



INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

Patrons Ken Livingstone
Paul Preston

www.international-brigades.org.uk

Charity no. 1094928

Issue 18 / October 2007

INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

37 Reginald Road, London E7 9HS

Tel/fax: 020-8555 6674

Email: marlenesidaway@hotmail.com

Life President: Jack Jones

Chair: Sam Lesser

Secretary: Marlene Sidaway

Treasurer: Nick Moreno

Committee Members: Gerry Abrahams,
Mike Arnott, Richard Baxell, John Callow,
Geoff Cowling, Jack Edwards, Pauline Fraser,
Mary Greening, Mick Jones, Jim Jump,
Dolores Long/Hilary Jones, Manus O'Riordan,
Alan Warren

The recent destruction of our memorial plaque on Hill 705 (see photo below) has been occupying our minds a lot but, when Ian Walters' statue of Nelson Mandela was placed in Parliament Square, I was reminded of his earlier bust of Mandela outside the Royal Festival Hall which was subject to many attempts at destruction by the BNP. Ian repaired it straight away each time, finally re-casting it in bronze. The late Tony Banks who, with Ken Livingstone, was responsible for giving us the site of our memorial in Jubilee Gardens, said: "If you repair something immediately, vandalism is less likely to continue" - a lesson to us all!

We are very grateful for the support that the government and local councillors in Catalonia have given. They were quick to condemn the desecration, and to arrange for the graffiti to be removed and the plaque replaced. We have also been very fortunate to have Angela Jackson, in particular, and Rachel Ritchie and Anna Marti working so hard on our behalf over there. They have liaised with the local authorities, with the plaque manufacturers and with the police and press. We should now be able to re-dedicate the plaque on 10 November.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Belfast annual general meeting on 13 October. Lynda Walker and the team in Belfast have been working very hard to make the weekend a success and to have their own memorial ready for that day.

Finally, many thanks to Gerry Abrahams who has developed the Newsletter into one of the most valuable assets of our organisation. We can never thank her enough and I hope she will continue as a vital member of the committee.

Salud,

Marlene Sidaway



Billy Bragg (above) sings and (left) Dolly West assists Penny Feiwei as she lays a wreath at the memorial.



Memorial day at Jubilee Gardens

This year's ceremony at Jubilee Gardens, London, was particularly moving, with Jack Jones welcoming the large crowd and Sam Lesser giving a rousing speech, singling out Worthing for its recent commemoration before reading "The Volunteer" with the clarity and passion which only he can invoke.

Dolores Long read the names of all those Brigaders we had lost in the last year, and before the minute's silence, Bernado Fernández laid a wreath on behalf of the Spanish Embassy, and Penny Feiwei and Dolly West laid one on behalf of the Trust.

Roman Marquez, one of only three surviving militiamen and women who took part in the events in Catalonia and Aragon in 1936, thanked all of those who had volunteered to go to the aid of his country. With emotion, he reminded us all how deeply his countrymen fighting for the Republic valued the sacrifices and bravery of volunteers who went to a strange country knowing little of the language or the dangerous journey involved, prepared to die for an ideal, and to help the Spanish people in their hour of need.

Geoff Cowling spoke of Hitler's bombers who used the skies of

Spain to practice their later bombardment of Britain and made the point that the last battle of the Spanish Civil War should always be regarded in history as the first of the Second World War.

We welcomed Harald and Enrico from the friends group in Berlin. Their presence, and the reading of the poem "The Thaelman Battalion" reminded us of "the other Germany" and the 3,000 Germans who fought in Spain.

It was good too to see trade union banners raised beside our own, a symbol of the support and encouragement they have given us.

Finally, our great friend and supporter Billy Bragg spoke of his personal interest in Spain, and his commitment to our cause, before leading the singing of "Jarama" and the rousing "Internationale" the last notes of which rang out over Jubilee Gardens before the rain came down, and we scuttled to the Travel Inn for lunch.

Marlene Sidaway

● DVDs of the event are available for £8 (free to Brigaders) from Marlene Sidaway (details on left).



Devastating scene at Hill 705 in the Sierra de Pandols where the memorial has been daubed with graffiti, and the British and Lister plaques removed (full story on page 5).

Brief notes

Christopher Caudwell plaque: A plaque is being unveiled at the Atlantic Inn, Porthleven, on Saturday 20 October, the centenary of the birth of Christopher St John Sprigg who stayed there for 11 weeks, from August to October 1937, completing his classic work, "Illusion and Reality: a Study of the Sources of Poetry." When he was there it was a guest house, "Atlantic View", owned by Mr & Mrs Matthews. Christopher Sprigg was afterwards killed in the Spanish Civil War when fighting with the International Brigade in February 1937. His book was published posthumously a couple of months later under his nom de plume, "Christopher Caudwell". The ceremony will take place at 3pm and will be followed by an address by Dr Alan Kent on the literary significance of his work. Tea and refreshments will then be available. All are welcome to attend; arranged by James Whetter, email [trelipse@care4free.net].

Christopher Caudwell conference: There will be a one-day conference on Saturday 20 October, 10am to 5pm, celebrating the centenary of Christopher Caudwell entitled "Politics into Culture" at the Charity Centre, Euston, organised by the Marx Memorial Library. Admission is free, but tickets need to be booked and can be obtained from Marlene Sidaway.

