

ANTI-FASCISM, ANTI-COMMUNISM, AND MEMORIAL CULTURES: A GLOBAL  
STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE VETERANS

by

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## DEDICATION

For my dear Libby, who believed in me every step of the way.

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## ABSTRACT

The International Brigades were volunteer military units that fought for the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1938. Some 40,000-45,000 men fought in the International Brigades as an act of anti-Fascism, international solidarity, and national preservation. Although many historians have examined the volunteer soldiers' motivations, wartime experiences, and reintegration into their home societies on a national basis, there has not yet been a global study of veteran reintegration and memorial culture. This global comparative study demonstrates that a state's acceptance or rejection of their Brigade veterans was dictated by a global anti-Fascist and anti-Communist divide. In nations that underwent an ideological shift from anti-Fascism to anti-Communism after World War II, the veterans were repressed as potential threats and denied access to state-sponsored memory. In response to this exclusion, the veterans created their own memorial cultures. In nations that retained or renewed their commitment to anti-Fascism, the veterans were welcomed into the pantheon of state heroes as these states incorporated the Brigades into their national origin myths.

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## LIST OF FOREIGN TERMS

Dąbrowszczacy	Polish	People of Dąbrowski
Naši Španci	Serbo-Croatian	Our Spaniards
Spanienkämpfer	German	Spain Fighter
Yishuv	Hebrew	Jewish inhabitants of Palestine



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALBA	Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive
ASV	Association of Spanish Veterans
Comintern	Communist International
CPC	Communist Party of Canada
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPUSA	Communist Party of the United States of America
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FVMPB	Friends and Veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion
Histadrut	General Organization of Workers in Israel
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
IATIVB	Israeli Association of Veterans of the International Brigades
IBA	International Brigade Association
IBMT	International Brigade Memorial Trust
NDP	New Democratic Party
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SACB	Subversive Activities Control Board
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany
VALB	Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade
VMPB	Veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion



## CHAPTER ONE: A CONFLUENCE OF INTERESTS

### Introduction

In October 1938, Communist firebrand Dolores Ibárruri addressed the soldiers of the International Brigades assembled in Barcelona.<sup>1</sup> After a parade and celebration, Ibárruri thanked the volunteers for their service to the Spanish Republic with a rousing speech, telling them “You can go proudly. You are history. You are legend.”<sup>2</sup> Ibárruri’s promise of a proud place in history eventually came true for the Brigade veterans, though their postwar journey to recognition followed one of two divergent paths. Because the International Brigades were a potent symbol of international solidarity and anti-Fascism, their fate was tied to the reception of anti-Fascism in their home nations. American International Brigade veteran Albert Prago later said, “the motivations -- personal and political -- that spurred these young volunteers were many, but... common to all was a deep-seated hatred of Fascism.”<sup>3</sup> When World War II ended, some nations underwent an ideological shift away from anti-Fascism towards anti-Communism. In these nations, the Brigade veterans were repressed by the government and left out of formal public memory. Filling the void left by the government, the veterans’ associations sponsored private memory cultures and asserted their place in history. Other nations embraced anti-

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<sup>1</sup> Dolores Ibárruri, “Goodbye, Brothers, Till Our Speedy Reunion” in *The Heart of Spain* ed. Alvah Bessie (New York: Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, 1952), 347.

<sup>2</sup> Dolores Ibárruri, “Goodbye, Brothers, Till Our Speedy Reunion” in *The Heart of Spain*, 346.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Prago, editor’s note to “The International Brigades” in *Our Fight* (New York; Monthly Review Press, 1987), 26.

Fascism after World War II as a historically or politically important ideology. In these nations, the governments appropriated the history of the Brigades, weaving their story into the national founding myths.

This treatment of the International Brigade veterans defies the expectations of the Cold War. The anti-Fascist and anti-Communist global divide in Brigade veteran treatment and memorialization did not adhere to the Cold War divisions of East versus West, capitalist versus communist, authoritarian versus liberal, or American-aligned versus Soviet-aligned. Whether an international brigade veteran returned to public honor or public persecution was determined by their nation's acceptance of anti-Fascism. While it may appear that the Cold War divided the governments of America, Britain, and Canada, who persecuted the Brigade veterans and excluded them from public memory, from those in East Germany, Poland, and Yugoslavia, who accepted the veterans and celebrated their service, the presence of a vibrant state-sponsored memory culture and national myth in Israel -- an American-aligned, liberal, capitalist nation -- proves that anti-Fascism trumped the Cold War.

The roots of this anti-Fascist and anti-Communist divide go back to 1936 when the Spanish Civil War began. The anti-Fascists found their crusade when General Francisco Franco received assurances from Hitler and Mussolini that they would support the Nationalist war effort.<sup>4</sup> Some four months after the start of the war, Republican Spain's Prime Minister Largo Caballero received a similar assurance from Stalin that the

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Preston, *We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2009), 6; Adam Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 29-31.

USSR would support the Republican war effort.<sup>5</sup> Despite the vocal support for intervention on behalf of Republican Spain by various interest groups, the American, British, and French governments were hesitant to support Republican Spain. They feared that entry into the Spanish Civil War in opposition to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy would cause the conflict to spill over into the rest of Europe, triggering a world war. To avoid this potential disaster, they stuck to their established policy of appeasement.<sup>6</sup> The British, American, and French governments also fostered a deep distrust of Joseph Stalin and were, to an extent, unwilling to support the Republic because Stalin supported it.<sup>7</sup> Neutrality was thus equally an act of cautious concern for the stability of international diplomacy and tacit disapproval of the USSR.

When the American, British, French, Italian, German, Portuguese, and Soviet governments signed the Non-Intervention Agreement of 1936, it became clear that there would be no official aid to the Spanish Republic by the international democratic community. Under the provisions of the agreement, neither troops nor supplies would be provided or offered for sale by the participating countries.<sup>8</sup> To ensure that the embargo was upheld, the French, British, German, and Italian navies blockaded Spain, monitoring the seaports in their respective jurisdictions.<sup>9</sup> This agreement, however, left the door open to the German and Italian transfer of matériel and troops through their respective policing zones.<sup>10</sup> Afraid to provoke Germany and Italy with a confrontation over their disregard

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<sup>5</sup> Hochschild, *We Saw Spain Die*, xviii-xix.

<sup>6</sup> Hochschild, *We Saw Spain Die*, 46-49.

<sup>7</sup> Hochschild, *We Saw Spain Die*, 46-47.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 374.

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 1st ed. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961), 395.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 395.

for the agreement, the British, American, and French governments ignored Republican Spain's complaints that the policing system did nothing to stop the flow of German and Italian aid to Nationalist Spain.<sup>11</sup>

As Hitler and Mussolini blatantly disregarded the Non-Intervention Agreement, sending the German Condor Legion and Italian Corpo Truppe Volontarie to Spain and delivering purchased matériel through their policing zones, Stalin denounced the agreement as a sham.<sup>12</sup> Following Stalin's dismissal of the Non-Intervention Agreement of 1936, the Comintern worked with Republican Spain to establish the International Brigades, a military force overseen by high-ranking Communist Party commissars but organized under the Spanish Foreign Legion.<sup>13</sup> Communist legends like André Marty, Luigi "Gallo" Longo, and Guiseppe "Nicoletti" Di Vittorio formed the governing troika, with Marty acting as Commander, Longo as Inspector General, and Vittorio as Chief Political Commissar.<sup>14</sup> By the end of the war, some 30,000 to 50,000 anti-fascist volunteers from over 50 nations made their way to Spain so they could fight for the preservation of Spanish democracy.<sup>15</sup> Defying their non-interventionist governments, these volunteers thought that the only way to prevent further fascist expansion and the outbreak of war would be to stop the fascists from rising to power in Spain and defeat the expeditionary forces of Germany and Italy.

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<sup>11</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 395.

<sup>12</sup> Hochschild, *We Saw Spain Die*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Colodny, "The International Brigades" in *Our Fight*, 30-31.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, rev. ed., (New York: Random House, 2003), 44.

<sup>15</sup> Estimates for the total number of I.B. volunteers and the countries they came from vary. Some sources indicate as low as 30,000 or 35,000 volunteers, while others go as high as 45,000 to 50,000. Most estimates tend to stay in the 40,000 to 45,000 range, however. As for the countries of origin, the commonly cited figure is 52. Some sources vary on this from 50 to 53.

The Spanish Civil War, the International Brigades, and individual volunteers are the subject of a rich and often intertwined historiography. A significant portion of the current historiography has concerned itself with questions regarding the motivations, demographics, and experiences of the veterans in Spain. Some historians have considered the reintegration of the veterans into their home societies but on a typically national basis. Previous International Brigade histories have tended to focus on a single national group. Where there are international comparisons between groups it has been done only with a few national groups, such as a comparison between the Americans and the East Germans. By focusing on single nations and on the experiences of the International Brigade volunteers that shaped their enlistment and war experiences, the current historiography has missed the global anti-Fascist and anti-Communist divide in the veterans' post-war experiences.

The early historiography of the American International Brigade volunteers, known as the Lincolns, generally focused on the importance of anti-Fascism to the volunteers and the veterans' experiences in the Spanish Civil War. Arthur Landis's *The Abraham Lincoln Brigade* stands as an example of the first wave of historiography where the Lincolns produced their own history. Like his contemporaries Alvah Bessie, the author of *Men in Battle*, Edwin Rolfe, the author of *The Lincoln Battalion*, and Robert Colodny, the author of *The Struggle for Madrid*, Landis told the story of the Lincolns in a volunteer friendly history that is rich in its discussion of the day to day lives of the Brigades but was heavily influenced by the author's personal experiences in the war and political attitudes.

In successive histories, scholars expanded the Lincolns' story by examining their role as an active protest group or challenged the prior pro-Lincoln narrative. Peter Carroll's *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* built upon that early wave of Lincoln historiography and used an analysis of the then newly opened Moscow archives as well as countless hours of interviews to make his argument that the Lincolns were uniquely political men who -- in large part due to their anti-fascist conviction, Marxist ideology, and internationalist views -- committed themselves to a life-long noble struggle against the American political establishment. Richard Bermack's *The Front Lines of Social Change* compliments Peter Carroll's interpretation of the Lincoln's postwar social activism. Bermack uses extensive photographic evidence to supplement his argument that the Lincolns were noble activists who were so dedicated to the American progressive movements that only death or the infirmity of advanced age could prevent them from taking a stand. Cecil Eby, in his monograph *Comrades and Commissars: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War*, takes a contrarian stance. Using the Moscow archives and oral history interviews with the Lincolns who had fallen out with the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during World War II or the McCarthy Era, Eby tells a tale of Communist deceit, subversion, and repression where the Lincolns were simultaneously complicit in the Stalinist plans to make Spain a Soviet satellite state and silence the non-Stalinist supporters of the Spanish Republic. Peter Glazer's *Radical Nostalgia: Spanish Civil War Commemoration in America* situates the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade within the framework of "Radical Nostalgia" and applied this framework to the commemorative performance culture of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a culture that Glazer



participated in himself through the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, as part of his argument that the veterans combined political activism and memory culture as a rejection of American politics. While Lisa Kirschenbaum's *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War: Solidarity and Suspicion* placed the American veteran's persecution within an international context via comparison to the German veterans, her argument that Cold War paranoia drove the persecution of the Americans and the East Germans does not explain the treatment of other International Brigade veterans.

The historiography of the British Battalion has likewise focused either on the experiences of the volunteers during the war or the veterans' post-war activism. In this way, these histories have failed to address the role that global anti-Communism and the shift away from anti-Fascism towards cooperation with Fascism played in isolating the veterans and frustrating their political projects. Tom Buchanan's "Holding the Line: The Political Strategy of the International Brigade Association" and *The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain*, as well as Bill Alexander's *No to Franco: The Struggle Never Stopped 1939-1975* and *British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain, 1936-1939* detail the history of British participation in the International Brigades as well as the later formation and activities of the International Brigade Association. Buchanan argues that the volunteers' drive to pursue their agenda despite the objections of the Labor and Communist leadership created a complicated relationship with the Labour and Communist Parties. He also argues that the British volunteers targeted legal rights for political prisoners as a means of keeping Francoist repressions in British consciousness and chipping away at the Franco regime in the face of the slow but steady transformation of Francoist Spain into a vacationer's paradise. Bill Alexander's *British Volunteers for*

*Liberty* could be grouped with Landis, Bessie, Rolfe, and Colodny in its position as a friendly history of the International Brigades written by a veteran that argues for the historical importance of the British Battalion as Great Britain's contribution to the Spanish Republic and its opposition to the British-brokered non-intervention agreement. In *No to Franco*, Alexander details his contributions to the British anti-Franco movement as well as the contributions of the International Brigade Association. Here Alexander argues that although the Franco regime survived the international pressure against him and the International Brigade Association continuously struggled with poor finances and low membership, the British anti-Francoist could take solace in their few successes in Spanish criminal courts.

The historiography of the Canadian International Brigade Veterans, known as the Mac-Paps, similarly followed national lines as it traced the importance of anti-Fascism to the volunteers and the Canadian state repression of the veterans. Michael Petrou's *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War*, Victor Hoar's *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: The Canadian Contingent in the Spanish Civil War*, William Breeching's *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939*, and Trisha Turner's "Seeing Red: The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in Canadian History and Memory" speak to the experiences of the Canadian volunteers and the various veterans' associations they formed. Using oral history interviews, memoirs, and the large collections of the Moscow archives, Michael Petrou details the journey of the Canadian volunteers, seeking to answer the fundamental questions of "who" and "why." In the end, Petrou argues that the Canadian volunteers were a diverse group of men who shared a deep-rooted anti-fascist conviction and seized the opportunity to act on their beliefs. Petrou also details the Royal

Canadian Mounted Police's near-obsession with the Canadian volunteers and argues that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were the main source of tension between the Canadian volunteers and the Canadian government. Victor Hoar used taped oral history interviews to write a largely celebratory history of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, arguing that their participation in the war in Spain was equally reflective of the Canadian experience of the Depression and the siren-call of Communist internationalism. William Breeching, like Bill Alexander, Arthur Landis, Edwin Rolfe, Alvah Bessie, and Robert Colodny, wrote a friendly history of the Canadian volunteers that attempted to bring the contributions of the Canadian volunteers to the public's attention and counteract what he claimed was the willful forgetting of the Spanish Civil War by Canadian public history. In his account, Breeching argued that the Canadian volunteers played a small but still important role as the embodiment of Canadian anti-fascism in a time when the rest of Canada was withdrawn from the conflict. Trisha Turner argues that the Canadian volunteers were forgotten by the general Canadian public due to the Canadian government's repression of the volunteers and its repeated refusal to include the volunteers in Canada's state-sponsored public memory by granting them veteran status.

The historiography of East German International Brigade veterans has thoroughly detailed the state appropriation of the International Brigades, though it has failed to account for the similar state appropriation of the International Brigades in other nations. Josie McClellan's *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades, 1945-1989* and "The Odyssey of the German Volunteers" as well as Arnold Krammer's "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War in East Germany," detail the experience of International Brigade veterans living in East Germany, their place in the

East German pantheon of civic heroes, and their unique roles as models of communist self-sacrifice. McClellan argues that German participation in the International Brigades should be viewed as part of the long period of exile that began in 1933 and ended with the conclusion of World War II. McClellan argues the Socialist Unity Party folded the memory of the International Brigades into the origin myth of East Germany to foster proper Communist political consciousness in the next generation. McClellan further argues that the East German government could not tolerate alternatives to their story of the International Brigades and thus repressed the veterans to maintain their monopoly on history. Krammer echoes McClellan concerning the East German appropriation of the International Brigades, though he emphasizes the role that International Brigade memory played in differentiating East Germany from Nazi Germany.

The Yugoslav historiography likewise examined the appropriation of the International Brigades by the Yugoslav state without examining or explaining the similar appropriation by any other states. Vjerman Pavlakovic's "Twilight of the Revolutionaries: 'Naši Španci' and the End of Yugoslavia" details the trajectory of International Brigade veterans in Yugoslavia. Pavlakovic argues that the International Brigade veterans formed an important cadre within the Titoist government because of their role as revolutionary leaders and mentors during the Partisan movement in World War II. Pavlakovic further argues that the memory of the International Brigades was used as a tool to instill international and inter-ethnic cooperative attitudes in the next generation but the connection of the veterans to the Titoist establishment alienated the history of the International Brigades from the public as ethnic tensions plunged the nation into the bloody Yugoslav Wars.

The historiography of the Jewish International Brigade volunteers has missed the rich global connections of the Jewish International Brigade veterans by focusing on the motivations of the volunteers to join the Brigades, the formation and later commemoration of a Yiddish-speaking Jewish military unit, or the trajectory of International Brigade memory in the new state of Israel. In “Tikkun Olam and Transnational Solidarity: Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War,” Raanan Rein argues that although many Jewish volunteers held internationalist views and participated in the Spanish Civil War for varied reasons, the actions of the Jewish volunteers in the International Brigades fulfilled the Jewish scriptural mandate to repair the world. Albert Prago tells the story of the international Jewish unit in “The Botwin Company in Spain, 1937-1939” and argues in “Jews in the International Brigades” that the Jewish volunteers made a numerically significant contribution to the International Brigades and acted out of anti-Nazi conviction. Saul Wellman detailed the appropriation of the International Brigades by the Zionist establishment in “Jewish Vets of the Spanish Civil War: Personal Observation of the Conference in Israel.” In “Salud y Shalom: American Jews in the Spanish Civil War,” Joe Butwin argued that the Jewish-American volunteers wrestled with a complex relationship with their Jewishness while in Spain, with many ultimately rejecting their Jewishness as they emphasized their firm devotion to communist or generally anti-fascist political ideology instead. Later, as some veterans left the Communist Party, they reclaimed their Jewishness.

