



IBMT Newsletter

www.international-brigades.org.uk

Issue 22 / New Year 2009

INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST



Honouring the Dundee dead

IBMT Life President Jack Jones (seated, left) and fellow Brigade veteran Jack Edwards (seated, right) attended the re-dedication of the memorial in Dundee to the city's fallen in the Spanish Civil War.

The larger of the two plaques commemorates 16 men who died in Spain and the smaller plaque beneath it adds a 17th name which was only recently discovered by local researchers.

The new plaque was unveiled in October last year during a weekend of events centred on the IBMT's Annual General Meeting in Dundee.

A total of 70 volunteers from the city went to Spain and their story is told in a new booklet published at the AGM.

See page 5 for a full report.

Spanish citizenship to be conferred on surviving veterans

Final farewell to the Brigaders

By Pauline Fraser

Surviving International Brigaders from around the world, all of them now in their 90s, were reunited in Barcelona over the weekend of 24/25 October 2008 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the withdrawal of the International Brigades and to hear Spanish government ministers confirm the offer of citizenship to them.

Four British veterans were among those in Barcelona who travelled from as far away as Cuba, Russia, the US and many parts of Europe for what is likely to be the last major international gathering of International Brigaders. They were Jack Jones, IBMT Life President, Trust

Chairman Sam Lesser and Jack Edwards and Bob Doyle.

While many Spanish speakers praised the generosity of spirit and love of freedom and democracy which had brought the International Brigaders to Spain, Sam Lesser was one of several Brigaders who replied by thanking the Spanish people for the opportunity they had given young

IBMT membership subscriptions for 2009 are now due. We are also asking all members to complete the form inside this issue. See the back page for details of the new membership arrangements that are being introduced.

people from all over the world to fight fascism together and to "mix our blood with your blood". He finished his speech by reciting some lines from Laurence Binyon's poem "For the Fallen".

Other veterans made the point that the conferring of Spanish citizenship was an honour that was tinged with sadness for their 10,000 comrades killed fighting fascism in Spain, for the many who died in Franco's prisons, Nazi concentration camps or who lost their lives fighting in the Resistance or in Allied armed forces in the Second World War and for those who have died since and never lived to see the Spanish Republic's promise of citizenship fulfilled.

On 28 October 1938 a huge, emotionally-

Continued on page 3

Keeping alive the memory and spirit of the men and women who volunteered to defend democracy in Spain from 1936 to 1939

International Brigade Memorial Trust

www.international-brigades.org.uk

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Annual membership rates are £15 standard;

£7.50 for concessions; £20 family (single

household); affiliating organisations by

arrangement. Further details and

membership forms are available from the

Membership Secretary.

IBMT NEWSLETTER

The IBMT Newsletter is published three times a year and is sent free to all members of the IBMT. Members living overseas can access the current issue by using a password on the IBMT website. Back numbers can be downloaded from the IBMT website on [www.international-brigades.org.uk/newsletter.htm]. For information about receiving the IBMT Newsletter on tape, contact the IBMT Secretary.

Send all items for the next issue to the editor by 30 March 2009 at the latest.

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Marlene Sidaway writes: In October I met Councillor Ruth Simpson of Glasgow City Council's Land & Environmental Services and some of her colleagues who confirmed that they would repair the beautiful La Pasionaria statue by the Clyde (pictured above). They said they would also lobby the Government to have it put on the official list of war memorials, so that funds would be available for it to be kept in good condition. We tried this before without success, but now the climate is different and it's possible that we could register more memorials on the list.

By Marlene Sidaway

A new book and documentary

The much anticipated film by Matt Richards and Max Arthur, "The Brits Who Fought For Spain", is to be shown in two parts on the History Channel on 28 and 29 March. Arthur's book to accompany the film will be published in April and promises to be a fitting tribute to the Brigaders by an acclaimed history writer. Our veterans gave generously of their time and energy to be interviewed at length both for the film and book.

Busy year

2008 was certainly a busy year for all of us, the highlight of course being the Barcelona homage in October, but there were many other events, large and small, commemorating the International Brigaders and the 70th anniversary of their withdrawal from Spain. Our thanks go to all of you who have been active in supporting and organising them.

The same again

This year promises to be just as eventful, and I'm particularly looking forward to the lectures at the Imperial War Museum on 14 March (see page 5).

The Jubilee Gardens memorial day will be on 4 July, earlier than usual because we want to avoid clashing both with the Durham Miners' Gala and the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival on the two following weekends; any later date would have clashed with the school holidays.

Our Annual General Meeting will be in Durham, provisionally booked for the Miners' Hall in Red Hill on Saturday 10 October, and we hope to have a commemoration in Middlesbrough on the Friday and in Newcastle on the Sunday – so prepare for a wonderful weekend in the glorious North

East of England! Dolly West has suggested that we might organise a bus from London. If you're interested in that, let me know.

Our Brigaders

Our Brigaders have been very active, attending more events than some of us younger beings have managed.

The conferring of Spanish citizenship with dual nationality on the veterans has been a great boost to them all. The Spanish government's procedures for this are taking a while, but we hope that when it is official there will be some kind of ceremony for them.

Paddy Cochrane has asked me to remind everyone that he too is an Irish Brigader, who was born in Dublin, although he has spent most of his 95 years in England!

We sadly lost several of our veterans and friends last year, and we remember Steve Fullerton, Terry Maloney, Andy Andrews, Bernard McKenna and Rosaleen Ross, who would have been 100 in May (see obituary on page 4).

Time for change

This year will also see the committee and the structure of the Trust changing. We have been aware for some time that our constitution needs updating, and in the months before the AGM the committee will be considering these changes under the guidance of Mike Anderson, our Treasurer. As I mentioned last time, the membership of the Trust has grown more than we ever hoped for and our new Membership Secretary, Mary Greening, outlines her proposals for streamlining the subscription collection on the back page. We hope that all of you will continue to support the Trust with your subs and donations and by attending the many events which endorse our work.

By Jack Jones

I was very pleased to receive this New Year greetings (right) from the Madrid-based Association of Friends of the International Brigades (AABI). It was sent to all members of the IBMT. The card reminds us of the excellent work carried out by the dedicated individuals of the AABI – or the “Amigos” as we also call them – in organising events in Spain and bringing together the various International Brigade associations around the world.

Another eventful year has passed and, astonishingly, there seems to be no let-up in the events being organised to remember those who went to Spain to fight fascism more than 70 years ago.

“Sadly there are warmongers still among us, who rain bombs on civilians, just as they did in Spain. And there are those who would still appease them or look the other way.”



I am pleased that so many people from younger generations than mine are still taking an interest in the Spanish Civil War and the role played by the International Brigades. It is indeed heartening to see so many young

faces at our events in Britain, Ireland and Spain itself.

The card we received from the Amigos is perhaps a reminder of why this interest remains so strong. It wishes us peace, a sentiment that those of us who went to Spain also shared. But the warmongers of the 1930s denied us the chance to live in peace and we know what the conse-

quences were, first in Spain and then around the world.

Sadly there are warmongers still among us, who rain bombs on civilians, just as they did in Spain. And there are those who would still appease them or look the other way.

The economic mess which laissez faire capitalism has inflicted on us is also a reminder of the 1930s and another reason why we must always be on our guard against the rise of fascism in whatever form it takes.

With that in mind, I too wish you peace and happiness.

¡Salud y suerte!