No Jubilem La Memòria events at Marçà on 9/10/11 November will include the re-dedication of the British Battalion memorial on Hill 705 on Saturday 10 November (full programme on page 5),

"Jews in the Spanish Civil War", the extraordinary story of the large number of Jews who volunteered to join in the struggle against Fascism, will be told in an evening of film, music, memoirs, and a lecture given by Dr Richard Baxell on Wednesday 21 November at 7.30pm. It is hoped that some of our Brigade veterans will also be there. The event is organised by the Spiro Ark in collaboration with George Fokschaner; venue: 25-26 Enford Street, London W1; bookings 020-7723 9991; £8.

London Socialist Film Co-op: Take a look at their website for films at the Renoir, Brunswick Square WC1 [www.socialistfilm.blogspot.com]. Their Spanish Civil war-linked films: Yoav Segal's "The Battle of Cable Street" and

"Memories of a Future" by Margaret Dickinson and Pepe Petos (with film of 2006 Pyrenees walk) are not on until 9 March 2008. More details later.

Event planned as part of **"Vamos"** festival: Martin Ellis, who published George Wheeler's book "To Make the People Smile Again", is planning an event as part of the Latin American Festival, "Vamos", on Tyneside from 4 - 13 July, 2008. There will be readings from George Wheeler's book and from other publications. Martin would particularly like to hear from any members willing to take part, especially those with connections to Brigaders in the North East, Spanish refugees, and those in the Aid Spain movement. Contact him at 0191-276 2425 or email [martin.ellis@ablibris.com].

Len Crome Memorial Lecture 2008: Details of the Len Crome lecture at the Imperial War Museum are not yet fixed, but the date will be either 1 or 8 March, 2008. See the next issue for a definite date.

Barcelona 2008: The Amigos in Spain are planning a commemoration of the withdrawal of the International Brigades in Barcelona in November next year. More details in the next issue.

Worthing commemorations: Worthing has seen two commemorations in recent months. The first was at Beach House, which was home to 60 Basque children in 1937. A plaque, paid for by the Basque Children of '37 Association, was unveiled by María Teresa Grijalba who was only 14 when she stayed at the house, having travelled from Spain in the overcrowded SS *Habana*. María, now 85, travelled from her home in Venezuela to be at the ceremony on 23 May. She said she would never forget the kindness of English people after escaping starvation and death in her civil-war stricken country. Jim Jump's father, James, was a journalist in Worthing before going to fight in Spain, and his mother was one of the Spanish adult helpers at Beach House, who had also arrived on the *Habana*. Bill Thornycroft's family, his mother and sister, were at the time very involved in the Aid Spain movement and his brother, Chris, was an International Brigader. Bill has been working for several years on this project and also one to honour the five men from Worthing who volunteered for Spain. Their names are now on a plaque

in the Labour Hall, Lyndhurst Road: Tom Elliott, Chris Thornycroft, James Jump, Frederick Cronshaw and Edmond Updale. Tom Elliott was a branch secretary of Worthing Labour Party and was killed at Jarama in June 1937, aged 28. His niece, Veronica Cousins, and Worthing Mayor Heather Mercer unveiled the plaque on 7 July.

Competition winner for **Benissa** memorial: The competition to select the sculptor of the memorial to the International Brigades in Benissa, which attracted 15 entries, has been won by Rafael Carrio, who has already won various prizes for his work and has had many exhibitions. The memorial will be in a green zone of Casa Feliu in the Avenue of Pais Valencia on the N332 from Calpe. The house was the site of an International Brigades Hospital during the war and the design incorporates the three pointed star of the International Brigades, the cross of the medical services, and two open doors which represent the welcome and recognition given to the International Brigades by the people of Benissa.

Sponsored cycle trip to Barcelona: Charles Jepson has told us about a proposed 70th anniversary Clarion Cycling Club ride from Glasgow to Barcelona starting provisionally on 23 July 2008. The money raised from sponsorship is being offered to the IBMT. It is intended that the cycle event will visit UK cities which have IB memorials and possibly conduct publicity at each one. This may involve IBMT members coordinating to meet the cyclists and maybe even find places to sleep overnight. The other organiser of the trip, IBMT member Sid Sherriff, is proposing to have a meeting with interested members at some point during our Belfast annual general meeting, and a full list of the towns/ cities to be visited will be available then. Committee member Alan Warren has volunteered to drive a minibus to Barcelona to look after the cyclists. For further information contact Charles Jepson at [clariocc@yahoo.co.uk] or Sid Sherriff at [sid@sherriff1941.fsnet.co.uk]

Historic walk planned for 2008: La Columna and Ay Carmela groups are planning a walk covering the Great Retreats of April 1938 based on Walter Gregory's account in "The Shallow Grave" from 18 to 20 April 2008. The plans are still in the early stages, but it is likely to end up at Marçà. More information in the next issue.

Marlene Sidaway

IBMT Newsletter

Editor: Geraldine (Gerry) Abrahams

Email: [gerry@reelscoop.freeserve.co.uk]

Production: Jim Jump

Email: [jimjump@mac.com]

This is my last issue as editor of the IBMT Newsletter. It has been a great privilege to edit the Newsletter from the first issue until now, six years on. Over those years we have reported on the news and events here and abroad of interest to the organisation and its members, and I hope we have always done so with integrity. The Newsletter will now be in the capable hands of Jim Jump, who has been responsible for production over these years, and I know he will continue to reflect the needs and opinions of the membership. Many thanks to everyone for helping make the Newsletter a voice for democracy.

President's message



Youngsters in period costume at the Berlin memorial.

