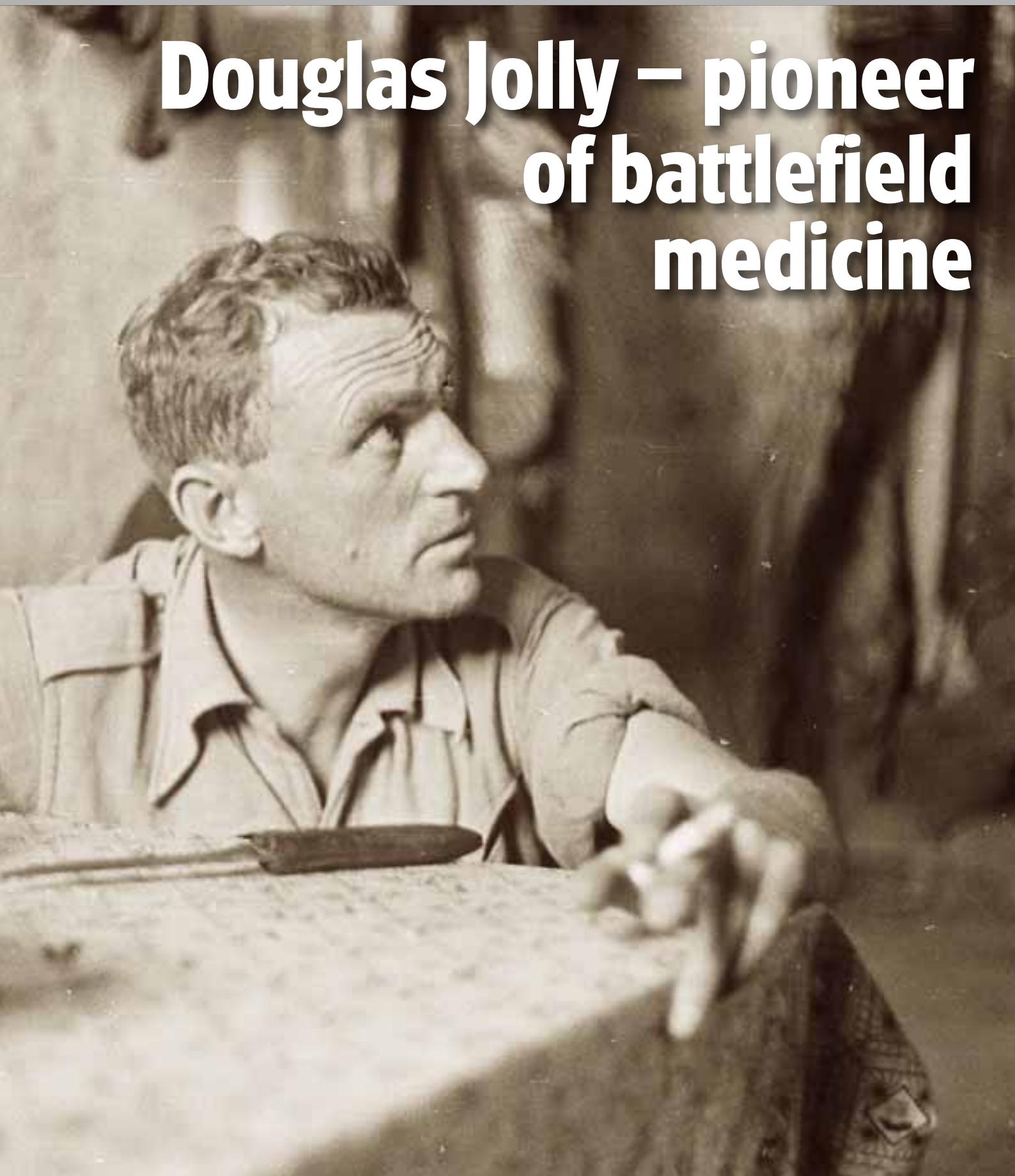




# **¡NO PASARÁN!**

International Brigade Memorial Trust ● 2-2020 ● £5

## **Douglas Jolly – pioneer of battlefield medicine**





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▲ Douglas Jolly, New Zealand surgeon who served in the International Brigades. See page 6.

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**INTERNATIONALISM:** Representatives of International Brigade groups from multiple countries, including Canada, Italy, Britain and the US.

## Hundreds of supporters march to commemorate the Battle of Jarama

On 22 February almost a thousand people gathered in the village of La Boyeriza, a few kilometres outside of Madrid, for the annual Jarama anniversary march organised by the IBMT's sister organisation, the Asociación de Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales (AABI).

Most of the gathering was Spanish, among them a significant number of young people, but there were also close to 100 international supporters in attendance, including a contingent of IBMT members from Britain.

On the march, AABI member Miguel Ángel García provided a historical outline of the Battle of Jarama, where the Republican Army and the International

Brigades desperately resisted the full might of Franco's forces. Marchers listened to a speech from 98-year-old veteran communist Nicolás Berzal, sang 'Jarama Valley' and placed wreaths commemorating the International Brigades and all other anti-fascist fighters.

The march concluded in San Martín de la Vega, where the city council presented a tribute to the combatants who fought or died in battle. Among them was a dedication to Virgilio Fernández, a Spanish Republican who served as a medic alongside the Dabrowski Battalion and who died last December at the age of 100. His widow Estela Cordero was in attendance.

► Supporters marched from the village of La Boyeriza, outside Madrid, near the site of the Battle of Jarama, to the town of San Martín de la Vega.



## The 2020 IBMT raffle

Readers in the UK will find two books of IBMT raffle tickets (10 tickets per book at £1 per ticket) enclosed with their copy of *iNo Pasarán!*.

We hope everyone will either buy the tickets or sell them on to family and friends.

The IBMT 2020 No Pasarán Raffle offers a first prize of £500 in cash.

The second prize is half a case of glorious Spanish wines, plus many other prizes for runners-up.

The draw will take place on Saturday 10 October 2020, during the IBMT's Annual General Meeting weekend, at La Tavernetta, Civic Centre Road, Southampton SO14 7FJ.

Return all completed stubs and cheques, payable to the IBMT, to: IBMT, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU. Note that each ticket purchaser's telephone number is all that is needed on each stub.

When returning tickets and

money, please also give your own name and phone number.

If you would like additional raffle ticket books, contact the IBMT (admin@international-brigades.org.uk or 020 7253 8748).

Please return any unwanted or unsold tickets to the above address so that they can be sold to others.

Proceeds from the raffle will help fund our vital educational and commemorative work, so please support us by buying and selling as many tickets as possible. Good luck!

## Manchester salutes Jarama dead

About 100 people met at Manchester Central Library for the city's annual Jarama commemoration on Sunday 16 February.

The gathering took place in front of the carved wooden memorial dedicated to the International Brigaders from the North West.

The commemoration included readings about Manchester volunteer Bernard McKenna and extracts from letters by medical staff in Spain. Local poet Dave Pullar wrote and recited two poems for the event and also read poems by Brigaders James Jump and Bob Cooney.

Nick Druce, grandson of

Brigader Benny Goldman, provided a moving account of his visit to Jarama. Finally, Bolton Socialist Choir sang a selection of Spanish songs.

Young Spaniards from Manchester and a representative of the Communist Party of Spain Exterior branch attended and contributed to the event.



▲ IBMT North West Coordinator Dolores Long pictured next to the Manchester International Brigade memorial.

◀◀ Dolores Long addresses the gathering.

◀ Young Spaniards living in Manchester honoured the legacy of the anti-fascist volunteers and the Spanish Republic.



Clockwise from top left (including pictures on facing page): Jeff Robert, Alison Skilbeck, flamenco guitarist Marcos, attendees in the Holywell Music Room, Brenda and Manus O'Riordan and folk duo Na-Mara.



Undergraduate students at Nottingham Trent University visited the International Brigade memorial on the wall of County Hall in Nottingham on 27 February as part of their studies covering memory and the Spanish Civil War.

IBMT Chair Jim Jump told the group how the information board in front of the memorial was removed when the Conservatives won control of the county council in 2009. It was reinstalled when Labour returned to power four years later.

The students heard from Jump and course tutor Heather Watkins how remembrance of the civil war can still stir controversy, especially as most of the International Brigade volunteers were communists at the time. In Spain the history of the war and the Franco dictatorship remains a bitterly contested political battleground.

The memorial in Nottingham (pictured above the students) is a dark bronze relief of a bombed-out Spanish town by sculptor Michael Johnson. Unveiled in 1993, it names five Nottinghamshire men killed in Spain.

The information board (hidden behind the students) was added later and lists all the volunteers from the county, with background information on the Spanish Civil War.

# Notts students learn about Spain's memory wars



Nottingham Trent University undergraduate students visit the International Brigade memorial outside County Hall, Nottingham.

# Comrades rally and sing in Oxford



On 8 March dozens of supporters gathered at Holywell Music Rooms in Oxford for a celebration in words and music of the Oxfordshire volunteers who fought Franco in the Spanish Civil War.

The event, titled 'Comrades Come Rally', involved numerous actors and musicians reading and performing Spanish Civil War-themed works. Actors Alison Skilbeck, Tim Hardy and Jeff Robert read poems from Cecil Day-Lewis and others and letters and battle memoirs of the volunteers John Cornford, Charlotte Haldane, Frank McCasker, John Dunlop, Thora Silverthorne, Kenneth Sinclair-Loutit, Jason Gurney, Rev Robert Hilliard, Gilbert Taylor, Jack Jones, Nan Green, Jim Brewer and Bob Cooney.

The folk duo Na-Mara played their songs 'The Bite', 'Only for Three Months' and 'English Penny' and took the lead on a collective variation of 'Jarama Valley' before the intermission.

Brenda O'Riordan, singer and daughter of Irish Brigader Michael

O'Riordan, performed 'La Carmagnole' and 'The Minstrel Boy'. Brother of Brenda and IBMT Ireland Secretary Manus O'Riordan followed with 'Song for Charlie Donnelly' and 'If My Voice on Earth Should Die' before collaborating with sister Brenda on a duet of 'Viva la Quinta Brigada' – a song about the Irishmen who fought in Spain against Franco. Attendees were also treated to a medley of traditional Spanish *palos* from professional flamenco guitarist Marco.

The evening concluded with a recital of La Pasionaria's iconic farewell speech to the International Brigades, read in both English and Spanish by Alison Skilbeck, and then all attendees joined in for a rendition of 'The Internationale'.

