterize the Spanish Republic. Trains continue to run, for example, but they dim their lights as they leave darkened stations. Brisk business at a winery whose Fascist owners have escaped to Italy generates much needed foreign revenue from the export market, while also providing wine for the Republican army. The Cordonú champagne company was a very old enterprise, but its co-operative ownership was quite new.

Shneiderman's ears perk up around Jewish involvement in the war. His attention is drawn by “the odd name of ‘Moysh,’ a Yiddish name” on a worker at a cooperative textile mill. Else-

where we meet Shaya Kinderman, a Jewish tailor who arrived in Barcelona in 1935; now he's a soldier who mentors “newly arrived volunteers from all corners of the world” in German, French, and Yiddish. A Jewish watchmaker from Kyiv fixes machine guns. The Dutch “queen of the machine gun,” Fanny Schoonheydt, is one of the many Jews who have come to Spain to join the International Brigades. The library of the Benedictine abbey at Monserrat, he notes, holds “ancient Talmudic tracts ... next to old Latin folios” along with Yiddish kitsch “still being sold on Nalewki Street in Warsaw.”

In the early 1930s, Spain had fewer Jews than any country in Europe. A chapter on “The Jews of Spain” tells the grim history of the Inquisition and expulsion in the fifteenth century followed by its ironic sequel—the recent arrival of thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing the rest of Europe. The Catalan leader Lluís Companys assures Shneiderman that “the doors of my country and the doors of my heart are open to the Jews.” No one was saying this on Franco's side.

But it is not simply his attention to Jewish news that distinguishes S. L. Shneiderman from other journalists in Spain. I am inclined to read the line that Deborah Green translates as “the first Jewish war correspondent”—in Yiddish, “*dem ershtn yidishn krigs-reporter*”—as the first Yiddish correspondent, that is, the first writer imbued with the spirit of Yiddish language and literature. There were other Yiddish journalists in Spain, and long before the war in Spain Sholom Aleichem's fictional character Menakhem Mendl writes letters home to his wife, Sheyne Sheyndl, about the First Balkan War of 1912.

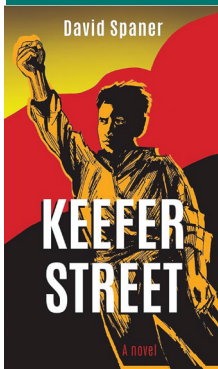
It's hard not to smile when a squeamish Shneiderman finds himself sitting next to a Jewish leather merchant at a bullfight in Barcelona. Shneiderman recounts how the merchant “squeezed his fist in anger” at the sight of repeated jabs from the picador—“and screamed in Yiddish, ‘They're ruining my bull's hide!’” Shneiderman greets his *landsman* “with a hearty ‘Sholem aleykhem!’” and learns that the man, a furrier from Warsaw, buys the hides for shoe leather and would rather not see them punctured. Shaya Kinderman, the tailor who greets *Brigadistas* at the Hotel Colón in Barcelona, “is short and timid looking, and nobody would take him for the hero he is ... with a Browning automatic in his hand.”

In Spain Shneiderman joined his brother-in-law, the great Jewish—I might say Yiddish—photographer David Seymour, known as “Chim,” whose photographs appeared in the original Yiddish edition as they do at the end of the current translation. The Yiddish text can be found online at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, MA., which also runs the White Goat Press. Apart from a few minor slips—the Basque metropolis is Bilbao, not Balboa—the translation is graceful, faithful, and poetic where poetry is appropriate. The book makes splendid reading and a fine addition in English to the expansive library of first-hand reportage from the Spanish Civil War. ▲

*Joe Butwin is an Associate Professor Emeritus of the Department of English at the University of Washington. He is the author, most recently, of *Salud y Shalom: Conversations with Jewish Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, which will appear with the University of Illinois Press in March.*

Keefer Street, by David Spaner. Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2024. 307pp.

Reviewed by Paul Buhle



The scholarship of the organized civilian resistance to fascism has expanded greatly in recent years. The “Partisans” are now often seen less as men with guns than as ordinary civilians, especially women and even children, who sabotage the Nazis and their fascist partners in small ways, including assistance to the men (and some women) who have boldly taken up arms.