NEWS

Barcelona’s final farewell

From front page charged parade of International Brigaders took place in Barcelona to mark the official withdrawal of the remaining 12,673 volunteers from the Spanish Republic’s army. Dolores Ibárruri (La Pasionaria) told them: “You are history, you are legend, and when the olive tree of peace puts forth its leaves, come back.” Prime Minister Juan Negrín promised the Brigaders Spanish citizenship after the war.

Under the recently-enacted Law of Historical Memory, International Brigaders can finally

become Spanish citizens without relinquishing their own nationality.

Tributes were also paid in Barcelona to Judge Baltasar Garzón for naming leading members of Franco’s administration for their part in the fascist dictator’s repression. “We now have a judge in Spain who recognises what we owe to the Brigaders,” commented one speaker.

Spanish TV reports of the anniversary gathering can be viewed at : [<http://tinyurl.com/6y5sjo>] and [www.tv3.cat/videos/768049].



Above: IB veteran Bob Doyle in characteristic pose during the Barcelona commemoration. Right: IBMT Chair Sam Lesser stands among the throng.



Above: IBMT Life President Jack Jones at the memorial to the International Brigades at Montjuich, Barcelona.

Below: Freddy Shaw, whose father Jack (1917-2003) was a Brigader, leaves a poppy at the memorial in Barcelona to the Jewish volunteers who died in Spain.





Rosaleen Ross, aged 99, at home in Vancouver last year.

Rosaleen Ross

By Jim Jump

Rosaleen Ross (née Smythe), one of the 150 volunteers from the British Isles who worked in the medical services of the Spanish Republic, died in Vancouver on 26 October 2008, aged 99.

“Ros” crossed the Pyrenees in November 1936 and spent the next two years in the war, with only a six-week break when she returned to England in the summer of 1937. She worked as an administrator and interpreter and for much of the time was posted in makeshift front-line hospitals that regularly came under enemy fire. Out of necessity, she was forced to acquire basic nursing skills. On one occasion she performed a person-to-person blood transfusion, a technique pioneered in Spain by International Brigade medical personnel.

After the war, she married Allan Ross, a Canadian volunteer whom she had met in Spain. They settled in Vancouver. But she had also fallen in love with one of the doctors she worked with: Reginald Saxton. They were not to be reunited for another six decades.

Smythe left school at the age of 15 and learnt shorthand and typing at evening class while employed in a Luton dyeing factory. Soon she was living and working as a secretary in London. By the time the Spanish Civil War began in July 1936, Ros, aged 27, had joined the Communist Party and was a veteran of anti-Blackshirt demonstrations.

Her first hospital posting in Spain was to Sol y Aire, a requisitioned hotel near Torrelodones, north-west of Madrid, near to where Republican forces were launching a counter-attack against a rebel offensive on the capital in January and February of 1937. The hotel bar served as an operating table. Here she first met Saxton, a newly qualified GP working in Reading who, along with others, was developing new blood transfusion procedures in forward field hospitals.

In the summer of that year Smythe was sent to the front in Aragón, where International Brigade units formed part of an unsuccessful Republican push towards Saragossa. She

helped set up a hospital in three huts outside the village of Grañén. Saxton was its director. Conditions were squalid and supplies meagre. They endured bombing by Italian planes and, as winter approached, constant rain and freezing cold. In a report to the Spanish Medical Aid Committee in London, she wrote:

We had orders to pack up and move off, but the floods have prevented the lorries from coming up. For two and a half weeks we have been in a state of package. We have scarcely any food and what there is is bad. We each keep a bit of quite mouldy bread under the pillow to nibble at night. Oh for something to put on it...

In the evenings, by the light of a few candles we put on a gramophone. The records we have are Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, one movement of Schubert's Unfinished and one Hayden. We play them over and over again to the drip, drip of incessant rain. We put on extra pullovers to go to bed in; we have given our blankets to the patients.

Before the Battle of the Ebro in the summer and autumn of 1938, she was sent to Catalonia to a newly established hospital in a former TB sanatorium at Santa Coloma de Farnés, near Gerona and later to the XV International Brigade's main hospital, with a capacity of 1,000 patients, further south at a farm near Valls, some 15 miles inland from Tarragona.

She returned home in October 1938, shortly after the International Brigades were withdrawn by the Republic. She married Ross, who, along with her younger brother Jim (who had joined her in Spain in 1937), worked as a driver and motor mechanic in Spain. The couple moved to Canada and a son, Steve, was born in 1940.

Ros was made an honorary member of the “Mac-Pap” (Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion) veterans, attending their meetings and joined in campaigns with the Friends of Free Spain. She also became active in the Canadian anti-nuclear and peace movements. One of her proudest moments came in 1962 when she met Che Guevara on a trip to Cuba.

Ros was one of a small group of people instrumental in getting a memorial to the Mac-Paps erected opposite the British Columbia parliament buildings in Victoria in 2000. Saxton, along with other surviving volunteers, was there for the unveiling. They had met again in 1996, at a 60th anniversary International Brigade reunion in Madrid.

Soon after Saxton's wife died two years later, he joined Ros in Vancouver. They returned to Spain in 2001 to unveil a plaque at the 120-bed cave hospital in a hillside near La Bisbal de Falset, just north of the river Ebro where Saxton and his mobile blood transfusion unit had operated on the wounded. With his health deteriorating, they moved to the UK in 2002, settling in a cottage on the edge of the South Downs in West Sussex. Following Saxton's death in 2004, she returned to Vancouver to be with her family.

Memorial at the homecoming port

By Mike Anderson

A memorial bench commemorating the return to Newhaven in December 1938 of volunteers in the Spanish Civil War was unveiled on 7 December by Jack Jones, 70 years to the day that the British Battalion of the International Brigades sailed in from Dieppe on the *Worthing*.

With the IBMT Life President at the ceremony at Newhaven Fort were widows, partners and children of International Brigaders, who were joined by Councillor Carla Butler, chair of Lewes District Council, and members and friends of the IBMT, which had organised the event.

Among those who spoke was Dolores Long, whose father Sam Wild had commanded the British Battalion. She described how he had led his men from the ferry onto the train that was to take them back to another welcome from 20,000 supporters at Victoria Station headed by future Prime Minister Clement Attlee.

Cllr Butler read an extract from an *Evening Argus* report of October 1938 about the arrival of 40 volunteers who had returned to Newhaven following their release from imprisonment as POWs. Their “first-hand stories of the terrible conditions” while being “shifted from one concentration camp to another in Franco Spain” were related on the dockside to awaiting reporters.

Under a clear blue Sussex winter sky, an honour guard from La Columna, a Spanish Civil War re-enactment group, stood to attention as Jack Jones unveiled the plaque on the bench which will sit on the ramparts of Newhaven Fort overlooking the dockside which played a key role in transporting volunteers to and from Spain where they had aided the elected government of the Spanish Republic in its battle against General Franco's military uprising. The wording on the plaque echoes the words delivered in Barcelona by Dolores Ibárruri, “La Pasionaria”, who told departing International Brigaders from over 50 nations: “You are history, you are legend.”

A floral tribute in the Republic's colours was then laid by Shirley Simon from Brighton, daughter of Phil Morriss from London who died at the Battle of Jarama in February 1937.



The University of Barcelona has placed its collection of over 1,000 Spanish Civil War posters online, including this 1937 poster in praise of the International Brigades. See: [<http://mdc.cbuc.cat/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=/pavellorepu>].

