

The Volunteer

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

Academics Facing Fascism: Mark Bray and Kirsten Weld

pp 4 & 6

Protests in NYC against the detention of Palestinian activist and Columbia student
Mahmoud Khalil, 10 March 2025. Photo SWinxy. Wikimedia Commons.



ICE OFF OUR
CAMPUSES
HANDS OFF OUR
STUDENTS

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The Volunteer

Founded by the Veterans of the Abraham
Lincoln Brigade

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

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Dear Friends,

Since the never-ending news cycle has us all gasping for air, it's hard to recall what life was like last week—let alone last year. Still, it will be a while before we forget this past November 4. For one, it's not every day that a politician opens a victory speech quoting Eugene V. Debs. But it was not just New Yorkers and their new mayor, Zohran Mamdani, who had something to celebrate. That same day, on the other side of the Atlantic, the cabinet of Pedro Sánchez, Spain's Prime Minister, voted to grant Spanish citizenship to some 170 children and grandchildren of International Brigaders, including several members of our own ALBA family (see below). The vote, which followed a stipulation included in the 2022 Law of Democratic Memory, acknowledged not only the Brigadistas' commitment to antifascist internationalism, but also their descendants' steadfast defense of that cause.

The gesture is symbolic, to be sure. But it is also defiant. After all, rightwing forces around the world are actively seeking to demonize, and even criminalize, the antifascist struggle then and now. This trend has had a chilling effect not only on civil liberties—including First Amendment rights—but also academic freedom, as Spanish Civil War historians Mark Bray and Kirsten Weld have experienced first-hand (see their interviews on pp. 4-8).

In this context, it is all the more important to connect our present fights with the past. Young people struggling against authoritarianism today should know about their precursors from the 1930s; they should know that they are not alone in history. At the No Kings protest in San Francisco, children of Lincoln vets proudly carried the banner of the VALB's Bay Area post (see back cover). If you run into anyone looking for inspiration, have them read David Bacon's reassessment of Tina Modotti as a political activist (p. 12), Tom King's touching story about his family connections to the Dutch anti-Nazi resistance (p. 14), Lindsey Swindall's piece on the lessons we can learn from Paul Robeson (p. 16), or Carter Barnwell's report on early antifascists at New York's City College (p. 18). Also, filmmaker Miguel G. Morales speaks about his gripping short film about Cuban volunteers in Spain (p. 10), while our Spanish soccer correspondent, Dean Burrier Sanchis, gives an update on the recovery of antifascist memory at the Valencian club Levante. Our recurring archival feature Arkivo recovers a little-known but powerful text by Joris Ivens, the director of *The Spanish Earth*. (As always, we have even more stories and reviews in our online edition at albavolunteer.org.)

Making this magazine every three months is as fun as it is stressful. Every time we send an issue to press, we are secretly a bit surprised that we managed to pull it off once again. But even more than surprised, we are grateful: to our authors—and to you, our readers, without whom none of this would be possible. We ask you a special favor: please consider forwarding a copy of, or a link to this issue of *The Volunteer* to some young people in your circle; people who might draw strength from knowing more about the deep history of antifascism. Thanks so much for your support.

¡Salud!



Sebastiaan Faber,
Co-Editor



James D. Fernández,
Co-Editor

Spain Grants Citizenship to IB Descendants

On November 4, the cabinet of Pedro Sánchez, Spain's Prime Minister, voted to grant Spanish passports to some 170 descendants of International Brigade volunteers who had applied for honorary citizenship following the 2022 Law of Democratic Memory, including some 30 Americans. Many of them relied on ALBA to support their applications. Invaluable help was also provided by Patricia Ure. For ongoing applications, ALBA continues to work with the Association of Friends of the IB (AABI).

ALBA NEWS

Susman Lecture: Joyce Horman Recalls Chile On October 16, as part of the annual Susman Lecture, Joyce Horman, a lifelong human rights activist and current member of ALBA's Honorary Board, shared her life story in an online conversation with ALBA board member Gina Herrmann. Joyce and her husband Charles were in Chile during the September 1973 military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile. In the days following, Charles was abducted and killed—a story chronicled in the 1982 Oscar-winning film *Missing*. The online event can be viewed on ALBA's YouTube channel.

New York Teachers Gather for ALBA Workshop More than 30 New York City teachers and others joined ALBA's annual, full-day teaching workshop on November 4. Titled "The United States and World Fascism: Human Rights from the Spanish Civil War to Nuremberg and Beyond," the workshop guided participants through ten modules—with primary texts, videos, and lesson plans—that seek to recast the narrative of US history by focusing on the antifascist organizing that occurred in response to the invasion of Ethiopia and the 1936 military coup in Spain, and looking at human rights activism and US foreign policy through the lens of US veterans of the Spanish Civil War.

Barcelona Conference Presents New Research on International Brigades On October 30 and 31, more than 150 researchers and teachers from around the world gathered in Barcelona to discuss the history and legacy of the International Brigades. The conference was organized by Lourdes Prades of the University of Barcelona, who also coordinates the international IB database SIDBRINT (sidbrint.ub.edu). ALBA was represented by Sebastian Faber, who delivered the opening keynote.

ALBA Marks Jarama March and Franco's Death On November 20, ALBA board member Nancy Wallach, daughter of Lincoln vet Hy Wallach, was joined by a group of IB family members to present a lively online event to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Franco's death and look back on this year's Jarama March, which specifically honored the North American volunteers.

ALBA Co-Sponsors Screening of New Short on Cuban Volunteers On November 21, ALBA joined NYU's Espacio de Culturas (formerly the King Juan Carlos I Center) for a screening of *Escuchar la Sombra* (Listen to the Shadow), a 30-minute short by the Spanish filmmaker Miguel G. Morales about the Cuban volunteers who fought in the Spanish war. The screening was followed by a discussion led by James D. Fernández, with Ameya Tripathi, Sebastian Faber, and the director. (For an interview with Morales, see p. 10.)

The Things We Carry: A Grand Gathering Join us in person on December 7 at the Spanish Benevolent Society (advance tickets are required) for ALBA's annual end-of-year gathering. Last year, grandchildren of the Lincoln veterans came together with the broader ALBA community to share memories. This year's event will once again focus on the "grands," as they discuss the meaning of the *things they carry*—that is, artifacts and mementos passed down from the vets. They will be joined by Shannon O'Neill, Curator for the Tamiment-Wagner Collections. House Opens at 12:30 PM ET;

Event Begins at 1 PM ET. Tickets are \$40; see alba-valb.org/eventcalendar for ordering details.

Film Discussions Continue Apace On September 19, ALBA's popular monthly series of online film discussions featured a well-attended session on two well-known newsreel compilations, led by Jordana Mendelson and Ameya Tripathi, both of NYU. (A recording is available on ALBA's YouTube channel.) On January 8, we'll discuss Fred Zinneman's classic *Behold a Pale Horse*, (with Linda Ehrlich). On February 5, Oriol Porta will lead a discussion about his documentary on Hollywood's complicated relationship with the Spanish War, *Hollywood contra Franco*.

Podcast: Family Secrets of the Spanish Civil War

In fall 1982, Patricia Schechter, an eager first-year student at Mount Holyoke, took a class with Daniel Czitrom, who was then a second-year assistant professor of history at the College. Czitrom encouraged his students to find their own ways to make sense of the past as they tried to understand how it affected them, their grandparents, or even remote ancestors they'd only heard of through family lore.

Schechter and Czitrom fell out of touch after her graduation—until a cold call in 2022 brought them back together. By then, Schechter had become a history professor at Portland State University in Oregon and had just published *El Terrible: Life and Labor in Pueblonuevo, 1887-1939* (Routledge), a study of the mining town in Andalusia where her maternal grandmother had lived. As it happened, Czitrom had just completed a book of his own, *Kitchen Table History: Wrestling With My Family's Radical Past* (U of Illinois Press, forthcoming), which included the stories of three relatives who had volunteered to defend the Spanish Republic as part of the International Brigades.

Deciding that the serendipity was too obvious to pass up, Schechter came up with an idea for a podcast. "Family Secrets of the Spanish Civil War" premiered in October 2024. In six hour-long episodes, the historians discuss their ancestors, attempting to describe their family members' possible frames of mind amid war. Each episode focuses on one aspect of their relatives' stories: love, loss, war, secrets, and so forth.

The books and the podcast leave readers and listeners with a lesson Czitrom spent his entire career trying to instill in his students: History is about trying to create understanding, not placing blame. "History is not just about famous and powerful people," Czitrom said in the first episode of the podcast. "I wanted to paint my family as full human beings, flaws and all." "The magic in the podcast," Schechter says, "is making the human connection across time, generation, countries. The most humanizing thing we can do is tell our stories."

Mark Bray, Historian of Antifascism Exiled to Spain: “All Left-Wing Protest is Being Demonized.”

By Sebastiaan Faber

Targeted by the far right, Rutgers historian Mark Bray and his family went into exile in October. Speaking with *The Volunteer* from Madrid, he reflects on the current political situation. “Fascism shamelessly takes over institutions that, under liberal norms, are supposed to remain neutral.”



“I don’t know what’s going on, but it seems your reservations have been canceled,” said the Newark Airport flight attendant one Wednesday in October, as historian Mark Bray was about to board a flight to Madrid with his wife and two young children. Bray, who teaches the history of the left at Rutgers, knew immediately that it wasn’t a mistake. Someone did not want him to leave the country.

The day before, he and his family had decided to leave the United States because they no longer felt safe. On October 2, Bray had become the target of an aggressive harassment campaign by far-right groups that not only demanded his university fire him but also published his home address and threatened to kill him.

On the very day that his flight reservations were mysteriously canceled, President Trump and his team were meeting at the White House with several far-right influencers who had participated in the harassment campaign. The meeting took place two and a half weeks after Trump, through executive order, declared “Antifa” a “terrorist organization,” and two weeks after the release of a national security memorandum (NSPM-7)

linking a “dramatic increase” in left-wing political violence to “anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Christianity.”

Exactly one week later, the organization Turning Point USA (whose founder, Charlie Kirk, was killed in September) branded Mark Bray as “Doctor Antifa,” claimed his presence on campus posed a “threat to conservative students,” accused him of funding the movement, linked him to Kirk’s murder, and launched an online petition demanding his dismissal.

Bray, an expert on the history of anarchism—his most recent book, published in 2023, explains how repressive responses to the rise of anarchism in late 19th-century France and Spain spurred the development of international law and the global human rights movement—is also the author of *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*, based on interviews with activists from around the world. The book’s release in August 2017 coincided with neo-Nazi protests in Charlottesville, Virginia, against the removal of a statue of Confederate general Lee. When Bray defended the right to self-defense against “white supremacist and neo-Nazi violence,” he was accused of inciting violence.