10th summer meeting of Veterans & Friends of the Spanish Republic

Spanish Civil War veterans from Austria, Estonia, Germany and Russia joined representatives from International Brigade organisations across Europe, at the invitation of the Veterans & Friends of the Spanish Republic (KFSR) in Berlin.

The tenth Sommertreffen (summer meeting) of the German group took place from 7 to 9 September, attended by veterans, representatives from Holland, Russia, Spain and Switzerland, and the IBMT.

Visits were made to the new Bundestag building, as guest of Dr Gesine Lotzsch of Die Linke, the new German Left Party, to the site of a former Nazi forced labour camp in Berlin at Schoneweide and to the annual flower-laying at the International Brigade memorial in Berlin, where local teenagers dressed in period costume explained the memorial's significance.

"Brigadistas", a film by Daniel Burkholz to commemorate the 70th Homenaje in October 2006, was shown. It includes interviews with Bob Doyle and Moe Fishman, who sadly died recently.

An English version should be available for next year's Jarama commemoration.

Saturday was dedicated to a conference discussing the role of the POUM and the anarchists in Barcelona, and the relationship between the Comintern and the International Brigades.

That debate was heated and inconclusive. An excellent evening's concert reconciled rivals and the evening ended with everyone singing the songs of the Brigades.

Pauline Fraser

● For more details, contact Pauline Fraser, who represented the IBMT at the meeting in Berlin. The full text of her report is on the IBMT website: [www.international-brigades.org.uk].

Our annual Jubilee Gardens commemoration this year was a great success, with our good friend Billy Bragg providing terrific musical support, and we can look forward to a whole series of extraordinary memorial events to mark the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War into next year and beyond.

I am sad to report that our great American comrade and Brigader Moe Fishman passed away recently and we pay tribute to his stalwart contribution, as we do to Ian Walters, the sculptor of our remarkable monument and whose work continues to be celebrated with the unveiling of his Mandela statue in Parliament Square, London.

It was also sad to see that the plaque erected to the British Battalion volunteers who died at the Ebro was senselessly torn



down and the area defaced with graffiti. But such immaturity, I'm glad to say, will not be tolerated by the local authorities there and they have pledged to speedily replace it, and ensure its care.

In Spain this year we have had some very successful events, with commemorative visits to Brunete, Belchite and the Ebro, keeping alive the memory of brave comrades, many of whom gave their lives for the cause in which we still so strongly believe and which has inspired our Trust.

We are looking forward to a great AGM in Belfast in October, when a new memorial will be unveiled and a good time will be had by all, if I know the Irish! Everyone welcome – see you there!

¡Salud!

Jack Jones

Obituary

Moe Fishman (left) with British veterans at Jubilee gardens in 2004.



Moe Fishman

We regret to record the death on 6 August of our New York comrade Moe Fishman (1915-2007). I first met Moe in Barcelona in 1988 for the unveiling of the first International Brigade memorial in post-Franco Spain, sponsored by Moe's own organisation, Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

A laundry worker and truck driver with a record of working class struggle already behind him, Moe had gone to Spain to enlist in the George Washington Battalion in April 1937, and he went on to fight that July in the Battle of Brunete. It was there that Moe was to be wounded, leaving him with a life-long limp. But this did not deter him from going on to serve as a radio operator in the US merchant marine during World War 2.

It was in 1950 that Moe emerged as Executive Secretary/Treasurer of the Lincoln Vets, joining Milt Wolff in leading its fight against the McCarthyite designation of them as an "un-

American" organisation. It took a further two decades before that fight was won.

Over the years Moe led the Lincoln vets not only in commemorating the Spanish Anti-Fascist War but also in campaigning against today's wars through his own personally-driven work with Veterans for Peace.

Not only have so many of us met him at commemorations in Spain itself, but we also have particularly fond memories of his visit to Britain and Ireland in July 2004, when he spoke at both our Jubilee Gardens commemoration in London and the unveiling of a new International Brigade memorial in Waterford. It was only six weeks before his death that I had an email from Moe enthusing about the forthcoming Brigade Memorial in the United States itself, on the San Francisco waterfront. This will indeed be a fitting tribute to Moe Fishman himself and to all his comrades in the struggle for a democratic Spain.

Manus O'Riordan

● A note from Moe's partner Georgia Wever: "Join us to honour the life and enduring contribution of Moe Fishman, the voice of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: music, speakers, memories, inspiration, and refreshments; all are invited; on Saturday 10 November, 10.30am, at Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Square South, New York, NY10012; accessible entrance on Thompson Street. Info: 212-989 8624. If anyone wants to come over, let me know and I will try to find them a place to stay."

News from home...

On 21 August, David Cabrera contacted us to say that a few days earlier, the International Brigade memorial (right) on Hill 705 in the Sierra Pandols to the British and Irish who died in the Battle of the Ebro, which was unveiled in 2005, had been "badly damaged and desecrated with fascist graffiti". We are grateful for his vigilance, which allowed immediate action to be taken by both the authorities and by our friends there. This is Angela Jackson's report of events and resolutions.



The good, the bad and the ugly: Recovering the memory of the civil war in Spain

The research being carried out to recover the memory of the civil war here in Spain has many facets. There are good aspects, such as giving the victims of repression a voice after so many years of silence. It's also good to be told repeatedly, in dozens of interviews being recorded here with those who experienced the war at first hand, that the International Brigaders always treated local people with respect and were renowned for their generosity.