IBMT lecture will focus on build-up to the war

This year's Len Crome Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Francisco Romero Salvadó with the title "Killing the Dream: The Spanish Labyrinth Revisited, 1898-1939". The date is Saturday 14 March and, as in previous years, the venue is London's Imperial War Museum.

Dr Romero Salvadó is the senior lecturer in modern Spanish history at the Department of Hispanic, Portuguese and Latin American Studies in the University of Bristol. His main

research interest is the analysis of the social and political origins of the Spanish Civil War. His most recent books are "The Spanish Civil War: Origins, Course and Outcomes" and "Foundations of the Civil War, Revolution, Social Conflict and Reaction in Spain, 1916-1923."

The IBMT-sponsored lecture begins at 2.30pm and is followed by a question and answer session chaired by Professor Paul Preston.

It will be preceded at 11am by an illustrated

talk by Harry Owens, titled "Individuals and Impacts of the War" Owens lived and worked in Spain during the Franco years and the transition to democracy and worked with Brigadier Bob Doyle on his memoir, "Brigadista: An Irishman's Fight against Fascism".

In the evening, there will be a meal to which all IBMT members are invited at their own expense. Let the IBMT Secretary know if you would like to attend the dinner (contact details on page 2).

At the 70th anniversary commemoration of the return of the British Battalion, Mary Greening, daughter of Welsh volunteer Edwin Greening, reads extracts from her father's autobiography, describing the arrival at Newhaven, where they were met with a "great welcome from an enormous crowd" after their long train and ferry journey home from Spain. IBMT Life President Jack Jones is seated bottom left. See "Memorial at the homecoming port".



The commemoration and dedication ceremony was filmed by BBC documentary-makers who recorded the final tribute of the day as the gathering moved from the fort to the quayside where the floral tribute was sent on its way out to sea in an emotional farewell.

Full weekend for the Dundee AGM

By Pauline Fraser

The 2008 Trust Annual General Meeting was held in Dundee on 11 October and ably organised by Mike Arnott, IBMT committee member and Secretary of the Dundee Trades Union Council.

Many IBMT members first met in Edinburgh on 9 October to attend a reception in the Scottish Parliament hosted by MSPs Bill Butler and Marilyn Glen. The next day saw the opening of an exhibition on the Dundee Brigaders at Wellgate Library, Dundee, and the launch of an accompanying booklet.

On the following morning, to the skirl of pipes, the IBMT banner led a procession of more than 200 Trust members and labour movement activists into Albert Square for a ceremony to commemorate the 17 volunteers from the city who died defending Spanish democracy out of 70 Dundonians who went to Spain.

A lone woman piper from Kennoway Pipe Band

played the lament, "Flowers of the Forest", as IBMT Life President Jack Jones unveiled a new plaque to Alan Craig, born in Dundee, and re-dedicated the original plaque with the 16 other names. Craig's connection with the city had come to light after the first plaque was unveiled. Fellow Brigadier Jack Edwards laid flowers on the plaques on behalf of the Trust, followed by Craig's family.

Opening a rally in the Steps Theatre, former Fire Brigades Union General Secretary Ken Cameron stressed the internationalist traditions of the Scottish labour movement. He spoke of the forces of racism and fascism rife in Britain today, and how they must be challenged whenever encountered.

On behalf of the Spanish government, the Spanish Consul General in Scotland, Federico Palomero Quez, thanked "all those who gave their blood for the freedom of Spain" and ended by reciting Robbie Burns' "A Man's A Man For A' That" which, he said, showed a similar generosity of spirit.

The AGM was later welcomed to the City Chambers in Dundee by the Lord Provost, John Letford. He spoke of the "ugly face of fascism" and paid tribute to Jack Jones in his "struggle for workers' rights and equality for all".



Elected: Bickerstaffe.

Elected to the IBMT national committee at the AGM was Rodney Bickerstaffe (pictured left)

along with another new member, Duncan Longstaff, from Bristol, who is the son of Brigadier John Longstaff. Gerry Abrahams, Geoff Cowling and Alan Warren stepped down from the committee in Dundee.

President of the UK National Pensioners' Convention since 2001 when he retired as leader of Britain's largest trade union, Unison, Bickerstaffe has been a member of the IBMT since its creation and has spoken at the annual commemoration in London's Jubilee Gardens.

The weekend's events concluded on the following day with the unveiling of a plaque in Montrose at a house in Mall Park Road that became home to 24 Basque children who were given refuge in Scotland after the bombing of Guernica. Basque Children of '37 Association Secretary Natalia Benjamin led the proceedings, and the plaque was unveiled by Tom Borland, son of one of the refugee children, and Ruth Melville, Provost of Montrose.

Copies of "Dundee and the Spanish Civil War" can be purchased for £3 from Dundee TUC, 141 Yarrow Terrace, Dundee, DD2 4DY.

An interview with Jack Jones on Scottish TV can be viewed at: [<http://tinyurl.com/7xzoyu>].

Belfast sculpture in place

By Pauline Fraser

A memorial to the workers of Belfast who supported the anti-fascist struggle in Spain during the Spanish Civil War was unveiled in its permanent position on 8 November by International Brigaders Bob Doyle and Jack Edwards.

The memorial faces out from Writers' Square in Belfast city centre, close to St Anne's Cathedral. The bronze sculpture of a soldier's head on a map of Spain is the work of artist Anto Brennan.

Doyle, speaking at the unveiling, recalled that, despite the Allied victory in 1945, Spain was abandoned to a fascist dictatorship for a further 30 years by the Western democracies.

"Their postwar policies showed they cared little for democracy in Europe, while they expanded their economic empires under the shelter of the

Continued overleaf



Artist Louella Frankel Jones, daughter of Brigadier Sol Frankel, has produced a set of etchings (two pictured above) commemorating the involvement of her father and other volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and the Aid Spain movement. Each limited edition folio set of 10 etchings costs £500 plus p&p, which includes a handmade presentation box. The edition, titled “Un Brigadista” is limited to 20 sets. She is donating one set to the Marx Memorial Library and will give 5 per cent of sale proceeds to the IBMT. Orders can be placed direct with Louella at: [louellafjones@yahoo.co.uk].



father had died while he was in Spain without knowing that he was still alive. Jones later became an active trade unionist and a founder member of the Wales TUC. The WTUC is inviting trade union branches and community organisations to get involved in the campaign for a memorial. Donations should be made payable to Wrexham TUC and sent to WTUC, 6 Leahurst Way, Bradley, Wrexham.

In brief

IBMT members on **Merseyside**, including Dan Payne and Simon Hawkesworth, have set up a network with their own website. This initiative has run parallel to the successful exhibition at the People’s Centre in Liverpool in September last year. The website can be found at [www.mibnet.org.uk].

Visitors to Montreal, Canada, can visit an exhibition dedicated to Canadian International Brigader and medical pioneer **Norman Bethune** and his service in Spain in 1937. “Norman Bethune – Trail of Solidarity – La huella solidaria”, is at the McCord Museum of Canadian History until 31 May 2009. There is more information at: [www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/expositions].

NATO Cold War alliance,” he added. “Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, these rightwing forces have increased in violence and their policies have lost all pretence of defending democracy. Now we are suddenly faced with capitalism’s worst crisis,” he went on. “The last time this happened, in the 1930s, we ended up at war, because we left it all to the ruling classes. This time we have to unite and act to protect ourselves.”

Launched to coincide with the unveiling was the booklet, “No Pasarán: We Intend to show the World”, commissioned by Belfast & District Trades Union Council (BDTUC), with the support of the Community Relations Council, and written by local historian Ciaran Crossey.