Compared to 2017, centrist media outlets are more skeptical of the government’s claims about Antifa.

The day after their reservations were canceled, the family managed to fly to Spain, but only after an interrogation by federal agents. Bray spoke to me in October from Madrid.

How do these recent attacks differ from those you faced in 2017?

Things have changed in several ways. Today there is a much more coordinated and strident campaign to fabricate the specter of supposed left-wing political violence and to demonize anyone on the left who protests as a “terrorist,” clearly in order to suppress them. This both reflects the fact that Trump’s second term is very different in character from his first and the aftermath of Charlie Kirk’s murder. Although the accusations are similar to those I received in 2017, today they are part of a state project. That said, this time centrist media outlets are more skeptical of the government’s claims about Antifa. They know perfectly well it’s made-up.

The current government has managed to turn an organization like Turning Point USA into a sort of extension of its surveillance and repression apparatus, violating every kind of protocol and decorum. Vice President J.D. Vance hosted Kirk’s podcast from the White House itself, using it to issue direct threats to supposedly extremist media and foundations.

It’s true that there are unofficial but explicit links between TPUSA chapters at universities, the organization’s national leadership, and right-wing influencers like Jack Posobiec and Andy Ngo—both of whom were at the White House when my airline tickets were canceled. The role Vance took on after Kirk’s death is only part of a broader, fully state-sanctioned response marked by attacks on anyone who dared to criticize Kirk. The violation of protocol you mention is straight out of the fascist playbook—Mussolini did it, too—though unfortunately many Americans don’t realize that. Fascism despises traditional politics and shamelessly takes over institutions that, under liberal norms, are supposed to remain neutral. Ultimately, fascists seek to dismantle the entire liberal project that insists on distinguishing between values and procedures. The Nazis, as we know, tried to create a partisan state by building parallel institutions to the German state. What we’re seeing today in the United States is a project that seems intent on going through the state, turning it into a defender of partisan values, while anyone opposing those values is cast as a terrorist opposition that must be destroyed. None of this bodes well.

You teach at a large public university in New Jersey. Would the situation be different in a state like Texas, where a historian, Tom Alter, was fired simply for identifying as a socialist?

Yes, it would be completely different. I’m lucky not only to be in New Jersey but also at a public university with a strong and progressive union. Otherwise, I would’ve been fired long ago. The faculty, the elected councils, my department, and the union all explicitly support me. Even my more conservative colleagues realize that if we accept a situation where pressure from a handful of students can drive professors to flee, the entire university would collapse.

How do you explain the administration’s obsession with targeting universities? Are we really that dangerous?

I suppose if you had an honest conversation with different members of the administration, they’d give you different answers. The most obvious one, perhaps, is what the polls show: most college-educated people don’t vote Republican. That means attacking universities generates support among the base. The image of the elitist, Marxist professor indoctrinating students is a powerful symbol for stirring up anger among Trump’s followers. But it’s not all just for show. The other day I spoke with a journalist who covers the White House, who told me he has the distinct impression that members of Trump’s team actually believe what they say. That’s important to keep in mind, even if their relationship to truth is different from ours. I used to think it didn’t matter whether they believed what they said or not. But these days I’ve started to frame the question differently: If they truly believe there’s a conspiracy to replace the white race, that Jewish money is manipulating immigrants and Black people to destroy their civilization—what does that imply? It’s certainly a framework capable of accommodating all kinds of fascist and racist garbage. And if they also believe that university professors are at the center of that conspiracy, promoting it, then that explains the ferocity you mentioned. Just read the latest national security memorandum, NSPM-7. It’s all there. Nor can we discount the role of personal resentment from someone like Trump, who has long felt despised by bookworms who think he’s an idiot.

Before you were able to leave the United States, you were questioned by federal agents. May I ask what they wanted to know?

I can say a few things. I think they were agents from Customs and Homeland Security, but I’m not sure. It was a disorienting experience. When they wanted to take me to a separate room, my small children started crying. The agents first told me they were concerned for my safety and that, if I had any problems in Spain, I should contact the embassy. But then they started asking about the income I’d received from my book—where the money was going. When I told them I wouldn’t continue that line of questioning without a lawyer present, they dropped it. What they did do was search all our belongings and take my phone. Although they returned it shortly afterward, once we arrived in Madrid I bought a new one, just in case.

What did the experience leave you with?

It was strange to feel that the well-being and safety of my family were in the hands of these four goons. I felt powerless. And that’s knowing full well that these situations are far worse for anyone without U.S. citizenship. What shocked me was that they wanted to search and question us even though we hadn’t been accused of anything. In fact, if we’ve made the news, it’s because crimes have been committed *against* us. To me, what happened at the airport is further proof that, increasingly, U.S. federal agencies couldn’t care less about pretending to be neutral arbiters of the law. In other words, they’ve stopped pretending. ▲

Sebastiaan Faber teaches at Oberlin College. A Spanish version of this interview appeared in Contexto (www.ctxt.es).

KIRSTEN WELD, HARVARD HISTORIAN:

“Some of the most powerful people in the current administration have made no secret of their admiration for Franco-style authoritarianism.”

By Sebastiaan Faber

Kirsten Weld has spent years studying Latin American dictatorships and the citizens who fight to hold them accountable. That experience has proven valuable in her current role as the president of the AAUP chapter at Harvard, which in March sued the federal government for targeting students and faculty—and won.

President Trump has “a problem ... with the First Amendment”, William G. Young, a senior U.S. district judge, wrote in September, adding: “The President’s palpable misunderstanding that the government simply cannot seek retribution for speech he disdains poses a great threat to Americans’ freedom of speech.”

This striking passage is part of the scathing 160-page sentence following a suit brought in Massachusetts against four defendants—the President, the director of ICE, and the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security—by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the Middle East Studies Association, and AAUP’s Harvard, Rutgers, and NYU chapters. The plaintiffs claimed that the administration had violated the first-amendment rights of students and faculty when it targeted non-citizen university affiliates for deportation as retribution for their pro-Palestine activism.

The outcome of the AAUP v. Rubio case has been one of the most decisive judicial blows dealt to the administration so far, both in the evidence that the proceedings brought to light and in the court’s unequivocal assessment of the administration’s goals, intent, and methods. At the end of his ruling, Judge Young, who is 85, quotes Ronald Reagan, who



appointed him: “Freedom is a fragile thing [that] must be fought for ... by each generation”.

“As I’ve read and re-read the record in this case,” Young adds,

... I’ve come to believe that President Trump truly understands and appreciates the full import of President Reagan’s inspiring message—yet I fear he has drawn from it a darker, more cynical message. I fear President Trump believes the American people are so divided that today they will *not* stand up, fight

for, and defend our most precious constitutional values so long as they are lulled into thinking their own personal interests are not affected. Is he correct?

Kirsten Weld (Ottawa, 1982), a Professor of Latin American History and the President of the AAUP chapter at Harvard, would like to answer that question with a resounding “no.” But she’s not sure. “In the face of the attacks on higher education from the administration,” she said when we spoke in October, “it’s been painful to see the relative absence of a collective response. As an historian who has worked on authoritarian regimes, I know that is a common reaction. On the other hand, my work with the AAUP this past year has also

shown me that everyone can do something, however small, and that you never know what effects those small actions might have. We saw that in the court case. When we first brought the suit back in March, we had no idea it was going to go this far. Our only thought was: “The government is going after our students and colleagues. We must do something!” As it happened, the same evening we filed the paperwork, ICE abducted Rümeysa Öztürk, right in my neighborhood, for having co-authored an op-ed in her Tufts college newspaper. In that moment, that felt like such a

defeat. Fortunately, we were able to add her and subsequent arrests to the case as it developed.”

The AAUP was founded in 1915. Did it really take more than a hundred years to create a Harvard chapter?

(Laughs.) No, there have been chapters before. The most active period was in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Sen. Joseph McCarthy and others claimed Harvard had been overrun by lunatic Communists who wanted to destroy the fabric of America. The almost literal echoes with the rhetoric coming from the administration today are striking.

What do those echoes tell you?

The fact that every generation seems to have to fight the same battle could be a depressing insight. But I found it oddly reassuring to see that the current administration is simply tapping into a well-established vein of anti-intellectualism: a kind of pseudo anti-elite posturing by people who themselves are the product of these same elite institutions.

Are there any tactical lessons to draw from those past battles?

Yes, although they are not surprising. They involve solidarity, collective action, and not allowing individual people and institutions to be picked off through cooptation. These may be principles rather than tactics, but you can't have one without the other.

What prompted you to resuscitate the AAUP chapter at Harvard?

A long-brewing governance crisis; we don't even have a faculty senate, though efforts are underway to create one for the first time. In recent years, the faculty has been increasingly marginalized. After Harvard was thrust into the national spotlight following October 7, 2023, the Harvard Corporation, which is our equivalent of a board of trustees, went repeatedly over the heads of the faculty. That created a huge amount of discontent.

At many public universities, the AAUP functions as a labor union. At Harvard and other private colleges, it has what are called “advocacy chapters.” These also operate on the principles of solidarity and collective action. But what does that look like, given how massively different academic working conditions are across the country?

That's a good question. I've been in AAUP workshops with colleagues at colleges in Texas, for example, where the state legislature has an enormous amount of direct power. Faculty there are afraid not just to join the AAUP but to be associated with colleagues who are—and they are right to!

That kind of fear-induced caution seems to be spreading everywhere, though.

Yes, even here at Harvard I've talked with non-tenured or non-citizen colleagues who are afraid to join the AAUP because they fear deportation or professional retaliation. That may sound ridiculous—but it was also ridiculous for Rümeysa Öztürk to be arrested for having co-authored an op-ed in her campus paper. Still, all that said, the circumstances here at Harvard, especially for tenured faculty, are not comparable to those in many other parts of the country.

In the examples you gave, being at a private institution provides some protection from the State. But when it comes to first-amendment protections, you're actually more vulnerable at a private university. What we've seen since January is that the real power of protection comes from civil society: organizations like the AAUP, the ACLU, and labor unions.

I agree. That, too, is a familiar historical pattern, of course. It's precisely why regimes have long been bent on destroying people's ability to organize in those forms.

Mark Bray, the Rutgers historian of antifascism who was forced to seek exile in Spain, told me that if it hadn't been for the fact that he teaches at a New Jersey public university with a strong union, he'd been fired a long time ago.

Rutgers is a great example, given its historical legacy of labor organizing and cross-sector solidarity.

What's it like at Harvard?