Marlene Sidaway, President of the IBMT, thanked the Oxford International Brigade Memorial Committee for organising the fundraiser on behalf of the Trust.

A video of the event can be seen on the IBMT website: [www.international-brigades.org.uk/content/ibmt-videos](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/content/ibmt-videos)

**CIVIL WAR SURGERY**



# **THE NEW ZEALAND DOCTOR WHO REVOLUTIONISED BATTLEFIELD SURGERY**





**FILIACION**

Estatura \_\_\_\_\_

Pelo \_\_\_\_\_

Ojos \_\_\_\_\_

Cara \_\_\_\_\_

Barba \_\_\_\_\_

Notiz \_\_\_\_\_

**SEÑALES ARTICULARES**

(Firma del interesado)

Fecha de nacimiento \_\_\_\_\_

Lugar de nacimiento \_\_\_\_\_

Nacionalidad *Anglais*

Profesión *Chirurgien*

Estado civil *Soltero*

**DOMICILIO:** *Pueblo (Cromwell)*

*Paris Nueva Zelanda*

Calle *Cromwell* num. \_\_\_\_\_

Partido Político *Antifascista*

Fecha de entrada en las B. I. *3. XII. 1936*

Fecha de entrega de la libreta *10. XI. 1937*

— 2 —

◀◀ Douglas Jolly (left) and South African-born volunteer Peter de Sarigny, trained by Jolly as his anaesthetist, Madrid 1936.

◀ Page from Jolly's Spanish Republican Army passbook.

International Brigades headquarters at Albacete bearing a personal letter of introduction from British Communist Party head Harry Pollitt: 'This comrade is not a member of the Communist Party, but is a very warm sympathiser with the cause of the Spanish Government, and has been highly recommended to us.'

Soon afterwards Jolly was spotted at a café by Tom Wintringham, later the commander of the International Brigades' British Battalion. The New Zealander appeared to be 'thoroughly lost, having come out on his own from London with a minimum of papers and less knowledge of foreign languages than even an Englishman of his sort can usually muster.' The two men soon became friends, and Wintringham later came to appreciate Jolly's surgical skills. 'I have to thank him (and a clean bullet) for much the neatest among my scars.'

That winter the Madrid front was under heavy attack from Nationalist forces trying to cut its only road link to Valencia. With the rank of lieutenant, and heading a surgical unit comprising seven nationalities, Jolly established a mobile field hospital just behind the front line. For the next two years his team was sent wherever the fighting was most intense, 'to Andalusia in the South with its semi-tropical heat, away to Upper Aragon with its snow-covered mountains and finally taking part in the government offensive which involved the crossing of the Ebro from Catalonia into Aragon in July 1938.'

Jolly deeply admired the local people he met, such as 'the peasants with their strange carts drawn by long strings of mules and donkeys,' who brought food and firewood that was often as vital to his work as anaesthetic. 'It was amazing also to see the people in the towns and cities with their over-riding contempt for falling bombs. In the early days they scorned to take shelter. One has to go to Spain's national sport in the bull-ring to find the analogy of this seeming indifference to death.'

One of his nurses, Hungarian-born Anna-Marie Basch, found that Jolly 'did not belong to any political party, he was simply a doctor who was anti-fascist through extraordinarily high ethics. That is what brought him to Spain.' Those ethics compelled him to treat his patients without regard for their military affiliation. He operated on Franco's Moorish troops in Madrid,

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

Many years after working as a nurse with Spain's Republican Army medical services, Aurora Fernández clearly recalled the outstanding qualities of a young surgeon from New Zealand. Doug Jolly, she said, 'does honour to his name – a man more "jolly" it would be difficult to find. I remember once, waiting an order to leave for the front, all of us nervous and tense, fearful that planes would arrive... Dr Jolly began to tell jokes and seeing that the Spaniards did not understand him, began to dance and sing in the style of the Maoris and he inspired the group of spectators and all were smiling and tension went down.'

Today, with much of the world locked down to control the spread of a deadly virus, it is timely to recall the work of this dedicated physician, who developed innovative techniques for

treating trauma injuries during the civil war, and never wavered from the principles of Christian socialism which first sent him to Spain.

### Studying

Jolly was aged 32 and studying in London for qualifications in surgery when the civil war broke out. He belonged to the Christian left, a circle that included Rev Donald Grant and his wife Irene (whom he had first met as a medical student in New Zealand), the moral philosopher John Macmurray, and the Austrian-born economist Karl Polanyi. To join the second team of volunteers organised by the Spanish Medical Aid Committee meant abandoning his surgical studies just before the final exam, yet he seems to have done so without hesitation.

In December 1936, Jolly arrived at the



The International Brigade Memorial Trust keeps alive the memory and spirit of the men and women who volunteered to fight fascism and defend democracy in Spain from 1936 to 1939.

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Mick Whelan

# CIVIL WAR SURGERY

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

and Italian fascists in Guadalajara.

This indiscriminate approach in the face of overwhelming demands for medical care provoked outrage from other doctors, such as the Czech Frantisek Kriegel.

He saw that Jolly had developed a novel method of triage, numbering each patient in order of urgency, and that the No.1 label had been given to a Nationalist prisoner. Kriegel ordered Jolly to treat one of the many wounded Republicans first. Jolly replied: 'I refuse, and if you insist I'm going home tomorrow... the reasons that brought me here are the same reasons which will make me operate on that prisoner first, because he is in the most need of salvation.' Kriegel conceded, and apologised the next day.

Over two frenetic years Jolly performed thousands of operations, winning deep respect for his professional skills, his good humour and his courage under fire. Nurse administrator Gusti Jirku remembers driving with him towards a newly captured village in the Guaderrama, when four Junker fighter bombers appeared. A bomb landed thirty yards behind their car. "What lousy shots", Mr Jolly said, without turning his head.' Arriving at their new field hospital, he performed a stomach operation with bombs falling 50 yards away. 'Mr Jolly worked on in complete silence and with perfectly steady hands, while the Czech doctor assisted and Anne-Marie [Basch] passed instruments with the precision of a machine. But she was no machine; she treated every patient like her own son.'

Jolly and his ever-changing team set up field hospitals in abandoned farm houses, tents, railway carriages, tunnels, and eventually a large natural cave – wherever they could conceal their patients from Franco's bombers. On the banks of the Ebro river in 1938, the British nursing administrator Nan Green classified the day's casualties according to type of wound, and the weapon that caused it. She then made hand-coloured graphs to show which medical supplies were needed, and priorities for treatment. This system proved so effective that Jolly revived it in the hospitals he ran during the Second World War.

#### Innovations

The Republican Army's hard-pressed but resourceful medical services pioneered profound and long-lasting clinical innovations, including the first widespread use of blood banks for transfusions. 'The blood was delivered daily to the field hospitals,' Jolly later recalled, 'in special vans equipped with refrigerators run by small petrol motors (rather like a milk delivery

**'The character of war had changed... The medical officer could no longer sit behind the lines and await his cases.'**

service.)... This is the first time that conserved blood had been used on a large scale.' He noted that this development would eventually transform peace-time trauma medicine.

Following the disbanding of the International Brigades in late 1938, Doug Jolly returned to Britain but continued to work on behalf of Republican Spain. During 1939 he addressed more than 60 public meetings in Britain and in France, urging support for former colleagues such as Kriegel whose home countries were now under Nazi control and who therefore faced imprisonment or worse if they were repatriated.

He also drew on his frontline experience to warn British leaders of the vital need to prepare for an entirely new form of warfare. *The British Medical Journal* reports him saying that 'The character of war had changed by reason of mass attack by aeroplane. The medical officer could no longer sit behind the lines and await his cases.' Jolly realised that the available texts on war surgery dated from 1918, and were written from 'the viewpoint of the base hospital.' He decided to produce a surgical manual aimed at 'younger, inexperienced surgeons, who will be operating in this [coming] war in the casualty clearing stations.' The resulting volume, 'Field Surgery in Total War', became an essential item of kit for military surgeons for the next several decades.

With the rank of lieutenant-colonel, Jolly served in the Second World War in the Middle East and Italy, occasionally encountering patients familiar to him from Spain. As a Stockton teenager, Johnny Longstaff had fought in the Battle of the Ebro and received a facial wound. He was treated by Jolly at the International Brigade hospital at Mataró, north of Barcelona. Six years later Longstaff was wounded in Italy, and again found himself on Jolly's operating table, at the New Zealand hospital near Naples.

As issue 48 of this magazine reports, in 2018 a plaque to Jolly was unveiled in his hometown of Cromwell, Central Otago, on the wall of a store founded in 1870 by his grandfather (see facing page). A biography is in progress, for publication by a US academic press.

**MARK DERBY  
DAVID LOWE**





## Online talk on Douglas Jolly

The IBMT and Marx Memorial Library are hosting an online talk on Douglas Jolly on Thursday 28 May from soon after 8pm to 9.30pm. It will be given by David Lowe, joint author of this issue's feature article on Jolly. The event will take place on Zoom. Those registered for the talk will receive an email with details 24 hours before it is scheduled.

David Lowe is an intensive care specialist at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, Australia. An interest in the life and work of Douglas Jolly was sparked by reading a biographical paper in 1990. Last year, with Wellington-based Spanish Civil War historian Mark Derby, he published a paper on the life and work of Dr Jolly in the *Journal of Medical Biography*.

● To register for the talk, go to: [www.tiny.cc/DougJolly](http://www.tiny.cc/DougJolly)



▲▲ Cave hospital on the north side of the Ebro.

▲ Interior of Spanish Republican hospital train.

▼ Operating in high temperature, left to right: unknown US doctor, Hungarian nurse Anne-Marie Basch and Douglas Jolly.

► Memorial plaque to Douglas Jolly in his hometown of Cromwell, Central Otago, in New Zealand.



# Your local International Brigade memorial group

Several independent locally-based International Brigade memorial groups have sprung up around the country in recent years. The IBMT welcomes this development and supports their work.

Local groups that join the IBMT gain extra benefits. They receive additional copies of *iNo Pasarán!*; they can buy IBMT merchandise at discount prices for resale; their details are published in this magazine so that members in their area can contact them; they enjoy all the rights of IBMT membership; they receive priority support and advice from the Trust.