BDTUC Secretary Kevin Doherty said that what united the Northern Irish volunteers was their history of trade union struggle. Sectarianism played no part in their decision to go to Spain. The BDTUC was proud to have played its part in supporting them and those at home who raised funds for food and medical aid for Spain.

The BDTUC was also the driving force behind the creation of Belfast’s International Brigade Commemoration Committee, which

organised the erection of the new memorial.

Crossey said that 78 International Brigaders originated in Northern Ireland, of whom approximately 20 died in Spain.

On the day before the unveiling, IBMT member Harry Owens was among the speakers at a lecture in Lurgan, commemorating local volunteer Jim Haughey.

Copies of “No Pasarán” booklet can be obtained from the BDTUC, 45/47 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2FG; £5.

Bob Doyle’s speech in full can be seen at: [www.geocities.com/irelandscw/ibvol-BDBelfasto8.htm].

Plan to honour Tom Jones

Wrexham Trades Union Council (WTUC) is keen to put up a memorial to Tom Jones, a Wrexham miner and International Brigader who was one of the last volunteers to return from Spain.

Jones, of Rhos, was 27 when he told his parents he was going to Colwyn Bay for the weekend. Instead he was soon illegally entering Spain via France and joining the International Brigades. He was appointed Political Commissar of his anti-tank unit, which lost half its men in the Battle of Brunete in July 1937. He was later shot in the foot during fighting around Saragossa and captured in the Aragón retreat of 1938.

Jones was to spend a month in hospital before being transferred to a prison built for 250 but then housing more than 4,500. He was tried in a military court and sentenced to 30 years in prison. He was freed in April 1940 but what should have been a joyful return home was tinged with sadness as both his mother and

According to a report in the *New Zealand Herald*, **New Zealand’s new Prime Minister**, John Key, is the son of an International Brigader. After serving in Spain, George Key married Ruth Lazar, a Jewish refugee who in 1938 had fled her native Austria for Britain, and they emigrated to New Zealand. John Key, who won the general election in New Zealand in November for the centre-right National Party, is the youngest of their three children. Another brother told the newspaper that George had fought in the Spanish Civil War and then with the Royal Artillery in the Second World War.

The Centre de la Mémoire, **Oradour-sur-Glane**, France, has an exhibition on the Spanish Civil War, including material on the International Brigades. The exhibition “La Guerre d’Espagne” runs until 15 May 2009. Oradour-sur-Glane is the village destroyed by the Nazis in June 1944, with the loss of over 640 lives, including several Spanish Republican refugees. It has been preserved as a memorial. For more information, see [www.oradour.org].

Anindya Raychaudhuri of Cardiff University’s Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory gave a talk at the Marx Memorial Library, London, on 24 November titled “**Spanish Civil War and its Welsh Afterlives: Memorialisation as a Political Act**”. He looked at the history and changing attitudes surrounding the establishment of the 18 International Brigade memorials in Wales, showing how they not only recuperated the memory of the war, but also constituted interventions in the politics of contemporary Wales.

Sculptor Frank Casey has created these wax maquettes for a planned memorial to the three International Brigade volunteers from Blantyre. Tom Fleck is pictured with a cap; the other portrait is of Tommy Brannon; there is no surviving image of Willie Fox, though his name was recorded on a memorial to the dead of the Battle of Jarama which was destroyed at the end of the Spanish Civil War.



This photo by Robert Capa shows fellow photographer Gerda Taro (right) with a Spanish Republican soldier. Taro was killed at the Battle of Brunete in July 1937. Their Spanish Civil War photos can be seen at the Barbican Art Gallery, London (see below).



Cornell Capa

● **Until 25 January 2009:** "This Is war! Robert Capa at work" and "Gerda Taro: a retrospective" feature the work of two legendary photographers of the Spanish Civil War; Barbican Art Gallery, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS; more information: 020-7638 4141 or [www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery/event-detail.asp?ID=8029].

● **17 January 2009:** Unveiling of a plaque to the volunteers who served in the ILP (Independent Labour Party) contingent in Spain; Working Class Movement Library, 51 The Crescent, Salford M5 4WX; more information from Chris Hall: 0161-861 7448 or [christoff_hall@yahoo.co.uk].

● **26-31 January 2009:** "From the Calton to Catalonia", a play about three Glasgow men and their involvement in the Spanish Civil War by John Maley and Willy Maley; Ramshorn Theatre, 98 Ingram Street, Glasgow G1 1ES; performances start at 7.30pm; more details from [www.strath.ac.uk/culture/ramshorn] or tel: 0141-548 2542.

● **30 January 2009:** Launch of "Echoes of Spain" booklet about the mosaic of the same name on Portobello Road commemorating the arrival of Republican refugees in West London as well as the local International Brigade volunteers; 6.30pm at the Instituto Español Vicente Cañada Blanch, 317 Portobello Road, London W10 5SZ.

● **18 February 2009:** Seminar by Lewis Mates (University of Newcastle) titled "The Spanish Civil War and the British Left: Political Activism and the Popular Front?"; 6pm; Cañada Blanch Centre, Cowdray House, Portugal Street, London WC2A 2AE; more details: [www.lse.ac.uk/collections/canadaBlanch].

● **21-22 February 2009:** Battle of Jarama commemoration in Morata de Tajuña, including battlefield visit and meal; more details and booking: [seve.montero@gmail.com]; minibus trip to Belchite battlefield on following day; more details and booking: [hillstoo@hotmail.com].

● **3 March 2009:** "Red Nightingales", a talk about Scottish women in the Spanish Civil War by Daniel Gray (author of "Homage to Caledonia: Scotland and the Spanish Civil War"); 7pm at the National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EW; [www.nls.uk/events/index.html].

● **5 March 2009:** "Hard Times and Hard Travellin': The Story of Woody Guthrie" by Will Kaufman; fundraising event for Perthshire International Brigade Memorial Fund; Perth Museum & Art Gallery, George Street, Perth; tickets £5 from [passionariabooks@blueyonder.co.uk] or tel: 01738-449 168 (after 6pm).

● **8 March 2009:** "Madrid Before Hanita", Renoir Cinema, Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AW; 10.30am for 11am; UK première of new film about Jewish volunteers from Palestine in the International Brigades; shown with "The Guernica Children" about the 4,000 Basque children who arrived in Britain in 1937; part of London Socialist Film Coop's 2008/9 season; more information on [www.socialistfilm.blogspot.com].

● **14 March 2009:** Annual Len Crome Memorial Lecture at the Imperial War Museum (Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ) by Francisco Romero: "Killing the Dream: The Spanish Labyrinth Revisited, 1898-1939"; 2.30pm; at 11am Harry Owens talks on "Individuals and Impacts of the War"; an evening meal is also being organised for the lecturers and IBMT members; booking is essential via the IBMT; contact the IBMT Secretary (details on page 2).

● **2 April 2009:** Portsmouth Hispanic Society hosts a talk "The Spanish Civil War – 70 Years On" by Jim Jump (IBMT Newsletter editor) at Fratton Community Centre, Trafalgar Place, Fratton, Portsmouth PO1 5JJ at 7pm; more information available at: [www.spanishportsmouth.org.uk].

● **7 May 2009:** Unveiling of plaque in Fuencarral Cemetery, Madrid, to the British International Brigaders; event to be confirmed; more information from IBMT Secretary (details on page 2).