When you're at an institution that does not have that kind of history, it can be a challenge to get going. When folks don't default to an understanding of themselves as workers, they may have trouble seeing themselves in meaningful solidarity with other groups of campus workers. Imagining that faculty inhabit

a separate category is a luxury that has been cultivated in the private, elite higher-education space.

A luxury that, now, has proven to be a liability. Maybe that's why the administration first went for the Ivies.

Totally! If they had tried to go after Rutgers first, I doubt they would have come away with an early “deal” like at Columbia. As far as Harvard is concerned, I am pretty sure that if there had not been an AAUP chapter back in March when the university was in backroom negotiations with the federal government trying to do a deal of its own, things would have turned out differently.

How has your experience with the courts this past year shaped your faith in the judiciary?

It's complicated. On the one hand, the judiciary has served as a crucial check—much more so than, say, Congress, which has totally abdicated its responsibility—upon a regime that seems hell-bent on shredding the rule of law as we know it. On the other hand, you need lawsuits and rulings and judicial relief for that check to function, and the Trump administration's “flood the zone” approach has made it difficult for the judiciary to keep up with the pace and extent of unlawful and unconstitutional governmental activity.

I'm curious how you read the current moment as an expert on twentieth-century Latin America. Your first book is on the police archives that document the genocidal actions of the military dictatorship in Guatemala. What parallels do you see?

The idea I keep coming back to is that you never know what consequences your actions might have. Keeping a scrap of paper that attests to someone having been in a particular place at a particular time—or, today, recording a video of someone being arrested—may prove crucial in the future to shape a narrative or build a court case. Over the years I have worked with and written about astonishingly brave folks all over the hemisphere who don't know what outcome their work might have. But they keep doing it anyway, putting one foot in front of the other, even as the landscape looks incredibly bleak. The other day I read about how, in Chicago, people are using free street libraries to distribute whistles along with a simple code to issue warn-

ings when ICE is around. Someone came up with that idea and put it in practice, without knowing if it would work—and now it has empowered people to collectively defend their neighbors and communities from the masked paramilitaries besieging them.

You are currently working on a book about the ways that the Spanish Civil War shaped Latin American politics across the continent during the Cold War. You show how dictatorships in Chile, Guatemala, or Argentina were directly inspired by Francoism. Can't something similar be said about the US today?

That's a bit of a leading question! (*Laughs.*) But yes, I see several parallels. For one, Trump, like Franco, is a kind of idiot savant of coalitional politics. Both have an intuitive grasp of how to get people who disagree with each other on fundamental issues pointed in the same direction. But there are more direct connections as well. Some of the most powerful people in the current administration are recent converts to Cathol-

icism who have made no secret of their admiration for integralist approaches, including Francoism. They are part of a strain in US reactionary thought that looked to Spain for inspiration, not just in the 1930s but through the 1960s and '70s. The people behind some of the first big anti-abortion demonstrations in 1970, like L. Brent Bozell and Fritz Wilhelmson, saw themselves as American Carlists—including the paramilitary methods and the red berets. They wanted to turn the US into a Catholic confessional state. So-called "post-liberals" like J.D. Vance are part of that lineage.

What also reminds me of Francoism is the way they describe anyone who disagrees with them as part of a massive left-wing conspiracy to destroy civilization.

You know, for my book, I've forced myself to carefully read a slew of reactionary and Falangist writers. It wasn't fun, exactly, but it did allow me to understand something that is present quite clearly both in the reactionary Hispanophone space and in Trumpism today.

What did you discover?

The thing that they hate is not actually whatever they think communism is, though they do hate that, too. The thing that they *really* hate is the Enlightenment, or at least what "the Enlightenment" has become a shorthand for: secularism, modernity, equality, mass politics. They hate liberal universalism—its implicit leveling of what the far-right sees as "natural" racial and gendered and civilizational hierarchies. And they think that communism is bad because it's a thing that liberalism helps to produce. Therefore, if you want to eradicate communism, what you must destroy is liberalism—the universalist idea that we should tolerate and find ways of coexisting with people with whom we may disagree or who have different faith traditions. For them, that very aspiration is itself a weakness, indeed a pathology, that needs to be extirpated. ▲

A Spanish version of this interview appeared in Contexto (www.ctxt.es).

JOIN ALBA'S JARAMA SOCIETY

In February 1937, American volunteers saw their first military action in the Spanish Civil War, fighting as part of the International Brigades in the struggle to defend Madrid. With little training, poor equipment, and none of the promised air and artillery support, the Lincolns took part in the attack on strategic Pingarrón Hill. Raked by enemy machine guns, with no coherent command, plagued by unworkable weapons, and amidst a cold, driving rain, survivors crawled back to the trenches, now crowded with wounded and dead bodies. The chaotic conditions made counting casualties difficult, and various sources report different numbers. Out of perhaps 350 soldiers, 120 were killed and roughly 150 wounded, for a staggering casualty rate of over 75%. Writing from Madrid for the *New York Times*, Herbert Matthews reported the Americans "were fighting in open terrain under exceptionally heavy fire, but they took it well and showed their officers they were to be relied upon."

"However incompetent their leaders," Peter Carroll noted, "the Lincolns acquired a reputation for courage and valor, the heroism of shock troops, that became part of their mythology." The decimated Lincoln battalion was rebuilt and continued fighting until the International Brigades were demobilized in the fall of 1938.

The Battle of Jarama has come to symbolize the courage, commitment, and bravery of the American volunteers, as well as the terrible price they paid. This is why ALBA has named its legacy gift program *The Jarama Society*.

The Jarama Society provides a way to step up your commitment to preserving and teaching the history of the Lincoln volunteers. Joining is simple: just include ALBA in your will or living trust, or name ALBA as a beneficiary of your estate. ALBA accepts legacy gifts in any amount. From training high school teachers and students in how to use our archives, the quarterly publication of *The Volunteer*, and our website, to our social media outreach, film discussions and annual celebration, ALBA continues to pursue its mission: teaching future generations about the sacrifices made by the American volunteers in their fight against the global threat of fascism. Today, as the menace of fascism once again real, educating citizens about the Lincolns and their legacy is more urgent than ever. Your legacy gift to ALBA, in other words, will help ensure that today's young people learn about the experiences of the volunteers in Spain, as well as their broader dedication to social justice at home.

If you would like to schedule a meeting or discuss options by telephone, please contact ALBA's Executive Director Mark Wallem at (212) 674-5398 or mwallem@alba-valb.org. We would be pleased to provide more information or follow up with a personal visit.

—Gina Herrmann & Daniel Czitrom
(ALBA Board of Governors)



A PIONEER OF VALENCIAN SOCCER RETURNS

Why Was José Ballester Gozalvo Erased from His Club's History?

By Dean Burrier Sanchis

Levante UD, the Spanish soccer club that recently recovered its 1937 Cup of Free Spain, has another victory to celebrate. Our football correspondent reports.

Three years ago, I celebrated in *The Volunteer* that my Valencian soccer club Levante UD finally achieved official recognition for winning the 1937 Cup of Free Spain, whose historic final was played during the Spanish war, in Republican-controlled territory. Today, that recovered title stands for two distinct democratic struggles. The first is the battle that the players—many of whom were also soldiers for the Republic—fought on the soccer field that day, granting their fans a welcome distraction from war. The second is the club's twenty-year battle for historical memory, which saw fans, journalists, and club historians spend countless hours in archives, legal proceedings and lobbying efforts to restore the trophy.

Now, the club has once again logged an impressive victory. It has managed to recover the remains of its founder, José Ballester Gozalvo (1893-1970), who served as a Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Spanish Republican government in exile. Ballester, who was raised in El Cabanyal, a maritime community in Valencia, died in France while Spain was still governed by Franco. Before passing away, he requested that he eventually be reburied in his hometown.

Ballester Gozalvo's resume is so extensive that founding a soccer club on a September morning in 1909, at just 16 years of age, seems rather fleeting in importance. A renowned educator, he would go on to write six books about pedagogy. In fact, the founding of Levante is linked to the conviction—which he shared with his father, the educator Vicente Ballester Fandos—that athletic activity was essential to a well-rounded educational experience. After studying and practicing law, and working as a professor in Soria, Segovia and Toledo, in the 1920s Ballester Gozalvo became more heavily involved in politics and Republican movements. He tried his hand at journalism, helped found a political party, and in 1931 was elected to Toledo's city council. During the Civil War, he was a legal advisor to the Republican President, Manuel Azaña.

After the war, Ballester went into exile in France. A tireless fighter for the Spanish Republican cause, he was a perpetual thorn in the side of the Franco dictatorship. As the Foreign Minister of the



A whole generation of Levante fans did not know who founded their club.

Spanish Republican government in exile, President of Izquierda Republicana and head of the Spanish League of Human Rights, he waged a 31-year intellectual war against the regime. He spoke before the United Nations and wrote scathing letters to both President Eisenhower and French President Charles de Gaulle criticizing their support of Franco.

Because of his ties to the Second Republic, the Franco dictatorship erased his name from the historical record. As a result, a whole generation of Levante fans did not know who founded their club. It took the investigations of two journalists, José Luis García Nieves and Felipe Bens, to uncover the truth as they marked the centenary of Levante Unión Deportiva in 2009 with a four-volume history running over a thousand pages. Their research not only restored the club's forgotten founder but also planted the seeds for Ballester's return home. They pointed out that he had been interred in a French cemetery with sand from El Cabanyal, a Republican flag, and a Valencian flag, in the belief that his remains would eventually be reburied in El Cabanyal, along with those of his wife, Teresa Molins Gasuach. Although Franco died five years later, it took another 45 years before their wish could be granted.

This past September 6, on Levante's 116th anniversary, fans, historians and club directors gathered to honor José and Teresa. After a funeral ceremony in the Estadio Ciutat de València, the couple's remains were reburied in the Cabanyal cemetery. The celebration marked the culmination of a multi-year effort as the club worked with living relatives to coordinate and finance the transfer of the couple's remains from France to Valencia. These acts are more than a symbolic tribute to an important Republican and Valencian leader. They are yet another vital step in the fight for historical memory and the collective healing from the wounds inflicted by the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime.

Dean Burrier Sanchis is a high school Spanish teacher and former soccer coach at Elk Grove High School. His Spanish-born grandfather, Vicente Sanchis Amades, was a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

MIGUEL G. MORALES, FILMMAKER: “If you look at an image carefully enough, it will start emitting its own light.”

By Sebastiaan Faber



For Miguel G. Morales, the archive is an endless treasure trove. His new short on Cuban volunteers in the Spanish war brings it to life. Next up: a feature-length project on the Lincoln Brigade.