Amir Locker-Biletzki’s “War and Memory: The Israeli Communist Commemoration of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1986,” and Raanan Rein’s “A Belated Inclusion: Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and Their Place in the Israeli

National Narrative” both detail the changing relationship the Palestinian/Israeli veterans had with the State of Israel. Both historians argue that the Zionist establishment slowly included the International Brigades within the pantheon of Israeli heroes. Locker-Biletzki attributes this change in attitudes towards the veterans in part to the Zionist’s desire to counter the Soviet Bloc’s backlash after the 6-Days War, with the Polish cancelation of many veterans’ pensions acting as the perfect fodder. In “Echoes of the Spanish Civil War in Palestine: Zionists, Communists and the Contemporary Press,” Raanan Rein argues that the Palestinian Jews were sympathetic to the Spanish Republic but viewed recruitment for the International Brigades as a potential drain of scarce manpower that had to be prevented. Nir Arielli’s “Induced to Volunteer? The Predicament of Jewish Communists in Palestine and the Spanish Civil War” tells the related story of International Brigade recruitment from the British colonial authorities. Here Arielli argues that the British colonial authorities saw the International Brigades as a convenient tool for disposing of unwanted Communists or other radicals.

Taking a global perspective shows that the relative prevalence of anti-Fascism or anti-Communism determined a given nation’s incorporation or rejection of the International Brigade veterans. This global comparative study also demonstrates that the public acceptance or rejection of internationalist world views, changes in conceptions of national identity, and the international Cold War political climate shaped the way International Brigade memory was formed and used.<sup>16</sup> International Brigade memory was

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<sup>16</sup> This comparative study has been limited to digitally accessible or print materials due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Due to these limitations, there are some national groups where only a few sources are included. For the Yugoslavs, only one source was available. There is thus room for a future scholar with sufficient linguistic knowledge and increased access to sources to further this line of inquiry.

constructed by either state or private actors who were often motivated by political aims. By examining these given nations in the context of a global anti-Fascist and anti-Communist divide, the actions of these memory agents are clarified as the products of international ideological movements as well as the responses to national politics.

### **The Nationalist Internationalists**

At the heart of the conflict between the International Brigade veterans and their respective home states lay their dual sense of nationality and internationality. While the International Brigades were appropriately named, the men who joined them were both nationalists and internationalists, as evidenced by the very names of the units within the Brigades. As the individual brigades, battalions, and companies were formed, the volunteers chose to name these units after national heroes. The Americans fought in the “Abraham Lincoln” Battalion of XV International Brigade. In naming their battalion after President Abraham Lincoln, the Americans invoked his national legacy. Just as Lincoln had freed African Americans from slavery, the Lincolns aimed to free Spanish peasants from their oppressors. The other national groups invoked similar legacies. The Germans fought under the name of Ernst Thaelmann, a member of the Reichstag who had been imprisoned by Nazis in 1933 and sent to Bautzen Camp. The Poles named their battalion after General Jarosław Dąbrowski. The Italians honored General Giuseppe Garibaldi, the famed unifier of Italy, by naming their brigade after him.<sup>17</sup> Many International volunteers had nationalist reasons for joining the International Brigades and saw their service in Spain as an opportunity to protect or better their home nation. Thus, for many of the

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Colodny, “The International Brigades” in *The Heart of Spain*, 32.

volunteers, their international actions were not in contrast to their national identities but rather were an extension of them.

The Lincolns, for instance, thought they were fighting for the safety of New York as well as Madrid. American veterans consistently argued that protecting Spain would protect America by stopping fascist aggression that could trigger a world war. This future world war would threaten American economic and military interests as well and jeopardize American lives. Many volunteers supported anti-fascism for this reason. Acknowledging the importance of anti-fascism to the Lincolns, Albert Prago states that “the motivations – personal and political – that that spurred these young volunteers to risk their lives were many, but, as we see here, common to all was a deep-seated hatred of fascism.”<sup>18</sup> Milton Wolff’s fictionalized recounting of the war captures the spirit of the International Brigades when Mitch Castle, Wolff’s author surrogate, tells Ernest Hemingway “if we don’t stop the fascists and war-makers here, you’ll all be in the same hole sooner or later.”<sup>19</sup> Members of the American Nazi Party and Italian nationalists paraded down the streets of New York, making the threat of a fascist invasion or political takeover feel immediate.<sup>20</sup>

Fighting in the Spanish Civil War was also an expression of the Lincolns’ internationalism and the Jewish American commitment to internationalist ideologies. Reflecting on the choice to join the Brigades, George Watt stated “when we went to Spain we saw ourselves primarily as internationalists. We internalized this feeling of

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<sup>18</sup> Albert Prago, Editor’s Note to “The International Brigades” in *Our Fight*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Milton Wolff, *Another Hill: An Autobiographical Novel* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 351

<sup>20</sup> Mike Wallace, “New York and the World: The Global Context” in *Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 22-23.



internationalism, that we were citizens of the world. When [Eugene] Debs was in prison, I remember his famous quote when he lost his citizenship in jail. He said, ‘I’m a citizen of the world,’ and that’s how we saw ourselves.”<sup>21</sup> Watt fought in Spain believing himself to be more than a New Yorker, an American, or even a Jew since he was an internationalist as well. Watt was not alone in this sentiment, as another veteran stated “I didn’t go to Spain as a Jew; I was an internationalist.”<sup>22</sup> Although Watt would later note that “our internationalism was flawed, seriously flawed, because it was an international link to the interests of the Soviet Union,” at the time Communists like Watt saw the Spanish Civil War as an opportunity to take part in the global struggles of the working class, saying he “was afraid our history was going to pass me by.”<sup>23</sup>

For the small contingent of African Americans, the war in Spain presented an opportunity to experience equality and fight against the oppression of Jim Crow racism back home.<sup>24</sup> When asked why he volunteered, James Yates says he went because he identified the plight of Spanish peasants with his own, recognized the rhetoric of the Klu Klux Klan in the words of Hitler, and saw fighting for Spain as an acceptable alternative to fighting for Ethiopia.<sup>25</sup> Yates claimed that because “the new government in Spain was dividing its wealth with the peasants... Spain was the perfect example for the world I

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<sup>21</sup> George Watt, Interview by Joe Butwin. June, 1992. <https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/american-jews-spanish-civil-war/george-watt/>.

<sup>22</sup> Anonymous, Interview by Joe Butwin. <https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/american-jews-spanish-civil-war/george-watt/>

<sup>23</sup> George Watt, Interview by Joe Butwin. June, 1992. <https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/american-jews-spanish-civil-war/george-watt/>.

<sup>24</sup> The number of African Americans in the International Brigades is generally accepted to be around 90.

<sup>25</sup> James Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid: Memoir of a Black American in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York: Open Hand Publishing, 1989), 88-96.

dreamed of,” a world where “a black man would be governor of Mississippi.”<sup>26</sup> In his memoir, *Mississippi to Madrid*, Yates claims that his experiences in Spain were but one chapter in a larger story of racial struggle that began in Quitman, Mississippi and moved through the labor movement in Chicago, the Harlem Renaissance in New York, and the Spanish Civil War before ultimately culminating in the Civil Rights movement. For black men like Tom Page, who attended “any demonstration against war and fascism” and enjoyed the “feeling of camaraderie, that everyone had a oneness, a singleness of purpose... irrespective of their color,” joining the Abraham Lincoln Brigade represented the opportunity to fight as “Tom Page, not as anyone else, not Tom Page, Black” and to serve “as a person... as a man!”<sup>27</sup> Page acknowledged that “you have to have war if you want to have any modicum of freedom, you have to protect your dignity, and if it takes war to do that, you have to have war.”<sup>28</sup> Page thus likewise saw his service in Spain as a part of his fight against racism in America, and thus a part of his efforts to improve the situation for African Americans like himself. He was willing to risk the depravities of war so he could experience the liberties of a life unfettered by the restrictions of the Jim Crow South, which he then sought to bring back to America.

Some of the Lincolns were exiled immigrants whose anti-fascist beliefs and actions made them personae non-gratae in their home countries, such as the Italians who were forced out of Italy for criticizing Mussolini.<sup>29</sup> Thus, some of the International Brigade volunteers joined to pursue the opportunity to fight they had been previously

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<sup>26</sup> Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid*, 96/

<sup>27</sup> Tom Page, “Interview with a Black Anti-Fascist” in *Our Fight*, 54-55.

<sup>28</sup> Tom Page, “Interview with a Black Anti-Fascist” in *Our Fight*, 56.

<sup>29</sup> Fraser Ottanelli, “Anti-Fascism and the Shaping of National and Ethnic Identity: Italian American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 27, no. 1 (2007): 5

denied.<sup>30</sup> The Italian American periodical *L'Unita Operaia* proclaimed "we promise to fight to the end to ensure that liberty will prevail not only in Spain... but also in Italy."<sup>31</sup>

These Italian immigrants in the Lincoln Brigade were also motivated by the desire to redeem Italy's international image which they saw as tarnished by the stain of Fascism, the war in Abyssinia/Ethiopia, and now intervention in Spain.<sup>32</sup> Giuseppe Dalleo wrote, "we will fight to the last drop of blood to demonstrate to the world that the true sons of Italy have contributed to the struggle for liberty of Spain and of the entire world."<sup>33</sup>

Albino Zattoni likewise stated he was proud to have fought with "the true Italy in Spain."<sup>34</sup> Other Italian-American immigrants wanted to drive Mussolini from power so they could return home and were eager to reincorporate themselves in the fabric of their old lives as soon as they were able.<sup>35</sup>

This confluence of interests, where the volunteers were both nationalists and internationalists extended to the British volunteers as well. One volunteer told his daughter that he was fighting in Spain "to protect you and all the children in England as well as people all over the world."<sup>36</sup> Bill Alexander stated the "dynamic force which drove volunteers from Britain to Spain and welded them into an effective fighting unit

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<sup>30</sup> Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism and the Shaping of National and Ethnic Identity," 5.

<sup>31</sup> "Nello Vergani vive oggi più che mai," *L'Unità Operaia*, September 4, 1937. Quoted in Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism and the shaping of National and Ethnic Identity," 10.

<sup>32</sup> Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism and the Shaping of National and Ethnic Identity," 23.

<sup>33</sup> *L'Unita Operaia* September-October 1938, 9. Quoted in Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism and the Shaping of National and Ethnic Identity," 22.

<sup>34</sup> "A sabido rapresentar en Espana la verdadera Italia" in "Albino Zattoni," Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive Fond 545 Opus 6 File 1018, 40-43. Quoted in Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism and the Shaping of National and Ethnic Identity," 22.

<sup>35</sup> Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism and the Shaping of National and Ethnic Identity," 12.

<sup>36</sup> James Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire: The British in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford, CA, 1998), 108. Quoted in Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism and the Shaping of National and Ethnic Identity," 11.

was a deep hatred of fascism.”<sup>37</sup> Alexander was motivated by a desire to stop the growing British fascist movement spearheaded by Oswald Mosley, which “sent disciplined, uniformed groups of Blackshirts to beat up Jewish people in London’s East End” and “also attacked unemployed workers in Merthyr Tydfil, Aberdeen.”<sup>38</sup> Alexander was also determined to prevent the spread of fascism since he understood that “war was not only a necessary instrument to extend [fascist] influence, but was a glorious and welcome feature of their programme [sic].”<sup>39</sup> Other British volunteers echoed Alexander’s sentiments since they “understood that fascism must be checked before it brought wider repression and war.”<sup>40</sup> The fear that a Fascist takeover of Europe would throw Europe into the throngs of war motivated many British volunteers who wished to prevent this war not by appeasing the Fascists, as their government had done, but by fighting the Fascists in Madrid.

The German volunteers had a similar experience. Service in the International Brigades was one part of a period of exile which began when Hitler rose to power in 1933 and banned the Communist Party of Germany. The German communists were spread all over Europe, with some being arrested and sent to concentration camps like Buchenwald and others fleeing to Paris, Prague, or Moscow. Many of these political exiles traveled to Spain during the war in search of meaning and action during their exile. As one volunteer put it, “there was enormous enthusiasm for Spain... most of the political emigrants had already done time in Germany. They had been imprisoned,

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<sup>37</sup> Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty* (London: Camelot Press, 1982), 30.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty*, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty*, 31.

beaten. It was an opportunity to face the Nazis with a weapon in your hand. That played a huge role.”<sup>41</sup> Some volunteers saw their ascent over the Pyrenees and arrival in Spain as the first of many future victories, a welcome reprieve from the “very arduous path” they had followed since 1933.<sup>42</sup> Willy Grunert described the moment the soldiers of the Edgar Andre Battalion received their consignment of arms as “a great day, we had weapons! Gold prospectors must have clung to their first find in the same way we did to the rifles. What I had dreamt as a child... wasn’t a dream anymore. I was a soldier of the working class.”<sup>43</sup>

Other German volunteers traveled to Spain to make better use of their exile. Some volunteers saw a glorious death in the battlefields of Spain as preferable to the drab life in the exile communities in Moscow or Paris. Gustave Regler left the German Communist exile hub of Moscow since “in Spain, I was sure of it, I would breathe a different air. There, death was a protection against treachery and judges; one died at the hands of the enemy.”<sup>44</sup> Max Kahane thought his political work in Czechoslovakia was “too conventional, too small” and saw the Spanish Civil War as an opportunity to take a greater stand against Nazism.<sup>45</sup> Seeing victory in Madrid as a steppingstone to victory in Berlin, they thought participation in the Spanish Civil War could hasten their return from

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<sup>41</sup> Roman Rubinstein. Interviewed by Josie McLellan, Jan 4, 1999. Quoted in Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 20.

<sup>42</sup> Alfred Katzenstein. Interview by Josie McLellan, Feb 5, 1999. Quoted in Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany*, 14.

<sup>43</sup> SAPMO-BArch, SgY 11/ V 237/ 13/ 206, P. 85. Erlebnisbericht Willy Grunert, 22 May 1968. Quoted in Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany*, 20.

<sup>44</sup> Gustave Regler, *The Owl of Minerva* trans. Norman Denny (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959), 266.

<sup>45</sup> Max Kahane. Interview by Josie McLellan, Feb 22 1999. Quoted in Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany*, 22.

exile. In this way, the German volunteers saw their actions in Spain as national. They wanted to return to a period of normalcy in their homes, and the International Brigades offered an opportunity to take a step toward this goal.

All these men exemplify the notion that participation in the International Brigades was simultaneously an advancement of both national and international goals. Joining the International Brigades was an international action that frequently had national motivations. These men did not join the International Brigades solely because they wanted to defend Madrid, but also because they saw in the defense of Madrid the defense of their home nation or the attainment of another nationalist goal. For some volunteers, joining the Brigades would hopefully forestall a deadly and destructive war that could potentially engulf their home nation and cause the deaths of their compatriots. For others, the Brigades represented a chance to earn redemption and clear the tainted name of their home countries or to help, even in a small way, to aid the defeat of the fascist regimes that sent them into exile. In these instances, International Brigade volunteers acted on a confluence of interests, where nationalist and internationalist motivations combined in a single action. For these men, enlisting in a foreign military was not a betrayal of their home states, but rather was an extension of the political beliefs that they thought would later contribute to the betterment of their nations.

## CHAPTER TWO: NATIONAL THREATS AND PRIVATE HEROES

Where many veterans saw their service in Spain as an act of national protection and international solidarity, some of their home nations did not. Participation in the International Brigades violated the Non-Intervention Agreement of 1936 and flew in the face of most nation's foreign policies. America stamped passports with "Not Valid for Travel to Spain" in 1937, hoping to dissuade American citizens from violating non-intervention.<sup>46</sup> The British government threatened to prosecute volunteers under the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870.<sup>47</sup> The Canadian Parliament passed the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1937 in response to the steady flow of International Brigade Volunteers.<sup>48</sup> These states thus saw the choice to volunteer in the Spanish Civil War as a subversion of national interests, not an extension of them. These states saw the internationalism of the volunteers as inherently anti-national.

### **The International Brigades in the Land of McCarthy**

The return of the Lincolns to America was a story of repression and national suspicion. When they arrived in New York harbor, they were met by FBI agents who promptly confiscated their passports.<sup>49</sup> African American veteran James Yates did not get

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<sup>46</sup> Harry Fisher, *Comrades: Tales of a Brigadista in the Spanish Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 22.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander, *British Volunteers*, 241.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2008), 171.