● **4 July 2009:** Annual commemoration at the International Brigade Memorial, Jubilee Gardens, London SE1; assemble at 12.30pm; followed by lunch at the adjacent Travel Inn and possibly an evening event; more details in our next issue.

● **13-16 July 2009:** "Agonía Republicana: Living the Death of an Era": conference in Dublin organised by Trinity College and the Instituto Cervantes; more information: [www.tcd.ie/Hispanic_Studies/AgoniaConference]

● IBMT Secretary **Marlene Sidaway** wants to know if anyone has copies of the group photos which *The Guardian* took outside the Marx Memorial Library after the meeting in 2001 at which it was decided to form the IBMT. A photo of the Brigaders was taken as well as another photo which included everyone else who was there.

See Marlene's contact details on page 2.

● Keryl Arroyo is trying to find out some information on her grandfather, **José María Arroyo (Tonero)**. He moved to Barry from Spain and married her grandmother in 1925; they lived in Thompson Street. After the Second World War they ran a delicatessen and a boarding house for immigrants boarded there by the local police. He was a Spanish national and olive oil importer who helped bring orphans over from Spain and re-home them in Wales during the civil war. He was once pushed off the platform of Barry station in front of a passing train by a Franco supporter. Fortunately the train was on the other track and he survived with a broken leg; this was documented at Barry police station. Keryl's email is [ker1@btopenworld.com].

● Marian Grimes is looking for any information about her great aunt, **Tomina "Miny" Smith**. She was brought up in Consett, Co Durham, and the family understands that she went to Spain with the International Brigades as a nurse. Marian's email is [Marian.Grimes@ed.ac.uk].

● Chris Birch wants to find out more about **Maurice (or Miles) Carpenter**, who was a working-class left-wing poet in the 1930s, '40s and '50s. He wrote for the YCL magazine *Alive* before the Second World War, published several volumes of poetry and a book called "A Rebel in the Thirties". He gave some literary lectures (perhaps organised by the local CP) at the postwar LCC council estate called South Oxhey near Watford. He was involved in some way with the Spanish Civil War but may not have been in the International Brigades. Chris's email is [chris@chrisbirch.me.uk].

● Steve Williams is writing a biography of Bernard Dix and would like to find out more about a fellow anarchist activist, an International Brigader named **George Haines (or Haynes)**, possibly a member of the CPGB when a Brigader. He lived somewhere in the borough of Greenwich in the early 60s and was at that time involved in anarchist politics. Steve's email is [s.williams@unison.co.uk].

If you do not have an email to reply to queries, contact the IBMT Secretary (details on page 2) and your message will be passed on. Please share your information about Brigaders with the IBMT's researcher, Jim Carmody. Send it to: [jamescarmody@yahoo.co.uk].



Remembering Bob Cooney

By Ivor Pearce

I first got to know Bob Cooney (left) when attending Young Communist League education classes in Birmingham in the 1960s. Bob was a tutor and he used to tell us all about the future communist society when the “wheels of production would be flowing so freely” that there would be enough for all. It was sometimes difficult to understand Bob’s strong Aberdonian accent, but his enthusiasm and our interest overcame that.

Bob had moved to Birmingham to get work in the 1950s, after he had served with the International Brigades in Spain, as a Political Commissar with the British Battalion.

He worked the night-shift in one of the big

motor car factories and on the three nights he wasn’t working he sang in the local folk clubs. Some years ago Aberdeen Folk Club produced a booklet of Bob’s songs and poems—of which a reprint is long overdue. Perhaps someone who reads this piece could follow this up.

Perhaps, also, a book or pamphlet could be researched and written about Bob’s life. He died in Aberdeen some years ago, having been a communist activist all his life. A block of flats in Aberdeen is named after him.

Editor’s note: Bob Cooney was born in 1907. He studied at the Lenin School, Moscow, in 1931/2 before arriving in Spain in September 1937. He was repatriated with the rest of the surviving British volunteers in December 1938.

Blacklisted by building employers, he worked in Birmingham after the war and died in 1984. His poem “Hasta la Vista, Madrid!” appears in the 2006 anthology “Poems from Spain: British and Irish International Brigaders on the Spanish Civil War”; available from the IBMT for £12 including p&p).

LETTERS

Researching Guernica

I am researching a significant moment of the Whitechapel Gallery’s history—the presentation of Pablo Picasso’s seminal work *Guernica* in 1939.

The painting *Guernica* is Picasso’s impassioned response to the Luftwaffe bombing of the Basque country, and it was exhibited in London with the intention of raising money for and consciousness about the Spanish Civil War. It was the only time this great masterpiece has been shown in Britain and the exhibition received more than 15,000 visitors in the first week alone.

The exhibition was organised by the East London Aid Spain Committee of the Stepney Trades Council, whose agenda was to raise awareness of and funds for the war in Spain. The exhibition was opened by Clement Attlee, local MP and the leader of the Labour Party, flanked by International Brigaders.

Unfortunately there is not much information about the *Guernica* exhibition in our archives and we are very keen to learn more about it. If anyone has more information, I would be very interested to hear from them.

Cassandra Needham

[cassandraneedham@whitechapel.org]

Exhibitions Organiser

Whitechapel Gallery

80-82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Unfair to Orwell

There are many discrepancies in the claims made in “Time to stop paying homage to Orwell’s version of events” (autumn 2008 issue), but the dress issue is the most important. Jim Jump quotes from “Homage to Catalonia” that in the egalitarian fervour that



Picasso’s *Guernica* was exhibited in London in 1939. Information about the event is now being sought. See the first letter.

lasted until May 1937 “practically everyone wore rough working class clothes, or blue overalls or some variant of the militia uniform” and goes on to describe Orwell as “an unreliable witness”. But Orwell also gives a detailed description of how dress codes changed: “Everyone who has made two visits, at intervals of months, to Barcelona during the war has remarked upon the extraordinary changes that took place in it. And curiously enough, whether they went there first in August and again in January, or, like myself, first in December and again in April, the thing they said was always the same: that the revolutionary atmosphere had vanished... The change in the aspect of the crowds was startling. The militia uniform and the blue overalls had almost disappeared.”

Other inferences are equally wrong when you check what is written in the book. It is said that Orwell implied that Stalin had the desire for “the creation of a communist state”. Nowhere in “Homage to Catalonia” does he

make this assertion: he only mentions Stalin twice, once about a pamphlet written by Stalin and then he refers to Stalin’s foreign policy, which he describes as opportunistic.

Equally misleading is the claim that the book’s message is that the treachery of the communists weakened the Republic, leading to its defeat. This does not appear in the book.

Orwell clearly states: The outcome of the Spanish war was settled in London, Paris, Rome, Berlin—at any rate not in Spain.” He goes on to say: “The Trotskyist thesis that the war could have been won if the revolution had not been sabotaged was probably false.”

At the same time he says: “As to the Russians, their motives in the Spanish war are completely inscrutable”. He then proceeds to list possible motives, none of which includes the creation of a communist state in Spain.

I think the article is unfair to Orwell, and recommend you read the book for yourselves.

Lyn Hurst

lynjoehill@aol.com



On the web

There are at least two International Brigaders who now have websites telling the story of their participation in the Spanish Civil War. They are David Crook (top), born in London in 1910, pictured here in Madrid in 1937. From 1948 until his death in 2000 he lived in China. See [www.davidcrook.net]. The life of Conrad Singer (1912-2006), pictured below in Teruel in the winter of 1937/38, can be viewed at [www.conradsinger.info].