More than a thousand Cubans—one of the highest per-capita contributions in the world—joined the International Brigades to defend the Spanish Republic. On November 21, Espacios de Cultura (NYU) screened *Listen to the Shadow* (*Escuchar la Sombra*), a compelling short film by Spanish independent filmmaker Miguel G. Morales, who uses historical photographs and archival footage to create a moving tribute to the Cuban volunteers.



Morales, who was born in 1978 in Tenerife (Canary Islands), has a special bond with Cuba. His paternal grandfather was born in Havana as a child of Spanish migrants. After moving back to Tenerife in the 1920s, in 1936 he was forcibly recruited, totally against his will, along with many other *Canarios*, to fight in the army of Franco—who at the time of the coup was stationed on the islands.

Morales himself spent significant time in Cuba as well: he studied there in the late '90s (Escuela de cine de San Antonio de los Baños), and he returned a couple of years ago in search of rare archival materials. This fall, he spent some months in New York working on a new feature-length project on the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and the relationship of the city with the Spanish Second Republic.

Tell me about the new project. When you begin working on a film like this, do you know what the finished product will look like?

No, I don't. But I do have a sense of its rhythm and cadence. Just like my short on the Cubans, this new film will be a story at street level, focusing on the experiences of everyone who was an outsider at the time: women, ethnic minorities, and activists.

I also know that the movie will incorporate the search process itself—a process often shaped by chance. Let me give you an example. I accidentally came across a text by Langston Hughes in which he writes that, when he entered Spain during the war on a train together with Nicolás Guillén, he realized that he and Guillén were the only Black people on board. Then, at one stop, a mulatto joins them. When they go talk

with him, he tells them he is a Canary Island fisherman who's fled from the Nationalists with his boat and traveled all the way through Africa to Spain to fight for the Republic. Reading that story moved me deeply. In a way, it's a metaphor of my own journey: two Black men, one from the United States and the other from Cuba, who are entering Spain clandestinely—and then run into someone from Canarias!

How did you come up with the idea for the Cuban film?

Totally by chance as well. When I was in Cuba to present a fiction short of mine, for some reason I came across a speech that Pasionaria gave in Cuba in 1963, in which she remembers the Cuban volunteers who came to Spain. Once I decided to make a movie about them, I made sure to get a Cuban script writer—the great Atilio Caballero—and Fajardo, a Canarian composer, for the soundtrack to avoid any hint of cultural appropriation. But even then, chance played a huge role. It was chance that allowed us to discover that the great Belkis Vega had made a documentary about the Cuban volunteers in 1983—when she was only 31 years old—titled *España en el corazón*, which includes interviews with veterans. That film had been so totally erased from Cuba's cultural memory that we had to go to the Cinemateque of Catalonia to find a copy.

About “*Listen to the Shadow*” you write that it is a “song to the memory of the so-called defeated, who were in fact never defeated, to those who sacrificed themselves and their bodies for a better world. ... It is also a film that seeks to come to the defense of everyone who was left out of the official history of the legendary International Brigades ..., to weave alternative paths through history.” Can you tell me about your process?

I think of myself as a visual artist who does research in the archive. Sometimes that research results in a movie, sometimes in an installation, and sometimes in something else altogether. More than as a creator, I prefer to see myself as a catalyst of the archive. The documentary movies I make are personal essays in which I go in search of stories that are hidden in the archive but have never been told. Mind you, I don’t claim to be doing history or biography. I am interested in the image and how it interpellates me. When I do research, I like to let myself be sidetracked, guided by chance, to go down roundabout paths that I couldn’t have imagined in advance. For example, I only realized later that, for me personally, making the film was a way to repair the horrible dilemma that my Cuban grandfather faced when he was forced to fight for Franco.

Your Cuban movie seems like a declaration of love for the images themselves—a love that makes you want to rescue them, resuscitate them, bring them back into circulation. Or perhaps to make us look differently at images we thought we knew.

It’s true that I have a very special relationship with images. They saved me when I was going through a very traumatic time in my childhood. Simone Weil said somewhere that the desire for light ends up producing light. In other words, if you look at an image carefully enough, it will start emitting its own light. It’s always important to go beyond the first impression. Right now, for example, I am in the archive all day looking at thousands of images. Every now and then, one will jump out at me. For me, those moments are crucial. What is it about that one image that makes me stop and look again?

The Cuban film opens with images of women volunteers.

Yes, because we wanted to normalize the presence of women in the war. Have you noticed that almost all the films about the Civil War limit themselves to a single sequence about the role of women? We wanted to go against that trend. For that same reason, we tried to avoid images of casualties, trenches,



bombs, and airplanes. Emilio Silva, the founder of Spain’s Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, loved that we did not put images of violence front and center. “After all,” he said, “the fascists have always used images of violence against us.”

Although the 1930s produced fewer images—moving or still—than we do today, there are still thousands of photographs and hours of film to choose from. How do you decide what makes the cut?

I always try to decontextualize the archive. That often means working with raw materials, including negatives and outtakes. This is also why I couldn’t do this work without the generous help of people like Shannon O’Neil, the curator at the Tamiment Library. For this film, I had access to Harry Randall’s negatives (Randall was the Chief Photographer of the Photographic Unit of the XV International Brigade, ed.), which included

images he chose not to print. Going through the negatives, you can tell what his eye was drawn to—details of the soldiers’ daily lives, for example.

Your film makes a point of showing us that we are looking at images from an archive. You often show them as negatives, as microfilm, or held down by thumb and index finger.

The point, for me, is precisely that I am *manipulating* the archive. I am looking at it from my present moment,

and my gaze contributes to the meaning of the image—as does the gaze of the people who view the film.

Manipulating images to create a new meaning was also what drove montage artists from the 1920s and ‘30s, like Josep Renau, John Heartfield, Kati Horna, or Luis Buñuel, who helped create some of the most iconic images of the Spanish war. To what extent is your editing process—your montage—deliberate, and how much do you leave to chance?

I try to do both. Just as I do with my research process, in the editing process I try to remain open to randomness—an unexpectedly powerful combination of images, for example, or image and sound. But then, at a later stage, I become obsessive and perfectionist about the emotional rhythm of the film, which is absolutely crucial in all my work. For *Escuchar la sombra*, the writer, the composer, and I worked together throughout the editing process so that the images, the text, and the music bled into each other organically, just as the three of us bled into each other. None of us had any idea of where we’d end up. ▲



TINA MODOTTI, REVISITED

Why are we still afraid to see her as the revolutionary that she was?

By David Bacon

Tina Modotti's short life took her from Italy to North Beach and from there to Mexico, Berlin, Moscow, and civil-war Spain. Rightly known as a pathbreaking modernist photographer, she was also a radical activist. "Modotti spent the second part of her working life fighting for revolution."

It was Jeannette Ferrary, herself a fine photographer, who drew my attention to the belated obituary of Tina Modotti that appeared in the *New York Times* on September 9. This decidedly post-posthumous obit—published more than 80 years after Modotti's death—is part of "Overlooked," a series of portraits of remarkable people whose death the paper had initially ignored. Grace Linden, the obit's author, deserves credit for getting the *Times* to acknowledge this radical hero so long after her death, and she gives a solid account of the work Modotti did in the 1920s as a photographer in Mexico—where she is regarded as a founder of Mexican socially radical photojournalism and documentary work.

But there is more to Modotti's life story. Born in 1896 in Udine, in northeastern Italy, in 1913 she emigrated with her working-class parents to San Francisco's North Beach, where she began acting in local theater. In 1918, she moved to Hollywood, where she met Edward Weston. Linden pays a lot of attention to her relationship with Weston, who is considered a founder of modernism in photography. As Modotti was searching for her way as a photographer and woman, the two moved to Mexico together. Tina was 27.

By this time, Weston had begun to discard the soft-focused pictorialism favored by established photographers of the day. His modernist images of the Armco steel mill, taken in 1922, were not only historic in their simplicity and sharp focus, but also expressed the era's progressive ideas about the importance of industry—and by implication, industrial workers. Weston was not alone: Paul Strand made a similar turn in that period. Later, in the 1930s, many photographers would use factories in a similar way, but Weston and Strand were ahead of their time. In those years, heavy industry represented the future.

Modotti, who joined the Mexican Communist Party in 1926, increasingly began charting her own course, combining the modernist ideas of directness, sharp focus, and simplicity with radical politics. This gave her work tremendous impact—including in the United States, where her famous image of a hammer and sickle was put on the cover of *The Masses* when that monthly magazine was at the height of its popularity.



This photograph was one of a series that opened with a straight depiction of the Communist symbol and then gradually transposed the elements. First, Modotti added a sombrero; eventually, she took out the symbols from the Russian revolution altogether and substituted them with a bandolier, a guitar, and an ear of corn—in effect "Mexicanizing" communism through symbols from the country's own revolutionary history. Ironically, the *Times* obit only reproduces the last image in the series, wholly obscuring its revolutionary intent.

This erasure of Modotti's radicalism is symptomatic. Unlike Weston, Modotti mobilized the modernist aesthetic for a political cause. Among her other overtly political images is a photograph of a group of workers reading a copy of *El Machete*, the

Communist Party newspaper. The message of the photograph is clear—the paper and its Party are speaking to the working class. As they participate in politics, ordinary people become literate.

Linden's focus on Mexico and photography mirrors that of most books about Modotti, including the excellent *Tinissima* by the great Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska. Authors generally have a much harder time with Modotti's life after her 1930 deportation, along with Vittorio Vidali, by the incoming rightwing government. Vidali, who was the representative in Mexico for the Communist International, eventually became Modotti's lover; their relationship lasted to the end of her life.

Linden misleadingly presents the years after Mexico as a series of spontaneous travels. The truth is that Modotti first spent six months in Berlin, where she began working for the Anti-Imperialist League, whose Mexican chapter she had helped organize, while trying to adapt to the new genre of street photography. With Vidali, she then traveled on to Moscow, where she became an organizer for the Comintern. For several years, she worked for International Red Aid (the MOPR), smuggling money and support to imprisoned revolutionaries and banned political parties. In 1934, after Hitler took power, she and Vidali went back to Berlin to organize support for Georgi Dimitrov, who was on trial for the Reichstag fire—the event that Hitler used to suspend all civil liberties in Germany.

In these years, Modotti's photographs from Mexico were widely published by Willi Münzenberg's *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* (AIZ), the Workers' Pictorial Newspaper. Although she gradually stopped taking pictures herself, she continued to contribute to the ideas of socially-committed photography. In 1932, she wrote "Photos als Waffe der RH-Agitation" (Photographs as Weapons of Red-Aid Agitation), arguing that while photography makes possible the "objective" reproduction of the hard reality of capitalism, images should not just illustrate text but should speak for themselves.