The bad memories are, of course, still almost overwhelming; loss, persecution, exile... However, this attack on the symbols of memory and remembrance on Hill 705 – two plaques stolen and others defaced – strikes the beholder first and foremost as abhorrently ugly; a manifestation of a sickly disease, prone to erupt like boils on society's backside.

It remains unclear as to whether the vandalism was carried out by "four or five kids from another town – not politicians" as claimed by Pere Martí, the mayor of the nearby village of Pinell de Brai, or by a more organised group. The slogan, "The Falange Continues the Fight", is certainly a clear political statement in support of fascism.

It can't have been easy to remove the heavy steel plaque bolted on to the wall, and few young people today could spray paint the ancient symbol of the "Victor", adopted by Franco as his personal emblem. In addition, the use of a stencil to paint the fascist symbol of yolk and arrows belies any suggestion that the perpetrators acted on the spur of the moment.

As Paul Preston has commented: "It's a tribute to the role played by the International Brigades in the struggle for democracy in Spain that supporters of

the Falange feel sufficiently insecure to take the trouble to ascend a remote mountain track to attack the symbol of that role."

Nevertheless, every cloud has a silver lining. There have been many messages of support, both moral and practical, including an offer from the Catalan government to pay for a replacement plaque. A re-dedication ceremony is planned for 10 November this year as part of the annual weekend of events organised by the local group, No Jubilem la Memòria, working together with the IBMT. It will be a chance to show support for those who wish to honour their dead in public remembrance; to turn an ugly incident into something more notable.

Angela Jackson

● For full details of the November programme see [www.nojubilemlamemoria.tk]. Further information on page 8.

Report from Brunete

A large contingent of IBMT members joined Spanish comrades for events to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Brunete, just north of Madrid, on the weekend of 6/7 July. The main guest was Bob Doyle, who attended all the events, and can only be described as a great ambassador for the IBMT.

The first event was a joint meeting on Friday night, with Unesco, at their offices in Madrid city centre, with film, talk, food & drink. Unesco were very supportive of our aims, and their director joined us on Saturday morning for an eight-mile walk along the battle field front, with songs along the way. We had a break for water half way as it was very hot, with no shade but very enjoyable, and about 40 comrades completed the walk.

Arriving in Brunete we joined with the comrades who couldn't do the walk, and enjoyed an alfresco meal before a meeting in a local community centre.

Some then visited Mosquito Ridge, site of very hard fighting, and great losses for the Republic.

Bob visited an enactment site of the battle, and was very well received when participants became aware of a Brigader in their ranks. They gave him a machine gun to hold: the same type he had used in Spain as a Brigader.

Bob also made a visit to the AABI (the Amigos) offices, meeting volunteers and their president, friend and comrade Anna Pérez, for a very emotional farewell.

Many thanks to Sevi Montero and Allan Warren for all their organising and work that made the whole event possible.

Lyn Joe Hill

Perth and Blantyre memorials

Campaigns for memorials at Perth and Blantyre are ongoing and support is being sought from Angus Council for a Basque Children's Plaque at Montrose, Scotland's only "niño" colony. Dundee's commemoration of Brunete led to the discovery of an unknown photo of David Samson, one of two Brigaders from the city who died there and costings for amending errors on the Dundee memorial have been obtained. The target is to have them completed for a rededication in October 2008.

Glasgow archive

On 4 July, IBMT members, Brigaders' relatives and local researchers from across Scotland grasped with both hands the opportunity to meet Brigade archivist Jim Carmody at an informal evening of discussion in the Scottish TUC Centre in Glasgow. As a bonus, Ciaran Crossey was able to join Jim as both were in Glasgow investigating the collections held by city's Caledonian University. Between them they fielded a wide variety of questions, ranging from which were the best Spanish archive sources, to the use of aliases by Brigaders and the places where volunteers were sent for their medicals. Gerry Abrahams and Mike Arnott facilitated at what proved to be a hugely worthwhile experience for all involved. Thanks go to Jim and Ciaran, to the STUC for the use of the venue and to Glasgow Trades Union Council for giving those present access to the Glasgow IB Memorial Plaque.

La Niña Bonita

"La Niña Bonita", the Irish TV documentary based on the memoirs of International Brigader Eugene Downing, can now be viewed on YouTube and can be accessed by clicking on "New Material" at [www.geocities.com/irelandscw] – Ciaran Crossey's "Ireland and the Spanish Civil War" website. Interviews are featured with a number of IBMT relatives of deceased Irish Brigaders: Eugene's own nephew Brendan Byrne, Michael O'Riordan's son Manus, and Frank Edwards's son Sean.

Motion on International Brigades at STUC

The Dundee Trades Council has agreed that one of three motions to next April's Scottish TUC Congress will be on the subject of the International Brigade. Possibilities include the 70th anniversary of the withdrawal, support for campaigns for memorials, support for the annual general meeting which is likely to be in Dundee in 2008, request for more affiliations to the Trust etc. If you have any ideas please contact Mike Arnott at [dun-dee-tuc@hotmail.com].

Wise and Foolish Dreamers

The exhibition on Wales and the Spanish Civil War entitled 'Wise and Foolish Dreamer's is on the move. Having been in Ammanford and at the National Eisteddfod in Mold this summer, it will be displayed at the Rhondda Heritage Park and venues in Bridgend and in Caerphilly before Christmas. At each of these a series of school workshops will be carried out by project co-ordinator Phil Cope, using the DVD, book, posters and other material accompanying the exhibition as stimulus for the students. These materials are also available for sale to IBMT members and supporters.