Jim Jump replies:

Orwell arrived in Barcelona in December 1936 and clearly states in "Homage to Catalonia" that "practically everyone wore rough working class clothes, or blue overalls or some variant of the militia uniform". No doubt dress patterns changed, but it is impossible to reconcile that statement with the footage filmed just a few weeks before his arrival showing tens of thousands of people in the city, most of them conventionally attired.

My article made it clear that it was challenging not just some of Orwell's observations in "Homage to Catalonia" but also "the lesson drawn from it by many readers... that Stalin's allies in Spain were engaged in a blatant bid for power". As an example, look no further than the introduction to Penguin's latest edition of the book in "Orwell in Spain" where Christopher Hitchens asserts that Orwell "became convinced that he had been the spectator of a full-blown Stalinist putsch".

Appeal for Fyrth book

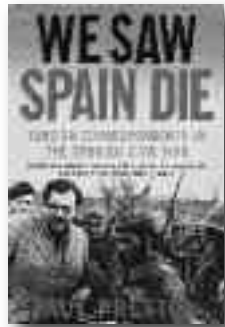
I am taking the liberty of asking readers to consider the possibility of donating the book "The Signal was Spain" by Jim Fyrth, to the Argentine Library of the Spanish Civil War of which I am the Director. It has 1,800 books in 30 languages as well as other documents but we have no funds to buy books; that is why we ask for donations and gifts.

Prof. Juan Carlos Cesarini
Avenida Rivadavia 7589, Piso 10,
C 1406 GMF, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Website: [www.lanuscipio.com.ar/gce/index.htm]

They fought to get the story out

"We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War" by Paul Preston; £20 (Constable & Robinson, London, 2008)

Reviewed by Angela Jackson



Paul Preston, highly regarded as the author of many outstanding books about the Spanish Civil War, now brings his encyclopedic knowledge of the subject to bear on a different aspect of the conflict: the foreign correspondents who risked their lives

and sometimes damage to their professional careers to report on what they saw in Spain. With his customary skill, Preston weaves together the historical context, the work of the correspondents, and the human stories behind the news.

Determined detective work has unearthed new material that enriches the content in these 12, wide-ranging chapters. The great tragedies of the war are conveyed through the wonderful writings of correspondents such as Jay Allen, who reported on the massacre at Badajoz, and George Steer, who shocked the world with his description of the bombing of Guernica. There is political intrigue aplenty as, for example, in chapters dedicated to evaluating the evidence in the case of the disappearance of José Robles and on the role of Mikhail Koltsov in Spain.

Especially moving are the accounts of the struggles the correspondents faced to get their stories out. After overcoming the problems of censorship in Spain, they frequently had to convince their own newspaper editors that the reports of Nationalist bombings and reprisals were not wild exaggerations but unpalatable truths. The last communication from Louis Delaprée before he was killed on the flight from Spain to Paris was an indictment of the policy being implemented by his employer, *Paris-Soir*. Half Delaprée's reports had not been published, thereby leaving room for extensive coverage on the love life of Edward VIII and the abdication crisis in England. "You have made me work for the wastepaper basket," he wrote, "I shall send nothing more... The massacre of a hundred Spanish children is less interesting than a sigh from Mrs Simpson."

Preston's chapter on the rebel zone reveals the heavy restrictions imposed by Franco to prevent correspondents from seeing what was happening for themselves, leaving them feeling like "a bunch of schoolgirls under the guidance of a schoolmistress". Not only was censorship much more tightly enforced by the Nationalists than by the Loyalists, but reporters also suffered a signifi-

cantly greater degree of mistreatment if they stepped out of line. One of the great strengths inherent in Preston's writing is his ability to portray the characters in historic dramas with wit and vitality. Idiosyncratic personalities leap from the pages to engage the reader. Hugh Slater's white Rolls Royce is "dreadfully noticeable on the battlefield". Ernest Hemingway treats all and sundry with "splurging magnificence" at the Hotel Florida. Thwarted in love, the dissolute Basil Murray acquires an ape. González Aguilera, a Nationalist press officer, believes the war was caused by the introduction of modern sewers for the masses.

But it is the humanity of the correspondents, both men and women, that gives the book its warmth. Most were deeply affected by their experiences in Spain, from Martha Gelhorn, who would have no truck with what she called "all that objectivity shit", to Arthur Koestler who wrote: "Anyone who has lived through the hell of Madrid with his eyes, his nerves, his heart and his stomach – and then pretends to be objective, is a liar." However, as Paul Preston demonstrates, it was possible to combine high professional standards with a passionate belief in the Spanish Republic, though this belief brought much sadness in its wake. "We left our hearts there," wrote Herbert Matthews.

Preston has written a book that will be valuable not only as a key work of reference, but also as a moving testimony to those who had the courage to go under fire and bring Spain's story to the world.

Angela Jackson, a British historian and author of several books on the civil war, lives in Catalonia where she is president of the historical association, No Jubilem la Memòria; see [www.nojubilemlamemoria.cat].

From a British perspective

"The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain" by Tom Buchanan; £16.95 (Sussex Academic Press, Eastbourne, 2007)

Reviewed by Richard Baxell



This latest publication from the Oxford historian Tom Buchanan is a collection of 10 essays on the impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain and British culture. Whilst not all the chapters are new, all are based on original primary research.

A central theme of the book is the varied and changing nature of British perceptions of Spain. Buchanan outlines in the opening chapter how contemporary images of "alien" Spain were often founded on clichés and stereotypes. As he states, "the opening phase of the civil war reinforced prejudices against the Spanish as violent and

Continued overleaf



IBMT members who can read Spanish might be interested to know that a new history of Spanish Republican exiles in Britain was published last year in Spain. Covering the period from the start of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 to the death of Franco in 1975 and the democratic elections held two years later, Luis Montferrer Catalán's comprehensive study charts how the exiles organised themselves and continued the anti-Franco fight during the dark years of the dictatorship. "Odisea en Albión: Los Republicanos Españoles Exiliados en Gran Bretaña (1936-1977)" is published by Ediciones de la Torre (Madrid, 2008).



"General Franco's International Brigades" by Christopher Othen, £12.99 (Reportage Press, London 2008) tells the interesting story of the foreign volunteers who fought against the Spanish Republic in the civil war of 1936-39. They comprised mainly a handful of fascists and far-right sympathisers from Britain and other countries, with only Ireland sending a sizeable contingent. Othen dubiously inflates their numbers to 90,000 by including the regular troops and airmen sent by Hitler and Mussolini and the Moroccans whom Franco recruited into his army – regarded by most people to have been foreign mercenaries.

From previous page

undisciplined, and did much to obscure the legitimacy of the elected government's cause... the idea that the conflict was typically Spanish played into the hands of a British government which sought to divorce it from the wider political crisis within Europe." Thus many British conservatives claimed to take little interest in the civil war, whilst remaining, of course, "anti-Red".

To others across the political spectrum, the civil war was always recognised as an event of seismic significance. Individuals in Britain and Ireland involved themselves deeply in Spain's cause, including more than 500 men and women who died in Spain. Several chapters examine the role of individuals, including George Steer, *The Times* correspondent whose report of the Guernica bombing is arguably the most influential piece to appear in a British newspaper during the civil war. Another, on the *News Chronicle* journalist John Langdon-Davies, is a welcome addition.