When Modotti first went to Spain in 1933, she was promptly deported. In 1934, when she tried to return to bring support to the miners' uprising in Asturias, she was stopped at the border. Then, in 1936, with the election victory of the Popular Front, she went back once again. This time, she managed to stay until the Republic's final retreat in 1939. During the Civil War, she was the head of Socorro Rojo (Red Aid), organizing support for the soldiers and civilian population and later for the refugees as they fled from Franco. Vidalí, aka Carlos Contreras, was one of the organizers and a political commissar of the Fifth Regiment. During the war, the membership of Red Aid in France grew to 150,000, and in Spain to 500,000. Modotti moved from city to city, even by boat from Barcelona to Valencia, under the guns of the fascist-occupied coast. She was close to poet Antonio Machado, who called her "the angel of my house."

As Franco's armies advanced, and the International Brigades left, Modotti "felt anguish in my heart," she later recalled, "and I thought about how this was the end." Vidalí said he thought the war still might be won. "You were always an optimist," Modotti responded. In the weeks that followed, she helped half a million people make their escape from Barcelona to the French frontier, under bombs and strafing planes. Her friend Antonio Machado died of pneumonia after crossing the Pyrenees. Her comrade at Red Aid, Mathilde Landa, stayed on but was captured. Landa committed suicide after being tortured by the fascists.

On February 9, 1939, Modotti, carrying none of her possessions, crossed the French border. Vidalí followed shortly after. In France, the Mexican ambassador Narciso Bassols, a Communist, got Mexican residence visas for Modotti and Vidalí and hundreds of other political refugees, including transit visas for the U.S. When the *Queen Mary* docked in New York, however, immigration authorities wouldn't let Modotti off the boat. Her sister, Yolanda Magrini, a Communist artist, tried to see her but was not allowed to board the ship. Modotti, who'd last seen the U.S. in 1923, was never able to return to American soil. Linden describes the successful efforts of Modotti's friends to find her refuge in Mexico, although she once again brushes over the political context.

Meanwhile, the decision by Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas to give asylum to more than twenty thousand Spanish refugees had a great impact on Mexican photography. Among the refugees were the Mayo brothers, Communists who founded a radical photo agency that created a new, radical direction for photojournalism. The Mayos mentored a whole generation of red photographers that followed, from Rodrigo Moya to Marco Antonio Cruz.

That tradition had its influence north of the border as well. Mariana Yampolsky, a niece of Franz Boas, was born, raised, and educated in Chicago, and emigrated to Mexico. Already a socialist, she went to work in the Taller de Grafica Popular, bringing her into the Mexican left and close to the Mexican Communist Party. During the hysteria of McCarthyism, Yampolsky, like Modotti, was denied the right to return to the U.S. A brilliant photographer, very much in the Mexican tradition, she spent many years producing photographs for books for the Mexican Education Ministry, when schools still taught socialism as a national goal. Yampolsky was influenced by Modotti's work and was a student of both Lola Álvarez Bravo and her husband, Manuel.

Modotti herself never returned to photography. Instead, she worked full time for revolution, motivated, as she wrote, by "the intolerable exploitation of the workers of the countries of South America and the Caribbean" and the "bloody revenge on peasants who fight for their land, the torture of imprisoned revolutionaries, [and] armed attacks on street rallies and unemployed marches." She died in 1942, in the middle of the war against Nazism, most likely from a combination of exhaustion and heart failure. Afterwards, Vidalí returned to Italy, where for many years he was a Communist senator for Trieste.

A dedicated Communist Party member, Modotti spent the second part of her working life fighting for revolution. Glossing over this part of her life, as the *Times* obit does, fails to do justice both to the political sophistication of her ideas and to her commitment to photography. Her attempt to balance those commitments contradicts the bourgeois idea that artists must sacrifice everything for their art. The tension between politics and art was experienced by other red women photographers in the U.S. as well, from Consuelo Kanaga to Marion Post Wolcott. Their history and contributions are still little known today because of the Cold War. Modotti believed that working toward communism and fighting fascism were more important than her photography. This was a revolutionary position.

All of this, I think, makes it unlikely that Modotti will ever be as idolized, at least in mainstream media, as Frida Kahlo—an-other Communist. Still, more can be done to acknowledge her extraordinary life and work, especially in the Bay Area, where I live. To be sure, San Francisco's Italian community was deeply split by Mussolini and the rise of fascism. But left-wing Italians here should claim her as their own, as should artists and photographers. We really need a Tina Modotti center, as they have in Udine, where she was born, to help popularize her ideas about photography and politics. They are as relevant today as they were when she was alive. ▲

David Bacon is a California-based writer and photographer. He was a factory worker and union organizer for two decades with the United Farm Workers, the United Electrical Workers, and other unions, and has been documenting the lives of farm workers through photographs and journalism since 1988. A previous version of this essay was published by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. For a longer version, visit albavolunteer.org.

Antifascist Resistance: A Dutch Family Saga

By Tom King

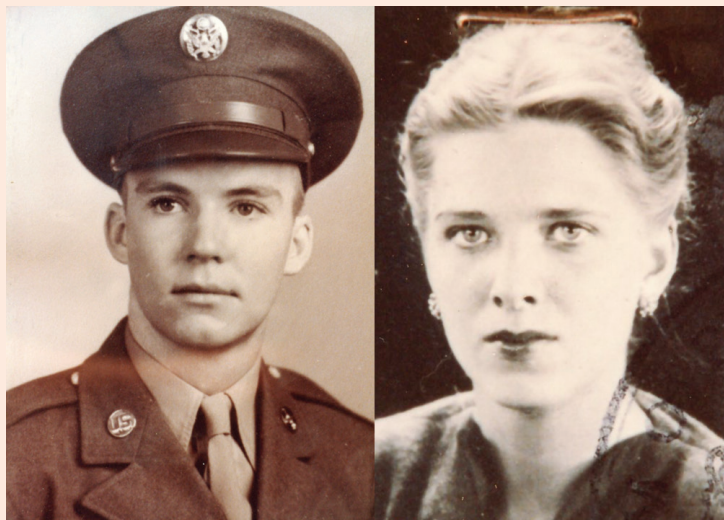
After the Nazis occupied the Netherlands, the Seegers family did not hesitate to join the resistance. They had experience fighting fascism: their son Piet had fought for the Spanish Republic. When Tom King started digging into his family history seventy years later, he fell from one surprise into the other.

Southern California, October 2010. My mother, the last remaining member of a notable Amsterdam Communist family, lies dying in the improvised hospice in my parents' living room in the semi-arid desert east of San Diego. Standing beside her, I watch with clinical detachment as she wearily fills her lungs for what turns out to be the final time. Then, on that final breath, she pronounces a name I have never heard before. I am stunned.

I look around the room seeking an explanation. My father, who as an American G.I. during World War II served as an infantryman under generals like Patton and McAuliffe, tries hard to stare through a blank wall as though it were a pane of glass. My older brother, born in Switzerland while my parents were both students there after the war, gazes down at the floor.

"I think Mom might have had a kid before us," my brother said later. He also told me that he had a memory of some letters sent to our mother in the 1960s that might have been from the half-brother I never knew existed. He even recalled his full name from a return address he'd seen only once.

In the years following my mother's death, I managed to gradually put some pieces of the story together. I would learn from my father that when my parents met in their student rooming house in Lausanne (Switzerland), my mom already had a child from a previous marriage. Within a few years, she and my father had one child of their own—my older brother—and she was pregnant with another.



Dad further admitted to me that when they abruptly decided to leave for California, where my American grandmother was dying of cancer, they decided to leave the child from her first marriage—I'll call him Arend, not his real name—at a children's home in the Alpine village of Trogen, one of many opened to shelter the vast population of orphans created by the war. My father then took his pregnant wife and child via train, ocean liner, airplane, and automobile to his hometown of San Diego, where they would live for most of the rest of their lives.

But what was Arend's story? Who was his father, and how had he and my mother met? What had become of him? The answers to these questions, it turns out, seem drawn from the plot of an implausible adventure film that spans the geography of the entire planet, and involves love and war and everything in between. I wonder whether the people who knew my mother in California could ever have imagined the epic scope and sweep of the life of her family. I certainly didn't.

The story starts with my uncle Piet, my mother's younger brother, who was one of the roughly 650 Dutch volunteers to join the International Brigades to help defend the Spanish Republic. From the biographical dictionary of Dutch volunteers, I learned that Piet, who had arrived in Spain at the beginning of 1938 and had been taken prisoner by April, spent years in Francoist POW camps like San Pedro de Cardena and Miranda de Ebro.

Among his fellow captives was a stateless Russian from the Netherlands, Alexis, who had been stripped of his nationality when his father, the Tsar's ambassador in The Hague, lost his patron in the revolution of 1917. Well-educated, multilingual, and groomed for diplomacy, Alexis was an asset for the prisoners when it came to keeping them mentally engaged with lectures on history and politics, language classes, and chess tournaments. Before pledging himself to the cause of the Spanish Republic, Alexis's life had been marked by failed business ventures and an unsuccessful arranged marriage to a White-Russian woman of his parents' choosing.

The stateless Alexis, reportedly with Uncle Piet's help, was registered as one of the 25 Dutch prisoners in San Pedro. He was also included in a group of four POWs who were released to the Dutch government in December 1939. Meanwhile, the remaining 21 Dutch prisoners, including my mother's brother, Piet, were sent to Belchite as laborers in the rebuilding of that city, which had been thoroughly razed. Alexis made his way

by ship first to England, and then to Rotterdam, before arriving in Amsterdam at the home of Piet's mother, my grandmother Helena Seegers-Budde, who promptly took him in.

This is when, in a scene worthy of a great Hollywood film, the 33-year-old Spanish Civil War veteran met his host's 17-year-old daughter, Jet (pronounced in Dutch as "Yet," short for Henrietta)—my mother—who, within three years, would become his second wife. Jet's father, the legendary Communist politician Leen Seegers vigorously disapproved of the relationship. But he was in no position to do anything about it, because he was arrested by the Nazi occupiers in April 1941 and deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp, where he was imprisoned until its liberation in April 1945. (After the war, my grandfather Leen resumed his career as an alderman for the Communist Party of the Netherlands in the Amsterdam city council, where he served for forty years.

When he retired in 1967, the city gifted him a trip to spend time with his daughter's family in San Diego. Although I was only ten at the time, I'll never forget that visit.)

Meanwhile, as Piet Seegers toiled in Belchite and eventually ended up in Franco's Miranda de Ebro prison camp, his liberated comrade-turned-brother-in-law Alexis was embarking on a career as a pharmaceutical executive in occupied Amsterdam. It wasn't long before his young wife, Jet, was expecting a child. Arend was born on May 27, 1942.