The stories of the antifascist struggle have presented the Spanish Civil War in unpredictable ways. The veterans of that heroic defeat—who were well trained and often kept their weapons— would be important and even decisive in phases of later anti-fascist conflict: in France and Italy, but also Yugoslavia and Hungary, and as far away as Scandinavia—where the armed struggles developed very near the end of the war, but with explosive results.

Keefer Street adds to this ever-expanding body of work with a story from Canada. The novel offers us a wonderfully written account of a veteran from Vancouver and Toronto, moving us back and forth through time, from his enlistment and experience at the battlefield, to a 1986 reunion in Spain, and back to Vancouver. It is the complex but heroic life story of an antifascist.

Our protagonist is a Jewish, working-class idealist. Somewhere in a family like his, there is a usually a *shtarke*, a tough guy—often a union defender against scabs and bullies, or in this case an actual prize fighter. Practically unknown in later generations, Jewish boxers were renowned up to the Second World War as tactical punchers, evading the blows and striking back, much in the model of a later Muhammed Ali. In Spaner’s novel, Uncle Sol lives and fights across the border in Buffalo, New York, with a Star of David on his trunks, just like the real-life Barney Ross (whose birth name was Dov-Ber Rosofsky).

By the time we get to an enlistment, the reader has already been transported ahead in time to the reunions of Lincoln vets, with all the varied ruminations, including regrets at the betrayals of Stalin and collective pride at what they accomplished. Then, back again in 1934, our protagonist is portrayed as a radical kid who reads classic leftwing novels and joins the protests against poverty. He is getting ready without knowing it.

As the novel shows, popular culture, American movies in particular, affected the emerging leftwing culture among the Canadian working class more than no one might expect. Becoming “modern,” leaving behind memories of the pre-emigration East European shtetls, drew people into a complex web of cultural-political affiliations like the Socialist (but not Communist) Workmen’s Circles. Canadian Jews, like their US cousins to the South, yearned to join wider society but still insisted on being accepted for who and what they were becoming.

It is within this Jewish milieu that the hard decision to go to Spain emerges. With broken families, with upward and downward mobility always present—and even with a retreat into Canada’s rural wilderness where many Jews found a living as small merchants—the youngsters portrayed in the novel find themselves taking chances politically and socially. Within their ethnic world, the youthful volunteers who volunteer for the International Brigades received praise, scorn, and a great deal of outright puzzlement.

The veterans’ return to Spain decades later is recounted with fascinating detail, including ceremonies and conferences in various Spanish towns and villages, where locals are caught up in memories. Despite their continued political disputes, the vets share the belief that they did what they could to halt the advance of fascism.

The novel contains a few wonderful tidbits. Joe Streisand, who did not live long enough to be Barbra Streisand’s uncle, died in Spain, but she repaid the favor in the film “The Way We Were,” the hugely popular cinematic saga of the Popular Front Left, which starred her alongside Robert Redford. ▲

Paul Buhle is co-editor of Partisans, an anthology of comic art stories of 1940s armed struggles in Europe, to be published by Between the Lines in Toronto, and also co-editor of Brigadistas!, a comic about the Spanish Civil War published by Monthly Review.

Every three months, ALBA’s online edition at

albavolunteer.org

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¡No Pasarán! The Popular Front Strikes Back

AUGUST 28, 2024
BY THE EDITORS

This issue's cover (see the print edition here) celebrates the worldwide antifascist movement. In a year where countries across the globe—including the United States—are facing a surge of far-right parties, France saw a revival of the Popular Front, a broad antifascist coalition that managed to hold the Rassemblement National at bay.

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POSTED IN NEWS

ALBA Celebrates Pride Month and Inaugurates New Monthly Spanish Civil War Film Series

AUGUST 28, 2024
BY THE EDITORS

ALBA's Monthly Film Discussion Series Kicks Off
On July 16, ALBA hosted the first session of its new online film discussion series, sponsored by the Peter N. Carroll Anti-Fascist Education Fund, and geared toward both teachers and the general public. The series features

News from Spain: Citizenship for IB Descendants; the Jarama March; Spanish Citizenship

AUGUST 28, 2024
BY THE EDITORS

Catalonia's Alnav Bessie Program Reports Progress
An article in The Guardian on May 29 reported that the Alnav Bessie Program, through which the government of Catalonia seeks to locate, exhume, identify, and repatriate the remains of International Brigade

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