<sup>49</sup> Carry Nelson, Afterword to *Another Hill*, 395; Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid*, 159

his passport back until the Supreme Court affirmed the right to travel two decades later.<sup>50</sup> The Lincolns were heavily surveilled in the decades after their return. As World War II broke out, bringing the global conflict that many of the Lincolns had warned against, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade initially chose to follow the party line and echoed the Communist Party of the United States of America's anti-war stance. This anti-war stance and their service in Spain irrevocably linked them to Communism. As the Cold War developed and anti-communism replaced anti-fascism, they were targeted as disloyal to the state. The ties to Communism were seen as ties to Moscow and conspiracy with a foreign enemy. Many Lincolns lost their jobs, were barred from their unions, were harassed by the FBI, and were blacklisted from the film industry during the Age of McCarthyism. Some Lincolns were even tried and jailed as threats to national security.

When World War II first broke out with the 1939 invasion of Poland, it was a war of authoritarianism versus democracy, not one of democracy against fascism or communism against fascism. With the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the USSR not only declared peace with Nazi Germany but also joined forces in the invasion of Poland. As the news of the war came to America, the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) received directions from Moscow that all American Communists should oppose American entry into the war and work to keep America neutral.<sup>51</sup> The Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade stunned some of their non-Communist members and supporters by following the "Imperialist War" line set by the CPUSA. They further justified their opposition to American entry into World War II by claiming it would make

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<sup>50</sup> Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid*, 159.

<sup>51</sup> Steve Nelson and James Barrett and Rob Ruck, *Steve Nelson: American Radical* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), 248.



America compliant in the crimes of British imperialism and would be a step towards the creation of an American empire.<sup>52</sup> To justify their anti-imperialist stance, the VALB published a rebuke of the Roosevelt administration in their in-house magazine which related the expressed opinions of their Latin American fellow International Brigadiers, who “spoke to us of the ruin and sorrow [American Imperialism] had brought to their homes.”<sup>53</sup> The VALB admonished the Roosevelt administration to “adopt a true good-neighbor policy toward the Latin-American countries” so the Latin American countries could “look trustingly upon us as their Northern friend, not fearfully as the dreaded Colossus of the North,” thus preventing the possibility that the “[American] flag be viewed by the peoples of Latin-America with the same horror as Hitler’s in Europe and Britain’s in Ireland and India.”<sup>54</sup> Looking back on these events decades later, Steve Nelson attributed this course of action to the strength of Moscow’s grip over the CPUSA and expressed his belief that it contributed to the political isolation during the McCarthy years and gave strength to the opposition’s claim that the Communists were Moscow’s puppets.<sup>55</sup>

Once the international situation had changed with Nazi Germany’s betrayal of Stalin and the invasion of the USSR, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, which had previously espoused non-intervention following the party line, fully supported the war. However, the Lincolns aligning themselves with Uncle Sam did not mean Uncle Sam wanted their help. Many faced difficulties enlisting or were given unfavorable

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<sup>52</sup> *The Volunteer for Liberty*, January 1938.

<sup>53</sup> *The Volunteer for Liberty*, February 1941.

<sup>54</sup> *The Volunteer for Liberty*, February 1941.

<sup>55</sup> Steve Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 381.

assignments because of their past involvement in the Spanish Civil War. African American James Yates enlisted into a segregated unit of the Army Signal Corps. When his unit was shipped overseas, the Army pulled Yates from his unit, sending him off to Utah where he cleaned the Bushnell Army Hospital.<sup>56</sup> His lieutenant told him he thought it was because Yates was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>57</sup> After getting an infection from a tooth extraction, Yates was given a medical discharge, having never seen a day of combat.<sup>58</sup> While Tom Page was allowed to go to Italy, he spent his time crushing rocks into gravel to be used in new road construction and also never saw combat.<sup>59</sup> The Army denied Milton Wolff an Army Reserves Officer Corps commission because of his service in Spain.<sup>60</sup> After spending a year recruiting for British intelligence, who had no qualms about Wolff's service, Wolff tried once again to get into the US Army. After a few transfers, he found that the Army was stalling his advancement through the Officer's Training School and had marked with his file with "P.A." - Premature Antifascist.<sup>61</sup> The US Army feared Wolff was unreliable and wanted to use the cover of war to hide his operations with European Communist leaders. Eventually, The US Army gave Wolff an officer's post in Burma, far from the reaches of the European Communist circles.<sup>62</sup> While

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<sup>56</sup> Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid*, 163.

<sup>57</sup> Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid*, 163.

<sup>58</sup> Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid*, 163.

<sup>59</sup> Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid*, 165.

<sup>60</sup> Cary Nelson, Afterword to *Another Hill*, 394.

<sup>61</sup> Cary Nelson, *Afterword to Another Hill*, 394

<sup>62</sup> Milton Wolff, 'Hemingway's "On the American Dead in Spain"' in *Remembering Spain: Hemingway's Civil War Eulogy and the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 10.

in Burma, Wolff met “Wild Bill” Donovan, who recruited him to the Office of Strategic Services and sent Wolff to Italy.<sup>63</sup>

Those members of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade who passed military screening joined the armed forces. While the U.S. Army’s suspicions that the Lincolns were Communist spies was a great obstacle to their participation, many Lincolns served with honor, such as former Commander Milton Wolff who eventually served as a US Army officer in the Pacific Theatre after years of maneuvering through the US Army and intermittent stints with the British.<sup>64</sup> There were enough Lincolns in the armed forces that the *Volunteer for Liberty* added an “In Memoriam” section for those killed in action, ran a “The War To Date by Major Milton Wolff” segment with information on the Pacific Theatre, and included a “Servicio Correo” (Mail Service) segment where they published letters from the Lincolns and other former International Brigadiers serving.<sup>65</sup>

Many Lincolns served in the Merchant Marine, finding it easier to go through the friendly unions than the hostile US military. Bill Bailey spent a year as the Port Agent of the New York branch of the Marine Fireman’s Unit, doing administrative tasks, negotiating with the Navy, and making sure the stream of Liberty Ships leaving New York Harbor had their firemen.<sup>66</sup> After some time, the safety of his desk job and the loss of some comrades weighed on his conscience. Bailey quit his post and spent the rest of

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<sup>63</sup> Peter Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 260.

<sup>64</sup> Milton Wolff, “Hemingway’s ‘On the American Dead in Spain’” in *Remembering Spain*, 10.

<sup>65</sup> *The Volunteer for Liberty*, January 1942; February 1944; March 1944; May 1944; October 1944; January 1945; February 1945; March 1945; May 1945.

<sup>66</sup> Bill Bailey, *The Kid from Hoboken: An Autobiography* ed. Lynne Damme (Larksprings Productions, 1993), Book 3 Chapter 3, unpaginated.; Book 3 Chapter 6, unpaginated.

the war on deck, traveling from the West Coast to Australia.<sup>67</sup> Former Commissar and CPUSA functionary Harry Haywood joined the National Maritime Union, one of the most militant seafaring unions, in 1943.<sup>68</sup> Haywood worked on transport ships carrying soldiers to Australia and then to Bombay.<sup>69</sup>

The US Army's suspicion of the Lincolns previewed the American government's suspicion after World War II ended. During the infamous McCarthy Era, the Lincolns were often the target of the legal mechanisms of the anti-communist purge. With American and Soviet governments in a standoff, any American who had connections to the Soviet Union or the Communist Party were suspected to be Soviet undercover agents. Since the International Brigades were organized under the auspices of the Comintern, most of the volunteers were Communists, and the veterans' organization had followed the Communist Party line against World War II prior to Hitler's betrayal of Stalin, the Lincolns were prime suspects. The House Un-American Activities Committee summoned some veterans, most of whom refused to cooperate. Screenwriter, novelist, and prominent Lincoln Alvah Bessie was one such extreme case. Bessie gained fame, or infamy, as one of the Hollywood Ten and suffered the price for refusing to cooperate with the investigation; the punishment for his being held in contempt of Congress which was a \$1,000 fine, 10 months in jail, and the loss of his Hollywood career.<sup>70</sup> Dr. Ed Barsky, the chief medical officer in the expedition from the American Bureau to Aid Spanish

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<sup>67</sup> Bill Bailey, *The Kid from Hoboken*, Book 3 Chapters 9-10, unpaginated.

<sup>68</sup> Harry Haywood, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle: The Life of Harry Haywood* ed. Gwendolyn Hall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), Kindle Edition. Kindle Location 3877.

<sup>69</sup> Harry Haywood, *A Black Communist*, Kindle Location 3955-3903.

<sup>70</sup> Albert Prago, Preface to *Our Fight*, 12.

Democracy, was called before the committee in 1950. His refusal to cooperate led to a jail sentence, fine, and the suspension of his medical license for contempt of Congress.<sup>71</sup>

Other veterans were tried for the violation of state or federal statutes. Steve Nelson, a prominent Lincoln and Communist Party functionary, was one such case. There were so many federal agents monitoring Nelson's family home that the local children made a game of finding them.<sup>72</sup> It thus came as no surprise when law enforcement agents raided the Pittsburgh Communist Party office and arrested Nelson for violating the Pennsylvania Sedition Act in August of 1950, kicking off a six-year odyssey through the courts.<sup>73</sup> While he was recovering from a 1951 car crash and unable to appear for his Pennsylvania Sedition Act trial, federal officers arrested Nelson for violating the Smith Act.<sup>74</sup> His Smith Act arrest prompted the courts to resume his Pennsylvania Sedition Act trial in December of 1951. Unable to find a willing defense lawyer, Nelson had to act pro se (for himself).<sup>75</sup> In both cases, Nelson was on trial for attempts to overthrow the government of the United States and for the possession and distribution of material that would incite violence against the government.<sup>76</sup> During the Pennsylvania trial, Judge Musmanno entered communist literature into evidence since they proved the dangers of communist rhetoric.<sup>77</sup> During questioning, Musmanno declared the literature to be more dangerous than a firearm in its potential destructive capabilities.<sup>78</sup> Nelson made headlines

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<sup>71</sup> Ed Barsky, "Someone had to help" in *Facing Fascism*, 59.

<sup>72</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 317.

<sup>73</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 319-320.

<sup>74</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 324.

<sup>75</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 325-337.

<sup>76</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 320.

<sup>77</sup> Steve Nelson, *The 13th Juror; The Inside Story of My Trial* (New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1955), 157.

<sup>78</sup> Nelson, *13th Juror*, 157.

when he was convicted and sentenced to twenty years in jail, \$10,000 in fines, and \$13,000 in prosecution costs for violation of the Pennsylvania Sedition Act in 1952.<sup>79</sup> After a year, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturned the Pennsylvania Sedition Act conviction, ruling that the federal Smith Act superseded the state law and to have Nelson tried and convicted under both would be double jeopardy.<sup>80</sup> The Smith Act trial took place in 1953; Nelson was convicted and the court passed down a 5 year sentence with a \$10,000 fine in August 1953.<sup>81</sup>

The American government denied the Lincolns their nationality by defining them as anti-nationalist and emphasizing their international connections to Moscow. The House Un-American Activities Committee had Un-American in its name, signifying how the state viewed Communism as inherently foreign. As Steve Nelson would later identify in his memoirs, a source of conflict between Communists, which included many of the Lincolns and the veterans' organization, and the United States government was the public perception of Communism as a foreign entity linked to Moscow rather than an internationally oriented but still American ideology.<sup>82</sup> The press and protestors frequently heckled Nelson during his Pennsylvania Sedition Act and Smith Act trials and often emphasized Nelson's foreignness. The Americans Battling Communism crowded around Iron City Jail, shouting for Nelson to "go back to Russia."<sup>83</sup> The local school children told Nelson's son Bobby that Steve was a spy, greatly upsetting Bobby.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Nelson, *13th Juror*, 11.; Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 339.

<sup>80</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 373.

<sup>81</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 374.

<sup>82</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 301-304.

<sup>83</sup> Nelson, *13th Juror*, 12.

<sup>84</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 328.

Nelson's case typifies the level of paranoia felt by the American state in this period. The state considered Nelson too dangerous to be allowed in public because of his affiliations, political beliefs, and previous actions like volunteering for Spain. Actions and beliefs that Nelson saw as contributing to America were seen as detrimental by the state. The paranoia continued even after his conviction. After receiving a court order, law enforcement personnel moved Steve Nelson from Iron City Jail in Pittsburgh and to the Allegheny County Workhouse in Blawnox for security concerns.<sup>85</sup> While at Blawnox, Nelson spent numerous days in "the hole," a lightless confinement room separate from the rest of the cells, because the warden feared he would cause trouble if given free contact with the rest of the inmates.<sup>86</sup> While Nelson was bedridden from injuries sustained during a car crash, the FBI increased the surveillance of his home, deeming him to be a flight risk despite his inability to walk.<sup>87</sup> At no point in this saga did Nelson pose a genuine threat to the United States government, but the internationalism that he represented could not be tolerated in light of the Cold War.

The state persecution of the Lincolns continued when, in 1953, the federal government put together a case to try the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade before the Subversive Activities Control Board.<sup>88</sup> The FBI recruited William Herrick, a Lincoln who had left the Communist Party and turned against the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the early stages of World War II, to testify that the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was Communist-controlled and should be

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<sup>85</sup> Nelson, *13th Juror*, 11-13.

<sup>86</sup> Nelson, *13th Juror*, 104-106, 54-59, 69-70.

<sup>87</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 323.

<sup>88</sup> William Herrick, *Jumping the Line: The Adventures and Misadventures of an American Radical* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), Kindle Edition. Kindle Location 3012.

listed as a front.<sup>89</sup> After hours of testimony, the board ruled in favor of the government and placed the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations.<sup>90</sup> In the eyes of the United States Government, the Lincolns were now officially foreign agents of the Soviet Union. As a front organization, they were considered to be fully controlled by the Communist Party, which of course served only the interests of Moscow. After their forced registry on the Attorney General's list, only a small cadre of veterans centered around Moe Fishman, the General Secretary of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, maintained involvement in the organization for fear that the federal government would crack down even harder and any members would be tried and imprisoned.<sup>91</sup>

During the anti-Communist persecution of the Lincolns, the Lincolns were dismayed by the breakdown of the alliance between Communists and non-Communists. Alvah Bessie pined for "the unity which existed in Spain" when "Communists and non-Communists united on a world-wide scale in defense of democracy" and expressed his disappointment that "the ideals of human progress, decency, and even peace are under attack as 'Red,' 'subversive,' and even 'treasonable.'"<sup>92</sup> Steve Nelson was confused when he was arrested, as he did not understand what law he had violated.<sup>93</sup> Nelson later stated his Pennsylvania trial "took place under conditions that can best be described as hysterical."<sup>94</sup> The mismatch between the United States government and the Lincolns can

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<sup>89</sup> Herrick, *Jumping the Line*, Kindle Location 3056.

<sup>90</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 409.

<sup>91</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 409.

<sup>92</sup> Alvah Bessie, Editor's Preface to *The Heart of Spain*, VII-VIII.

<sup>93</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 319.

<sup>94</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 321.



be attributed to the differences in their conceptions of American identity and in their tolerance for internationalism. The Lincolns were, for the most part, proud Americans. They saw their international efforts as complementary to their national efforts and as working toward the defense of America, so they did not expect the hostility of the government who questioned their loyalty.

With their denial from American public memory, the Lincolns embarked on a mission to create a private memory culture guided by the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Later, the successor organization the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives continued this memorial tradition after age and dwindling numbers prevented large scale gatherings of veterans. The Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade's memorial culture was uniquely linked to social activism, something that has been described as "Radical Nostalgia" by participant observer Peter Glazer.<sup>95</sup> As such, nostalgic events like anniversary dinners, poem readings, and play performances functioned as a binding force for the membership, commemorative ritual, an opportunity to challenge the present American power structures through grass-roots activism. In this way, the veterans simultaneously honored their fallen comrades, reserved honor for themselves, drew strength for future conflicts -- generally brought on because of their continued activism, and justified their involvement in non-Spanish activist causes. The veterans also used the written word to memorialize their service through books printed by the veterans' association. After a lifetime of maintaining this activist memorial culture,

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<sup>95</sup> Peter Glazer, *Radical Nostalgia: Spanish Civil War Commemoration in America* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005). Peter Glazer defines "Radical Nostalgia" as an emotional response to a misalignment between a participant's values and culture that fosters a desire to return to a real or imagined past where there was no misalignment. This motivates the participant to correct the misalignment through progressive activism. "Radical Nostalgia" is thus a significant source of energy for the participant group.

the veterans finally saw a physical memorial structure to rival those of state-sponsored memory when the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives oversaw the dedication of a private memorial in San Francisco.<sup>96</sup>

The American veterans used their history against the United States government as well. The Vietnam War became a significant rallying point for the American veterans. In their condemnation of the war, they drew parallels between the foreign policies of the United States and Nazi Germany. In 1967, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade printed 20,000 copies of the pamphlet *Spain and Vietnam* from Robert Colodny that expressed opposition to the Vietnam War through a comparison to the Spanish Civil War.<sup>97</sup> A few copies of *Spain and Vietnam* were even smuggled to Spain.<sup>98</sup> In the introductory note, Executive Secretary Maury Colow introduces the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade's anti-Vietnam stance as a continuation of their commitments in the Spanish Civil War, where they fought on the side of democracy and the people and against the international interventionist forces.<sup>99</sup> Recognizing the similarities in the conflict and the escalation of the destruction brought on by new weapons, Colow states that "Guernica, symbol for decades of the bitter fruits of fascism, is today surpassed a thousand times over by U.S. saturation bombings in Vietnam."<sup>100</sup> Colow ends his note by

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<sup>96</sup> "San Francisco Monument," Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, Accessed on February 24, 2021. <https://alba-valb.org/event/san-francisco-monument/>.