The 148-page full colour book costs £10 (inc. postage and packing), and comes with a free copy of the DVD. Alternatively, a set of six colour posters which reproduce the exhibition panels can be purchased for £5 (including p&p). Send your order with payment to: Owain Iorwerth, Welsh Centre for International Affairs, Temple of Peace, Cathays

Park, Cardiff CF10 3AP, or contact him at [owainiorwerth@wcia.org.uk] or phone 029-2022 8549.

The venues are as follows:

Rhondda Heritage Park: 1 October-4 November
Bridgend Ogmere Life Centres/ Berwyn Centre: 6-30 November
Caerphilly: 3-31 December
Swansea Pontardawe Arts Centre: 8-29 January
Cardiff Temple of Peace: 30 January-12 February
National Library of Wales Aberystwyth: 13 February-March.

Call for papers

● *Spanish Civil War: History, Representation, Memory*

● *An International Interdisciplinary Conference. 9th-10th February, 2008*

● *Temple of Peace, Cardiff*

Seventy years ago Spain was engulfed in a long and bloody civil war, pre-empting a struggle which would erupt across Europe and the rest of the world. In decades since, the Spanish conflict has been endlessly discussed, written about, and represented in countless literary, cinematic and visual works of art.

The Spanish government declared 2006 the Year of Historical Memory and submitted a "law of historical memory" to the country's Congress for ratification. For the first time the mass killings committed by General Franco's fascist regime (1939-1975) will be legally exposed as "unjust", hopefully leading to some form of reparation for the victims and their families. As expected, this law has caused protests from right-wing conservative groups who see the proposed law as an effort at historical revi-

sionism. They believe that victims from both the Nationalists and the Republicans should have equal claim to reparation. Ironically, the Law of Historical Memory has been castigated by the political descendents of Franco as "Orwellian". So what exactly, if any, should the position of the Spanish Civil War be in the collective memory of the country, the continent and the world?

This international, interdisciplinary conference organised by the Welsh Centre for International Affairs [in conjunction with Cardiff University] seeks to examine representations of the War, and how they have helped create the image of the War we have today. The conference will analyse the often complex relationships between history and memory, compare the differences between the various "lies" and "truths" that have been articulated about the war and try to establish what version of history we should remember.

This event will also showcase the Wise and Foolish Dreamers Exhibition and other cultural events that focus on Spanish Civil War.

Proposals are invited from any relevant discipline and any theoretical framework.

Possible topics might include:

- The cultural history of the war
- The war in literature
- The war on the screen
- Women in the war
- Ideologies of the war
- The war in Spain today
- Fighting fascism today
- Wales and the Spanish Civil War.

Prospective speakers are invited to submit proposals of approximately 500 words, with a short CV, by 1 December 2007 to conference organisers at: [scwconference08@googlemail.com].

Letter from the past

Last November a highly significant letter was discovered in the Transport Union of America archives at New York University. Authored by Irish International Brigader Michael O'Riordan in April 1939 when he was a 21-year-old veteran of the Battle of the Ebro, it set out to provide a 24-page handwritten analysis of Irish history and contemporary politics for his friend and comrade-in-arms, the New York International Brigader Bill Gandall.

The letter also exchanged news of Spanish comrades who had managed to flee Barcelona on the eve of the fascist conquest, only to experience the horrific and often fatal conditions of the French Republic's internment camps. This fascinating document, together with an introduction by Mick's son Manus O'Riordan, was published in full for the very first time in the July 2007 issue of "Irish Political Review". Now it has also been made available at [www.geocities.com/irelandscw/ibvol-MoR1939.htm], the "Ireland and the Spanish Civil War" website.



Bob Doyle with machine gun: see "Report from Brunete".

Can you help?

If you do not have an email to reply to queries, contact Marlene and she will pass it on. Much of the additional information listed comes from the British IB archive, via James Carmody, whose work is much appreciated.

● Does anyone have any information on Herbert Hill, of Canadian nationality, born in England on 10 April 1907, died at Gandesa between 25 July and 5 August 1938? His niece, Marlene Hill, would be grateful for any help. Contact her at [kpt385@sasktel.net].

● Steven Jauncey, of 37 Ashcombe Road, Weston Super Mare, North Somerset, is researching those who volunteered from the West Country. He knows a little about Archie Dorran, killed at Jarama. Does anyone have connections with any other International Brigaders from there?

● Mira Grossbard is trying to find out about her uncle, known as Bernard Jean “Jam” Frejtkes, wounded in Huesca and died in Barcelona in June 1937 aged 29. He was born in Poland and named Jankiel Feidkes (Frejkes). He migrated to France in the early 30s and volunteered to the Dombrowski Brigade. Mira is looking for any details or written material in any language. Contact her at [mira.grossbard@hotmail.com].

● Chris Coates, a councillor in Lancaster, is interested in finding Brigaders from Lancaster and the surrounding area and Basque refugees. Contact him at [ccoates@lancaster.gov.uk].

● Arturo Díaz, a journalist working for a new Spanish newspaper *Público*, has written to say that they are working on an article focusing on the grandchildren of foreign Brigadistas and Spanish women to commemorate the 70th

anniversary of the first intervention of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. If anyone is a grandchild or knows of any grandchildren of such couples, can they get in touch with him at Público, tel: +34 660 39 95 96.

● Rebecca Dickson is looking for information about her grandfather Malcolm Dickson, who came from Glasgow and who left for Canada after World War 2. Contact her at [rebecca_dickson_uk@yahoo.com].