Other individuals to warrant their own chapters include Bob Smillie, the Independent Labour Party volunteer who, Buchanan asserts, was not in fact murdered by Stalinists, but died of appendicitis in a Republican gaol. In a chapter on the artist Felicia Browne, who was killed in Spain in late August 1936, Buchanan challenges the conventional wisdom that, by volunteering in Spain, Browne made a significant choice between politics and art. Continuing with the artistic theme, Buchanan argues in a later chapter on the impact on British artists that their role has been underestimated.

Buchanan's chapter on British Medical Aid is, perhaps, his most provocative. To Buchanan, the story is "one of intrigue and of intense personal and political infighting". Here he sets himself directly against Jim Fyrth's work and, in particular, Angela Jackson's recent book on the role of British women. Whilst Buchanan is no doubt right to suggest that there were major differences of opinion between some of the personalities working in the British Medical Aid unit, it would be pretty surprising if there weren't. Lacking sleep, working under horrific pressure and, as Archie Cochrane admitted, the medical workers were "divided by age, sex, class, intelligence, political allegiance and mental stability".

Buchanan's examination of the impact on volunteers' families is another welcome inclusion. As Buchanan states, the situation was obviously

more difficult where the volunteer was married and worse still if they had children. Many supported their spouses' decision to go to Spain but it is hardly surprising that some found it difficult, especially the parents of young volunteers killed in Spain.

The book concludes with two chapters analysing aspects of post civil war Spain. The first examines British perceptions of Francoist Spain and the advent of mass tourism from the end of the Second World War, until Franco's death in 1975. Whilst many Brigaders refused to travel to Spain whilst Franco's regime continued, Buchanan notes the hypocrisy amongst Labour leaders who criticised Franco whilst taking family holidays in Spain. The concluding chapter examines the war's "tangible, if diminishing role within British politics" after 1939. As Buchanan acknowledges, "after seven decades their heroism had become the essential reference point for understanding the resonance of the Civil War – and, above all of the International Brigades – within British politics".

Harrowing and uplifting

"Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War" edited by Jim Fyrth with Sally Alexander; £14.99 (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 2008 reprint of 1991 original)

Reviewed by Angela Jackson



Drawing on a variety of written sources and recordings, the voices of just under 80 English-speaking women who went to Spain during the civil war are included in this anthology, which is a paperback reprint of a 1991 hardback original. Most

are from Britain and America, but Australia and New Zealand are well represented, along with a photographer from South Africa, Vera Elken, and one Spanish student who trained as a nurse with the British, Aurora Fernández. The vast majority were working within the Republic, helping the Loyalist cause; only three contributions are from

women who went to Spain in support of General Franco and the Rebels.

An introduction by Sally Alexander highlights some of the main issues of the 1930s, especially those affecting women, and the concerns that motivated these particular individuals to go to Spain. The majority went as volunteers with the medical services or with groups such as the Quakers to carry out refugee work. Others were reporting on the situation at first hand for newspapers, parliamentary committees or fund-raising meetings.

Jim Fyrth's preface draws on earlier research carried out for his book, "The Signal was Spain: The Aid Spain Movement in Britain 1936-39" (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1986), and gives the organisational background of groups such as the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief and the Spanish Medical Aid Committee, placing their work within the context of the "non intervention" policy which was to have such a disastrous outcome for the legally elected Spanish Republican government.

The texts selected for this book have been arranged into seven different themes which help the reader navigate the wide subject of the women's experiences of war in Spain. One subject that emerges from this diverse collection of voices is that of attitudes towards women, and to the roles they played in the war. From the Australian writer, Mary Low, we learn of the early days of women's mobilisation to fight at the front and the explanation for their withdrawal to the rear-guard after the first few weeks. Nobody questioned their courage or capabilities but, apparently, the heroic chivalry of the Spaniards put everyone in danger. "If one of you girls gets caught by the enemy," explained a French soldier, "fifteen men immediately risk their lives to avenge her." Another instance illustrating the attitudes of men towards traditional women's roles is given by Lini de Vries, an American nurse who, like Nan Green from England, was one of the few women with children who volunteered for Spain. When in charge of the hospital at Castillejo, she supported the young Spanish girls working there who were keen to learn to read and write. However, as the casualties increased, their heavy workload meant they were too tired to study. Lini decided to look for volunteers for floor scrubbing, dishwashing and potato peeling amongst the patients with non-serious wounds.

The men displayed an overwhelming reluctance to undertake this “women’s work”, despite their political beliefs in equality. Only Lini’s appeal to the soldiers of the Lincoln Battalion saved the day. When they agreed to help with the chores, others followed their lead.

The testimonies of the nurses are both harrowing and uplifting as these women take on tremendous responsibilities in triage and running hospital wards, in some cases meeting and overcoming challenges despite their youth and inexperience. Thoughtful retrospective memoirs contrast with the immediacy of contemporary diaries, such as that of Una Wilson. “My diary speaks the cold truth,” she writes, “what’s the use of hiding the dreadful experiences we have, you must take the good with the bad.” After hours on duty treating terrible wounds, she finds a dead man in her bed. When the corpse is removed, she turns over the blood-stained mattress to snatch a few hours sleep before being awakened by falling bombs. On the edge of collapse, she gratefully records the doctors’ concern for her, and her admiration for one of the surgeons turns to love. She is heart-broken when the time comes for her to leave Spain and he returns to the front. A number of nurses married doctors or International Brigaders they met in Spain, but usually this aspect of the war is mentioned very little in their testimonies. Perhaps they feared that they would appear frivolous speaking of love amidst so much tragedy.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the lines, Florence Farmborough is broadcasting to English speaking countries. Her experiences as a nurse in the Russian revolution left her with a deep fear of communism. In Spain, all her rhetoric is in praise of the Nationalist cause and her words are dedicated “with pride and humility to Generalissimo Franco”, seeing him as the beacon guiding the Spanish people to their highest goal. She explains how the patriotic duty of Nationalist women is changing to encompass activities not only within the home, but also in the public sphere where, she says, women are combining prayers to the Virgin Mary with philanthropic services, such as knitting for the “boys at the front” and distributing food to the poor.

The writer Dorothy Parker is one of the women included in the section Afterwords. She was greatly affected by her experiences in Spain, believing that it was there that she “became a member of the human race”. Whilst viewing the defeat of the Loyalists with anger towards those who refused them the aid to which they were entitled, she nevertheless maintains a bitter sort of optimism. In Spain, she writes, “I met the best people anyone ever knew. I had never seen such people before. But I shall see their like again. And so shall all of us. If I did not believe that, I think I should stand up in front of my mirror and take a long, deep, swinging slash at my throat.”

Since “Women’s Voices” first appeared in hardback in 1991, further memoirs written by women have been published and more research has been done on the subject of English-speaking women and the war in Spain, but the opportunity



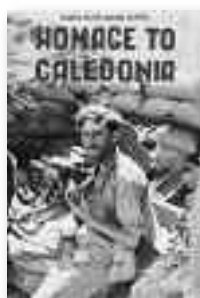
Historian Daniel Gray (standing), who has written a new history of Scotland and the Spanish Civil War (see review below), speaks in Dundee at a public meeting during the weekend of the IBMT’s Annual General Meeting in the city last October. With him are (from left) former Fire Brigades Union General Secretary Ken Cameron and Mike Arnott of the IBMT and (right) Federico Palomero Quez, the Spanish Consul General in Scotland.

has been missed to update the list of books for further reading. It would have also been helpful to include the exact sources of each extract with the text, rather than have them grouped together without proper references in the acknowledgements at the end. Sadly, the photographs in the original version have been omitted but, when the gems to be found within this collection are taken into consideration, these small grumbles seem relatively unimportant. The voices of these women deserve to be more widely heard.