To join, local groups pay an annual membership fee of £30. Download the application form from the 'Membership' page of our website ([www.international-brigades.org.uk](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk)) or phone 020 7253 8748 to request a membership affiliation form.

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# WELSH SEA CAPTAINS



## Mercenaries, heroes and professionals

In the spring of 1937 Franco had announced that all ships would be stopped from entering ports in Republican-held northern Spain. The *Western Mail* has numerous reports on the plight of Welsh ships being caught up in this situation. The blockade of ports such as Bilbao was a blow to the people of the Basque area who were already desperate for food. British ships could only be protected outside the three-mile territorial limit and the British Admiralty also accepted reports that the waters were mined and were too dangerous for any merchant ships to enter Bilbao. They instructed any ships in the vicinity to head for the French port of St Jean de Luz.

Three of the ships that docked at St Jean de Luz were Welsh-owned and the three captains, all with the surname 'Jones', were given the nicknames 'Potato' Jones, 'Corn Cob' Jones and 'Ham and Egg' Jones. Capt David John Jones of Swansea ('Potato' Jones) was captain of the *Marie Llewellyn* and often carried a load of potatoes on top of, allegedly, a cache of arms. He had no intention of obeying the Admiralty instructions and at 4pm on 15 April the *Marie Llewellyn* set out, pitching heavily on a swell, in the direction of the Spanish coast.

### David 'Potato' Jones

'Potato' Jones was well known on the Spanish trading routes and had experienced a few scrapes, as members of the crew of the patrolling HMS *Hood* could bear witness. Leonard Williams, a torpedo-man on the *Hood*, wrote about the time when the ship was sent to give protection to 'Spud Jones' and

his boat, which was being threatened by a Francoist Spanish cruiser. He described how Jones often wore a bowler hat and on this occasion was gesticulating to the Spanish that his potatoes were in danger of going rotten if he were denied access to Bilbao. However, the claim that Jones broke the blockade of Bilbao has little truth to it. George Steer's account in *The Times* makes it clear that his attempt to enter any northern Spanish port failed. He was sailing into the jaws of the battleship *Espana* when HMS *Brazen* intercepted his boat, hailed him and advised him to go back. Crestfallen, he had returned to St Jean de Luz, having forgotten that Nationalist warships were not the only watchers on the coast of Spain.

Also, the harsh reality is that not only was Capt Jones providing provisions for the Republic and making considerable economic gain, but he was also not averse to servicing Franco's forces and entering his ports. In an old rare autobiography I recently discovered, Jones recounts how his first cargo after returning to the sea in 1936 was some of the very best quality Welsh steam coal delivered to Franco's Spain.

### William Roberts

What is much clearer is that on 19 April 1937 at 10pm the Cardiff-registered steamer, Capt Roberts's *Seven Seas Spray*, without permission from the harbour master and without navigation lights, slipped out of St Jean de Luz into the darkness and ended her voyage safely tucked away in the city of Bilbao. Having been warned by a British destroyer





▲ Left to right: David 'Potato' Jones, William Roberts and Archibald Dickson.

en route that he was proceeding at his own risk, Roberts steamed ahead and sailed into Bilbao with 4,000 tons of food, finally escorted by Basque warships and planes and cheered by thousands of waving people on the banks of the River Nervión. Both the British and the Nationalists were stunned by this success and, despite some skirmishing between British and Nationalist vessels, other ships were able to discharge their cargoes, including 'Corn Cob' Jones's *Macgregor*.

Bilbao's local paper, *Euzkado*, in a dramatic piece on 21 April 1937, relates that the *Seven Seas Spray* suddenly was intercepted by Franco's cruiser *Almirante Cervera* (the pirate of the Bay of Biscay) whose captain demanded information about the cargo and course. The delightful and possibly enhanced version describes how Capt Roberts,

unimpressed with the impertinence of the question drily indicated he was on his way to San Juan de Luz. As the *Cervera* hurries away Roberts is heard to mutter to himself: 'He has nothing left to say to me about what can happen. Since when does the ocean have an owner?' *Euzkado* also suggests that Roberts was so sure that the reports of mines were inaccurate that he had no hesitation in taking on board his daughter, the wife of the first mate and the boat's owner.

Capt Roberts and his daughter Fifi, along with one of the owners of the ship, enjoyed the hospitality of a people who were also grateful that the myth of the mining of the harbour had been debunked as well as enjoying the small victory against Franco. They were entertained to dinner by the Basque Ministers of Finance, Commerce and Supplies and Roberts was presented with a cigarette case embossed with the Basque flag and with a message of thanks inscribed on it, while Fifi received a bracelet.

#### Archibald Dickson

Two years later another scenario was played out involving another Welshman, Cardiff-born Archibald Dickson, captain of the *SS Stanbrook*, a steam merchant vessel of 1,383 tons. On 28 March 1939 the *Stanbrook* was anchored in the port of Alicante waiting to load oranges and saffron. Alicante historian Juan Martínez Leal suggests that the *Stanbrook*, which flew different flags in its travels for the Republic, was actually now owned by France-Navigation. However, on the dockside was the grim sight of around 15,000 refugees who had fled to the eastern ports desperately waiting for ships to rescue them from the approaching Nationalist forces.

In his personal account Dickson described how, beside the boxes of tobacco, oranges and saffron,

appeared about 1,000 refugees, also arrived from a number of provinces in Republican Spain. The port authorities asked him to take on board these desperate people. He was placed in a dilemma, but on seeing the condition of the people he decided from a humanitarian viewpoint to take them with him to Oran. He noticed that there were all sorts of people from those who were poorly dressed and very hungry to some men and women who seemed to be quite well off. People carried bags and suitcases, probably all they possessed, and the boarding was done in an orderly manner, with the passports being inspected by the customs officials. However, as the boat began to fill up the officials lost control and masses of people struggled to get on board. By 10.30pm the last of the refugees were on board and there was no hope of taking any cargo. Dickson described the scene as 'like one of the Thames holiday steamers on a Bank Holiday'. In fact the boat left the port with 2,638 passengers, many more than such a cargo ship could safely hold.

People were standing on the deck, cold and hungry; some lay on the tables and the floor and Dickson allowed some of the weakest people to use his cabin and gave them some hot coffee. It was a dangerous journey too, as the large number of people affected the balance of the ship, especially when they moved to one side when another boat was sighted, fearing that it was one of Franco's vessels. Mercifully the ship arrived safely at Oran around about 10pm on the next day. The tragedy of the aftermath in the port of Alicante is poignantly provided in the first hand account of Eduardo de Guzmán, which I describe in more detail in my book.

However, not all reminiscences are positive and some accounts paint a picture of conflict, mistrust and 'the business of exile'. Some incidents raise the question, which has often been debated, of whether the captains of the 'exile' ships were mercenaries or heroes, professionals who simply carried out the orders of the shipowners, or men who risked their lives and those of the crews for humanitarian purposes. It is likely that Archibald Dickson, having taken on board all those who had bought their passage from the various political and union organisations in the port, was moved by the mass of refugees still remaining and agreed to receive large numbers of them on board. Certainly Dickson is held in high esteem in the city of Alicante and his bust in a central area of the port is an indication of the gratitude of the people for his altruism and heroism.

**GRAHAM DAVIES**

*Graham Davies is a historian of Wales and the Spanish Civil War and author of 'Outwitting Franco: The Welsh Maritime Heroes of the Spanish Civil War', published in 2019.*



**HEROIC:** The *SS Stanbrook* transporting thousands of refugees in March 1939.



**GUNS:** Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero seizes control of the Spanish Cortes (parliament) in the attempted coup of 23 February 1981.

# CORRUPTION AND BETRAYAL

**PAUL PRESTON** writes about his latest book, an overview of Spanish history from 1874 to 2014. He blames violence and bad governance on the venality, reaction and ineptitude of much of the country's political class and institutions, such as the Army and Church. But there are bright spots, notably the Spanish people themselves, whose courage and democratic spirit have been demonstrated time and again, on occasions such as the defence of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War or in the transition to democracy following Franco's death.



There are many possible approaches to the rich and tragic history of Spain. My new book, 'A People Betrayed', spans the period from the restoration of the Borbón monarchy in 1874 to the beginning of the reign of his great-great-grandson Felipe VI in 2014. It aims to provide a comprehensive and reliable history of Spain with a dramatic emphasis on the way the country's progress has been impeded by corruption and political incompetence. It demonstrates how these two features have resulted in a breakdown of social cohesion that has frequently been met with, and exacerbated by, the use of violence by the authorities. All three themes consistently emerge in the tensions between Madrid and Catalonia. Throughout the restoration period, and most spectacularly during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, institutional corruption and startling political incompetence were the norm. This opened the way to the country's first democracy, the Second Republic.

From the inception of the Republic in 1931 until its demise in 1939, corruption was less toxic, not least because the newly installed political elite was inspired by many of the propositions of the regenerationists. That is not to say corruption did not exist. A recurring character in my book, the multi-millionaire Juan March, who was behind some of the most spectacular corruption during the Primo de Rivera period, was equally active during the Republic, as indeed he would be in the first decades of the Franco dictatorship. This was also true of Alejandro Lerroux, an important politician who was on March's payroll. A lifetime of shameless corruption reached its peak when, as prime minister in 1935, he brazenly sponsored a system of fixed roulette wheels, an outrageous operation that gave rise to the word *estraperlo* which has become a synonym for economic malfeasance.

### Terror

The victory of General Franco saw the establishment of a regime of terror and pillage which allowed him and his elite supporters to plunder with impunity, enriching themselves while giving free rein to the political ineptitude that prolonged Spain's economic backwardness well into the 1950s. Ironically, throughout his life, Franco would express a fierce contempt for the political class that he held responsible for the loss of empire in 1898. In 1941, on the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the civil war, he declared in a speech to the top brass of the Falange (el Consejo Nacional): 'when we started out in life, ... we saw our childhood dominated by the contemptible incompetence of those men who abandoned half of the

**'The unspoken assumption that political and social problems could more naturally be solved by violence than by debate was firmly entrenched in a country in which for hundreds of years civil strife was no rarity.'**

fatherland's territory to foreigners'. In fact, some of his own fatuous errors would far outdo those of the predecessors he mocked. That he would not scruple to put his determination to stay in power above national interests can be seen in his relationships with the Third Reich and later with the United States. His scatter-brained get-rich-quick schemes, ranging from alchemy and synthetic water-based gasoline to the disaster of his autarkic policies, contributed to Spain's backwardness until he was persuaded in 1959 to let others supervise the economy.