● Enrico Hilbert, one of our German friends, tells us that they have been working to build an encyclopedia about the volunteers from Germany for the past few years, and they need help to “close some gaps”. They especially want information about or photographs of German volunteers who went from Great Britain to Spain, or who stayed in Great Britain after the war. One example is Dr Herbert Carol Kretzschmar, originally from Plauen. After the war in Spain he emigrated across France to Great Britain and was arrested as an enemy foreigner. He published an article about the effect of German explosive projectiles and because of that he was obliged to work in a military hospital, later working as a surgeon. In 1945, in London, he became a GP. He was a member of the Communist Party. It is possible that his wife and children still live in Great Britain. They would be very pleased to receive more information about him and about other comrades, including Herbert Spinnler, Rudolf Ehrlich, Egon-Kurt Burkert and Freddy Brand. Enrico Hilbert thanks you very much for your efforts. If you can help, contact him at: Enrico Hilbert, Kämpfer und Freunde der Spanischen Republik 1936-1939 e.V., Gießstraße 14, 09130 Chemnitz, Germany.

IBMT membership continues to grow

At this year’s annual general meeting, I shall be able to report that membership is now over 730, so our next target will be 800. Interest in the Brigades shows no sign of slackening over time. It shows how their example remains relevant in a world still threatened by the dangers of fascism and attacks on democracy. We now have new subscription rates: £15 (standard) and £7.50 (concession). If you pay by cheque, you will receive a membership reminder with the Newsletter for the part of the year in which your membership falls: February, June or September.

A growing number of trade unions have affiliated to the Trust, and we have made it easier for them to do so, by producing a form for affiliates to

complete, with suggested tariffs. Please contact me if you would like a form, whether it’s for a trades council, union branch, region or national union.

A round of thanks is due to so many of our members for their willingness to help the Trust increase its finances. Many of you enclose a donation with your subscription when in a position to do this, more than 140 have now completed the Gift Aid form we sent out with the summer Newsletter, and an increasing number of members opt to pay by Standing Order.

Please contact me if you would like a Standing Order form. To those of you who don’t have a UK bank account, many thanks for your understanding in accessing the Newsletter online, or making alternative arrangements to pay. This is greatly appreciated.

Pauline Fraser

Blinded by anti-communism

“The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939” by Antony Beevor (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006, £25) reviewed by Dr Helen Graham, Professor of Contemporary Spanish History, Royal Holloway, University of London



Weighing in at over 900 pages, military historian Antony Beevor’s new general history of the Spanish Civil War is a bestseller in Spain. The English-language edition, published on 1 June of last year, has also received much media attention and at

a relatively more manageable 526 pages, it too established itself as a market-leader. After the author’s previous blockbusting success with “Stalingrad” (1998) and “Berlin: the Downfall” (2002), there is, one might say, an identifiable Beevor “product” which has a ready-made appeal to a very large general audience. The product is highly readable – for Beevor writes very well – and combines an original, archive-based take on the military dimension with an intelligent synthesis of the rest, culled from the publications of specialist academic historians whose work would rarely otherwise reach the general reader, even in its country of origin.

“The Battle for Spain” follows this formula and in many respects the resulting work of synthesis fulfils a useful function in giving a non-Spanish reading audience with an interest in the civil war access to the findings of recent specialist research. This is particularly noteworthy in the case of Beevor’s treatment of the murderous Francoist repression of the 1930s and 40s on which a huge leading edge bibliography has been produced by Spaniards over the last 25 years but almost none of which has been translated into English.

In terms of Beevor’s analysis of the war itself, he is, as one might expect, most thought provoking on the military detail. There are many nice observations which bring alive the problems ordinary soldiers faced. Much more controversial is his negative assessment of Republican Chief of Staff, Vicente Rojo, considered by many commentators – including other military historians – to be the outstanding strategist of the war. Beevor is critical of his military leadership, and considers him irresponsible to have engaged in “prestige operations”, as the author describes the Republic’s major diversionary attacks at Brunete, Belchite, Teruel and the Ebro. Certainly these proved costly

Books etc

to the Republic in men and material. But such actions were vital to projecting an image of military vitality and political will. Without them the Republic's foremost political leaders knew they stood absolutely no chance of breaking the international diplomatic deadlock that, in perpetuating Non Intervention, was killing the Republic. Indeed even Beevor's technical criticisms of the "prestige operations" often ignore the profound and lasting effects of the arms shortages inflicted by Non Intervention.

But Beevor is much less interested in the devastation wrought by Non Intervention than he is in Russian involvement with the Republic. He assumes rather than demonstrates that Republican military resistance was run by Soviet advisers. Moreover, he sees the Second Spanish Republic at war as virtually a Soviet satellite. But again, this is not a view sustained by his own substantial mining of newly available Soviet sources. Rather it is an article of faith, much as it has always been for Cold War historians, from Burnett Bolloten to Ronald Radosh, and to whose school Beevor clearly belongs. As with his predecessors, Beevor's anti-communism at times blinds him to the evidence of his own material. Many of the reports filed by the Republic's Soviet advisers indicate their utter powerlessness to affect military outcomes given material shortages and the huge organisational and

personnel problems they confronted. They were equally bewildered by the complexity and diversity of the Republican political scene which neither they nor their Soviet masters ever really properly understood let alone controlled. In the end of course, the Cold War view of the Spanish Republic at war is an imperialist one: "Spain" was a blank canvas until written upon on by agendas of the great powers. The history of Republican Spain and the agency of its protagonists are entirely written out of the script.