<sup>97</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 412.

<sup>98</sup> Nelson, *Steve Nelson*, 412.

<sup>99</sup> Maury Colow, "A Note to the Reader" in Robert Colodny, *Spain and Vietnam: The Fight for Freedom* (New York: Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, 1967), 1.

<sup>100</sup> Maury Colow, "A Note to the Reader" in *Spain and Vietnam*, 1.

issuing the statement “We, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, see clearly the connection between the strangling of Spain and the rape of Vietnam.”<sup>101</sup>

In the body of the pamphlet, Colodny illustrated the “stark and illuminating” parallels between the Spanish Civil War and the Vietnam War in order to “bring into sharper focus some of the ideas which have tormented [the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade] as we have watched month by month, year by year, the role once played by Hitlerism and the legions of fascism preempted by our own country.”<sup>102</sup> First Colodny repeated the story of the Spanish Civil War, as understood by the Lincolns, stating that the conflict was primarily a battle between the peasantry on one side and the oligarchy and military on the other which was unfortunately co-opted by international powers who sought to use the war as a testing field for their war machinery and a stepping stone to increased global domination.<sup>103</sup> Colodny then showed how the same story could be told of the Vietnam War with various substitutions, such as France and the United States in the place of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.<sup>104</sup> Colodny ends the pamphlet by claiming the Vietnam War to be the result of a twisted American historical vision and political consciousness that has “made it clear they are prepared to shower napalm and dispatch Green Berets to any area of the third world where the poor and damned rise up in their desperation.”<sup>105</sup> Colodny states the necessity of a correction of this historical vision, and proposes that the United States government should repatriate a fallen soldier of the

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<sup>101</sup> Maury Colow, “A Note to the Reader” in *Spain and Vietnam*, 2.

<sup>102</sup> Robert Colodny, “Spain and Vietnam: an Historical Perspective” in *Spain and Vietnam*, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Robert Colodny, “Spain and Vietnam: an Historical Perspective” in *Spain and Vietnam*, 3-6.

<sup>104</sup> Robert Colodny, “Spain and Vietnam: an Historical Perspective” in *Spain and Vietnam*, 7-13.

<sup>105</sup> Robert Colodny, “Spain and Vietnam: an Historical Perspective” in *Spain and Vietnam*, 14-15.

Abraham Lincoln Brigade from the battlefields of Spain and place the body to rest in honor in Arlington as a way to correct the twisted historical vision by showing a time where American's fought on the side of the oppressed, not the oppressor.<sup>106</sup>

The Israeli political establishment were not the only ones to condemn Poland for their mistreatment of the Jewish Polish veterans. The Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade also worked to aid the Jewish Polish veterans who had faced the wrath of Polish anti-Semitism following the 6-Day War. The National board of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade attempted to reach out to Polish authorities on behalf of the Jewish-Polish veterans in 1972.<sup>107</sup> Steve Nelson, acting as the National Commander of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, attempted to negotiate an assurance from the Polish veterans that they would work within the Polish government to help their comrades regain their pensions while representing the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade at the 40th Anniversary event held in 1976.<sup>108</sup> Irving Weissman reported to the general membership of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in 1978, describing the destitution of the Jewish veterans who were forced to leave Poland.<sup>109</sup> In February of 1978, the National Board of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade resolved to continue campaigning for the restitution of the pensions for the Polish.<sup>110</sup> At the national meeting of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in 1979, the general

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<sup>106</sup> Robert Colodny, "Spain and Vietnam: an Historical Perspective" in *Spain and Vietnam*, 15.

<sup>107</sup> *The Volunteer* V. 1 No 1, 1978.

<sup>108</sup> Albert Prago, "A Fortieth Anniversary in Florence: Reunion of the International Brigades in Spain," *Jewish Currents*, V. 31 No 2, 1977, 37-38.

<sup>109</sup> *The Volunteer* V. 1 No 1, 1978.

<sup>110</sup> *The Volunteer* V. 1 No 1, 1978.

membership voted to affirm the National Board's stance and continue to lobby the Polish government, standing by their former comrades-in-arms.<sup>111</sup>

In 1978 and 1979, the Lincolns attempted to join the American public memory culture surrounding World War II. Representative Ron Dellums, the representative for the Oakland, California congressional district, introduced legislation in 1978 that would have granted World War II veteran status to the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.<sup>112</sup> Representative Dellums introduced H.R. 12684, "A Bill to amend Title 38, United States Code, to provide for the entitlement to veterans' benefits of Americans in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War and for other purposes," on May 11, 1978, referring the bill to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. If passed, this measure would have amended section 101 of Title 38, United States Code, with the provision that

Any person who served in the Spanish Civil War in the Fifteenth International Brigade, known as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, during the period beginning July 1, 1936 and ending March 31, 1939, shall be deemed for the purposes of this title to be veterans of World War II, and shall be entitled to the same rights and benefits, and subject to the same obligations and liabilities, as a person who is a veteran by reason of service in the United States Army during World War II, and who served during the same period, for the same length of time, with the same discharge, with the same rate of disability, and with all the same characteristics relevant to determining such rights, benefits, obligations, and liabilities, as such person who served in the Fifteenth International Brigade.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *The Volunteer* V. 2 No 2, 1979.

<sup>112</sup> U.S. Congress. House. *A Bill to amend Title 38, United States Code, to provide for the entitlement to veterans' benefits of Americans in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War and for other purposes*. H.R. 12684. 95th Cong., 2nd Sess., introduced May 11, 1978.

<sup>113</sup> H.R. 12684.

In 1979, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade's secretary Hy Wallach sent a letter to journalist Pete Hamill, where he stated that "This bill gives official recognition to the fact that we were not premature anti-fascists, but the first fighters against fascism. World War II began in Spain in 1936 and ended in Japan in 1945."<sup>114</sup> There is no record of the bill after its introduction, indicating that the bill was dead on arrival.<sup>115</sup>

The Contra issue in Nicaragua was another poignant issue for the Lincolns. The anthology *Our Fight* included an introduction written by Ring Lardner Jr., a member of the Hollywood Ten and brother to James Lardner, who died in Spain.<sup>116</sup> In his introduction to the anthology, Ring Lardner Jr. contextualizes *Our Fight* within the current events of the Reagan administration by opening with a quotation from a 1984 re-election speech in which President Reagan encouraged Americans to "join the 'Contras' harassing Nicaragua from their Honduran sanctuary" and "cited the Abraham Lincoln Brigade as a precedent."<sup>117</sup> Reagan was, however, unwilling to praise a decidedly left-leaning institution with his use of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade as an example, so he qualified his statement by saying the Lincolns "were, in the opinion of most Americans, fighting on the wrong side."<sup>118</sup> Taking issue with that statement, Lardner placed the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in direct opposition with President Reagan on the issue of the Nicaraguan government through a detailed attack of President Reagan,

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<sup>114</sup> Nancy Wallach, "Ronald Dellums (1936-2018)," *The Volunteer*, August 23, 2018, <https://albavolunteer.org/2018/08/ronald-dellums-1936-2018/>.

<sup>115</sup> "95th Congress House Bill 12684," United States Congress, Accessed February 24, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/95th-congress/house-bill/12684?r=41&s=1>.

<sup>116</sup> Albert Prago, Preface to *Our Fight*, 12.

<sup>117</sup> Ring Lardner Jr., "Introduction" in *Our Fight*, 15.

<sup>118</sup> Ring Lardner Jr., "Introduction" in *Our Fight*, 15.

where he claimed the Spanish protests against Reagan during the president's 1985 visit proved how unpopular Reagan's claims were.<sup>119</sup> Lardner ends his introduction with a direct comparison between the Reagan Administration and the Nazi German and Italian Fascist regimes, stating the Lincolns "are especially concerned with support for Nicaraguan independence, moved perhaps by the grim irony that Washington has assumed the role played by the Berlin-Rome Axis in a remarkably similar situation half a century ago."<sup>120</sup>

To the Lincolns, the similarities between the Nicaraguan conflict and the Spanish Civil War were too similar to be dismissed. In Nicaragua, a faction of the military, the Contras, attempted to overthrow the elected government to reestablish conservative rule; in Spain a faction of the military, the Nationalists, attempted to overthrow the elected government to reestablish conservative rule. In Nicaragua, the Contras were armed, financed, and trained by a highly conservative, imperialist, interventionist hegemon, the United States, just as in Spain, the Nationalists were supported by expeditionary forces from highly conservative, imperialist, interventionist would-be hegemons, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The same men who opposed Franco's bid for the governance of Spain as an act of anti-fascist opposition to the loss of democratic rule in Spain and the growth of Hitler and Mussolini's influence over Europe thus opposed the Contras' bid for the governance of Nicaragua as an act of continued anti-fascist opposition to the loss of

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<sup>119</sup> Ring Lardner Jr., "Introduction" in *Our Fight*, 15-16.

<sup>120</sup> Ring Lardner Jr., "Introduction" in *Our Fight*, 21.

democratic self-determination for a sovereign nation and the growth of Reagan's influence over South America.<sup>121</sup>

While they could not volunteer to fight against the new fascist threat of the 1980s, the Lincolns were still politically active and used the means they had, primarily the historical value placed on their experiences in Spain that made an anthology like *Our Fight* commercially viable. As a further act of support to the Sandinista Nicaraguan government, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade donated nine furnished ambulances and an additional \$17,000 to the Nicaraguan government.<sup>122</sup> By the end of the Contra War, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade had raised more than \$300,000, which they used to provide seventeen ambulances, wheelchairs for wounded soldiers, and electric generators for the Nicaraguan government.<sup>123</sup> The Lincolns mirrored the many gifts of medical equipment and ambulances that American supporters had sent to the Spanish Republic those many decades ago.<sup>124</sup> This was a greatly appreciated gesture, the Nicaraguan Minister of Health Commandante Dora María Téllez sent a letter to the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade expressing her country's gratitude.<sup>125</sup> The veterans published this letter as a part of *Our Fight*, once again combining the history of the International Brigades with their current political activism.

It would not be until 2008 that the American International Brigade veterans were honored in a physical memorial. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Monument was dedicated

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<sup>121</sup> Ring Lardner Jr., "Introduction" in *Our Fight*, 15-16.

<sup>122</sup> Dora María Téllez, "Letter to the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade" in *Our Fight*, 355-56.

<sup>123</sup> Peter Carroll, email to the author, February 25, 2021.

<sup>124</sup> Eric Smith, "New York's Aid to the Spanish Republic" in *Facing Fascism*, 47-48.

<sup>125</sup> Dora María Téllez, "Letter to the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade" in *Our Fight*, 355-56.



in the city of San Francisco in March of 2008, making it the first public monument to the International Brigades in America.<sup>126</sup> The monument was funded by the donations of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives and the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.<sup>127</sup> Coming more than 70 years after the start of the Spanish Civil War, it was simply too late for most of the veterans. Only thirty-nine were still alive, eleven of whom were in attendance.<sup>128</sup> In an act of belated acceptance, Mayor Gavin Newsom and the Spanish Ambassador Carlos Westendorp attended the unveiling ceremony, where Ambassador Westendorp thanked the surviving veterans for taking a stand for democracy in Spain.<sup>129</sup>

### **The “Undesirables” of Canada**

The Canadian veterans, known collectively as the Mac-Paps, faced similar persecution in their home state. The Canadian government, especially the police force, was more concerned about the possibility of a Communist uprising than a Fascist takeover. The Canadian Communist Party handled the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion’s recruiting. The Mac-Paps were thus branded as dangerous Communists the moment they left the country for Spain. When it came to the attention of the Mackenzie King government and the Canadian Parliament that there was a steady stream of volunteers heading off to Spain, it passed the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1937 in the hopes that the

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<sup>126</sup> “San Francisco Monument,” The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, accessed February 25, 2021, <https://alba-valb.org/event/san-francisco-monument/>.

<sup>127</sup> “San Francisco Monument,” <https://alba-valb.org/event/san-francisco-monument/>.

<sup>128</sup> Cecilia Vega and Carl Nolte, “Monument to Lincoln Brigade Unveiled,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 31, 2008, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Monument-to-Lincoln-Brigade-unveiled-3220351.php>.

<sup>129</sup> Carl Nolte, “Memorial First in U.S. for Lincoln Brigade,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 29, 2008, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Memorial-first-in-U-S-for-Lincoln-Brigade-3221867.php>.

threat of prosecution would halt or at least diminish recruiting efforts while giving the government the image of taking a stance against Communism.<sup>130</sup>

The government deemed service in Spain to be un-Canadian. In March of 1938, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, hereafter the RCMP, met with members of the Department of Immigration and the Department of External Affairs to discuss the eventual return of the Mac-Paps.<sup>131</sup> The RCMP proposed the Mac-Paps be barred from returning on the grounds that they had violated the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1937. The RCMP were in favor of “getting rid of a lot of undesirables.”<sup>132</sup> Although immigration officials acknowledged their right to repatriation, the Canadian government was reluctant to pay the associated costs, preferring that the family of the volunteers, the Communists, or the Spanish Republic foot the bill.<sup>133</sup> The conflicts over repatriation forced the Mac-Paps to languish in the Catalonian town of Ripoll long after their American and British comrades had left.<sup>134</sup> The repatriation of the Mac-Paps was so delayed that they were evacuated to the French town of Cerbere before being allowed to return to Canada.<sup>135</sup> Some of the Mac-Paps were denied re-entry, however, and were forced to relocate to Mexico.<sup>136</sup>

Under this line of thinking, the returning veterans of the International Brigades were thought to be dangerous spies and double-crossers. Marked as criminals, the RCMP

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<sup>130</sup> Tyler Wentzell, “Canada’s Foreign Enlistment Act and the Spanish Civil War,” *Labour / Le Travail* V. 80, Fall (2017): 224.

<sup>131</sup> Victor Hoar, *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: The Canadian contingent in the Spanish Civil War* (Toronto: Carleton University Press, 1986), 225.

<sup>132</sup> Petrou, *Renegades*, 170.

<sup>133</sup> Hoar, *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion*, 227.

<sup>134</sup> Hoar, *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion*, 228-229.

<sup>135</sup> Hoar, *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion*, 233.

<sup>136</sup> Hoar, *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion*, 230.

surveilled the Mac-Paps from the moment they returned to Canada. This surveillance continued through the Second World War and into the years after as the RCMP worked diligently to prevent potential Communist unrest. As battle-hardened veterans, the Mac-Paps were feared as the ultimate saboteurs and potential instigators of a revolution. Although the RCMP gave up on their efforts to prosecute the Mac-Paps under the auspices of the Foreign Enlistment Act, the Mac-Paps still faced the scrutiny of a distrustful government. During World War II, the RCMP intervened to prevent Mac-Paps from joining the war effort, sending a list of the Mac-Paps' names to the army recruiting officers and administrators to prevent "subversives" from enlisting.<sup>137</sup> The Canadian government feared Mac-Pap sabotage so much that William Breeching and other Mac-Paps were held in an internment camp created under the authority of the War Measures Act.<sup>138</sup>

In the years after World War II, the RCMP followed the Mac-Paps for fear of future threats. The RCMP raised the alarm in 1947 when a junior agent reported the Mac-Paps were reforming the battalion with a call to arms so they could go fight in Spain again.<sup>139</sup> Nothing came of this, however, since the junior agent had misinterpreted the announcement of the formation of the "Veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion" as the reformation of the battalion and the organization's founding promise to resist fascism and help Spain regain her democracy as a plan to invade.<sup>140</sup> After senior agents determined that there was no legitimate threat to Canada or her diplomatic interests, the

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<sup>137</sup> Petrou, *Renegades*, 176.

<sup>138</sup> William Breeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain, 1936-1939* Canadian Plains Studies (Winnipeg: Hignell Printing Limited, 1989), 201.

<sup>139</sup> Petrou, *Renegades*, 176.

<sup>140</sup> Petrou, *Renegades*, 178.

RCMP resumed their normal surveillance. This misinterpretation reveals the levels of paranoia that surrounded the Mac-Paps. The story of the Mac-Paps as battle-hardened and trained saboteurs saturated the Canadian government, leading to this almost comical mishap.

The 1980s gave way to a series of prolonged battles between the Mac-Paps and the Canadian government over the veterans' request to be granted official veteran status. They wanted to be given the same honor and legitimacy afforded the veterans of the Second World War, arguing that although they acted outside the official boundaries of the Canadian government and even blatantly broke a Canadian law, they still fought the same enemy as the Canadian Armed Forces: Fascism. For their service against this deadly foe, and in recognition of their forward-thinking, the Mac-Paps sought legitimacy. In 1980, the Mac-Paps sent the Minister of Veteran Affairs a letter through their new veterans' organization, the Veterans of the International Brigades, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, requesting that the Canadian government amend the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1937 to remove the sanction of criminal charges and that the Canadian government grant the veterans of the International Brigades official veteran status, with all of the perks this would entail.<sup>141</sup> The New Democratic Party, acting as the sole supporter of the Mac-Paps' initiative, brought a motion to grant the Mac-Paps veteran status to the House of Commons, where it set off a fiery debate.<sup>142</sup> The New Democratic Party argued that the Mac-Paps deserved to be honored in the same manner as the veterans of the First and Second World Wars. Other officials declared that no matter how noble the cause or brave

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<sup>141</sup> Trisha Turner, "Seeing Red: The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in Canadian History and Memory," M.A. Thesis, (Saint Mary's University, 2019), 81.