In denouncing politicians in 1941, Franco was far from alone. With brief intervals when optimism flowered, between 1931 and 1936 and the first decade of the rule of King Juan Carlos, the attitude of Spaniards towards their country's political class has often been one of disdain bordering on despair. Belief in the incompetence and venality of politicians has been an underlying constant of Spanish life since the Napoleonic invasion if not before. Franco used rhetoric about corrupt politicians to justify a dictatorship under which corruption flourished unchecked and was indeed exploited ruthlessly by the Caudillo himself, both for his own enrichment and to manipulate his followers.

The humiliation of 1898 was just the final confirmation of a truth that had been coming for nearly a century. Spain's internal economic problems could no longer be alleviated by imperial plunder. A backward agrarian economy, an uneven and feeble industrial sector, the heavy hand of the Catholic Church, parasitical armed forces and growing regional divisions were endemic burdens. They were perpetuated, as was perceived by the far-sighted polymath, Joaquín Costa, by a corrupt

and incompetent political system which blocked social and economic progress and kept the Spanish people in the servitude, ignorance and misery which lay behind the contemporary slur that 'Africa begins at the Pyrenees'. However, the solution proposed by Costa, the iron surgeon, showed little confidence in the people and in democracy.

Other equally damaging, and inextricably linked, features of Spanish politics and society have endured since the late 19th century. The unspoken assumption that political and social problems could more naturally be solved by violence than by debate was firmly entrenched in a country in which for hundreds of years civil strife was no rarity. In modern times, certain forms of social violence have been a consequence of corruption and government incompetence. Electoral corruption excluded the masses from organised politics and challenged them with a choice between apathetic acceptance and violent revolution. The war of 1936-1939 was the fourth such conflict since the 1830s.

### Military

Between 1814 and 1981, Spain witnessed more than 25 'pronunciamientos', or military coups. That crude statistic provides a graphic indication of the divorce between soldiers and civilians. In the first third of the 19th century, those *pronunciamientos* were liberal in their political intent but, thereafter, a tradition of mutual misunderstanding and mistrust between the Army and civil society developed to a point at which soldiers considered themselves more Spanish than civilians. By the early 20th century, officers were ripe for persuasion by reactionary politicians that it was their right and duty to interfere in politics in order to 'save Spain'. Unfortunately, that apparently noble objective meant the defence of the interests and privileges of relatively small segments of society. Accordingly, a factor generating hatred within Spanish society was the fact that deep-rooted social conflicts, in the wake of imperial decline and military defeat, were repressed by the Army. Military resentments of politicians in general and of the left and the labour movement in particular were the other side of the same coin.

The role of violence in Spain was consolidated by the way in which the armed forces dealt with post-imperial trauma. A resentful officer corps, which blamed the humiliation of 1898 on the politicians who had provided inadequate support, came to consider itself the ultimate arbiter in politics. Determined to lose no more battles, they

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

# SPANISH HISTORY

## FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

became obsessed not with the defence of Spain from external enemies but with the defence of national unity and the existing social order against the internal enemies of the regions and of the left. At one level, this was not surprising. After the Cuban disaster, the Army was inefficient, overburdened by bureaucracy and ill-equipped. An absurdly high proportion of the total military budget was absorbed by salaries, administration and running costs which left very little for training or equipment.

Spain's rulers had tried to shake off the immediate post-war shame with a disastrous new imperial endeavour in Morocco. Woefully unprepared, this African adventure stimulated massive popular opposition to conscription thereby intensifying the mutual hatred of the military and the left. While working-class conscripts became militant pacifists in response to the appalling conditions in North Africa, there emerged within the military an elite corps of tough professional officers, the Africanistas, of whom Franco became the iconic example. They came to believe that they were a beleaguered band of heroic warriors alone concerned with the fate of the patria. This inevitably exacerbated their sense of apartness from a society which they felt had betrayed them. The Africanistas came to dominate the officer corps, particularly in the late 1920s when Franco was director of the military academy. They would be at the heart of the coup of 1936 and then use against Spanish civilians the same

terror tactics that they had perfected in Morocco.

They would be a favoured element of Franco's kleptocratic elite. The survival of their 'values' through and beyond the dictatorship would guarantee the determination of sectors of the armed forces to derail the new democracy established in the late 1970s. Fortunately, popular distrust of the armed forces came to an end with the democratisation of the Army after the military reforms carried out during the first Socialist government. Generational change within the officer corps and the entry of Spain into NATO have seen a dramatic reversal of popular perception of the armed forces and the Civil Guard which are now among the most highly rated institutions in Spain. Popular perception of Spain's problems puts the political class second only behind unemployment.

## Dead hand

Equally damaging to Spain's attempts to attain modernity was the dead hand of the Catholic Church. In the civil wars of both the 19th and 20th centuries, the Catholic Church took sides against the threat of liberalism and modernisation. Besieged by violent popular anticlericalism and impoverished by the disentanglement of its lands in the 1830s and 1850s, the Church allied with the powerful. Already by the 1880s, the Church, in its educational provision for the middle and upper classes, had become the legitimising agent of

the socio-economic and political system.

The history of the Catholic Church in Spain in the 20th century parallels that of the country itself. Almost every major political upheaval of a turbulent period – with the possible exception of the revolutionary crisis of 1917-1923 – had its religious back-cloth and a crucial, and often reactionary, role for the Church hierarchy.

My new book interleaves these themes of military and ecclesiastical influence, popular contempt for the political class, bitter social conflict, economic backwardness and conflict between centralist nationalism and regional independence movements. It also places these processes in an international context.

The breakdown of the Second Republic and the coming of the civil war are incomprehensible without consideration of the influence of international developments, particularly fascism and communism, on domestic developments. The course of the Spanish Civil War is analysed with particular attention to the interplay between domestic and international factors in determining its outcome.

In many respects, the Spanish conflict can be seen as either a rehearsal for the Second World War or as the location of its first battles. Spanish neutrality in the Second World War played a key role in the result of the conflict in Europe. The process whereby the Franco dictatorship shook off international ostracism to become the valued ally of the Western powers is fully considered.





My book shows how Spain went from utter despair in 1898 on a roller-coaster that culminated in the present state of almost comparable pessimism. The civil war was the most dramatic of a series of uneven struggles between the forces of reform and reaction which had punctuated Spanish history from 1808 to the present day.

### Curious

There is a curious pattern in Spain's modern and contemporary history, arising from a frequent *desfase*, or lack of synchronisation, between the social reality and the political power structure ruling over it. Lengthy periods during which reactionary elements have used political and military power to hold back social progress were followed by outbursts of revolutionary fervour. In the 1850s, the 1870s, between 1910 and 1912, between 1917 and 1923, and above all during the Second Republic, efforts were made to bring Spanish politics into line with the country's social reality. This inevitably involved attempts to redistribute wealth, especially on the land, which in turn provoked reactionary efforts to stop the clock and re-impose the traditional order of social and economic power.

Thus were progressive movements crushed by General O'Donnell in 1856, by General Pavia in 1874, by General Primo de Rivera in 1923 and by General Franco between 1936 and 1939. It took the horrors of the civil war and the nearly four decades of dictatorship that

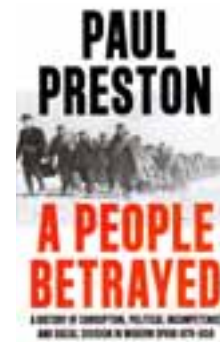
followed to break the pattern. The moderation shared by the progressive right and a chastened left underlay a bloodless transition to democracy.

The pattern of conflict between the political establishment and sociological development – progressive forces pushing for change until driven back by violence and the imposition of dictatorship – changed in 1977. Nevertheless, the new democratic establishment was tainted by the old ways. As asserted by Baltasar Garzón, one of the judges who has worked to eliminate corruption: 'In Spain, no one has ever been afraid to be corrupt. Given that its existence was taken for granted, corruption is not something that has bothered the average citizen. This indifference has ensured that its roots have grown deep and solid and sustain a structure of interests that is very difficult to bring down.' In the view of Garzón, the justice system has contributed to this situation: 'Judgements that are laid down after long years of delay, laughable sentences, incomprehensible dismissals or shelving of cases, unacceptable collusions and connivance...'

Throughout the entire period, corruption and political incompetence have had a corrosive effect on political coexistence and social cohesion. Spain's transition to democracy has been widely admired. Nevertheless, the scale of uninterrupted corruption and periodic ineptitude demonstrated by the political class at various levels of society since 1982 has been remarkable. Politicians of both right and left

have been unable or unwilling to deal with corruption and the pernicious clash between Spanish centralist nationalism and regional desires for independence. Only during brief periods in the early 1930s and in the first years of the transition to democracy was there a degree of public respect for politicians.

However, widespread contempt and resentment have intensified anew during the economic crisis of recent years. The boom of the 1990s fostered corruption and witnessed political incompetence on an unprecedented scale. From the late 1980s to the present day, endemic corruption and renewed nationalist ferment has brought disillusionment with the political class almost full circle. While not at the unrepeatable low point of 1898, politicians are nevertheless rated by the Spanish population far lower than could have been imagined when the transition to democracy was being hailed as a model for other countries.



'A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain 1874-2014' by Paul Preston is published this year by William Collins.

◀ **PROFESSOR SIR PAUL PRESTON:** The IBMT's Founding Chair.

▶ **REPUBLICAN POSTER:** Catalan appeal to help the bombed-out people of Madrid.

▶▶ **FASCIST POSTER:** Franco's 'new dawn for Spain'.



# Teesside's historic memorial and a tragic love-letter home

I am currently researching the Teesside International Brigade memorial (pictured on facing page) for a series of talks as part of Middlesbrough council's heritage festival. Produced in 1939 it was on display in the YCL (Young Communist League) office, and later the Communist Party offices in Middlesbrough. When this office was closed in 1967 the plaque went missing until, in 1983, it was found by a teacher on sale in Acton, west London. International Brigader David Marshall ensured it was returned to Teesside, where fellow veteran John Longstaff held it for safe-keeping.