Nazi-occupied Amsterdam in 1942 was a chaotic and scary place and time. By the end of October 1940, our maternal grandmother and one of her sons had been arrested for their anti-fascist activities. She was beaten to death in a notorious Hamburg prison while my uncle Leendert was held in a neighboring cell. Leendert was later tried in Berlin on charges of sabotaging German ships loaded with arms for the Spanish Falangists. Improbably, he was acquitted. Nevertheless, he was sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he was deliberately inoculated with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* as a subject in the medical "experiments" conducted by the infamous Zahn brothers. (These Dutch-Nazi

quacks and grifters worked under a contract awarded by the buffoonishly self-important Reich Commissioner Heinrich Himmler, whose gullibility the brothers exploited when convincing him of the efficacy of ozone for the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis.) Leendert would eventually die of tuberculosis, aged 29, in the Majdanek Concentration Camp in Lublin, Poland.

Arend, in short, was born into quite a mess. To make things even more complicated, eyewitness accounts of Jet's life at this time, though few seem to describe an immature, negligent mother who did not take her duties as a wife and homemaker very seriously. Nor did her relationship with Alexis last. At the pharmaceutical company, Alexis met a young secretary, Ann Wagemans, who would later become his third and last wife. When I spoke with Ann in 2012, she told me that it was she, as an early member of the anti-Nazi resistance, who convinced Jet and Alexis to join the underground. Alexis later expressed guilt over not doing so earlier. Jet, who had perhaps enjoyed a maternity-related respite from anti-fascist activism—the Seegers' "family business," so to speak—seemed to embrace the sense of obligation provoked by Ann's example.

Meanwhile... cut, back to Spain... Around the time of Arend's birth in 1942, the last few Dutch prisoners in Spanish custody, including my uncle Piet, were released from Miranda de Ebro. They were sent first by train to Vigo, Spain, and then by ship via Trinidad and Curaçao to Canada. There, these stateless Dutchmen, stripped of their nationality for the sin of serving under another nation's flag, were mustered into the Dutch military and trained in various combat specialties. Next, they were shipped to Australia, where they would be pressed into service in the KNIL (the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army). First, they were tasked with defending Dutch Indonesia against the Japanese invaders. Later, they fought against Indonesians who were struggling for independence.

It seems that during this time Piet was captured once again and spent time in a Japanese POW camp. Not long after, we find him back in Australia, where he lived as a refugee and apparently began

receiving mental health treatment in a hospital. Meanwhile, his father and sister, Leen and Jet, had lost confidence in the efforts of the Red Cross to find him. They appealed to the Dutch Seafarers Union, hoping it could use its globally distributed membership to find Piet and bring him home. Miraculously, this worked. By late 1945 or early 1946, my mother told me, Piet was allowed to go home.

Cut back to Arend, my long-lost half-brother, who had been born to Alexis and Jet in 1942, and left in Switzerland by my parents after the war: Sometime in 1952, when Arend was ten, Alexis and his wife Ann, who was now expecting a child of her own, withdrew him from the Swiss children's home where my parents had housed him. They brought him to Brussels, where they lived as a family until moving to Lausanne, of all places, a few years later. While Alexis became quite successful in his career as a pharmaceutical executive, Arend attended an exclusive boys' high school on Lake Geneva's south shore, commuting daily via water taxi from Lausanne.

My uncle Piet's story has a less happy ending. Although my grandfather and mother were able to retrieve him and bring him back to the Netherlands, he would remain institutionalized for the remainder of his life in facilities near Rotterdam, Haarlem, and finally Eindhoven, where he died of chronic illness in October 1963.

Post-script:

In 2011, the year after my mother died, I finally met my half-brother Arend in Amsterdam. We then traveled to Brussels to meet his children and grandchildren, all of whom have by now been melded together with the 45 or so members of the U.S.-based King family to form one exceptional trans-Atlantic clan, united by the struggle against fascism.

Tom King (b. 1957), the son of Dutch resistance fighter Henrietta M. King-Seegers and American veteran-linguist Francis X. King, was born and raised in San Diego, California, and received his bachelor's and doctorate degrees from UC Berkeley. He lives in San Francisco and is a member of ALBA's Bay Area community.

PAUL ROBESON'S ANTI-FASCIST LESSONS

By Lindsey Swindall

The climate of the Cold War was anti-radical—but it was also white supremacist, as Paul Robeson experienced firsthand. Yet it didn't faze him, Lindsey Swindall explains. "He not only refused to stop speaking against militarism, segregation, and colonialism, but found new ways to disseminate his message."

As the Second World War concluded in 1945, artist and activist Paul Robeson was wrapping up a record-breaking run in Shakespeare's *Othello* that had started on Broadway and then toured the United States and Canada. The prospect of peace filled him with optimism. "This can be the final war," he wrote in *The American Scholar*. "It is possible to solve once and for all the problem of human poverty, to attain a speedy freedom and equality for all peoples." Along with many progressives, civil rights activists and others who had supported the war effort, Robeson's expectation was that, once fascism was defeated abroad, the United States would turn to dismantling its manifestations at home—including racial segregation and support for colonial empires.

But it was not to be. Rather than an era of peace and progress, the end of the war gave way to militarism and repression. There were immigration crackdowns. Passports were revoked, loyalty oaths imposed. And anything less than unquestioning fealty to the State was considered subversive, disloyal and dangerous. The climate of the Cold War was anti-radical, to be sure. But it was also white supremacist.

Robeson experienced those deeply troubling developments first-hand. He supported the 1948 Progressive Party presidential candidate Henry A. Wallace, who emphasized peace, diplo-



macy, and ending segregation—but that campaign was met with a stunning defeat. Following some off-the-cuff remarks at a World Peace Conference in Paris in 1949, where Robeson highlighted the need to end global militarism and systems of racial oppression, the mainstream US press turned virulently against him. Some Robeson concerts were canceled. Worse, concert attendees in Peekskill, New York were assaulted by

vigilantes. Then, in 1950, the State Department revoked Robeson's passport, claiming that his outspokenness undermined the US interests. While in 1945 Robeson's career had reached an artistic pinnacle, just five years later he was trailed by the FBI, his income was plummeting, and he was treated as a pariah across the nation.

Today, as we face yet another rise of a vindictive, power-hungry right-wing movement, looking to the past can be instructive. Reading today about the courage of Robeson and those like him reminds us of their commitment in the face of authoritarian tactics. The anti-fascism of the post-WWII era holds important lessons for us—including the importance of solidarity, unity, and resiliency.

In his statements following the Peekskill riots, Robeson compared the attackers to "Hitler's storm troopers" who struck at "all who stand for peace and democracy in America." In response,

The response to Peekskill illustrates the resilience of US anti-fascists in the postwar years.

Robeson and others quickly organized another concert in Peekskill, followed by a six-city concert tour, as acts of solidarity and peaceful protest. Such opportunities to come together peacefully and uplift each other were sorely needed.

When Robeson's passport was revoked, he missed out on artistic work around the world. He wasn't even allowed to travel to Canada.

In response, a concert was organized in May 1952 at Peace Arch Park in Washington State, on the US-Canadian border, where tens of thousands gathered to demonstrate their solidarity. Hearing Robeson's voice travel across the border, when his body could not, buoyed the spirits of people who supported free speech, civil rights, and anti-colonial struggles. When he returned in 1953 to sing at the border again, Robeson repeated a message he often stressed during those years: "I know that there is one humanity, that there is no basic difference of race or color ... [and] that all human beings can live in friendship and in peace." Robeson did not just talk about a vision of living in peace and friendship, but put it into practice at his concerts, if only for a few hours.

The response to Peekskill and the Peace Arch concerts illustrate the resilience of US anti-fascists in the postwar years. Robeson not only refused to stop speaking against militarism, segregation, and colonialism, but found new ways to disseminate his message—even when mainstream media largely ignored or maligned him. Starting his own newspaper, *Freedom*, allowed Robeson to create a space for news, history, and culture that placed people of African descent at the center of the story. *Freedom* engaged stalwarts like W.E.B. Du Bois, Louise Thompson Patterson, Eslanda Robeson and W. Alphaeus Hunton while also nurturing the talents of younger writers and activists like Louis Burnham, Esther Jackson, and Lorraine Hansberry. When mainstream presses refused to publish Robeson's memoir, he founded his own company to distribute his book, *Here I Stand*, and recordings of his music. When one of the founders of the Council on African Affairs abruptly turned rightward, Robeson and others took over the reins and doggedly continued the an-



ti-colonial work of the organization.

Few moments illustrate Robeson's resilience better than his testimony before the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956. Although he had to testify before the committee shortly after undergoing a difficult surgery, Robeson stood firm.

HUAC, known for

ferreting out radicals, also had long-time segregationists among its members. When the committee confronted Robeson with his famous statement that it was in Russia where he had first felt "like a full human being," because of the lack of racial prejudice, and asked him why he hadn't moved there, Robeson's reply was unwavering in its antifascism: "Because my father was a slave, and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay here and have a part of it just like you. And no fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear?"

Perhaps Robeson's most significant lesson for us today is that, while periods of repression are damaging, they do end. Robeson's resilience paid off when his passport was restored in 1958. Before going on a triumphant, extended global concert tour, Robeson performed to a sold-out crowd at Carnegie Hall, signaling that major concert halls were again welcoming him. By bringing people together and by resiliently continuing his advocacy, Robeson helped push the anti-fascist fight forward and cleared the way for the next generations of antifascists. ▲

Lindsey Swindall teaches at Stevens Institute of Technology. She is the author of The Politics of Paul Robeson's Othello, Paul Robeson: A Life of Activism and Art and The Path to the Greater, Freer, Truer World: Southern Civil Rights and Anticolonialism, 1937-1955.

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OF GARGOYLES AND GUTTERSNIPEs: How City College Stood Up to Fascism in 1934

By Carter Barnwell

Antifascism has long been synonymous with American values. In 1934, student activists at New York's City College arguably understood this better than many do today.

As jeers and cat calls erupted from the student section, the restive Great Hall at New York's City College (CCNY) filled with the din of two thousand murmuring voices. "Guttersnipes, your conduct is worse than that of guttersnipes," muttered College President Frederick B. Robinson, visibly upset. It was October 9, 1934—and a new epithet was born.

The CCNY community had gathered to welcome a small group of Italian students who were visiting American universities as part of a goodwill tour from Mussolini's Italy. This cultural exchange, chronicled by Robert Cohen in *When the Old Left Was Young*, was fiercely opposed by campus groups worried the Italian visitors would promote fascist propaganda in Shepard Hall, the gargoyle- and grotesque-covered building that was the symbolic heart of CCNY's iconic campus. Warnings and calls for resistance filled college newspapers and pamphlets ahead of the event.