<sup>142</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 82-83.

the man, breaking the law was breaking the law, and veterans' honors ought to be reserved for those fighting under Canada's authority, not outside it.<sup>143</sup> The motion failed; the requests for veteran status and an amendment of the Foreign Enlistment Act failed with it.<sup>144</sup> As a concession, the House of Commons gave an assurance that though the Foreign Enlistment Act would stand, the government would not prosecute the Mac-Paps for violating it.<sup>145</sup>

In 1986, the Mac-Paps again asked the Canadian government for an apology for their harassment and internment during the Second World War, noting the apology offered to the Japanese-Canadians.<sup>146</sup> They then took their campaign for veterans' recognition to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, where they asked that the Foreign Enlistment Act be amended and that veterans of the International Brigades be granted official veterans status equal to the veterans of World War II.<sup>147</sup> The Standing Committee could not overcome their concern that in granting official status to the Mac-Paps or in altering the Foreign Enlistment Act, the Canadian government would be setting a dangerous precedent.<sup>148</sup> "Where would we stop? How could we justify not giving benefits to all Canadians who fight in other countries for what they consider to be a just cause?"<sup>149</sup> It was reasoned that if the legal justifications for granting official veteran status were widened in such a way that included the Mac-Paps, the Committee would

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<sup>143</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 83.

<sup>144</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 83.

<sup>145</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 83.

<sup>146</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 78.

<sup>147</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 83-84.

<sup>148</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 83-88.

<sup>149</sup> Commons Debates, Private Members' Motion, December 15, 1980, 5769, box 9, File 14, Spanish Civil War Collection. Quoted in Turner, "Seeing Red," 88.

open the door for a wave of requests for official recognition from every soldier of fortune or volunteer fighter who operated outside the bounds of the Canadian Armed Forces.<sup>150</sup> The line had to be drawn somewhere, so the Committee decided to keep the line where it currently stood. The Mac-Paps' request for recognition was again denied.

The Mac-Paps were thus left to cultivate their own memory. In 1989, the city of Winnipeg approved a memorial plaque, which was then erected in the Winnipeg City Hall to honor the Mac-Paps who came from Manitoba.<sup>151</sup> The plaque was a result of a private initiative that began almost immediately after the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs denied the Mac-Paps request for formal recognition in 1986. The Ontario provincial government, at the time controlled by the New Democratic Party who had previously supported the Mac-Pap's efforts to gain veterans' status, gave permission to the Friends and Veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion to build a monument in 1994.<sup>152</sup> The Spanish town of Gandesa donated a boulder for the monument. The Friends and Veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau unveiled the monument in 1995.<sup>153</sup> The British Columbia provincial government, similarly under the control of the New Democratic Party, gave the British Columbia Mac-Pap Monument Committee permission to erect a monument in Victoria in 1997.<sup>154</sup> The committee unveiled the completed monument in

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<sup>150</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 87-88.

<sup>151</sup> Turner, "Seeing Red," 90.

<sup>152</sup> "Monuments," Friends and Veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, accessed February 25, 2021, <http://www.macpabattalion.ca/monuments/>; "Monuments - The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion," University of Victoria, accessed February 25, 2021, <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/macpaps/monuments/#W>.

<sup>153</sup> "Monuments - the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion," <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/macpaps/monuments/#W>.

<sup>154</sup> "Monuments," <http://www.macpabattalion.ca/monuments/>.

2000.<sup>155</sup> The largest monument to the Mac-Paps, located in Ottawa, was unveiled in 2001.<sup>156</sup> The product of a design competition held the previous year, the Ottawa monument was likewise funded by the Veterans and Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.<sup>157</sup> In a belated act of ceremonial acceptance, the Governor General of Canada led the unveiling ceremony.<sup>158</sup>

### **A Labor Without Labour: Great Britain and the International Brigade Veterans**

In Great Britain, the International Brigade veterans returned with great fanfare. Clement Attlee, the head of the Labour Party and Leader of the Opposition, was among the crowd who welcomed the veterans home when they returned to London in 1938.<sup>159</sup> Attlee was joined by a few Labour MPs and leaders of the National Trade Union.<sup>160</sup> In January of 1939, the British Battalion held a memorial service in Earl's Court. Around 12,000 people attended the service, which raised over £3,800 to establish a memorial fund.<sup>161</sup> A group of twenty-two veterans embarked on a month-long speaking tour, visiting factories, schools, universities, and union halls across the country. A group of nurses and ambulance drivers likewise canvassed Britain, raising money and supplies to donate to the refugees in France.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> "Monuments - The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion," <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/macpaps/monuments/#W>.

<sup>156</sup> "Monuments, the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion," <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/macpaps/monuments/#W>.

<sup>157</sup> "Monuments - The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion," <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/macpaps/monuments/#W>.

<sup>158</sup> "Monuments," <http://www.macpabbattalion.ca/monuments/>.

<sup>159</sup> Tom Buchanan, "Holding the line: the political strategy of the International Brigade Association, 1939-1977," *Labour History Review* Vol. 66, No. 3 (2001): 294; Bill Alexander, *No to Franco: The Struggle Never Stopped 1939-1975* (London: Oval Printshop, 1992), 18.

<sup>160</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 18.

<sup>161</sup> Buchanan, "Holding the Line," 294; Alexander, *No to Franco*, 18.

<sup>162</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 18-19.

A group of veterans from the British Battalion formed the International Brigades Association (IBA) in order to capture the public admiration for the British Battalion and channel it into direct political action against Franco.<sup>163</sup> As the veterans returned from Spain, they decided to continue the fight against Franco and fascism with veteran Sam Wild issuing the call to action, saying the British Battalion had “changed fronts but not the battle” and would continue to fight for Spanish democracy.<sup>164</sup> Realizing that an official organization would be more effective than piecemeal individual efforts, the veterans of the British Battalion decided to form a veterans’ association. A group of twenty-two veterans formed the Provisional Committee, which met on February 11 and 17, 1939, in order to draft the proposed constitution for the association.<sup>165</sup> After allowing the other veterans to review the proposed constitution, the Provisional Committee met on March 5 and formally established the IBA.<sup>166</sup> The IBA extended full membership to all men and women who had served the Spanish Republic, thus opening the door for the participation of women like Nan Green who had been nurses in the medical auxiliaries. The IBA bolstered its numbers by offering associate membership to next of kin. Through the IBA, the veterans continued their war against Fascism in Spain.

As Britain became involved in the Second World War, the national war effort overtook any concerns for the Spanish situation. The IBA struggled to keep the issues of Spain relevant as the battles being waged across Europe and the air raids on London

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<sup>163</sup> Buchanan “Holding the Line,” 294.

<sup>164</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 7.

<sup>165</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 19.

<sup>166</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 19.



made Franco seem less important to the average Briton.<sup>167</sup> The IBA also struggled with an initial lack of support for the war effort. It was only natural that since the Communist Party of Great Britain sponsored the British Battalion and many of the British Battalion's officers were party members, the IBA retained some institutional ties to the British Communist Party. Although there were some dissenters who fully supported World War II, the IBA as a whole followed the Communist Party line and denounced World War II as a war between rival capitalist empires brought on by the arrogance of the men who sold Spain down the river.<sup>168</sup> The IBA criticized Clement Attlee for collaborating with Churchill on the war effort, alienating the veterans from the Labour Party.<sup>169</sup> Attlee, whose name graced Company 1 of the British Battalion, cut ties with the IBA, leaving the veterans without their most important ally.<sup>170</sup>

The British veterans were not fully united, however, as there were some dissenters like Tom Wintringham, who developed the Home Guard. Wintringham had formerly been entrusted with the teaching of discipline in the International Brigades as well as the formation of an operational officer corps. After being wounded in the Battle of Jarama, Wintringham commanded the officers' training school in 1937, where he had the task of turning inexperienced political radicals into efficient military commanders.<sup>171</sup> Upon his return to Great Britain and the breakout of World War II, Wintringham successfully leveraged his experience in paramilitary combat and leadership training to aid the new

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<sup>167</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 34.

<sup>168</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 34.

<sup>169</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 34-35.

<sup>170</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 35.

<sup>171</sup> David Fernbach, "Tom Wintringham and the Socialist Defense Strategy," *History Workshop*, No. 14 (1982), 70.

British paramilitary defense force. As the Home Guard was formed, Wintringham stepped forward as a vocal advocate for a British popular army. After convincing some wealthy patrons to donate money for the formation of a training facility, Wintringham established the Home Guard Training School in Osterley Park.<sup>172</sup> With the aid of a few other International Brigade veterans, Wintringham developed a curriculum that ranged from improvised explosive devices to proper firearm handling and other light infantry tactics.<sup>173</sup>

Although the IBA supported the war effort after Germany invaded the USSR and the Communist Party changed its tune, the damage had already been done and the veterans were now politically isolated. When the war ended, relations between the veterans and the Labour Party were tense; Attlee had not forgotten the IBA's earlier criticisms. The end of World War II also brought on a shift in the political orientations of the British public. Anti-Fascism was less widely supported. The majority of the Labour Party thought the removal of Hitler and Mussolini from power meant Franco no longer posed a threat to British interests.<sup>174</sup> There was also a shift in the Foreign Office, as anti-Communism and the relationship with America became more important than a commitment to anti-Fascism. As anti-Communist sentiment grew and America accepted Francoist Spain into the anti-Communist coalition, the British government recognized Franco. The IBA fought against the normalization of relations with Spain, but there was little they could do.<sup>175</sup> The new dominance of anti-Communism meant Francoist Spain

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<sup>172</sup> Fernbach, "Tom Wintringham," 71.

<sup>173</sup> Fernbach, "Tom Wintringham," 72-76.

<sup>174</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 52.

<sup>175</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 53.

was no longer a rogue element and potential danger, but was now a strategic ally. Anti-Fascism was no longer a key tenet of the Labour party, cooperation with Fascism was now expected.

After the conclusion of World War II, the IBA wrestled with low membership, short funding, and a general apathy as the events of the Cold War overshadowed Spain. In 1948, Bill Alexander states the IBA was in contact with 550 veterans, only 200 of whom were involved in the IBA.<sup>176</sup> When Phil Gallan took over the leadership of the Glasgow branch of the IBA in 1950, he admitted that his previous work on Spanish issues had been poor and he thought current issues like the Korean War were more important.<sup>177</sup> The dwindling of public support was shown in the collections of the Trade Union Congress, which had previously been among the greatest supporters of the IBA. The TUC raised only £770 for Spanish relief efforts in 1948, roughly a quarter of their 1947 haul.<sup>178</sup> The IBA's magazine "Spain Today" can be used as further evidence of the declining relevance of the Spanish issue. Where the first monthly issues sold over 5,000 units, though by 1953 "Spain Today" barely reached 2,000 sales every two months and had been reduced to eight pages in order to save costs.<sup>179</sup> The IBA closed "Spain Today" after they could no longer afford to print it.<sup>180</sup>

Powerless to stop the ascendancy of Francoist Spain from dark age pariah to valued Cold War ally and vacationer's paradise, the British veterans resigned themselves

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<sup>176</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 57.

<sup>177</sup> Buchanan, "Holding the Line," 296.

<sup>178</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 53.

<sup>179</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 58.

<sup>180</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 58.

to token protestation of the Franco regime and advocating for political prisoners. The IBA vocally resisted the American-led efforts to rehabilitate Franco's public image and welcome Francoist Spain into the Western anti-Communist fold. Every step in the formation of the alliance between America and Francoist Spain was met with protests, letter writing campaigns, and speeches at colleges, union halls, or civic centers.<sup>181</sup> The IBA protested the activities of the American anti-communist movement. Speaking out against the trials of Dr. Edward Barsky before the HUAC and the forced registration of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade as a Communist Front on the Attorney General's List, the Bill Alexander denounced the anti-communist targeting of IB veterans and Spanish aid groups as a conciliatory gesture to the Franco dictatorship that undermined American democracy.<sup>182</sup> While the British government had done nothing worse than bill the veterans for the cost of their repatriation, the British veterans were worried by the attacks on their comrades.<sup>183</sup>

After the veterans finished their political work and retired from lobbying, the act of memorialization began in earnest. After Franco died and Spain transitioned to a parliamentary democracy, the British veterans accepted that they had finally won the war and could now celebrate their efforts. In 1985, the International Brigade Association and the Greater London Council unveiled the South Bank Jubilee Gardens memorial to the British Battalion.<sup>184</sup> The following year, the Memorial Archive opened, coinciding with

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<sup>181</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 51-63.

<sup>182</sup> Alexander, *No to Franco*, 61.

<sup>183</sup> Alexander, *British Volunteers*, 241.

<sup>184</sup> "South Bank," International Brigade Memorial Trust, Accessed February 25, 2021, <http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/content/south-bank>.

the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>185</sup> The memory of the International Brigades in Britain gained significant traction after the Cold War ended and anti-Communism no longer pervaded British politics. The International Brigade Memorial Trust, founded in 2001 when the International Brigade Association and Friends of the International Brigades dissolved, currently exercises stewardship over more than 100 memorials across the isles, the significant majority of which were erected after 1986.<sup>186</sup>

While the British veterans of the International Brigades received a hero's welcome, they did not stay in the political mainstream for long. They quickly squandered their goodwill in their battles against Attlee and isolated themselves from their biggest ally. As the international circumstances changed around them, first with the onset of World War II and then with the tensions of the Cold War, the veterans were unable to adapt. They staunchly opposed the international acceptance of Francoist Spain but their opposition paled in comparison to the demands of the United States and a Cold War calculus that deemed a stable anti-Communist regime preferable. The British veterans could not coexist with Franco and considered the war ongoing until the day Franco died.

For these states, Cold War-driven paranoia instilled a suspicion of anything foreign. The shift from public acceptance of anti-Fascism to an open partnership with fascism signified the newfound importance of anti-Communism. Any ties to the enemy, no matter how they were formed, were potential threats that needed to be neutralized. The veterans of the International Brigade represented one such threat. As they returned from Spain, the veterans were suspected as potential saboteurs. State security or policing

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<sup>185</sup> Buchanan, "Holding the Line," 307.

<sup>186</sup> "International Brigade Memorial Trust," International Brigade Memorial Trust, Accessed February 25, 2021, <http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/content/international-brigade-memorial-trust>.

agencies and government prosecutors saw service in the Spanish Republican Army as a glaring example of national disloyalty and obedience to Moscow's orders, which played into the narrative of the International Brigade veterans as Communist spies who worked to undermine the security of the nation. The mingling in Spain of so many national and ethnic groups and the presence of Communist Party leaders in the International Brigades created a convenient story to place upon the veterans, labeling them as a security threat. The veterans' actions during World War II and immediately after only cemented their reputation as Soviet agents. By following the Party line, the veterans inextricably linked themselves to Moscow, placing themselves in the crosshairs of the new anti-Communist order.

### CHAPTER THREE: MYTHS AND MEMORY

The destruction of World War II left many nations in shambles. Some governments were destroyed and replaced by Soviet or Allied occupation governments. As new nations were born from the ashes of war and occupation, they grappled with the need to create a cohesive national identity that differentiated the new nation from the predecessor state without crossing the tightening lines of the Cold War. In some of these new post-World War II nations, there was no shift away from anti-Fascism. Some of these new states embraced anti-Fascism, which they viewed as historically significant to the development of the nation. The ruling party folded the Spanish Civil War into their national founding myth and the International volunteers were sanctified as national heroes. In a world recovering from the horrors of World War II while bracing for the Cold War, these states used the public memory of the International Brigade volunteers by turning the volunteers into the prime example of political loyalty, martial prowess, and civic self-sacrifice. These states made extensive use of public memory commemorating and honoring the International Brigades while reminding the citizens who they should emulate. This process was particularly potent in East Germany and Israel, where the International Brigades were fully incorporated into the new nations' foundational myths. Both states sponsored memorial "cults" that venerated a particular fallen International volunteer, with Hans Beimler in East Germany and Mark Milman in Israel. Yugoslavia also incorporated the International Brigades into its foundational myth, though it did not have a central hero. Where the International Brigades were incorporated into the East

German and Israeli foundational myths on their own merits, the International Brigades found their way into the Yugoslav myth via the link to Tito's Partisan armies and World War II.

Several states also sponsored public memory regarding the International Brigades. Although not all these states fully appropriated the history of the International Brigades as a part of their origin myth, they still propagated the public memory of the International Brigades, using the veterans as examples of political conviction, martial prowess, and self-sacrifice for a higher cause. This public memory was predominantly shown through physical spaces like memorials, statues, and museum exhibits, though it was also reinforced through the publication of books and memoirs and the screening of films. The larger events, such as the unveiling of a statue or a new exhibit, generally coincided with important anniversaries, creating an ebb and flow pattern that peaked in 1986, during the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. In these physical and cultural spaces, the participating states hoped to use the historical memory of the International Brigades as a tool to instill the proper civic values. For those states who had incorporated the International Brigades into their foundational myths, the public memory of the Brigades became tied to the legitimacy of the ruling party, which in turn fueled more public memory as these parties attempted to stay in power.