**‘The memorial is... one of the first, if not the first, memorial to Brigaders in the UK.’**

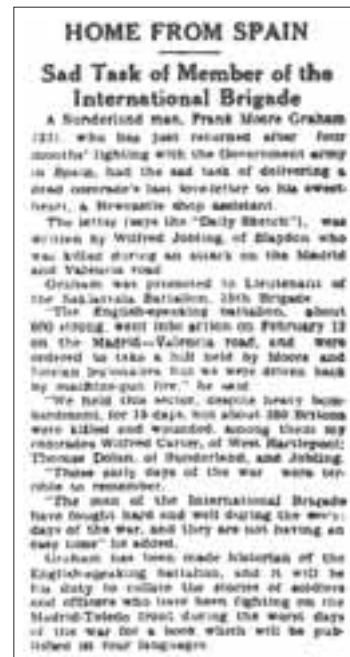
In their book ‘Memorials of the Spanish Civil War’, Williams, Alexander and Gorman state that Sir Maurice Sutherland, on John Longstaff's initiative, arranged for the Teesside plaque to be placed in Middlesbrough Town Hall. The plaque names 10 Brigaders from Teesside who ‘went out to fight’ and found a resting place in the soil of Spain. The memorial is unique in that it is one of the first, if not the first, memorial to Brigaders produced in the UK, and in addition was produced by men who knew these men as comrades before they went to Spain. In his 1987 book ‘Battle of Jarama 1937’, Sunderland-born International Brigade volunteer Frank Graham writes: ‘I knew all of them for several years and their deaths affected me profoundly.’

The Teesside memorial plaque has particular significance for IBMT President Marlene Sidaway. Not only does she hail from Teesside, but David Marshall, her partner, was instrumental in the plaque's initial production,

restoration and re-dedication. Talking to Marlene about the memorial's dedication in 1992 brought to light a heart-breaking story. Very recently Marlene kindly allowed me to see what I think is the only photograph of the 1992 ceremony. It shows David Marshall, John Longstaff and Frank Graham as guests of honour. David and John came from Teesside and Frank from Wearside.

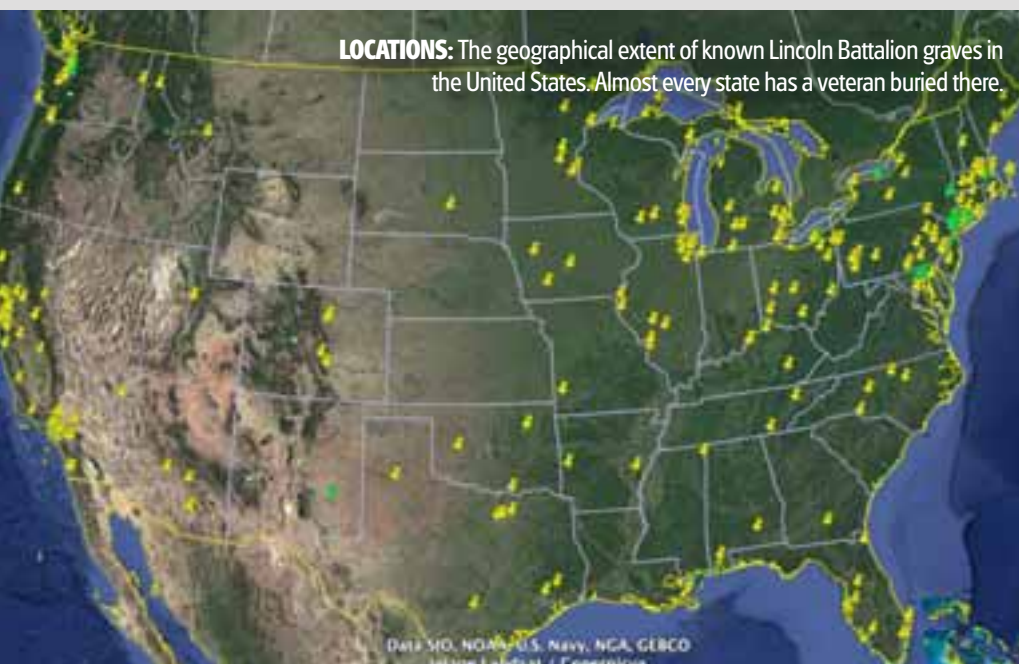
One 1937 newspaper clipping from the *Yorkshire Evening Post* shows how close the bond between these Brigaders was and suggests the impact it had on those who did make it home. The newspaper report (pictured) describes Frank Graham's return in 1937.

He would return permanently after being wounded in the Battle of Caspe in March 1938. It movingly describes how he brought with him ‘a dead comrade's last love-letter to his sweet-heart’, before going on to describe the early battles in which comrades lost their lives. The



*Yorkshire Evening Post, 12 April 1937.*

‘dead comrade’ whose letter he brought is named as Wilf Jobling of Blaydon. Jobling, along with Bob Elliott, was a prominent organiser in the local Communist Party. Both organised a number of hunger marches and other YCL and NUWM (National Unemployed Workers' Movement) activity in the region. I have evidence of frequent visits to Teesside to work with George Short of Stockton (George, his wife Philis and Wilf all originate from Chopwell). Wilf



**NANCY PHILLIPS** and **RAY HOFF** from the Friends and Families of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (FFALB), an IBMT sister-organisation in the US, report on a project encouraging supporters to visit and honour Lincoln Battalion graves on Memorial Day, observed on the last Monday in May.

Memorial Day in the US is traditionally set aside to remember Americans who served in the military. And yet, those who went to Spain to fight fascism are rarely, if ever, included in the remembrances. We would like to change this.

Over the last two years, Canadian volunteers led by Pamela Vivian, with support from several trade unions, have organised remembrance ceremonies in Canadian communities from coast to coast. Over 100 graves were visited last November. Since 2014, supporters of the FFALB have also been visiting Lincoln Battalion graves and honouring them by



Jobling and Bob Elliott's names appear on the Teesside memorial. Wilf features heavily in Frank's 'Battle of Jamara 1937' book. For me this suggests that this memorial dedication in the council chamber of Middlesbrough Town Hall must have had a huge emotional impact on David, John and Frank, as Frank says in the 1937 newspaper report: 'Those early days of the war were terrible to remember.'

These words resonate, and resonate particularly strongly as we think of Frank recalling his fallen friends and comrades, recollecting the time he had to console the sweetheart of a dear friend. This story becomes even more heart-breaking when we note that the dedication ceremony was held on 14 February 1992, Valentine's Day, just over a week before the 55th anniversary of the death of the man whose last love-letter Frank carried; Wilf Jobling was killed on 27 February 1937 during the Battle of Jamara.

I am continuing with my research into the Teesside memorial and would be grateful for information, in particular anything on Harold W Bennet from Kent. Contact by email at [foxy.foxburg@gmail.com](mailto:foxy.foxburg@gmail.com) or through the IBMT.

**TONY FOX**

## ...and how the plaque was lost and found

Stuart Hill writes...

The CPGB (Communist Party of Great Britain) moved offices to Grange Road, Middlesbrough, and had been there for quite a few years when I joined the YCL in 1965. I remember George Short, the Teesside District Secretary, taking us youngsters on a course on political economy with my two school-mates from Stainsby Boys, Dave Wedlake and Andrew Harland.

Sometime in 1967 we heard that the party was selling the premises and all the contents were going to be dumped in a skip. Dave and I went down to see what we could rescue. The plaque was in pride of place in the HQ. I managed to get some factory bulletins from the ICI workplace



The 1939 Middlesbrough memorial.

branch fighting for union recognition before the Second World War. Dave insisted he should take the plaque for safe-keeping. I remember there seemed to be a crack in it and Dave said he knew someone who could repair it.

Dave went off to Exeter University shortly after. I could never get an answer from him on what had happened to the plaque.

I eventually lost contact with him altogether. He had been an officer with the old NUPE union for a short time and then a college

lecturer in Redditch, I believe.

John Longstaff was absolutely furious when he spoke to me about its rediscovery in 1983. How could anyone treat such an important memorial with such casual neglect? The impression I had at the time was that he had found it either in a second-hand bookshop or antique shop whilst in London on union or civil service business. It was definitely in his care until moved to the Middlesbrough Town Hall. I do not recall him mentioning David Marshall but it may have been him that passed it on to John.

## Putting Brigaders on the map

putting down a simple white rose. The organisation has created a database in which we have catalogued the graves of over 400 Lincoln veterans, other battalion veterans and medical staff.

This effort began as a contribution to the biographical records of the Lincoln Battalion undertaken by Chris Brooks of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA). Information about likely grave sites was obtained from diverse sources such as family members, Ancestry.com, the Find A Grave online database and newspaper obituaries. The locations of these graves have been geo-referenced so they can be located to within a few feet using GPS and Google Maps.

Although it is not possible this May due to the ongoing pandemic, in the future we would like to see this effort continue. We are asking supporters of

the FFALB to consider visiting the graves of Lincoln veterans and leaving a flower or a flag next year. We provide supporters with information as to how to locate Brigaders' graves; many graves have latitude and longitude information that can be imported to Google Maps on a mobile phone application which takes visitors to within a few feet of the graves.

We also encourage supporters to take a photo of the gravesite, perhaps a 'selfie', and ask them to enable 'record location' on their cameras. They can then send this information on to us so it can be added to the existing database of known gravesites.

The men and women who joined the international effort against fascism in Spain are more and more forgotten. Through this project, we are encouraging members and supporters to consider taking steps to remember them on

Memorial Day by visiting their graves. Many who have done this have found it to be an immensely moving experience.

Finally, by locating gravesites, supporters have the opportunity to add to the existing biographical information about Lincoln veterans.



Tombstone of Lincoln Battalion veteran Louis Busto-Bango, St Gertrude's Cemetery in Colonia, New Jersey.