Fearful of disruption, President Robinson had warned students against making overt political statements during the assembly or engaging in any behavior that might tarnish the reputation of the institution. They ignored him. "I do not intend to be discourteous to our guests," Edwin Alexander, who represented the student council, said in his formal address to the visitors. "I merely wish to bring them anti-fascist greetings from the student body of City College to the tricked, enslaved student body of Italy." These would be Alexander's last words at the podium, as administrators dragged him away from the microphone. Hand-written notes on the back of a political poster preserved in CCNY's archive described the scene that followed. As some



of Alexander's supporters rushed the stage to help him, "fists flew freely," and partisan pushing and shoving plunged the Great Hall into chaos.

The tense exchange mirrored the international scene during the interwar period, as individual citizens and their local governments responded in different ways to the rise of right-wing authoritarianism. Remarkably, CCNY students were ahead of the university leadership in defending their alma mater's institutional integrity. Using publicity and direct action—through their school newspaper, *The Campus*, protests, and mass demonstrations—student activists were able to clearly articulate the threat that fascism posed to democracy and to American values.

Such values, of course, included freedom of speech and of assembly as well as academic freedom more broadly. Both had come under assault during the interwar era, an age of radical campus activism across the country. A backdrop to college life in the decades following the devastating war 1914–18 was the

tension between national loyalty and free speech, perhaps best articulated by the Supreme Court's 1919 decision to label anti-government agitators as a "clear and present danger," allowing the government to restrict first-amendment protections if warranted by national security. The debate on national loyalty and first-amendment rights returned to college campus debates following Hitler's 1933 ascension to the German Chancellery—but this time it was accompanied by a new concept: antifascism.

The term first entered the American lexicon thanks to Willi Münzenberg, who brilliantly exposed the injustice of the German trial following the Reichstag Fire through a widely publicized counter trial in London. The antifascism that Münzenberg represented, with its implied defense of democratic principles and the promise of direct action against fascism, gave new legitimacy to student activism across the democratic West, the United States included. Crucially, it reconciled students' desires to be patriotic, principled, and academically committed.

The emergence of antifascism coincided with a larger debate about "Americanism" that began in the early 1930s (when the phrase "The American Dream" was coined) and was especially prominent on college campuses. It was not long before Congress joined the conversation. In December 1933, the House of Representatives instituted the McCormick-Dickstein Committee to combat, wherever possible, "the overthrow of democratic principles and personal liberties; the freedom of the press, liberty of speech,

President Robinson had warned students against making overt political statements. They ignored him.

rights of franchise without discrimination as to race, creed, or color..." Urging Americans to be vigilant against "those dark forces that are working against us," the Committee's work sought to define what constituted "American" values and behavior. It was in this context that American anti-fascism first emerged. It was defined on an ad-hoc basis by an active public that embraced it as a moral argument against "un-American" behavior.

The arrival of the Italian delegation in October 1934 foregrounded the national debate on fascism and the dangers it might pose for American civil society. Days before the visit, *The Campus*, the CCNY paper, ran a story with the headline: "Fascist Group to Visit Here on School Tour." The piece called attention to the reaction of other regional universities to visits from the Italian delegations. Mentioning the opposition of the Yale chapter of the National Student League, a Communist-led radical student organization founded in 1931, the piece quoted from the NSL's formal protest to Yale President Angell: "the Italian students represent the destruction of intellectual integrity characteristic of fascism." The *Campus* story, in other words, not only portrayed the City College campus as a site of intellectual and democratic ideals to be protected from fascism but also as part of a national academic community.

The next issue of *The Campus* advertised a protest in the campus quad in a story titled: "Student Council, Radicals Plan Flagpole Protest Against Visit of Fascists." In addition to once again denouncing fascism, the story related that "many groups" planned to protest at the demonstration, acknowledging the power of anti-fascism to unite groups across the political spectrum. The article also noted that many students now held Robinson himself in suspicion for extending official greetings to the Italians in the first place. One upperclassman even charged the President with "acting against the interests of the student body for the sake of a decoration from the Italian government." "We must oust Robinson, the Fascist president of the College," he stated. A contemporary

political poster made these points even more explicit. Student strikes would be ineffective, it stated, if they did not "raise concretely a militant protest against the fascist tendencies of our administration as exemplified by President Robinson." These claims—fairly or unfairly—painted Robinson as a defender of the same "dark forces" that were increasingly working against the freedoms outlined by the House Committee.

Students feared the official welcome would lend credibility to Mussolini's regime. They saw the "visit of the Italian Black shirts (as) an attempt to reestablish Mussolini's reputation and popularize fascism here." They presciently worked to stop this popularization by dominating all possible mediums of publicity. Defending academic freedom and free speech gave CCNY students—neither "tricked" nor "enslaved"—noble causes to rally around. Yet the embrace of antifascism gave the students something to *do* in a moment when fascism came to the very gates of the College. Their physical and discursive opposition to the Italians created a public firestorm resulting eventually in the suspension and expulsion of dozens of students—but also in a significant contribution to the national conversation about national loyalty, which now proposed antifascism as both a logical goal of patriotic activism and one soon to be sanctioned by the federal government.

Indeed, an "antifascist philosophy" emerges from the conclusions of the McCormick-Dickstein Committee's work in February 1935. In a nod to the importance of maintaining a public sphere free from "dangerous" foreign influence, the Committee included in its recommendations that Congress should enact a statute requiring all "publicity, propaganda, or public-relations agents" of foreign governments or political parties to register with the Secretary of State of the United States. The committee further stated:

To the true and real American, communism, naziism (*sic*), and fascism are all equally dangerous, equally alien and equally unacceptable to

American institutions . . . Whatever may be the result elsewhere, the constitutional rights and liberties of American citizens must be preserved from communism, fascism, and naziism. The only 'ism' in this country should be 'Americanism.'

For CCNY students in the Fall semester of 1934, Americanism was synonymous with antifascism. The extent to which antifascist activists at CCNY galvanized students from across the political spectrum would be made patently clear in 1936-37, when a contingent of more than 40 CCNY students volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War.

By presenting themselves as the ultimate defenders of college policy and institutional reputation, antifascist students won nation-wide credibility when their efforts coincided with the objectives of the National Government. But this credibility would not last forever. On their return from Spain, the volunteers would be branded "Premature Anti-fascist" and investigated for potential ties to Communism by the very congressional committee mentioned above—now known as the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Yet for a brief, important moment, student activists succeeded in making antifascism synonymous with Americanism and democracy. The CCNY incident shows an example of civil society defining "American" behavior for itself, and declaring it to be democratic, loyal to liberal institutions, and antifascist. Ironically, President Robinson was himself instrumental in creating a new category of antifascist identity when coining a nickname many students would later embrace. In subsequent rallies and around the CCNY campus, activists proudly wore buttons claiming: "I am a Guttersnipe. I fight Fascism." ▲

Carter Barnwell is a graduate of The City College of New York and holds a doctorate in Modern European History from the University of New Mexico. This story is based on research funded by the UNM's Latin American and Iberian Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

ARKIVO

My Work in Spain

By Joris Ivens



Joris Ivens (1898-1989), the Dutch documentary filmmaker who in 1937 shot *The Spanish Earth*—with Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Helen van Dongen, and John Fernhout—was back home in the Netherlands for a brief respite when he wrote this article for *Rusland van Heden* (Today's Russia), the magazine of the Dutch Society of Friends of the Soviet Union (VVSU). Three months later, he'd be en route to China. Although the piece is little known—and has never been translated before—it offers an eye-opening reflection on the power of his filmmaking. If Woody Guthrie famously described his guitar as a “machine” that “kills fascists,” Ivens considered his film camera in much the same way.

mijn werk in Spanje door Joris Ivens

Gelijk met de infanterie aan het Spaanse front, zien wij de tanks optrekken. Als ik deze zie, denk ik aan de mannen die deze tanks maakten, aan de mannen die het eerste staal en ijzer maakten voor de strijd, die nu ook in Spanje gestreden wordt.

Dan voel ik meteen hoe mijn filmwerk nooit de remmende invloed onderging van de studio, maar steeds samenhang met het werkelijke leven. Ik ken de mensen, die het vaste geloof hebben in hun recht en in hun land. Op de grens van Europa en Azië, in Magnitogorsk, werkte ik samen met hen. Daar zag ik hoe een hele berg van metaal niet aan enkele mensen, maar aan een heel volk behoorde, hoe de arbeiders de rijkdom van hun eigen land omzetten in persoonlijke welvaart voor iedereen. Hoe zij hard en goed staal konden maken. Misschien is het gebruik in de tanks, die hier de strijd van de democratie tegen de fascistische bedreiging steunen....

En niet alleen aan het militaire front, waar gevochten wordt op leven en dood, komt deze vergelijking op. 10 K.M. achter het front was ik temidden van de boeren, die onder het bulderen van de fascistische kanonnen hun eigen land bewerkten. Optimistisch, zeker van hun toekomst. Er is maar één land waar ik, bij al mijn zwerftochten over de wereld, dat ook meemaakte: de Sowjet-Unie. Het gevoel: als wij vandaag het land irrigeren, is het product morgen van ons, is hetzelfde gevoel, dat de boeren in de Sowjet-Unie beeerste. En het filmmappaaraat is ingeschakeld in dit hele gebeuren. Het maakt het mee, wordt er deel van en ondersteunt het. Want dit gebeuren vindt overal plaats, vandaag hier, morgen daar. En de ervaring van vandaag kan morgen — de ervaring van hier kan ginds — helpen.

Toen ik filmde hoe de Russische boeren koelen zonden naar het mijn-dorp Koesnetsk, melk voor de kinderen van de mijnwerkers, was dat hetzelfde meeleven met de productieve krachten van het land, als van de Spaanse boeren die hun eerste tomaten en hun jaren oude wijn naar hun kameraden in Madrid zonden.