As the state actors built the memory of the International Brigades, they did so in reaction to events unfolding in their nation. Where the memory was state-sponsored, such as in East Germany or Israel, the memory was made to serve the state. In this way, the state nationalized the International Brigades. For the veterans, many of whom saw no conflict between their international actions and the national interests of the state, this



confluence of interests was a welcome change. Many veterans embraced their new positions and the moral strength it gave them in society. In many cases, the state weaponized the memory of the International Brigades as part of the mythologization. In most cases, this meant a denunciation in the form of a comparison to the interventionist forces of Nazi Germany, such as the East German condemnation of American intervention in Vietnam. In other instances, the memory of the Brigades was politicized via a condemnation of a particular action as dishonorable to the veterans, such as the Israeli condemnation of the Polish government that rescinded the pensions of Jewish-Polish political refugees.

### **The Myth of the Spanienkämpfer**

International Brigade veterans were prominent state builders in East Germany, where they formed a key cadre of party functionaries and participated in the ministry as well as the extensive state security apparatus. They were overrepresented in the army officer corps, in the police force, and in the secret police and intelligence agency. Twenty-nine Spanienkämpfer rose to the rank of colonel, seventeen of whom retired as generals.<sup>187</sup> A 1948 survey found that nearly all the veterans were Party members, more than half were functionaries, some were members of the provisional government, and a fifth were policemen.<sup>188</sup> Within the Socialist Unity Party (SED), International Brigade veterans served in the heights of party leadership. At various points in the party's history, thirteen Spanienkämpfer served on the Central Committee and ten were in the Politburo; Franz Dahlem, Paul Verner, and Alfred Neumann were also members of the

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<sup>187</sup> Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades, 1945-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 49.

<sup>188</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 47.

Secretariat.<sup>189</sup> International Brigade veterans served in all levels of the ministry. The Minister of National Defense, the Minister of Foreign Trade, the Deputy Foreign Minister, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, the Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of State Security were at various points International Brigade veterans.<sup>190</sup>

That the Spanienkämpfer found success in the state security apparatus is not surprising, given their proven loyalty to the party and military experience. In the early stages of the formation of East Germany, Franz Dahlem, the beloved party leader and public face of the veterans' association, encouraged the Spanienkämpfer to join the Volkspolizei.<sup>191</sup> Kurt Lohberger admitted that he "would have preferred to do something else" but saw it as his duty to the party and Dahlem to join the police.<sup>192</sup> Hermann Gartmann's career stands as an example of the connections between the Spanienkämpfer, the Socialist Unity Party, and the state security apparatus. Gartmann began his career as a regional party secretary before being made the deputy police chief of Potsdam in 1948. The following year, he worked to develop the Brandenburg regional security organization. In 1952, he became a commander in the border patrol. In 1957, Gartmann received a commission in the National Volksarmee as the commander of an officer's training school.<sup>193</sup>

Since the German communists lived the pre-war and war years in exile after Hitler's rise to power, the East German communists had neither a resistance movement

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<sup>189</sup> Arnold Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War in East Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 39, No. 4 (2004): 539.

<sup>190</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 536-538.

<sup>191</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 48.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Kurt Lohberger, March 3, 1999. Quoted in McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 48.

<sup>193</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 49.

like Tito's Partisans in Yugoslavia nor a story of cooperation with the Red Army comparable to the Polish Forces in the East to draw on. So, the party ideologues turned to the Spanish Civil War. The experience of German anti-fascists who fought in the International Brigades became central to the East German foundational myth as the ruling party appropriated the history of the Brigades. This myth was particularly useful for the East German government in the context of the Cold War since the claim to inherit the tradition of the International Brigades implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, imposed upon West Germany the dubious legacy of the Nazi Condor Legion while simultaneously differentiating East Germany from former Nazi Germany. West Germany was thus declared to be the successor state to Nazi Germany while East Germany gained an alternative, oppositional origin. The East German government thus reinforced their citizens' notions of West Germany as an imperialist state while differentiating East Germany as an anti-fascist state. The American and West German anti-Communist alliance with Francoist Spain gave credence to these beliefs.

This mythologization turned the International Brigade veterans into the glorious "Spanienkämpfer," the prime example of proper socialist values, martial prowess, and honorable self-sacrifice. The Spanienkämpfer were honored with an active memory culture while fallen International Brigade soldiers like Hans Beimler were the subject of an active memorial cult. The Hans-Beimler Regiment of the National Volksarmee screened movies about Beimler and held commemorative services on the anniversary of his death.<sup>194</sup> The medal awarded by the East German government to the veterans of the

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<sup>194</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 547.

International Brigades bore his name.<sup>195</sup> Every year the eighth-graders competed in the “Hans Beimler Contest,” which combined tests on the life of Hans Beimler, military sport games, fitness exercises, and military policy exercises, with points being awarded for their performance in the various tests. At the end of the year, the highest scoring boy and girl were awarded the coveted Artur Becker Medal and placed on the fast track for promotion through the Free German Youth, the state youth association similar to Boy Scouts, to the military.<sup>196</sup>

The veneration of the International Brigade Veterans in East Germany was not guaranteed since their new position as public heroes and models for the people forced the veterans into a life of blind loyalty and obedience to the state. Any deviations from the state’s expectations were dealt with quickly and severely. When the myth of Spain did not serve the East German state’s interests, the veterans were discarded and removed from public life. The rehabilitation of the former Nazis in East Germany, forced by the political expediency of unifying East Germany against West Germany, proved to be an early test for the Spanienkämpfers. In 1949, Walter Ulbricht, who would later rise to govern East Germany in a near dictatorship as the General Secretary of the Central Committee, declared that anyone who questioned the loyalty of former Nazis was working to undermine the unity of the nation.<sup>197</sup> A few Spanienkämpfer could not turn a blind eye and refused to work with their former enemies, earning them the attention of

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<sup>195</sup> Krammer, “The Cult of the Spanish Civil War,” 544.

<sup>196</sup> Krammer, “The Cult of the Spanish Civil War,” 554.

<sup>197</sup> Krammer, “The Cult of the Spanish Civil War,” 539.

the authorities. They lost whatever positions they had held and disappeared from public life.<sup>198</sup>

Even the most important of Spanienkämpfer could not escape run-ins with party discipline during the purges of the 1950s. Their past activities and international outlooks made them suspect, especially as the Field Affair and Slansky Affair unfolded in the other Eastern Bloc countries. Noel Field was an American Communist and humanitarian worker who helped many Spanienkämpfer obtain their visas to America. He also acted as an informal link between the German communist community and the American intelligence during World War II.<sup>199</sup> Field was arrested in Prague and tried in Hungary in 1949 for the crimes of spying for America, undermining the Resistance, and working to increase American influence over Germany.<sup>200</sup> As a reaction to the Field Affair, all the Spanienkämpfer who had had direct contact with Field or the American intelligence during World War II were suspected to be American spies. The Slansky trial in Czechoslovakia, where the joint-defendants, some of whom were International Brigade veterans, were accused of collaborating with French intelligence during their internment in France, set off a new round of SED purges, this time with a broader scope.<sup>201</sup> Nearly all of the Spanienkämpfer had spent time in the French internment camps at St. Cyprien, Gurs, and Le Vernet.<sup>202</sup> Many had spent their post-Spanish Civil War exile in Western Europe, such as Hans Kahle who fled to England, or Franz Dahlem who settled in France.

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<sup>198</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 540.

<sup>199</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 57.

<sup>200</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 57.

<sup>201</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 58.

<sup>202</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 40.

Some were still in contact with their friends and acquaintances from that time, such as Karl Kormes, who wrote to his friend Nan Green in Great Britain.<sup>203</sup> All were now suspects.

As these cases illustrate, the East German state had a particular idea of what constituted national loyalty and what sort of internationalism they could tolerate. The SED bumped Paul Merker from the Politburo and expelled him in 1950.<sup>204</sup> Willi Kreikemeyer, the Director-General of the East German Railways, was arrested in 1950. The Stasi notified his wife in 1954 that he had committed suicide in his cell six days after his arrest four years prior, though she believed till the end that the Soviets had ordered him murdered.<sup>205</sup> In 1953, the SED purged Franz Dahlem, the leader of the Spanish Civil War veterans' association, a member of the Central Committee and Secretariat, and the public face of the *Spanienkämpfer*, for "political blindness."<sup>206</sup> The SED purged Anton Ackerman from the Central Committee in 1953. The SED purged Wilhelm Zaisser, the Minister of State Security and head of the dreaded secret police, the Stasi, for "activities against the party" in 1953 after the Stasi failed to put down the June 1953 uprising.<sup>207</sup> The SED purged Walter Janka, head of East Germany's state publishing arm, for "counter-revolutionary activities" and held Janka's show trial in 1957, where he received a sentence of 3-years imprisonment and the loss of all honors.<sup>208</sup> Alfred Kantorowicz, the professor of New German Historical Literature at Humboldt University and the director

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<sup>203</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 59.

<sup>204</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 540.

<sup>205</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 540.

<sup>206</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 540.

<sup>207</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 540.

<sup>208</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 541.

of the Heinrich Mann Archives at the Academy of Science, refused to pledge his solidarity with the Soviets after the Red Army invaded Hungary in 1956. He lost his post and fled to West Germany in 1957 in order to escape the dreaded Stassi secret police.<sup>209</sup>

In the early days of the Cold War, East Germany braced itself for an American and West German invasion. The alliance with the Soviet Union was paramount to the protection of the nation. Thus, the Spanienkämpfer had to display unfettered loyalty to East Germany and its all-important ally. Failure to support the Soviet Union or deviation from the state's expectations seemingly undermined national security. The Cold War tensions with Western Europe and America made any connection to those countries suspicious and potentially dangerous, even those connections that were formed under the blessing of the Communist Party. It was the Comintern, after all, that had organized the International Brigades. The volunteers had fought alongside political commissars who ensured they knew their communist doctrine and followed the party line. The German volunteers were largely political exiles who had been devoted party members for years. For this reason, the purges shocked the Spanienkämpfer, who thought they had done nothing wrong.

Where the myth of the Spanienkämpfer could serve the East German state, the state relayed it to the public. When the state-owned Museum of German History was built in 1951, a Spanienkämpfer directed the construction of displays dealing with the period of 1918 through 1945.<sup>210</sup> The Spanish Civil War and International Brigades featured prominently in a permanent display, propagating the myth of the loyal, courageous, and

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<sup>209</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 551.

<sup>210</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 552.

politically pure Spanienkämpfer for the East Germans to model. Thousands of East Germans, including children on school tours, had the myth reinforced in every visit.

The East German state also used the myth of the Spanienkämpfer as a potent political weapon against America and Western Europe. The 1952 Anniversary commemoration took place under the slogan of “1936 Spain, 1952 Korea.”<sup>211</sup> The veterans’ association attributed the spirit of the international brigades to “all people who are fighting for the independence of their country against American imperialism.”<sup>212</sup> They also warned against the American propping up of “German imperialism” in West Germany and promised that “Adenauer’s days are as numbered as Franco’s.”<sup>213</sup> The veterans saw American intervention in Korea and the American aid to and cooperation with West Germany as the first stages in a plan to invade the Soviet Bloc and embroil Europe in war once more, with America invading the USSR from the Korean peninsula and West Germany invading East Germany.

East German commemoration of the International Brigades extended to the built environment as the government named barracks, factories, city squares, government buildings, and streets after the Spanienkämpfer, the most famed of which was the “Hans-Beimler-Straße” in East Berlin. The commemorative naming continued into the military, intensifying the link between the International Brigades and the East German military as servicemen were encouraged to live up to their namesakes.<sup>214</sup> The commemorative naming included the flagship of the Volksmarine, minesweepers, tankers, Volksarmee

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<sup>211</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 82.

<sup>212</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 83.

<sup>213</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 83.

<sup>214</sup> Krammer, “The Cult of the Spanish Civil War,” 547.



units, fighters squadrons, the artillery school building, and tank barracks.<sup>215</sup> By the time the Berlin Wall fell, more than 40 troop units, barracks, and military bases bore the names of Spanienkämpfer.<sup>216</sup>

As part of the 20th anniversary celebration in 1956, the East German government unveiled the Hans Beimler medal, named after the famed political commissar who died in the defense of Madrid.<sup>217</sup> The East German government awarded the Hans Beimler medal to all those who had fought in the Republican Army during the Spanish Civil War. The General Secretary Walter Ulbricht awarded himself the medal on the dubious claims of his visiting Spain for a few weeks despite his never actually fighting.<sup>218</sup> Though this was insulting to some Spanienkämpfer, it demonstrates the level of political and social capital that came with the International Brigades. Ulbricht claimed to be a Spanienkämpfer so he could project the image of anti-Fascist devotion that was now synonymous with the Brigades.

International Brigade veterans from across the world, provided they passed the screening and were deemed politically compatible with the Socialist Unity Party, were invited to attend the 1966 30th Anniversary Celebration in East Berlin; those who came were awarded the prestigious Hans Beimler medal.<sup>219</sup> As part of the 1966 30th Anniversary Celebration, the ministry unveiled a memorial to the 3,000 fallen of the Thaelmann battalion, a significant overestimate, complete with an oversized statue of a

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<sup>215</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 548.

<sup>216</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 548.

<sup>217</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 544.

<sup>218</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 544.

<sup>219</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 549.

soldier rising from the trenches, sword in hand.<sup>220</sup> The government placed the statue into context by constructing a smaller statue honoring the October Revolution and a third monument for those who were still fighting. In this way, the International Brigades were placed into the grand narrative of Communism, with a depiction of Communism victorious, Communism temporarily defeated but not without a valiant effort, and Communism in progress.<sup>221</sup>

The East German government propagated the memory of the International Brigades through the realm of culture with the publication of books and memoirs and the screening of movies. The East German Ministry of Culture unveiled a collection of state-sponsored memoirs meant to coincide with the 30th Anniversary Celebration, titled *Pasaremos: Deutsche Antifaschisten im National-Revolutionären Krieg des Spanischen Volkes* (German anti-fascists in the National Revolutionary War of the Spanish People).<sup>222</sup> The Ministry of Culture would occasionally request that a *Spanienkämpfer* write a memoir for publication or storage in the party archives, especially when it could be arranged for the memoir to be published alongside an anniversary celebration. These memoirs became not only a staple for the Ministry due to their popularity, but allowed the Ministry to censor out alternative narratives, thus preserving the *Spanienkämpfer* story that soon became a matter of public expectation.<sup>223</sup> Ludwig Renn's memoir underwent four years of review before the Ministry of Culture published it.<sup>224</sup> The

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<sup>220</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 549.

<sup>221</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 550.

<sup>222</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 551.

<sup>223</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 46.

<sup>224</sup> McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 152.

Central Institute for Classroom Supplies ensured the students were watching movies on the *Spanienkämpfer*, which were often accompanied by literature on the Thaelmann Brigade.<sup>225</sup>

As the International Brigades became symbols of heroism, selfless sacrifice, and the champions of a noble cause, the legacy of the German and Italian interventionist forces was inherently villainized. An important aspect of the public memory surrounding the International Brigades in East Germany, for example, was the claim to inherit the honorable tradition of the Brigades and the claim of West Germany inheriting the villainous tradition of the Condor Legion, making West Germany worse in comparison. This ideological framework, where the accused acts in the role of Nazi Germany and the claimant act in the role of the International Brigades, dominated the weaponization of the International Brigades' history. In other situations, a state with a prominent memorial culture declared certain actions to be dishonorable and shamed the actors who committed the dishonorable act.

Through media coverage of unveiling of the 1966 monument to the Thaelmann Battalion, East Germany wielded the story of the International Brigades as a weapon against Western Europe and its powerful ally, the United States. The third piece of the monument, the depiction of Communism in progress, was said to represent the Vietnamese people. This brought with it the condemnation that the United States, and West Germany by association, had taken on the historic role filled by Hitler and Mussolini.<sup>226</sup> Spain and Vietnam were construed as the same story where a large

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<sup>225</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 553.

<sup>226</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 550.

imperialist nation, driven by its gnawing thirst for raw materials, intervened in the course of a civil war of a less developed nation and used its bombers to tip the scales in favor of the side that would permit the exploitation of the people and resources. The Vietnamese people were carrying on the tradition of the International Brigades, while America took on the mantle of the Condor Legion. That the media would seize this chance to politicize the Spanish experience is not surprising, considering Spanienkämpfer controlled the four largest state-sponsored newspapers, occupied positions of influence in many other newspapers, and even controlled a few radio stations.<sup>227</sup>

### **Polish Nationalism and International Brigade Memory**

In Poland, the International Brigade veterans, known collectively as the Dąbrowszczacy -- from the Polish Dąbrowski Battalion, were welcomed with open arms. Like their East German comrades, the Polish International Brigade veterans formed a core cadre within the police, army, and national security sectors. A survey of the Gdansk Association of Dąbrowszczacy found that the majority worked as part of the state security apparatus.<sup>228</sup> Twenty-five Dąbrowszczacy in Gdansk were employed by the Security Office, eleven by the Citizen's Militia, ten by the Prison Guard, seven by the Navy, two by the Army, and two by the Party.<sup>229</sup> The overwhelming majority of the Dąbrowszczacy were on the payroll of the state, with only six Dąbrowszczacy listed as "other."<sup>230</sup> This seems to have fulfilled the earlier statements of Karol "General Walter"

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<sup>227</sup> Krammer, "The Cult of the Spanish Civil War," 550.