**'The Salamanca Diaries: Father McCabe and the Spanish Civil War' by Tim Fanning (Irish Academic Press, 2019).**

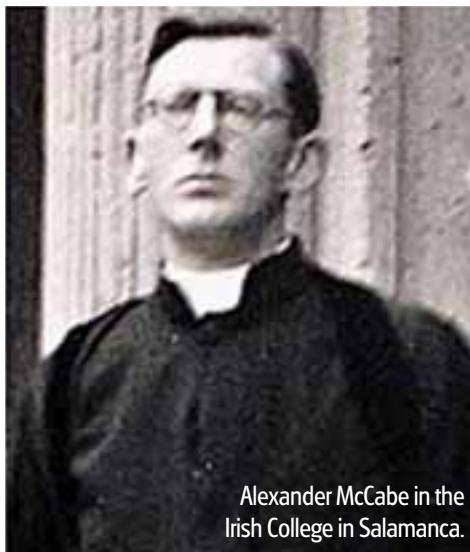
Cavan-born Alexander McCabe (1900-1988) had his first encounter with Spain when a student for the priesthood at the Irish College in Salamanca from 1919 to 1925. He would return as vice-rector in 1930, being promoted to rector in 1935, and remaining there until the college was handed over to the Spanish Church in 1950. McCabe was an incessant diarist, writing every day, and often several times a day, and author Tim Fanning has constructed a fascinating narrative from the material at hand. His is a book that leaves one hungry for more, but it is a hunger that cannot be assuaged. At the very outset Fanning reproduces a July 1946 diary entry where McCabe related that, while his diaries for the years 1938-45 had been the best kept, he had decided to burn all of them! So, for the missing years, the author was reliant on McCabe's reports to the Irish Hierarchy and other correspondence.

When it came to the Spanish Civil War McCabe was far from neutral. Once it erupted, this churchman was very much a partisan against the Republic. And yet, since he was such an acute observer of both societal realities as a well as personalities, his diaries contribute to a much deeper understanding of what had been unfolding in Spain. McCabe recognised that social fissures and religious fissures went hand in hand in Salamanca. He had observed the inauguration of the Second Republic in 1931 and how assiduously working class Republicans had campaigned in that year's elections, and how even their children loudly sang the most extreme anti-clerical songs on a daily basis 'as sweetly and as fervently as if they were hymns to Our Lady'.

**'The Spanish Church had disregarded the everyday concerns of the working class.'**

Some chickens were coming home to roost, as McCabe noted how the Spanish Church had disregarded the everyday concerns of the working class, preferring instead to intrigue with aristocrats, officers and industrialists: 'Irish priests played a big part in the land agitation of the century. Of course, the Irish landlords were Protestants, which isn't true in Spain', where its Church 'wraps itself in the liturgical dignity' and 'remains as tranquil and lifeless as a mummy and does nothing'.

In the Asturian village of Pendueles, where the Irish College maintained a summer villa, he also observed



Alexander McCabe in the Irish College in Salamanca.

## From an Irish priest in Salamanca

that, whereas the villagers would work hard, the 'leisured aristocrats and middle classes idled away their time, and did nothing... Rich and poor tend to keep apart and be naturally hostile'. He was alarmed at the fact that, by 1933, illiterate men in the Asturian mountains were now listening to the radio and talking about foreign politics: 'The workmen here are evidently following what is happening in Germany, and it shows the spirit of class solidarity and international sympathy that European workmen everywhere have today.'

McCabe was actually on vacation in Ireland when the fascist revolt against the Spanish Republic commenced in July 1936, and he did not return to Salamanca until November. As he listened to the radio back home in Cavan, McCabe recorded an October evening when he heard 'the Socialist lady deputy, Margarita Nelken, make a very bitter appeal to the peasants and workers of Badajoz, her constituency... in a venomous style, like a serpent'. It is here that Tim Fanning had an uncharacteristic lapse from his otherwise meticulously high standards, as he established no context for Nelken's address. It is only 50 pages later that there is a passing, disconnected, reference to the Badajoz massacre of that July. But even here, the author failed to note that as many as 1,500 of Nelken's constituents had been summarily shot in that town's bullring.

On the outbreak of the civil war, the Irish College's students had been evacuated back to Ireland from its Asturian summer villa, and would never again return to

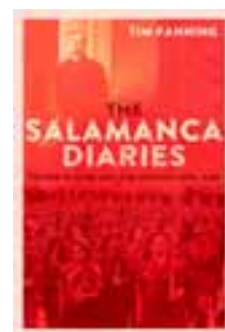
Spain. As Salamanca became Franco's temporary capital, McCabe would preside over an empty Irish College, until it became the seat of Nazi Germany's mission to Franco from July 1937 to April 1938. It would continue to house the Nazi press and propaganda department until the civil war ended in April 1939, lasting longer than many had anticipated. But in a November 1936 conversation with a Franco officer McCabe himself had opined: 'In 1935, the Socialists staged a big concentration in Madrid, in which 100,000 took part. If these men are willing to fight, the taking of Madrid won't be an easy affair.'

It is the McCabe diary entries on the 1937 visits to Salamanca of Irish Christian Front leader Paddy Belton and General Eoin O'Duffy that are most scathing in their pen portraits. McCabe served as the intermediary for their audiences with Franco and other luminaries. He would record: 'Franco asked O'Duffy if he had any experience of military command. O'Duffy replied that he had commanded a million men on one occasion... At the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin... Franco merely smiled.' But it did not remain a smiling matter for long. Fanning has chronicled McCabe's devastating commentary on how the sheer military ineptitude of O'Duffy's Brigade, and his reluctance to commit it to battle, rendered it a liability for Franco. Yet in May 1937, when O'Duffy announced his decision to bring the Brigade home after such a short sojourn, McCabe unsuccessfully sought to persuade him to soldier on in Spain with Spanish officers.

McCabe himself had been very much sympathetic to the Franco cause, while abhorring what he would describe as a 'spirit of revenge' that had become 'a physical lust'. On first returning to civil war Spain in mid-November 1936, McCabe estimated that to date, in Salamanca itself, 1,300 individuals had been 'shot by lorryfuls' by Franco's forces. And in mid-July 1937 he went on to record as a 'diabolical mystery' how, from the windows of the college itself, he could hear executions continuing at a frequency of once or twice a week.

All the more reason then to lament McCabe's 1946 decision to burn all his 1938 to 1945 diaries, which had contained, in his own words, 'crudely bitter pages, especially about the cruelty of the Spanish Civil War', while also expressing 'a fierce hatred of the German Nazis'.

Nevertheless, to have so thoroughly mined the McCabe diaries for the years beforehand, and to have constructed such a readable and informative book therefrom, is indeed a considerable achievement on the part of author Tim Fanning.



**MANUS O'RIORDAN**





**INSET:** Wolfram Freiherr von Richthofen, commander of the Nazi German Condor Legion.

**BOMBER:** The German Junkers Ju 87, flown by the Condor Legion as a prototype.

# Restating the truth about Gernika



**'Gernika: Genealogy of a Lie'**  
by Xabier A Irujo (Sussex  
Academic Press, 2019).

Astonishingly, the bombing of the Basque town of Gernika during the Spanish Civil War remains a crime that is still having to be solved. Immortalised by Picasso's vast painting, *Guernica*, its destruction on market day on 26 April 1937 by Hitler's Condor Legion has become a symbol of civilian suffering in modern warfare. Witness the now notorious incident in the build-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when a tapestry of the painting was covered up at the UN headquarters in New York while US Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a press conference justifying the march to war.

For Condor Legion commander Wolfram von Richthofen, the aerial bombardment of Gernika – and indeed the bombs dropped on other Basque towns and on Barcelona, Madrid and Valencia – was the shock-and-awe of its day, a belated birthday gift to the Führer to demonstrate the power of firebombing to instil terror. As Franco's rebel in arms General Emilio Mola warned on the day before the attack: 'Franco is about to deliver a mighty blow against which all resistance is useless. Basques! Surrender now and your lives will be spared.'

Newspapermen rushed to Gernika in the wake of the bombing. Amid the smouldering ruins they found German bomb-parts. Terrified eye-witnesses confirmed how the attack had unfolded. Among the reporters was George Steer, of *The*

*Times*, whose historic despatch published on 28 April and syndicated around the world, declared: *The bombardment of this open town far behind the lines occupied precisely three hours and a quarter, during which a powerful fleet of aeroplanes consisting of three German types, Junkers and Heinkel bombers and Heinkel fighters, did not cease unloading on the town bombs weighing from 1,000lb downwards and, it is calculated, more than 3,000 two-pounder aluminium incendiary projectiles. The fighters, meanwhile, plunged low from above the centre of the town to machine-gun those of the civilian population who had taken refuge.*

Yet within 24 hours of the atrocity Franco, no doubt sensing the international outrage that would soon be unleashed, denied the bombing and accused the 'Reds' of setting the town ablaze. So began what author Xabier Irujo calls a cascade of lies – one that continued throughout the 40 years of dictatorship and even to this day.

There were two categories of lies, says Irujo, who in 2015 delivered the lecture 'The Terror Bombing of Guernica' as part of the IBMT's annual Len Crome Memorial Conference in Manchester. First comes the 'official lie', starting, in this case, with Franco's brazen repudiation of responsibility. Next comes the 'historiographical lie', when historians repeat and refine miss-truths and when facts are brushed aside as exaggerations or myths.

Francoist historian Ricardo de la Cierva, for example, would claim in 1970 that 'not even a dozen died'. More recently others, such as Jesús Salas, have massaged the death toll down to 300 or less. Yet George Steer's fellow-reporter on the

scene, Noel Monks of the *News Chronicle*, counted 600 dead in the aftermath of the bombing, and the Basque government soon listed 1,647 dead. There had been some 10,000 people in the town on the day. In fact, as Irujo makes plain, the final death tally is more than 2,000.

There are no fewer than 29 such lies demolished by Irujo, each with its own concise chapter. They include 'Franco did not know anything', 'It was not a terror bombing' and 'It was a strategic bombing whose objective was to cut the withdrawal of the Basque troops' – lies that are still in circulation in those parts of Spanish society sympathetic to Franco.

'The bombing of Gernika is the story of the exaltation of a lie,' the author writes, and he goes on to consider the 'social psychology' behind this phenomenon, speculating in Freudian mode that 'if the perception of reality produces in us sorrow, restlessness, or disgust, we tend to sacrifice the truth'.

As long as the truth is not accepted, the victims of Gernika – and of the entire Spanish Civil War – still cannot properly be laid to rest. Marking last year's 75th anniversary of the Nazi invasion of Poland, German President Walter Steinmeier publicly begged forgiveness for the aerial destruction of the town of Wielun on 1 September 1939, along with the bombardment of Warsaw and other centres of population. Spain's Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory immediately observed: 'Let's see when Germany does the same for the Spanish victims of the 1936-39 war and dictatorship it helped and consolidated.'