Nooit was het filmmappaaraat voor al deze mensen een nieuws- en sensatiejager of een fabriek van vage en valse illusies, maar steeds deelnemer en klankbodem van hun eigen grote strijd, moed, vreugde en toekomst-zekerheid. De mensen vragen mij wel eens waarom is je compositie zo vast, zo betrouwbaar — wat ik hier neerschreef is de diepere reden en motivering daarvan. Het apparaat is op zijn plaats midden in het leven en in dienst van een publiek, dat recht heeft om de waarheid te kennen over de Sowjet-Unie, over Spanje, over China, de waarheid van elk volk, dat

In de enkele dagen dat JORIS IVENS zich in Amsterdam bevond en heel veel zaken had te regelen, vond hij niettemin toch de tijd het bijgaande artikel voor ons blad te schrijven! Het is een kort artikeltje, maar het is om zo te zeggen, de beginselfverklaring van een strijder, die de camera als wapen weet te hanteren. Het zal onze lezers verheugen, dat JORIS IVENS, wiens werkterrein zo langzamerhand wereldafmetingen heeft aangenomen, onze V.V.S.U. niet terugdenkt toen hij zijn montages maakte voor onze film-ochtenden. JORIS IVENS heeft zich in die dagen heel veel vrienden verworven, die thans zijn arbeid met hartelijke belangstelling volgen, en... die én op Joris én op zijn arbeid trots zijn! Wij wensen Joris Ivens alle succes toe, die zijn trouw aan de zaak, zijn kunstenaarschap en zijn bekwaamheid verdienen. Red. R. v. H.



strijdt voor zijn werkelijke toekomst. De waarheid, die in verzen overal dezelfde is.

De spontane montages, die ik jaren geleden maakte voor de V.V.S.U.-ochtenden en de gezonde weerklank, die deze vonden bij het Amsterdamse publiek, blijven mij steeds bij en zijn een belangrijk element in de ontwikkeling en verdieping van het werk van mij en mijn medewerkers. Deze montages behelzen reeds toen de feitelijke samenhang van het internationale gebeuren en het verband tussen de strijd van mensen, die hun rechten verdedigen tegen aanval en verdrukking, waarvan ik trachtte de losse beelden tot een organische eenheid te verenigen.

Hetzelfde principe heeft mijn werk in Spanje geleid en zal ook het werk in China leiden. Reeds in 1932 kwam verfilming van de strijd in China — ook toen deed Japan een inval — ter sprake. Nu verschijnt dit alles nog duidelijker dan toen in een groot, internationaal verband.

bij de foto's

„Hemingway camera van strijd verveert foon ving van Anderen staan Hemingway zij nog krachten noemt de con

„de Spa

Heel de pers van van Joris Ivens, John mingway in de film sproken. „Bezielde olijkheid, wij geloven, is voor het werk van Amerikaan, die — als nale „brigade” — me aarde” de wereld een schenken van een wer Aldus oordeelde de Volk” — aan wier volgende passages ont „Van de inzet af, w het wijde Spaanse land devot strijkt langs die langs die gloeiende wolke strijdt voor zijn leven, het volk terugkeert n men gepakt door de ech van elk beeld, dat allee het beeld zelf en om d geheel verleent.

Niet voor niets hebt Hollywood het hoofd g film zagen. Zij, de gevan die amusement voor gel ten misschien plotseling

At the Spanish front, alongside the infantry, we watch the tanks advance. Seeing them, I think of the men who made those tanks—the men who made the first steel and iron for the fight that is now also being fought in Spain.

At moments like these, I realize how important it is that my film work never suffered the inhibiting effects of the studio. Instead, it has always been connected to real life. I have met people who hold a firm belief in their rights and in their country. I worked with them on the border of Europe and Asia, in Magnitogorsk, where I saw an entire mountain of metal that did not belong to just a few, but to an entire nation, and saw how workers transformed their country's wealth into prosperity for everyone. I witnessed their ability to produce steel that was strong and good—the same steel, perhaps, that was used for the tanks that now support the struggle of democracy against the fascist threat here in Spain...



The comparison doesn't just apply to the life-and-death struggle at the front. Ten kilometers behind the lines, I found myself among peasants who, under the thunder of fascist artillery, were working their own land. They were optimistic, certain of their future. In all my travels around the world, there is only one other country where I experienced something like it, and that was the Soviet Union. The feeling in Spain was the same as the one that dominated among the Soviet peasants: If we irrigate the land today, tomorrow the product will be ours. And while all this is going on, the camera is

rolling. The camera experiences it, becomes part of it, and supports it. Because what is happening here is happening everywhere—here today, elsewhere tomorrow. Today's experience can be of use tomorrow, just as the experience here can be of use elsewhere.

When I filmed Russian peasants sending cows to the mining village of Kuznetsk to provide milk for the miners' children, I saw the same sympathy for the productive forces of the land as I saw in the Spanish peasants who sent their first tomatoes of the year and their years-old wine to their comrades in Madrid.

None of these people ever felt that the film camera was a hunter for news and sensation or a factory of vague and false illusions. It has always been a participant in—and sounding board for—their own great struggle: their courage, their joy, and their faith in the future. “Why,” people sometimes ask me, “is your composition so solid, so reliable?” What I am explaining here is the deeper reason and motivation behind it. The camera's proper place is in the midst of life itself, serving a public that has a right to know the truth: about the Soviet Union, about Spain, about China. The truth of a people fighting for their actual future. A truth that, in essence, is the same everywhere.

I haven't forgotten the healthy response from the Amsterdam audience to the spontaneous montages I produced years ago for the morning gatherings of the Friends of the Soviet Union. Those montages proved to be an important element as my collaborators and I have developed and deepened our work. They were already seeking to illuminate the connection between international events and the struggles of people who defend their rights against assault and oppression, as I attempted to bring together the discrete images of those struggles into an organic whole.

The same principle has guided my work in Spain, and it will also guide our work in China. We discussed filming the Chinese struggle as early as 1932, during the first Japanese invasion. Today, all of this emerges even more clearly than before in a broad international context. ▲

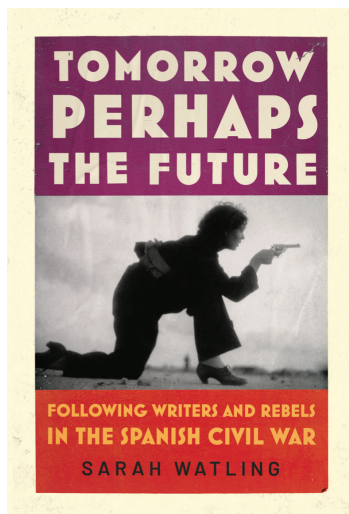
Joris Ivens, “Mijn werk in Spanje,” *Rusland van Heden*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1 Jan. 1938), pp. 10-11. Translation by Sebastiaan Faber.

In this occasional feature of *The Volunteer*, whose title is the Esperanto word for “archive,” we present, translate and contextualize iconic foreign language documents related to the anti-fascist struggle in Spain. If you have a favorite document in a language other than English, let us know!

Book Review

Sarah Watling, *Tomorrow Perhaps the Future: Writers, Outsiders, and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2023), 372 pp.

Reviewed by Martha Ackelsberg



What do you do when you feel like your world is profoundly threatened, but very few people around you seem to care? What do you do if you are without significant social power or status, and have no platform on which to stand, speak, and be heard? What if your family and close friends think you're crazy for being so obsessed? And what if there is a war going on in another part of the world that seems to encapsulate and represent all that you hope or fear?

While these questions feel all too relevant to our contemporary moment, I'm referring to the Spanish Civil War and the political and cultural crises that accompanied it, which are so powerfully evoked in Sarah Watling's new book.

In *Tomorrow Perhaps the Future*, Watling follows a group of mostly women writers and artists whose fears of fascism and fascination with the revolutionary developments in Spain drove them to travel there and report on what they saw—hoping, in the process, to alert the world to the tremendous injustice of western “neutrality.” Spain, of course, turned out to be a dress rehearsal for World War II, with Hitler and Mussolini testing out new military tactics, bombing civilians, and using various terror tactics against supporters of the Republic. The legitimate Spanish government, meanwhile, militarily weakened and abandoned by the western democracies it considered its natural allies, was forced to depend on arms from the Soviet Union and the bravery and sacrifice of rag-tag local militias and, later, the 35,000 volunteers who joined the International Brigades.

Yet many more supporters of the Spanish Republic were not ready to take up arms. What could they do? Scores of writers and artists traveled to Spain to document what was happening, to stir the conscience of the world, and to share in the revolutionary moment. Most of the Spaniards who participated in the revolution, my research shows, would come to see their years of activism as peak moments of their lives: experiences they would not have missed for anything, despite all the hardships, fear, and death. The same seems to be true for the writers and artists featured in Watling's book, from Martha Gellhorn and Nancy Cunard to Josephine Herbst, Sylvia Townsend Warner,

Jessica Mitford, Paul Robeson, and Langston Hughes. They went to Spain to understand, to participate, and to document; and they were profoundly changed by the intensity of political feeling and commitment they experienced there. What Watling writes of Martha Gellhorn could have written of many others: “Because of the war, Martha had got to live the rarest kind of life—a life in which her beliefs and the labors of her days coalesced into a perfect wholeness.”

While the book presents a series of vignettes of individual lives and travels, it also reads as a mystery. Watling tries to reconstruct not just what these artists did, but what they felt—drawing on their published materials and letters, but also on interviews recorded years later. We learn that writers and photographers who were largely ignored in their home countries felt they had a place in Spain. They felt welcomed and valued by those who understood how critical it was to get their stories out to the world. They also came to appreciate the role of culture—the importance of literacy and the value of art—to the revolutionary project in Spain, where levels of illiteracy, especially among women, were very high. There were huge challenges: in addition to the conditions of war, sexism and racism were evident among the volunteers (and also among some of the writers). Most came to question traditional notions of “objectivity,” which, they insisted, made no sense in the context of a war in which right and wrong were so clearly defined. Nevertheless, virtually all continued with their work, putting aside whatever doubts they had about the conduct of the war—or the complex machinations among the Republicans—to try to tell the story of the antifascist struggle for justice.

Watling's stories resonated deeply with this reader. Our own historical moment feels not all that different from the 1930s: we, too, face world-wide challenges to democracy, a sense that values and practices taken for granted are under threat, and a perception among many that there is “nothing we can do.” But Watling points out that the intellectuals, writers, and artists she studies effectively “made a way out of no-way,” claiming their place in the struggle, and the specific contributions they could make to that struggle *as* outsiders. Of course, their legacy is a mixed one. They succeeded in stirring the conscience of some but failed to convince the western democracies to intervene on behalf of the Spanish Republic. Still, the images they captured and the stories they told continue to inspire. They also impel us to do what we can. ▲

Martha Ackelsberg is the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor Emerita of Government and Professor Emerita of the Study of Women & Gender at Smith College. Author of numerous works on Feminist Theory, Women's Studies, and Spain, Ackelsberg's Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women (1991) is an essential history of women and anarchism in Spain.

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At the No Kings protest in San Francisco on October 18, children of Lincoln vets proudly carried the banner of the VALB's Bay Area post. Photo Len Tsou

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