Without any apparent sense of the absurdity of the proposition, Beevor tell us that in August 1936 in Spain "the communists" were interested in building an army only because they judged that, compared to the militia, it would be easier to dominate. But in the apocalyptic conditions of summer 1936, all of the Republic's frontline defenders were interested in building an army to fight Franco. For all had the most immediate and pressing of matters on their minds. Whether in Mérida or Madrid communists, socialists, anarchists and republicans were absorbed body and soul by present danger: how might they conceivably offer a half way effective resistance to the onslaught of the Army of Africa's seasoned troops? Quite simply, how might they stay alive?

Nor is the sociological complexity of Spain's wartime mass communism ever really explored.

Beevor makes passing reference to the movement's social and cultural hybridity but never draws any conclusions from this in terms of its political trajectory during the war, nor to its manifest and obvious weakness when faced with the Casado coup that capsized Republican resistance in March 1939. For a movement that purportedly controlled everything in Republican Spain, the jobbing historian is increasingly awash with evidence (much of it courtesy of the Soviet archives) that indicates quite the opposite. Ultimately the problem with Beevor's quite relentless anti-communism is the problem of all conspiracy views of history: they can never do justice to the complexity of how and why things happen. No doubt many communists at the time believed their party-movement's rhetoric: that "history" was on their side, that theirs was the grand design. But that belief is an historical phenomenon, while Beevor seems to mistake it for a methodology.

Much counterfactualty also creeps in to Beevor's assessment, in spite of this being the historian's cardinal sin. If Francoism was bad, he insists that a victorious Republic, post-victory, would have engaged in just as bloody a repression. Once again, this isn't so much argued, as stated and assumed – indeed there isn't even a passing reference to the evidence/arguments to the contrary available in several of the specialist texts the author cites in his own bibliography. Taken together, the implicit message of Beevor's intense ideological anti-communism combined with his equally vehement criticism of Francoist barbarity would seem to be "a plague on both your houses". This is not so very far removed from views explicitly expressed by some elite British opinion-formers at the time. But for a widely read professional historian to be implying the same in the 21st century is myopic and more than unfortunate, ignoring as it does the quite fundamental differences between the Francoist and Republican political projects. No doubt the author would say that this is simply the current reviewer's own "article of faith". But in fact these differences are pretty much empirically verifiable if one compares the judicial, social and economic practices of the Republican state at war (wars and all) with the practices of Franco's (emergent) new order.

Ideological blind spots notwithstanding, Antony Beevor's book is worth read for its broad synthesising coverage – although the reader should beware of minor errors and gremlins that have inevitably crept in, given the scale of the author's endeavour. The book's real value, however, lies in Beevor's thought-provoking military analysis. For even if one disagrees with his conclusions, and there are plenty of grounds for doing so, his assessments will contribute to and stimulate wider interest in the complex ongoing debate over Republican military strategy and its political and material constraints. And that is no bad thing.

Women at war

Dr Bernice Archer (author of "The Internment of Western Civilians Under the Japanese 1941-1945") reviews "Warm Earth", a novel by Angela Jackson (Pegasus Elliot Mackenzie, Cambridge, 2007; £8.99; [www.pegasuspublishers.com])



Angela Jackson's "Warm Earth" is a fine and meticulously researched first novel which views the Spanish Civil War through the eyes and experiences of three different but equally eager young British women who join the male-dominated International Brigade. The women's individual and unique perspectives of that time tell a deeply moving story of high ideals, love, loss and heartbreak intertwined with extraordinary courage and comradeship.

Initially the women are partly motivated by the need to escape unfulfilled lives in a grey depressed England but also undoubtedly by the desire to "be of some help in Spain". As they become more deeply involved in the war they, and the reader, are introduced to the stark, painful, brutal reality as well as the political, social and emotional complexities that underpinned the "raison d'être" for the Spanish Civil War and those who fought in it.

Helping to feed the starving refugee children is heartbreaking. Learning to dodge the bombing in Madrid and cope with the constant tension is both exciting and frightening. Nursing the wounded, maimed and dying soldiers in the grossly understaffed and pitifully ill-equipped, lice-ridden, makeshift hospitals on the front lines is harrowing and shocking.

Inevitably the war left permanent emotional, mental and physical scars on these women and their experiences changed them irrevocably. On returning to Britain, now itself at war with Germany, one of the women proclaims, "When I came back I felt as if I'd arrived on another planet and was speaking a different language."

Recognition and reconciliation, and to some extent, closure, arrives with the 60th anniversary celebrations of the war in Madrid in 1996. But clearly "Spain" was, is and will always be "engraved on the hearts" of all the International Brigade.

"Warm Earth" is, however, far from a depressing book. It is about survival, courage, conviction and commitment and is challenging, thought-provoking and up-lifting.

I was ashamed how little I knew of this relatively recent and bloody civil war, but pleased to have learned so much about it and those involved in it in such an enthralling way.

International Brigade Memorial Trust

Notice of Annual General Meeting in Belfast

on Saturday 13 October 2007 and related events for the weekend of Friday 12 to Sunday 14 October

The IBMT annual general meeting will be held in the Grosvenor Hall, 5 Glengall Street, Belfast BT12 5AD at 15:45 on Saturday 13 October 2007

Agenda

1. Chairman's opening remarks
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of previous AGM
4. Matters arising
5. Secretary's report
6. Membership secretary's report
7. Treasurer's report
8. Election of officers
9. Any other business
10. Date and place of next AGM
11. Chairman's closing remarks

Information

For more information about the AGM contact Marlene Sidaway on 020-8555 6674 or [marlenesidaway@hotmail.com].