<sup>228</sup> Daniel Czerwiński, "Dąbrowszczacy," Institute of National Remembrance, Accessed on February 25, 2021, <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/43772,Dabrowszczacy-opracowanie-historyczne-dr-Daniela-Czerwinskiego.html?search=17659>.

<sup>229</sup> Czerwiński, "Dąbrowszczacy."

<sup>230</sup> Czerwiński, "Dąbrowszczacy."

Świerczewski who, in reference to the Dąbrowski Battalion, proclaimed they would be “a cadre unit of the future army of the People's Republic of Poland.”<sup>231</sup>

The Polish government also sponsored anniversary events and awarded medals and honors to the veterans. The Dąbrowszczacy were awarded the “For Your Freedom and Ours” medal in 1956 in honor of the 20th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>232</sup> The medal contained the tripoint star of the International Brigades and the roman numerals XIII on one side, representing the “Dąbrowski” 13th International Brigade.<sup>233</sup> A side profile of “General Walter,” A.K.A. Karol Świerczewski, the former Red Army general and Polish commanding officer of the XIV International Brigade, was featured on the other.<sup>234</sup> Streets across Poland were named after the Dąbrowszczacy, collectively or individually.<sup>235</sup> There were numerous monuments and statues erected in honor of the Dąbrowszczacy.<sup>236</sup> The Dąbrowszczacy were honored with engraved plaques listing the dates of the battles of Madrid, Guadalajara, and Ebro at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.<sup>237</sup> The conference “Polacy w wojnie hiszpańskiej, 1936-1939” (Poles in the Spanish War, 1936-1939), a state sponsored celebration of the Dąbrowszczacy, was held

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<sup>231</sup> Czerwiński, “Dąbrowszczacy.” “General Walter” was a nom de guerre given to Red Army General Karol Waclaw Świerczewski in order to hide his Soviet ties.

<sup>232</sup> The State Council of the Polish People’s Republic, “The Statue of the Medal ‘For Your Freedom and Ours,’” October 18, 1956.

<sup>233</sup> The State Council, “The Statue of the Medal ‘For Your Freedom and Ours.’”

<sup>234</sup> The State Council, “The Statue of the Medal ‘For Your Freedom and Ours.’”

<sup>235</sup> “Decommunization means removing the names of criminals from public spaces,” The Institute of National Remembrance, Accessed February 25, 2021, <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/41311,Dekomunizacja-to-usuniecie-nazwisk-zbrodniarzy-z-przestrzeni-publicznej-Warszawa.html?search=839366>.

<sup>236</sup> Giles Tremlett, “The Contested Legacy of the Anti-Fascist International Brigades,” *The Guardian*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/oct/22/the-contested-legacy-of-the-anti-fascist-international-brigades>.

<sup>237</sup> Zuzanna Hertzberg, “Dąbrowszczacy disavowed,” Accessed February 25, 2021, <http://www.zuzannahertzberg.com/portfolio/wykleci-wsrod-wykletych-dabrowszczacy/>.

in Warsaw in 1962.<sup>238</sup> Henryk Torunczyk, a former commander of the Dąbrowski Battalion, led the conference, which was attended by representatives of the Central Committee as well as other government and foreign dignitaries. The Polish Ministry of National Defense published the conference proceedings from the 1962 conference, edited by Dąbrowszczak Michał Bron, which contained 28 articles as well as a complete list of surviving Dąbrowszczacy.<sup>239</sup> In 1977, Polish state television in Warsaw ran a documentary about the Polish involvement in the Spanish Civil War, fittingly titled “Dąbrowszczacy.”<sup>240</sup>

### **Yugoslavia and the Naši Španci**

In Yugoslavia, International Brigade veterans also rose to positions of power, though their ascendance was in many ways tied to their participation in World War II. Similarly to East Germany, the International Brigades were also held as high moral examples who legitimized the government as the honored “Naši Španci,” or “Our Spaniards.” Since the Kingdom of Yugoslavia revoked the citizenship of any Yugoslav who joined the International Brigades, the veterans were unable to be repatriated when the International Brigades were disbanded in 1938.<sup>241</sup> They fought with the Republican Army until the Fall of Catalonia in 1939, when they crossed the border into France. Immediately upon their crossing, they were disarmed and placed in internment camps

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<sup>238</sup> Krammer, “The Cult of the Spanish Civil War,” 535.

<sup>239</sup> Krammer, “The Cult of the Spanish Civil War,” 535.

<sup>240</sup> “A Telling ‘Omission,’” 28 June 1977. HU OSA 300-8-3-4856; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. Electronic Record <http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:20555d6b-5b94-4a41-8851-8542cf934dc0>.

<sup>241</sup> Vjerman Pavlakovic, “Twilight of the Revolutionaries: ‘Naši Španci’ and the End of Yugoslavia” *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 62, No. 7 (September 2010): 1178.

with the rest of the refugees or soldiers.<sup>242</sup> Roughly 250 of these volunteers escaped or were released from the French internment camps in the 1940s and made their way back to Yugoslavia where they joined the early stages of the Partisan anti-German occupation resistance movement.<sup>243</sup> As battle-hardened revolutionaries with a proven track record of militant activism, the Španci were quickly elevated to leadership positions within the Partisan forces and led the fight against the Axis powers in Yugoslavia. Thirty Španci attained the rank of general by 1945 and all four Partisan armies eventually created by the end of the war were commanded by Španci.<sup>244</sup> After World War II ended, many Španci held high posts in the government of Tito's Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Twenty veterans were members of the Central Committee, several were vice presidents or ministers of defense, and many others were ambassadors, directors of various state organizations, or high-ranking officials in the intelligence services.<sup>245</sup> As a reward for their service, fifty-nine Španci were designated as People's Heroes during and after World War Two.<sup>246</sup> Approximately 400 members formed the Association of Yugoslav Volunteers of the Spanish Republican Army 1936-1939 in 1946.<sup>247</sup>

As Tito pursued his Cold War policy of non-alignment, the League of Communists amplified the Naši Španci's place as moral examples for society, making

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<sup>242</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1177-78.

<sup>243</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1177.

<sup>244</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1177.

<sup>245</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1178.; With the Stalin-Tito split of 1948, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia came under fire from the Soviet party and the Cominform. In 1952, after the Informbiro era of purges, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was renamed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in a bid to differentiate the party from the Soviet party and indicate to the international community that Yugoslavia was unaligned with the USSR.

<sup>246</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1177.

<sup>247</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1178.

any deviation from this position cause for punishment. During the Croatian Spring of 1971, the Croatian Party Cadres advocated for the decentralization of Yugoslavia, for increased power and autonomy for the respective Republics, and for increased federal spending in Croatia. Tito punished the leaders of the Croatian Spring, purging them from the Party and declaring them to be nationalists working to undermine Yugoslavia.

Keeping in line with Tito, the Association of Spanish Veterans sharply censured the few members who sympathized with the Croatians, deeming them to be “nationalists and chauvinists.”<sup>248</sup> In 1974, Tito allowed the Yugoslav constitution to be amended, providing some measure of decentralization and increasing the power of the individual republics. After Tito’s death, the Yugoslav government and the Central Committee were placed under intense scrutiny and faced increased resistance from factions across Yugoslavia. With criticism on all fronts, the Party became increasingly reliant on the prestige of the Naši Španci and the Partisan veterans and the moral example they provided.

While there was no single venerated figure in socialist Yugoslavia, the International Brigade veterans were celebrated for their role in shaping the Partisan movement. The International Brigade’s connection to the Partisans allowed the Titoist system to use the International Brigade story as a crutch, propping up the regime by appropriating public memory for socialist educational purposes. Although there were individual veterans honored as People’s Heroes from the beginning, the Yugoslav state appropriation of International Brigade history came later. In 1971, President Tito

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<sup>248</sup> Pavlakovic, “Twilight of the Revolutionaries,” 1179.



designated the entire veterans' association as a People's Hero, putting it on par with the veterans' association for the Partisan army.<sup>249</sup> In the context of the Croatian Spring the same year, this move proved the growing importance of the Španci to the Titoist system as symbols of ethnic unity and proper socialist values. In December 1972, the Yugoslav federal assembly enacted the Law on the Basic Rights of Veterans of the Spanish National Liberation War and Revolution (1936-1939), granting the Naši Španci the same rights and honors afforded the Partisans, though they were required to show "revolutionary continuity" in the years between the end of the Spanish Civil War and the formation of the Socialist Yugoslavia.<sup>250</sup> The veterans' association received the authority to determine if a veteran had exhibited the necessary "revolutionary continuity," making the Law on the Basic Rights of Veterans of the Spanish National Liberation War and Revolution a unique case in which a Yugoslav civic institution effectively directed the implementation of a federal assembly law.<sup>251</sup> Those veterans who were approved by the association received a pension and the Medal of 1941.<sup>252</sup>

By the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War in 1986, the now-failing Titoist system had fully incorporated the International Brigades. They sought to use the celebratory events to reignite the flames of socialism in the youth in an attempt to hold on to power and keep the nation from tearing itself apart. The 50th Anniversary celebrations came at this time of increasing dissent, so the International Brigades saw their place in the Yugoslav Partisan founding myth retroactively strengthened. Museums across

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<sup>249</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1178.

<sup>250</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1178-1179.

<sup>251</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1179.

<sup>252</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1179.

Yugoslavia mobilized to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War in 1986. The Revolutionary Museum of the Peoples of Croatia in Zagreb as well as museums in Sisak, Pula, and Livno commemorated the Croatian Naši Španci.<sup>253</sup> The Vojvodina Museum of the Socialist Revolution in Novi Sad celebrated the Serbian Naši Španci while Belgrade's Revolutionary Museum of the Peoples and Nationalities of Yugoslavia displayed 'Yugoslav Volunteers in the Spanish War 1936-1939,' celebrating Naši Španci of all ethnicities and from all the constituent republics.<sup>254</sup> In all the exhibits, special attention was paid not only to the link between the Španci and the success of the Partisans, but also to the coexistence and cooperation of the constituent Yugoslav ethnic groups within the International Brigades, making the Naši Španci the prime example of the League of Communists' slogan "brotherhood and unity."<sup>255</sup> By doing so, the League hoped to diminish the rising tide of ethnic nationalism, separatism, and irredentism.

International Brigade veterans were so common in Yugoslav Partisan stories that it became a trope. The Spanac (the Spaniard) was an older, experienced revolutionary who had already proved his loyalty to the Party in Spain. The Spanac was a mentor archetype, as he typically worked to organize and train the peasant villagers who wished to fight with the Partisans.<sup>256</sup> In the film *Kozara* (1963), for example, a Spanish veteran calms frightened Partisans on sentry duty and steadies their nerves by telling stories and singing songs from the Spanish Civil War.<sup>257</sup> Spanish Civil War songs were also popular

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<sup>253</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1187.

<sup>254</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1187.

<sup>255</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1187.

<sup>256</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1186.

<sup>257</sup> Pavlakovic, "Twilight of the Revolutionaries," 1186.

in Yugoslavia, even after the fall of the Titoist system that encouraged them, as evidenced by the publication of a book of Spanish Civil War marching songs sold as part of the 1996 anniversary festivities.<sup>258</sup>

### **The Zionization of International Brigade Memory**

Where the incorporation of the veterans of the International Brigades in Germany was immediate, the nationalization of the International Brigades in Israel was delayed and retroactive. As Israel wrote and rewrote its own national history following the various Arab-Israeli wars, anti-Fascism received greater importance. As a prime example of anti-Fascism, and particularly Jewish anti-Fascism, the International Brigades received special attention in Israel. This was not always the case, however, as the International Brigade veterans were at first unwelcome traitors. The Spanish Civil War coincided with the Arab Riots of 1936. As such, the dominant Zionist groups heavily discouraged volunteering in the International Brigades, arguing that every Jew is needed in Palestine to contribute to collective protection from the Arab populace. The phrase “Hanita comes before Madrid,” made in reference to a borderland kibbutz, was often used to remind potential volunteers of the conflicts with Arabs in the frontier and to dissuade potential volunteers from leaving.<sup>259</sup> Some leading Zionists went so far as to declare the Palestinian volunteers in the International Brigades to be “traitors to the interests of the Jewish people.”<sup>260</sup> The Zionist Socialist Ya’akov Riftin was quoted as saying “We have neither the time nor the ability to deal day in and day out with the events taking place on

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<sup>258</sup> Pavlakovic, “Twilight of the Revolutionaries,” 1187.

<sup>259</sup> Raanan Rein, “A Belated Inclusion: Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War and Their Place in the Israeli National Narrative” *Israel Studies* V. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 25.

<sup>260</sup> Rein, “A Belated Inclusion,” 25.

the Spanish fronts. We too are defending ourselves in the trenches for the third year now. We are losing people every day. And no one knows if we have reached the height of terror or if the worst is still ahead of us.”<sup>261</sup>

As the veterans returned home to Palestine or the later State of Israel, they found themselves in a period of prolonged political isolation. The events of World War II and the wave of new Jewish immigrants settling in Palestine thoroughly eclipsed the issues of Spain. With the Zionist movement fighting a multipronged battle against the British Mandatory authorities, the United Nations, and the local Arab population for the creation of a Jewish home state while dealing with the challenges of incorporating a massive influx of immigrants, there were more urgent matters than the public recognition and celebration of the veterans of the International Brigades who had, in their view, left national struggles behind to fight someone else’s war.<sup>262</sup> When the veterans were planning their 10-year anniversary event in 1946, the various organizations of the Zionist establishment such as the Histadrut, the national trade union center, would not work with the veterans, citing their preoccupation with matters of current interest.<sup>263</sup> Only the local Communist Party agreed to participate, and only their newspaper covered the event.<sup>264</sup>

The Palestine Communist Party dominated the first stage of International Brigade commemoration. As the sole commemorating agent, the Palestine Communist Party exercised great control over the narrative, as shown by their mythologization of Mark Milman. Milman, a Palestinian volunteer who rose to the rank of captain, served as the

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<sup>261</sup> Rein, “A Belated Inclusion,” 25.

<sup>262</sup> Rein, “A Belated Inclusion,” 31.

<sup>263</sup> Rein, “A Belated Inclusion,” 32.

<sup>264</sup> Rein, “A Belated Inclusion,” 32.

political commissar of the 24th Battalion in the XV International Brigade and was among the many casualties of the Battle of the Ebro. In the early post-World War II years, the Party held Milman up as the epitome of heroic sacrifice, international and transcultural solidarity, and Jewish nationalism and turned him into the poster-boy of the Palestinian volunteers.<sup>265</sup> The Party first memorialized Milman in *Mark Milman: Jewish Captain in Fighting Spain* in 1945 and continued to hold Milman up in memorial articles published in their in-house newspaper *Kol Ha'am* through 1955.<sup>266</sup> Part history of the International Brigades, part biography, *Mark Milman* portrayed the themes of a grand struggle between the forces of democracy and international fascism with the fate of all Jewry hanging in the balance that would define the PCP's treatment of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>267</sup> *Mark Milman* did not create an entirely out of reach myth however, since discussions of his emotional commitments to his family and his description as an introspective and observant man made Milman an approachable hero that the youth could identify with.<sup>268</sup> This approachability worked to the party's favor, as the Banki club, a youth outreach organization, bore Milman's name.

The Zionist establishment and the Israeli general populace would eventually warm up to the veterans of the International Brigades. A key moment of acceptance came with the 1972 Conference of the IAVIB in Tel-Aviv, held to celebrate the 35th

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<sup>265</sup> Amir Locker-Biletzki, "War and Memory: The Israeli Communist Commemoration of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1986" *Israel Studies Review* V. 31, No. 2 (Winter 2016): 71-73.

<sup>266</sup> Locker-Biletzki, "War and Memory," 72.

<sup>267</sup> Locker-Biletzki, "War and Memory." 72-73.

<sup>268</sup> Locker-Biletzki, "War and Memory," 72.

anniversary of the formation of the Jewish Naftali Botwin Company.<sup>269</sup> The Botwin Company was a small unit of around 150 men within the Polish Dombroski Battalion formed in 1937.<sup>270</sup> Formed as a majority Yiddish-speaking Jewish unit at the request of Polish Jews, the Botwin Company took men from all national groups though it was predominantly Polish.<sup>271</sup> The Botwin Company would become symbolic of the larger Jewish participation in the International Brigades. Originally planned as a collaboration between the Polish and Israeli veterans' associations for the 30th anniversary in 1967, the outbreak of the 6-Day War prevented Tel-Aviv from hosting the event.<sup>272</sup> The subsequent severing of diplomatic relations between Poland and Israel and the rise of Polish anti-Semitism prevented the Polish veterans from collaborating in the 1972 event.<sup>273</sup>

While the weaponization of International Brigade memory followed distinctly Cold War ideological lines in East Germany, in Israel it was more targeted towards Poland. At the 1972 conference, the Histadrut revealed the results of a survey that indicated that close to 7,000 of the 45,000 participants in the International Brigades were Jewish.<sup>274</sup> Claiming to represent all Jewish participants who survived the war, the Histadrut adopted several resolutions intended to protect these veterans and advance their interests, bringing them under the wing of Israel. These resolutions called for all nations to assure their citizens of Jewish origin the right to maintain their ethnic culture and their

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<sup>269</sup> Saul Wellman, "Jewish Vets of the Spanish Civil War. Personal observations of the Spanish Civil War," *Jewish Currents* V. 27, No 6, 1973, 8.