Inspirational Scots

“Homage to Caledonia; Scotland and the Spanish Civil War” by Daniel Gray with a foreword by Tony Benn; £16.99 (Luath Press, Edinburgh, 2008)

Reviewed by Mike Arnott



Anyone who has met Daniel Gray, or heard him speak on the subject of the Spanish Civil War, can have no doubt as to his enthusiasm for his subject matter. Combine this with his job as a curator in the National Libraries of Scotland, with access to its

unique collections of civil war related material, and the signs augured well for a fine publication. How those expectations have been surpassed.

For those of you who identify with the struggle of the International Brigaders but find it hard to explain your passion to others, simply give them this book. For those whose insight begins and ends with Land and Freedom, this is the book for you.

Much of the testimony in this important book is new, at least to this reviewer, as are many of the pictures, and the source material reaches far beyond the catacombs of George IV Bridge: the archive of the Marx Memorial Library is to the fore, alongside transcribed insights both from

the friends and families of deceased Brigaders and from Scotland’s last surviving veteran, Steve Fullarton, whom Daniel spent many hours talking with, right up until his death last February.

In this, it is less a history book than a social commentary, using the words of those involved to paint a picture of the time; an age of hope, of certainties and of belief in the value of collectivisation and struggle. The social and political context of the 30s is well delineated, allowing us a deeper understanding of not only the motivations of those who went to Spain, but of the community roots here in Scotland whence sprang the phenomenal humanitarian aid movement.

Annie Murray’s experiences as a front line nurse are acute and moving. Hugh Sloan and John Dunlop describe the horror of battle and its aftermath with sometimes chilling detachment, and I swear I could almost hear Barney Shields shout a defiant challenge as he held out alone in Belchite’s cathedral bell tower, still firing as he watched the fascist advance encircle him.

But this is no hagiography. The military disasters, leadership tensions and individual failings are all catalogued here. Instances of desertion, drunkenness and indiscipline, though few, are acknowledged and the wider tensions in Spain are explored, with chapters on Independent Labour Party member Bob Smillie’s death in a Republican prison and on the role of Glasgow anarchist broadcaster Ethel MacDonald.

What is most impressive about this book is the way in which the different characters involved carry the reader along with them. From its pages, the voices of the ordinary Scots who volunteered to fight fascism ring out loud and clear. Forged in austerity, on hunger marches and in street battles with the Blackshirts, the honesty and sincerity of their witness resonates across the years. These are not the dupes of Moscow or the Stalinist dogmatists portrayed by lazier historians or those with an axe to grind. These are humane, often funny, free-willed but disciplined individuals, full of life and optimism and driven by a desire to defeat fascism. In no other book will you feel yourself closer to them, or more inspired.



Simon Green

Penny steals the show

International Brigade nurse Penny Feiwei (right) was the guest of honour at a celebration of the role of women in the Spanish Civil War at TUC headquarters in London on 28 October – the exact anniversary of La Pasionaria’s memorable farewell address to the International Brigades. The audience gave her a standing ovation. Pictured with Penny are IBMT Life President Jack Jones and Lola Sergueyeva, granddaughter of La Pasionaria (Dolores Ibárruri).

Over 300 people at the “Viva La Pasionaria” event organised by Philosophy Football in association with the TUC were entertained by modern folk star Eliza Carthy, ska singer Rhoda Dakar and poet Jackie Kay.

Among the speakers was Sally Alexander, co-editor with Jim Fyrth of “Women’s Voices from the Spanish Civil War”, who paid tribute to the extraordinary women she had interviewed (see page 10).

More photos can be seen at: [<http://flickr.com/photos/eventful/sets/72157608478152696>]. Listen to a BBC Radio 4 Woman’s Hour interview with Penny at: [www.bbc.co.uk/1/player/episode/boof303f/Womans_Hour_31102008].

‘You are legend’ says Manchester concert

By Dolores Long

On Saturday 8 November, the IBMT staged an evening of poetry, music and prose in Manchester. Called “You are Legend”, a quote from the farewell speech made by Dolores Ibárruri to the International Brigaders, the concert at the Mechanics Institute was a moving commemoration of the withdrawal of the volunteers from Spain 70 years ago.

Poems and extracts written by International Brigaders and nurses commemorating their thoughts and feelings about leaving Spain in 1938 were read by local poets and performers. The Manchester poet Jackie Kay performed several of her own poems, including one specially written for the event. Mike Wild sang a song he had written, “Our Open Eyes Could See No Other Way”, and the Maddonas sang a selection of Spanish songs.

The wonderful Irish/Glasgow band The Wakes gave a superb performance of songs from and about the Spanish Civil War, including a moving tribute, “These Hands”, to the Scottish Brigader James Maley. The concert ended with actor Maxine Peake reading La Pasionaria’s farewell speech to the Brigaders, including the quotation “You are history, you are legend”.

Thanks must go to everyone who made the evening such a success.



For the London celebration of women in the Spanish Civil War (see above), organisers Philosophy Football produced a t-shirt (left) dedicated to Dolores Ibárruri, La Pasionaria, one of the great leaders of Republican Spain. It features one of her famous quotations in Spanish: “It is better to die on your feet than live on your knees.” The t-shirt costs £19.99 and is available in various sizes (including a small fit for women) from [www.philosophyfootball.com] or call 020-8802 3499 for phone orders.



The IBMT has produced a metal badge replica (left) of the Tom Mann Centuria banner carried by some of the first British volunteers to arrive in Spain in 1936. It costs £5 plus £1 p&p from IBMT Treasurer Mike Anderson (details on page 2).

New system for collecting subs

By Mary Greening, IBMT Membership Secretary

The membership of the IBMT has grown in recent years and it has been difficult to keep pace with this. In order to streamline the system and make it more efficient, several changes are being implemented and will start in January 2009.

Subscriptions will be collected in January of each year and will run for the calendar year. This means that subscriptions are now due.

If you currently pay by standing order, you will be credited as paid up from January even if the standing order is set up for payment later in the year. But please check that your bank has been paying your standing order as many banks have not been doing so.

It has been agreed that a direct debit system will be introduced in 2010. If you do not have an existing standing order in place then please pay by cheque or postal order for 2009. The direct debit system will replace the standing order system, but not until next year.

The membership categories are:

- Honorary (free)
- Standard (£15)
- Concessionary (£7.50)
- Household (£20)
- Affiliate (variable).

Honorary membership is conferred on all Brigaders, their partners and widow/ers.

“Subscriptions will be collected in January of each year and will run for the calendar year. This means that subscriptions are now due.”

Household is a new category and applies to members living in the same house. For example more than one person living at the same address could avail themselves of this new category. There would be one Newsletter mailed to that address.

Could all members please complete the membership form included with this Newsletter. This is to make sure that we have everybody’s correct contact details including postcodes to enter on our new database. If you joined at or after the 2008 Annual General Meeting your membership will be rolled over to 2009.

If you are a taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid section of the form. This enables the IBMT Treasurer to claim money from the Revenue.

Members who fail to pay their subscription will be deemed to have lapsed and will no longer receive the Newsletter.

If you have any queries about your membership status or wish to discuss your subscription then please contact me as soon as possible.

Mary Greening’s contact details are on page 2.