Exhibition 8-24 October

Exhibition in the Linen Hall Library of original material, memorabilia, letters, newspapers and photographs relating to the Spanish Civil War.

Programme 12-14 October

Friday 12 October

18:30: Linen Hall Library: Official opening of the Spanish Civil War Exhibition: Welcome by John Gray, Librarian, Linen Hall Library; Ciaran Crossey, Spanish Civil War historian; Peter Bunting, Assistant General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Saturday 13 October

11:00: Unveiling of the memorial to "Los Internacionales" (commissioned by the International Brigade Commemorative Committee) by Bob Doyle, International Brigade veteran; introduced by Kevin Doherty, IBCC Secretary

12:45: Grosvenor Hall, civic reception and public meeting

– Welcome from the IBCC/IBMT by Pol McAdaim, IBCC Chair

– Hazelwood Integrated College Choir

– The Lord Mayor, Councillor Jim Rodgers

– Jack Jones, International Brigade veteran

– Guest speakers including family members of International Brigaders, Amaya Ruiz Ibárruri, daughter of "La Pasionaria" (TBC)

– Conclusion: Patricia McKeown: ICTU President and Unison NI Regional Secretary; tea and coffee

15:45: IBMT annual general meeting

17:15: Dinner in the Grosvenor Hall

19:30: Europa Hotel: Guest Speakers: Marlene Sidaway, IBMT Secretary, Unite Ireland Regional Secretary Jimmy Kelly (TBC); music and entertainment compered by Martin Lynch: Brenda O'Riordan, Mel Corry and Pól MacAidaim, Tommy Sand, Paul ("The Brother") McGuire, Gerry Jones & Friends.

Sunday 14 October

10:45: Bus tour of historic Belfast

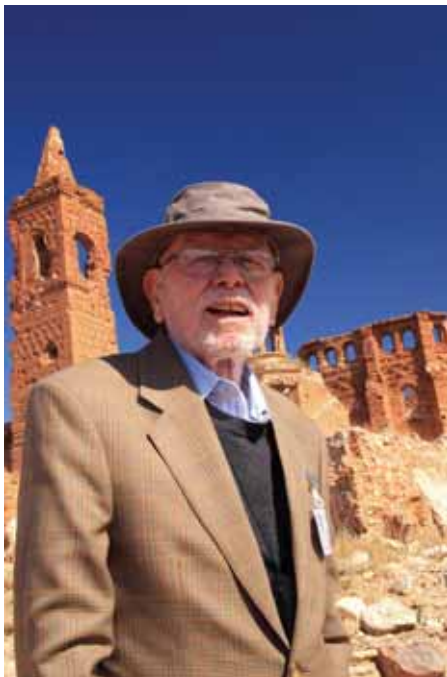
14:00: The John Hewitt: Bob Crow, RMT General Secretary

For further information contact: Lynda Walker, tel: 07751-951 785, email: [lyndaernest@btinternet.com]. For the IBCC: Kevin Doherty, tel: 07748-148 863 and Ciaran Crossey, email [cpcrossey@hotmail.com]. For accommodation and travel contact the Welcome Centre, tel: 028-9024 6609, email: [info@belfastvisitor.com].

The IBMT AGM and events are being organised by the IBCC and supported by the Belfast & Dublin Trades Council, the Community Relation Council, Belfast City Council, many trade unions, trades councils, political parties and individuals who will be acknowledged in the programme.

Back to Belchite

International Brigade veteran Paddy Cochrane was recently back in Belchite exactly 70 years since he was blown up by a fascist grenade and left for dead. His search for the house in which he took cover and the man who saved his life are the subject of a major article by Chris Haslam to be published this autumn in the Sunday Times magazine.



No Jubilem La Memòria, 8-11 November 2007, summary of provisional programme

Thursday 8 November

19:30: British Council, c/Amigó 83, Barcelona; presentation of Angela Jackson's novel, "Warm Earth" by Paul Preston (in English) and display of the NJLM photographic exhibition "Prelude to the Last Battle: The International Brigades in the Priorat, 1938".

Friday 9 November

19:30: Sala Polivalent in Marçà; talk by Paul Preston (in Catalan) "Corresponsals estrangers durant el setge de Madrid i la caiguda de Catalunya".

Saturday 10 November

12:00: Serra de Pandols, Hill 705, re-dedication of the plaque in memory of the British and Irish International Brigaders who died in the Battle of the Ebro (in collaboration with the IBMT).

14:00: Lunch in Gandesa.

18:30: Casal de Marçà, inauguration of the exhibition "Papers Prioratins de Salamanca".

Sunday 11 November

La Torre de Fontaubella

11:00: Inauguration of a plaque in the village cemetery in memory of the victims of the Battle of the Ebro buried in the nearby communal graves. Some International Brigaders are among the names on the list of the dead.

12:00: Sindicat, opening and introduction to the NJLM photographic exhibition (see above) and display of medical material used during the civil war.

12:10: Presentation (in Catalan) by the president of the association, Victims of Franco's Repression in Tarragona, Montserrat Giné.

12:30: Talk (in Catalan) by Dr Joan Mauri: "The Miracle of Blood Transfusion".

13:00: Closing words by Angela Jackson, NJLM president.