<sup>270</sup> Albert Prago, "The Botwin Company in Spain: 1937-1939," *Jewish Currents*, March 1992, 9.

<sup>271</sup> Prago, "The Botwin Company in Spain," 8.

<sup>272</sup> Wellman, "Jewish Vets," 9.

<sup>273</sup> Wellman, "Jewish Vets," 10.; Prago, "The Botwin Company in Spain," 9.

<sup>274</sup> Wellman, "Jewish Vets," 9.

right to immigrate to Israel and join their national homeland.<sup>275</sup> The Histadrut also proclaimed its support for the Spanish struggle against Francisco Franco, calling for the democratization of Spain, noting that Israel had not yet normalized relations with the regime.<sup>276</sup> Finally, the Histadrut called for the granting of government pensions to the veterans of the Spanish Civil War and for the guaranteeing of these pensions in a clear reference to the Polish government, which had ceased paying the pensions of the Jewish veterans who fled to Israel as a result of the anti-Semitism that rose in the aftermath of the 6-Day War.<sup>277</sup>

The Polish situation gave the conference an additional layer of meaning. As a celebration of the Botwin Company, the conference was in part a celebration of the Polish soldiers of the Dombrowski Battalion and an act of public acceptance for the Polish Jews. Israel had recently absorbed a group of International Brigades veterans who fled Poland.<sup>278</sup> The 6-Day War had not only postponed the celebration of the Botwin Company, but had fundamentally altered the nature of this celebration. As some Jewish veterans of the Dombrowski Battalion expressed their sympathy with Israel and opposed the Gomulka government's anti-Israel stance after Israel's victory in the 6-Day War, they ran afoul of the authorities in Poland.<sup>279</sup> The veterans who were members of the Communist Party were expelled.<sup>280</sup> All lost their pensions and social security rights and

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<sup>275</sup> Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 37.

<sup>276</sup> Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 37.

<sup>277</sup> Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 37.

<sup>278</sup> Rain, "A Belated Inclusion," 33.

<sup>279</sup> Prago, "A Fortieth Anniversary in Florence," 37.; Wellman, "Jewish Vets," 11.

<sup>280</sup> Prago, "A Fortieth Anniversary in Florence," 37.

those veterans who had been granted honors or medals were stripped of them.<sup>281</sup> Facing economic uncertainty and political persecution as “Zionist double agents,” they fled to Israel.<sup>282</sup> This gave the Israeli association the distinction of being the only growing veterans association.<sup>283</sup> The Israeli association would continue to grow after the 1972 Conference, as anti-Semitism continued in the Soviet Bloc.<sup>284</sup> Once in Israel, the veterans were denied their pensions as the Polish government claimed they could not send money to Polish citizens living in countries that Poland had no diplomatic relations with.<sup>285</sup> It was ironic then, that the veterans who had been forced out of Poland were celebrating Polish national heroes.

Unlike the 10th anniversary in 1946 where the Histadrut refused to participate, the Histadrut sponsored the 1972 conference.<sup>286</sup> The conference included speeches by Botwin veterans, the central committee of the Histadrut, a representative of the Israeli Organization of Fighters Against Nazism, members of the Spanish Republican government-in-exile, and American Milt Wolff, showing the broad support for International Brigade veterans within Israel.<sup>287</sup> The 1972 conference showcased a new development in the story of the Palestinian veterans as Botwin veteran Shlomo Shiloni used his speech to connect the International Brigades to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and the conflict with the British authorities in Mandatory Palestine, weaving the Botwin

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<sup>281</sup> Prago, “A Fortieth Anniversary in Florence,” 37.; Wellman, “Jewish Vets” 11.

<sup>282</sup> Prago, “A Fortieth Anniversary in Florence,” 37.

<sup>283</sup> Wellman, “Jewish Vets,” 11; Prago, “A Fortieth Anniversary in Florence,” 38 .

<sup>284</sup> Prago, “A Fortieth Anniversary in Florence,” 38.

<sup>285</sup> Prago, “A Fortieth Anniversary in Florence,” 37.

<sup>286</sup> Wellman, “Jewish Vets,” 9.

<sup>287</sup> Wellman, “Jewish Vets,” 9.



Company into the Zionist history of Israel.<sup>288</sup> Shiloni justified the volunteers' choice to leave behind Palestine during the Arab Revolts by asserting that participation in the International Brigades still contributed to the formation of the Jewish home state of modern Israel.<sup>289</sup> The conference was also used to fight against the narrative of the docile Jew who willingly allowed the Holocaust to be inflicted upon him. Saul Wellman, an American observer at the conference, later noted that "one of the important contributions our Israeli vets have made is in personifying to this younger generation the historical continuity of Jewish militancy on behalf of progressive causes, the refusal to surrender to fascism, the readiness to take up arms for democracy."<sup>290</sup>

This growing Zionist appropriation of the International Brigades was further reflected in the creation of the Forest of Peace and Friendship in Beit Shemesh, dedicated in the memory of the fallen Jews of the International Brigades. With over a thousand trees, the Israeli memorial forest commemorates far more than the 150-250 volunteers who came from Mandatory Palestine.<sup>291</sup> In this way, the Forest of Peace and Friendship formalizes the claims made at the 1972 conference that all Jews, irrespective of their national origin, the unit they fought with, or their actual reason for joining the International Brigades, served the interests of the embryonic Jewish community in Palestine and contributed to the formation of an independent Israeli state. All of the fallen Jewish volunteers were honored as Israeli heroes, echoing the earlier statements that all Jewish International Brigade veterans had a potential home in Israel.

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<sup>288</sup> Wellman, "Jewish Vets," 10.

<sup>289</sup> Wellman, "Jewish Vets," 10.

<sup>290</sup> Wellman, "Jewish Vets," 10.

<sup>291</sup> Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 40.

The memorial forest became the site of a commemorative service celebrating the anniversary of Germany's surrender every May 9, further strengthening the link between the Spanish Civil War and World War II.<sup>292</sup> As an extension of the Zionist tradition of creating memorial forests and planting sacred trees in the land of Israel, exemplified by the Martyrs' Forest monument to the Holocaust in the outskirts of Jerusalem, the Forest of Peace and Friendship uses explicitly Zionist means of commemoration, finalizing the Zionist adoption of the Brigadistas.<sup>293</sup> The fallen Jews of the International Brigades received the same honor as the victims of the Holocaust, creating an undisputable connection between the two groups.

### **Conclusion**

For the veterans of the International Brigades, the ideological path their nations took after World War II determined their reintegration and memorialization. The British, Canadian, and American veterans returned home to nations that would later survive World War II and undergo an ideological shift away from anti-Fascism towards anti-Communism. As the Cold War developed, the USSR and Communism took Nazi Germany and Fascism's place as the top threat to world peace and national economic and political interests. These states recognized Franco, accepting his repressive government as a necessary evil in the battle against the Soviet threat. In these nations, the veterans were forgotten and politically isolated at best. At worst, the governments repressed the veterans who were hounded by state security agents, tried, jailed, or even forced into exile. The veterans who settled in East Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Israel

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<sup>292</sup> Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 40.

<sup>293</sup> Rein, "A Belated Inclusion," 40.

witnessed or participated in the birth of these new states. These new governments, reflecting on the horrors of World War II or their commitment to Communism, remained committed to anti-Fascism. As anti-Fascism gained renewed significance, either historically or politically, these governments wove the anti-Fascist history of the International Brigades into their national origin myths. In these countries, the governments honored the International Brigade veterans as heroes and constructed vibrant memory cultures.

In anti-Communist nations, the Communist involvement in the Spanish Civil War and the veterans' associations tendency to toe the party line caused problems for these veterans. The Canadians and Americans clashed with their government immediately. Fighting in the Spanish Civil War broke the Non-Intervention Agreement of 1937. These governments saw service in the International Brigades as an admission of Communist beliefs since the Comintern organized the International Brigades and Communist commissars maintained order in the ranks. This violation of international law and national policy and the link to Communism alarmed state security agencies, who began monitoring the veterans. FBI agents met the returning veterans at the docks of New York harbor, where they confiscated the veterans' passports. The Canadian government stalled the repatriation process and prevented some soldiers from reentering the country. During World War II, the American and British veterans' associations squandered their hard-earned goodwill by opposing the war while the rest of their nation fought with vigor. The British veterans isolated themselves by fighting with Clement Attlee and alienating themselves from the Labour Party, their greatest ally. When the American veterans turned around and attempted to join the war effort, the US Army was hostile and wary of their

participation. The army suspected the veterans as potential subversives. Recruiters turned many of the veterans away, and the military often gave those who managed to enlist assignments that kept them away from the front. Some Canadian veterans never had the chance to support their nation during the war because the Canadian government interned some veterans in the central plains. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police sent a list of veterans to the Canadian Armed Forces' recruiting offices to prevent their enlistment.

As the veterans navigated through the changing political landscapes back home, many entered conflicts with the state rooted in their service to Spain. The International Brigade volunteers were motivated by their anti-Fascist ideology and their coexisting nationalist and internationalist beliefs. Most saw the events in Spain as intricately linked to the fates of their home nations and perceived little to no contradiction between their violation of international non-intervention in the International Brigades and their work back home. Many of the International Brigade volunteers were Communists. Those who were not Communists soon discovered, however, that their service in Spain created an unbreakable link to the Comintern, Moscow, and Joseph Stalin. The states that discarded anti-Fascism and pursued anti-Communism after World War II feared the veterans as spies and saboteurs. These states would not accept the veterans as both nationalists and Communists because they perceived Communism as foreign and anti-nationalist. These states denied the veterans their nationality and defined them exclusively by their international political interests. For this reason, some veterans suffered political persecutions, trials, and even exile at the hands of their governments.

In the anti-Communist nations, the government did not sponsor a public memorial culture surrounding the International Brigades. In Canada and America, the veterans

petitioned their governments to be included in the state-sponsored memory of World War II. In both nations, the veterans argued that the Spanish Civil War was a precursor to World War II. By joining the International Brigades, they fought Fascism and Nazism. As such, they felt entitled to the same memory and honors as the veterans of World War II. Neither effort was successful. In Britain, the veterans considered the Spanish Civil War to be ongoing. Being at war, they did not allow themselves to commemorate their service until Franco's death relieved them of their duty. In these nations, the veterans were not content to wither away to the dustbin of history. The veterans asserted their contribution to the world and claimed a place in national history. With no competition from the government, the national veterans' associations guided the commemoration of the International Brigades. In America, commemoration went hand in hand with political activism. The Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade used their anniversary dinners to raise money for their activist causes, blending political protest and memorialization. In Britain, the International Brigade Association held off on commemoration until after Franco's death. While Franco ruled Spain, the British veterans involved themselves in legal activism, which they used to stay relevant during the changing times. After Franco had passed, the British veterans successfully erected memorial statues, plaques, and monuments across the country. In Canada, the veterans built private memorials immediately after their formal exclusion from World War II memory.

In the nations that stayed anti-Fascist, the governments accepted the veterans into the pantheon of heroes, though the veterans followed different paths to national praise. In East Germany, Poland, and Yugoslavia, the governments welcomed the veterans immediately after World War II. As new states formed and new governments rose from

the rubble, these governments appropriated the history of the International Brigades. In East Germany, the German participants of International Brigades offered a national origin myth that differentiated East Germany from Nazi Germany. The Cold War tension with neighboring West Germany motivated the government to weaponize the narrative of the Spanish Civil War. By declaring themselves to be the successor to the International Brigades, they forced upon West Germany the legacy of Nazi Germany's Condor Legion. In Yugoslavia, the government accepted the International Brigades as a precursor to the Partisan movement and celebrated the leading role Brigade veterans played in the Partisan armies. In Poland, the initial memorial culture was inclusive. The government celebrated all the Polish Brigade veterans as heroes, with a medal and pensions. Following the 1967 6-Day War, the Polish government excluded the Jewish-Polish veterans from state-sponsored memory and cleansed the record of their participation. The state appropriation of International Brigade memory in Israel was retroactive. The Israeli government first shunned the veterans as unimportant while the general public considered them to be traitors to the Jewish people. The local Communist Party acted as the sole memory agents in the early years, though they eventually faced competition from the Zionist establishment. In the aftermath of the 6-Day War, the Israeli government used the International Brigades against Poland and accepted the Jewish International Brigade veterans into the grand narrative of Jewish anti-Nazi and Zionist struggle that included the Warsaw Uprising.

In some nations born from the ashes of World War II, such as East Germany, veterans participated in the formation of these new states from the highest level. As these new nations created their national origin myths, some included the International

Brigades. These nations incorporated anti-Fascism into the fabric of their new societies, defining themselves by their opposition to Nazi Germany and the historical significance anti-Fascism played in the development of their nation. As these states appropriated the history of the International Brigades, they created vibrant memorial cultures so they could use the propaganda value of the International Brigades to shape future generations. The governments turned the veterans into two-dimensional national heroes, paragons of whatever virtues the government wished to instill in its citizens. In East Germany, this meant the veterans modeled loyalty, Marxist political consciousness, and self-sacrifice. In Yugoslavia, the veterans embodied inter-ethnic and international cooperation. These governments mobilized the cultural and public spheres in support of the myth. In these instances, the state nationalized the veterans, turning their dual nationalist and internationalist identity into a singular national identity. While the Jewish volunteers in the International Brigades likely did not consider themselves to be fighting for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Israel, the Israeli government's narrative from 1972 on construed Jewish participation in the Brigades as a part of the long Israeli national struggle.

In participating in a state-sponsored memorial culture, the veterans relinquished control over the narrative and accepted the government's direction as they filled prescribed roles. When the veterans failed to live up to the government's expectations, they lost their privileged position. As the Cold War enveloped East Germany, the veterans found themselves under scrutiny because their earlier cooperation with American and French intelligence during World War II made them suspect. The Socialist Unity Party purged many veterans over concerns regarding their political reliability and

loyalty to Franz Dahlem. In Poland, the state narrative of the Spanish Civil War excluded the Jewish-Polish. After Poland cut diplomatic ties with Israel in 1967, the police harassed the Jewish-Polish veterans, who they considered to be potential Zionist spies. When these veterans fled to a life in exile in Israel, the Polish government refused to pay their pensions. As the Israeli Zionist establishment appropriated the history of the International Brigades, they Zionized the Brigades. The Zionists placed the Brigade veterans within the grand Israeli narrative, regardless of their real reasons for joining the Brigades and fighting in Spain, their national origin, or their residence after World War II. The Israeli narrative included all Jews purely based on their Jewishness and their anti-Fascism.

In many nations, both where the veterans controlled Brigade memory and where Brigade memory rested in the hands of the government, the memory agents used the history of the International Brigade as a political tool on the international stage. The memorial agents bestowed upon their allies, or the enemies of their enemies, the legacy of the International Brigades while condemning their enemies as the modern Condor Legion. The East German government considered itself to be the successor of the Thaelmann Battalion, leaving West Germany as the successor to Nazi Germany's Condor Legion. The East German veterans lauded the North Korean and North Vietnamese soldiers who fought American interventionist forces as the heirs of the spirit of the International Brigades. American and East German veterans condemned America as the new Nazi Germany for their intervention in the Vietnam War. American veterans similarly protested American involvement in the Nicaraguan Contra Wars as an act of military intervention comparable to the Condor Legion. The British veterans likewise



condemned their own government, though they protested the normalization of relations between Britain and Francoist Spain. The Israeli government touted their support of the International Brigade veterans. Speakers at the 1972 conference declared all International Brigade veterans to be deserving of pensions and honors and exhorted all governments with International Brigade veterans to guarantee their veterans' pensions. The Israeli government indirectly shamed Poland by declaring the veterans of the Naftali Botwin Company, a Jewish-Polish unit in the Polish Dąbrowski Brigade, to be Israeli national heroes.

Though the International Brigade veterans received varied treatment after they returned from Spain and World War II ended, this treatment can be divided according to the national adherence to anti-Fascism or anti-Communism. While at first glance Brigade veteran reintegration and memorialization may appear to follow the Cold War divisions of East versus West and capitalist versus communist, the treatment of veterans in Israel does not fit that paradigm. The vibrant memorial culture in Israel proves that the government's treatment of its veterans followed this anti-Fascist and anti-Communist divide. As the perils of World War II ended and the threat of Soviet Communism overshadowed the threat of Fascism, some nations pursued anti-Communism at the expense of the anti-Fascists. Despite this divide, the story of the International Brigades was told across the globe. Whether the state or the veteran's associations controlled the narrative and sponsored the memorials, someone told the story of the men who volunteered to fight for the Spanish Republic. Dolores Ibárruri's promise came true, though it came earlier for the East German, Yugoslav, and Polish veterans. The International Brigade veterans became legends and history. The "soldiers of the highest

ideal of human redemption” received their honored memory; the ideological commitments of their home nations determined who gave them this memory and how it was constructed.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Dolores Ibárruri, “Goodbye, Brothers, Till Our Speedy Reunion” in *The Heart of Spain*, 345.

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