**JIM JUMP**



**'The People's Army in the Spanish Civil War: A Military History of the Republic and International Brigades 1936-1939' by Alexander Clifford (Pen & Sword Military Press, 2019).**

There have been many books written about the military side of the Spanish Civil War of varying quality, some very good, others very opinionated and expressing common assumptions. Recent books like Charles Esdaile's 'The Spanish Civil War: A Military History' and James Matthews's 'Reluctant Warriors' – about conscripts in the civil war – along with Michael Alpert's earlier work on the Republican Army discuss in detail the organisation, performance and problems the force faced. Authors like Michael Hooton and Anthony Beevor, although giving very detailed accounts of the civil war and its battles, have little sympathy

## Republican Army myths

with the problems that the Republicans faced in organising an army from scratch.

Alexander Clifford's book is sympathetic to these problems and points out the faults in its organisation and occasionally in its leadership. His account is well-researched, balanced and written in an engaging style throughout.

Clifford concentrates on four aspects of the People's Army. The first three are detailed accounts of offensive action by the Republican forces. His narrative covers the period when the two sides briefly had some parity in forces and equipment. He covers the Brunete campaign in the summer of 1937, the autumn campaign aimed at the capture of Saragossa which included the actions at Quinto, Belchite and Fuentes de Ebro and finally what he sees as the turning point in the civil war: the winter offensive of 1937-38 against Teruel. In the fourth part of his book he looks at the performance of the

Republican Army, where he gives a balanced, critical summary of their strengths and undoubted weaknesses.

There are two elements of this book I found particularly good. The first was his use of personal accounts of individuals involved in the battles on both sides. He combines foot soldier accounts with grand battle strategy without losing the flow of the battles, which gives them a more human feel rather than just a mass of division numbers and X went to Y to fight A. In each battle you get a very clear idea of the ebb and flow of the action and what it was like to have fought in that action.

The second element that was particularly good was that Clifford broke down the myth of the Republic receiving a similar quantity of arms to the Nationalists and that their incorrect deployment was the cause of defeat; a theory championed by Hooton in his recent book on the civil war. As

## Poets take sides



**'The Neglected Poetry' by María Luisa González Biosca (University of Valencia Press, 2019).**

The Spanish Civil War saw 'poets exploding like bombs', as WH Auden wrote in his 1937 poem 'Spain'. He was

one of several poets of his generation who became engaged with the cause of the Spanish Republic. Some, like him, made solidarity visits to Spain, while a few became soldier-poets, taking up arms against fascism. Others, certainly among the English-speaking contingent of the International Brigades, were moved by the war to begin writing poems.

Their work appears in a number of specialist anthologies, notably 'The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse' (edited by Valentine Cunningham, 1980), 'The Wound and the Dream: Sixty Years of American Poems about the Spanish Civil War' (edited by Cary Nelson, 2002) and 'Poems from Spain: British and Irish International Brigaders on the Spanish Civil War' (edited by Jim Jump, 2006).

'The Neglected Poetry' is both an anthology and a textual and historical analysis of the poems written in English by participants and

propagandists in the civil war. It contains more than 50 such poems, all of which can be found in the established collections listed above, along with some helpful images, particularly of extracts from *The Volunteer for Liberty*, the XVth Brigade's English-language newspaper. There are short biographies of all the poets, many of them reproduced word-for-word from 'Poems from Spain' – without permission, it must be said. Many of the poems and International Brigade poets will be familiar to IBMT members and anyone interested in this topic. They include Clive Branson, Charlie Donnelly, Aileen Palmer, Miles Tomalin and Tom Wintringham.

### Legacy

Author María Luisa González Biosca argues that the legacy of English poetry that emerged from the Spanish Civil War has been unjustifiably overlooked; hence the title of the book. There is probably some truth to what she says, although many would argue that this ignorance applies to the war in Spain in general, not just its poetry. The reasons she gives for this neglect – anti-communism, McCarthyism, the Cold War and the silence in Spain about its civil war – can equally explain why the Spanish Civil War, beyond its specialist historiography, is usually glossed over in the textbooks and mainstream histories of the 20th century. All too often when the war is described, it is subjected to a shallow, politically warped analysis, one that is hostile to the Republic and its supporters.

At one point the author admits:

'Generations of Spaniards have not known about the civil war. Only recently is its teaching being normalised, but not in all regions. There are still professors, teachers and politicians who are reluctant to make the study of this recent period of contemporary Spanish history available.'

This is significant. For, while González Biosca's claim that hers is the first compendium of English poems written by those who took part in the Spanish Civil War is highly debatable to say the least given the anthologies covering the same ground that have already been published, it is no doubt true that this body of work is surprisingly little known in Spain. As if to prove the point, she fails to acknowledge the Spanish version of 'Poems from Spain'.\*

It's a shame therefore that this book has not been published in Spanish rather than English, as part of the University of Valencia Press's 'English in the World Series'. This may also have helped avoid some of the jarring language. International Brigaders, for example, are referred to as 'brigadists' throughout and 'English' is frequently used where 'British' should be instead. Better editing would also have removed the glaring errors of fact: Stephen Spender was not an International Brigade volunteer, the Munich Agreement was not signed by Hitler and Stalin, and it was Cecil Day-Lewis, not his actor son Daniel Day-Lewis, who wrote 'The Volunteer' and other poems about Spain.

González Biosca's stylistic analysis of the poems and her historical contextualisation is



# dispelled

Clifford points out, much of the equipment sold to the Republicans was of very poor quality and obsolete. Yes, they did receive good quality Soviet equipment but never in enough quantity to make a difference. Republican equipment, when it wore out, often could not be replaced. The Nationalists simply received replacements from Italy and Germany. Having a mass of different shells, ammunition and arms meant re-supplying Republican units was a logistical nightmare. Artillery differences between the two sides was crucial in every major action. The Nationalists were able to amass more guns and were able to fire many more shells per gun. The Nationalists also had a significant advantage in having a greater number of military aircraft.

Clifford does point out the weaknesses of the Republican Army. These included promoting some officers higher than their ability warranted, a lack of

often interesting, nonetheless. She finds, probably correctly, that the tone of the poems written by those who had actual experience of the war was more personal and less propagandistic than in those written by supporters of the Spanish Republic abroad.

## Perceptive

The author makes perceptive links between the poetry of the First World War and the Spanish Civil War and the modernist poetry movement of the day. She also underlines the point made in 'Poems from Spain' that the working-class British volunteers who fought in Spain and went on to write poetry were part of the first generation educated with proper reading and writing skills. And here she draws a parallel with the Republic's commitment to eradicating illiteracy among its own soldiers.

This new book therefore joins a substantial body of work on the English poetry of the Spanish Civil War. It may not break new ground, but the poems themselves lose none of their power in their repetition. Herbert Read's call in the famous 1939 pamphlet 'Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War' was clearly heeded: 'All poets must follow the course of this struggle with open and passionate partisanship.'

**JIM JUMP**

*\*Hablando de leyendas: Poemas para España. Poemas escritos por brigadistas internacionales de las Islas Británicas que participaron en la Guerra Civil Española' (edited by Jim Jump, Antonio Díez and David González, 2009).*

trained junior officers and the way the army was organised in 'mixed brigades' which was wasteful of precious equipment. In some battles he is critical of Republican commanders pressing on with First World War attacks for no good reason when the attack had already stalled. He does not hide the fact that when the best military equipment arrived it was allocated to those units that had the highest morale and best combat ability; these tended to be communist units and the International Brigades. I previously was of the opinion that this was done mainly for political reasons but Clifford argues well that with the bulk of the Republican forces in static trenches or if a unit is a conscript unit with low morale it makes little sense to arm them with your best weapons if they are in short supply. The ideal tactic is distributing the best weapons to your most combat effective units, regardless of their political persuasion.

I really enjoyed this book and find it hard to be critical, so these are not so much criticisms as what I would have liked. I understand why the author concentrated on the three battles he chooses as

these battles occurred when the two sides were more evenly matched, and the result of the civil war was still in the balance. I personally would have liked more on the early days of the People's Army pre-Brunete and would have liked the Battle of the Ebro to have been covered in more detail. His eyewitness accounts of the battles are a little top heavy in favour of those who served in the International Brigades. I would have liked more accounts from Spanish Republicans.

Overall, I would have no hesitation in recommending this book to people who, like me, are fascinated by the military side of the Spanish Civil War, but also to general readers who I believe would enjoy this too. Each battle is covered in detail but is never boring and the section on the performance of the Republican Army dispels myths of Republican incompetence or communist blame. Clifford rightly points out the Nationalists' overwhelming arms advantages caused by 'non-intervention' and their ability to replace any losses of equipment was the decisive factor in their victory.

**CHRISTOPHER HALL**



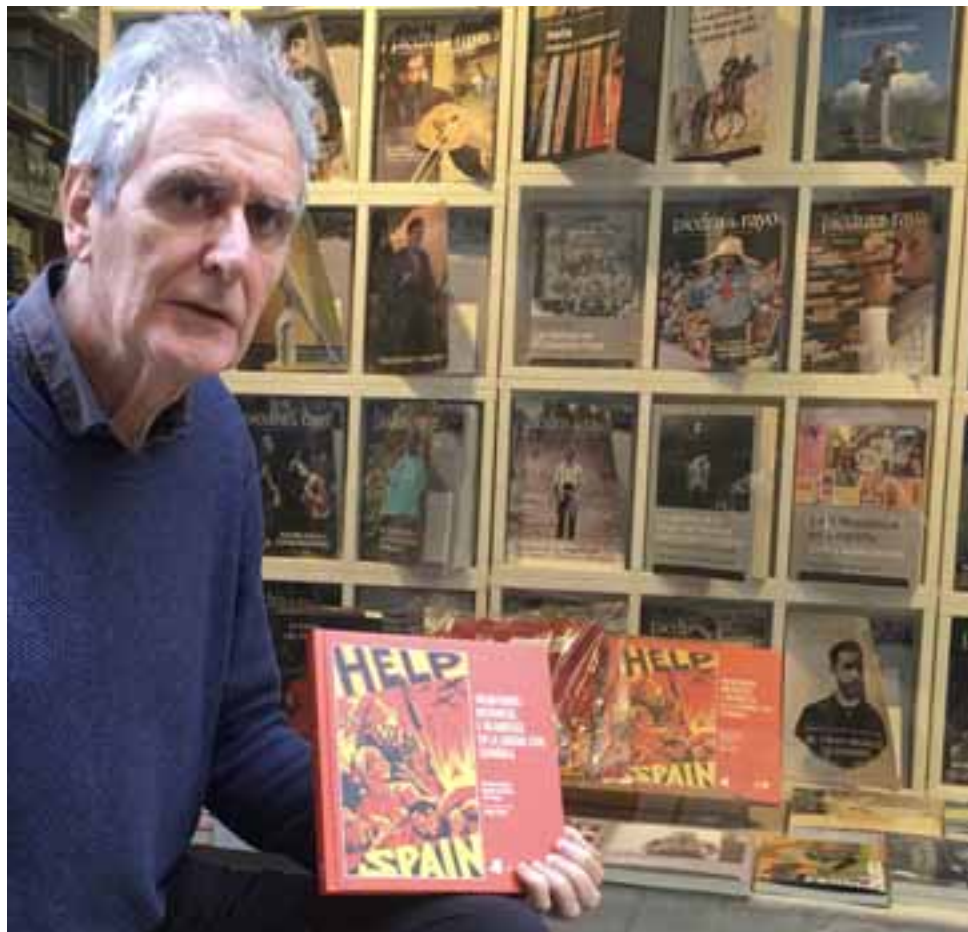
*This poem is taken from 'The Neglected Poetry'. The Canadian doctor Norman Bethune (1890-1939) pioneered mobile blood transfusion techniques while tending the injured in Spain.*

## I Come from Cuatro Caminos

I come from Cuatro Caminos,  
From Cuatro Caminos, I come.  
My eyes are overflowing, and clouded with  
blood.  
The blood of a little fair one,  
Whom I saw destroyed on the ground;  
The blood of a young woman,  
The blood of an old man, a very old man,  
The blood of many people, of many  
Trusting, helpless,  
Fallen under the bombs  
Of the pirates of the air.  
I come from Cuatro Caminos,  
From Cuatro Caminos, I come.  
My ears are deaf  
With blasphemies and wailings,  
Ay Little One, Little One;  
What hast thou done to these dogs  
That they have dashed thee to pieces  
On the stones of the ground?  
Ay, ay, ay, Mother, my Mother;  
Why have they killed the old grandfather?  
Because they are wolf cubs,  
Cubs of a man-eating wolf,  
Because the blood that runs in their veins  
Is the blood of brothel and mud,  
Because in their regiment  
They were born fatherless;  
A 'curse of God' rends the air  
Towards the infamy of heaven.

**NORMAN BETHUNE**

## Spreading the word in Spain, and selling the odd IBMT t-shirt to a government minister



Meet Carlos Muntión (above), publisher of the Spanish-language version of the IBMT's flagship book about the International Brigades, 'Antifascistas: British and Irish volunteers in the Spanish Civil War.' In Spain the book is called 'Help Spain: Voluntarios británicos e irlandeses en la Guerra Civil Española'.

Carlos's publishing house is called Piedra de Rayo, which is also the name of his bookshop in Logroño, capital of La Rioja, the region in northern Spain famous for its wines. By special arrangement with the IBMT, he also sells the ever-popular IBMT t-shirt featuring the British Battalion's banner.

Written by Richard Baxell, Angela Jackson and Jim Jump and co-published by Pamplona-based

Pamiela, 'Help Spain', is in fact an expanded version of 'Antifascistas'. It contains a new chapter on the International Brigaders in Franco's prisons and a section on the Basque refugee children who arrived in Britain in 1937, along with the full text of La Pasionaria's (Dolores Ibárruri's) legendary farewell speech to the International Brigades in Barcelona on 28 October 1938. The foreword for this Spanish edition is by Ángel Viñas, a leading historian of Spain's civil war.

Piedra de Rayo is also the publisher of 'Poems of War and Peace / Poemas de guerra y de paz', a bilingual collection of poems written in English and Spanish by British International Brigader James R Jump (1916-1990), who wrote a number of books on Spain and the Spanish language, including 'The Penguin Spanish Dictionary'.

Carlos Muntión is himself a historian and author of several books on local history. His magazine, *Piedra de Rayo*, regularly features articles on the brutal Francoist repression in this part of Spain. Currently he is researching the civil war concentration camp in Logroño's former bullring – where several American International Brigaders

were held for a short time before being transferred to nearby San Pedro de Cardeña.

Carlos reports a steady stream of customers interested in the book and t-shirt, often buying both at the same time – as pictured together in his shop window. 'Many Spaniards simply don't know about their civil war and are amazed and very moved when they find out about the International Brigades and their sacrifice in the fight against fascism,' he says.

Among the t-shirt customers this year is Alberto Garzón, who is a Riojan as well as leader of the Izquierda Unida (United Left) party, which with Podemos is in coalition with the PSOE socialist party under Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez.

**'Many Spaniards simply don't know about their civil war and are amazed and very moved when they find out about the International Brigades.'**

Garzón is the Minister for Consumer Protection – and the first communist to be in the Spanish government since 1939.

Carlos says he will keep an eye on proceedings in the Spanish parliament, or Cortes, in Madrid to see if Alberto takes up his challenge to wear the t-shirt while in the Congress of Deputies.

**JIM JUMP**

- The IBMT has a limited number of copies of 'Help Spain' for sale at £20 each plus £5 p&p. Send a cheque with your name and address to: IBMT, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU, or arrange payment by other means by emailing the IBMT office ([admin@international-brigades.org.uk](mailto:admin@international-brigades.org.uk)).
- If you would like a copy of 'Poems of War and Peace / Poemas de guerra y de paz' (£10 plus £5 p&p) email IBMT Chair Jim Jump ([chair@international-brigades.org.uk](mailto:chair@international-brigades.org.uk)).
- Piedra de Rayo is in calle de San Juan 6, Logroño 26001, La Rioja.

Alberto Garzón:  
proud owner of an  
IBMT t-shirt.





# Merchandise from the IBMT

Proceeds help fund the commemorative, educational and publicity work of the International Brigade Memorial Trust.

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**Send orders, including your name and address, a size and colour where appropriate, and a cheque payable to the IBMT to: IBMT Merchandise, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU.**

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**See the new products/special offers section on the website for discount deals on certain products.**



**Football scarf:** In the colours of the Spanish Republic. Says '¡No pasarán!' on one side, International Brigade Memorial Trust on the other. £12.99 plus £4.99 p&p.



**Mug:** On one side the International Brigades three-pointed star and on the reverse the words of La Pasionaria: 'You are legend'. £9.99 plus £3.99 p&p.



**Brooch in colours of the Spanish Republic:** Bespoke perspex laser-cut brooch designed for the IBMT in art deco style. 6cms x 4.5cms. £9.99 plus £3.99 p&p.



**Three-pointed star International Brigade brooch:** Bespoke perspex laser-cut brooch designed for the IBMT. 4.5cms x 6cms. £8.99 plus £3.99 p&p.



**Earrings in colours of the Spanish Republic:** Bespoke perspex laser-cut earrings designed for the IBMT in art deco style. 3cms x 2.25cms. £8.99 plus £3.99 p&p.



**Anti-fascist women t-shirt:** T-shirt featuring names of British nurses who served in Spain. Made for the IBMT by t-shirt specialists Philosophy Football from ethically sourced cotton. 'International Brigade Memorial Trust' on sleeve. Available in **XXL** (size 18); **XL** (size 16); **L** (size 14); **M** (size 12). £19.99 plus £4.99 p&p.



**British Battalion t-shirt:** In red or grey and made for the IBMT by t-shirt specialists Philosophy Football from ethically sourced cotton. British Battalion banner on front and 'International Brigade Memorial Trust' on sleeve. Available in: **S** (36inch/90cms chest); **M** (40inch/100cms); **L** (44inch/110cms); **XL** (48inch/120cms). £19.99 plus £4.99 p&p.



**15th International Brigade t-shirt:** With flag of 15th International Brigade, which included British, Irish, American, Canadian and Commonwealth volunteers. 'International Brigade Memorial Trust' on sleeve. Available in **S**, **M**, **L** and **XL** (see British Battalion t-shirt for size details). £19.99 plus £4.99 p&p.



**International Brigade flag:** Replica of the flag of the mainly English-speaking 15th International Brigade, which included the British Battalion. Based on the flag of the Spanish Republic. 150cms x 87cms. £10.99 plus £3.99 p&p.



**¡No Pasarán! bag:** Ethically sourced jute bag (30cms square, 18cms across). One side printed, other blank. Robust, useful for any shopping trip and a great way to show support for anti-fascism and the IBMT. £6.99 plus £2.99 p&p.



**Volunteers for Liberty plate:** Highly decorative commemorative plate made in Staffordshire by Heraldic Pottery exclusively for the IBMT. Fine bone china. 26.5cms diameter. Re-issue of the much sought after 50th anniversary plate produced by International Brigade veteran Lou Kenton. Includes mount for wall display. SPECIAL OFFER: £24.99 plus £5.99 p&p.



**Three-pointed star International Brigade earrings:** Bespoke perspex laser-cut earrings designed for the IBMT. 2.5cms x 3.5cms. £7.99 plus £3.99 p&p.



**IBMT badge:** Solid metal badge with International Brigade medal in centre and 'International Brigade Memorial Trust' around the edge. £3.99 plus £2.99 p&p.



**Tote bags:** One with image of International Brigaders, the other with the Spanish Republican flag. £6.99 each plus £3.99 p&p.



**Clenched fist sculpture:** Life-sized sculpture in specially treated concrete. Based on the clenched fist created by sculptor Betty Rae for the top of the pole of the original British Battalion banner. 23cms high. The clenched fist was the iconic salute of the Popular Front and is still used by anti-fascists around the world. £29.99 plus £7.99 p&p.





Andrew Wlaid

# International Brigade Memorial Trust

Help us inspire new generations with the story of the men and women who fought fascism and defended democracy in Spain from 1936-1939.

To make a donation or become a Friend of the IBMT go to [www.international-brigades.org.uk](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk) and click the donate button.

## International Brigade Memorial Trust

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[www.international-brigades.org.uk](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk)

## PLEASE NOTE

The IBMT hopes to be able to organise an annual commemoration at the International Brigade memorial on London's Southbank at 1pm on 4 July 2020. However, as we go to press, this remains in doubt due to the Covid-19 measures currently in force. Members will be kept informed through the *IBMT eNewsletter* and our website.

¡No pasarán!  
They shall not pass!