



IBMT Newsletter

www.international-brigades.org.uk

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INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

Members of the Clarion Cycling Club 1895 celebrate their arrival in Barcelona on 19 August, having completed a 1,000-mile ride through Britain and northern Spain. The purpose of the ride was to honour two club members who were killed in Spain while fighting with the International Brigades and to commemorate a fundraising ride to Barcelona which the club organised in 1938 to help the victims of Franco. See report and more pictures on page 5.



'Pasionaria' nights for London and Manchester

By Jim Jump

Two star-studded celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of the departure of the International Brigades from Spain in 1938 are scheduled for London and Manchester.

In London, Philosophy Football is organising, in association with the TUC and the public sector union Unison, an evening entitled "Viva La Pasionaria!" which will pay tribute to the women of the Spanish Civil War. It will be held on Tuesday 28 October – the exact 70th anniversary of the passing out parade in Barcelona when "La Pasionaria", Dolores Ibárruri, made her never-to-be-forgotten speech in tribute to the International Brigades.

In Manchester on Saturday 8 November, the IBMT is staging, under the title of a quote from La Pasionaria's speech, "You are legend", an evening of poetry, music and prose to commemo-

rate the withdrawal of the volunteers from Spain. Compered by actor Maxine Peake, among those who will be performing are the poet and author of the novel "Trumpet" Jackie Kay and the Glasgow group The Wakes, one of the most exciting bands on the new folk scene.

For the London event, which is supported by the IBMT, music will come from modern folk superstar Eliza Carthy, together with legendary ska diva Rhoda Dakar. There will be poetry from Jackie Kay and contributions from Maxine Peake, Zoe Williams of *The Guardian* and Frances O'Grady, deputy general secretary of the TUC, among others.

With film and visuals, a tapas bar and special guests, the organisers say it promises to be a night to remember. The venue is the TUC's Congress Centre, Congress House, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. Doors open at 6pm and the event starts at 7pm. Tickets cost

£9.99; full programme details and ticket sales from: [www.philosophyfootball.com] or 020-8802 3499.

The Manchester celebration begins at 7.30pm at the Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD; tickets will be available on the door for £10 (£5 concessions); for more information, phone: 0161-224 1747 or 0161-226 2013.

The weekend before the London event will see surviving International Brigade veterans from around the world, including several from Britain, travelling to Barcelona for a 70th anniversary reunion. In 1938, La Pasionaria told them: "You can go proudly. You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of democracy's solidarity and universality in the face of the vile and accommodating spirit of those who interpret democratic principles with their eyes on hoards of wealth or corporate shares which they want to safeguard from all risk."



Compering both events will be Maxine Peake (far left), with The Wakes (centre) among those performing in Manchester and Eliza Carthy (right) in London.



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

International Brigade Memorial Trust

www.international-brigades.org.uk

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Annual membership rates are £15 standard and £7.50 for concessions; affiliating organisations by arrangement. Further details and membership forms are available from the Membership Secretary, along with standing order and gift aid forms.

IBMT NEWSLETTER

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

Send all items for the next issue to the editor by 31 December 2008 at the latest.

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By Marlene Sidaway

Looking forward to Barcelona

The 70th anniversary commemoration of the October 1938 farewell to the International Brigades promises to be a very moving event. On Friday 24 October there will be a visit to the Barcelona monument to the International Brigades and wreath-laying at the Fossar de la Pedrera. In the evening the Catalan government will host a reception at the Palacio de la Generalitat. Saturday will be spent in Sitges, where the Brigaders and friends and families will be lodged during their stay. There will be a ceremony of homage to the International Brigades and a dinner with musical entertainment in the evening. Anyone who plans to go who has not yet done so should contact me on 020-8555 6674 or [\[marlenesidaway@hotmail.com\]](mailto:marlenesidaway@hotmail.com).

Searchlight calendar

The July page of the 2009 calendar produced by anti-fascist group Searchlight features the wonderful Mark Read photo of surviving Brigaders. Phone 020-7681 8660 to order your copy.

Thank you, ambassador

We are sad to learn that Carlos Miranda, the Spanish Ambassador, is leaving to become his country's ambassador to Nato. But we wish him well in his new post. He paid a very moving tribute to the Brigaders and laid a wreath at this year's Jubilee Gardens commemoration (report on back page). Wreaths were laid too by Katie Green (IBMT), Martin Sugarman (Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women), Natalia Benjamin (Basque Children of '37 Association UK), Joe Sisto for his father and all Spanish Republicans and one from the Waterloo Nine Elms Branch of the Aslef rail union. ("The truth of the defeated": page 7.)

Sponsored run for the IBMT

Chris Hall finished the 10k Great Yorkshire Run in Sheffield on 7 September to raise money for the IBMT. In doing so he beat his best time by two minutes but missed out on running under the hour by just three minutes. Well done Chris! Members who sponsored him should now send their sponsorship money to Dolores Long at 3 Rufford Road, Manchester M16 8AE or to me.

Protecting the good name of the Trust

When the IBMT was formed in 2000, its constitutional aims were to keep alive the memory and



Congratulations to Brigader Lou Kenton (left), 100 on 1 September, who celebrated his birthday with wife Rafa (pictured) and family and friends in Chiswick, west London. A photo display put together by son and daughter John and Judy illustrated Lou's life, from his anti-Blackshirt struggles in the East End, where he was born, and his time in Spain to decades of postwar political activism.

spirit of those who volunteered in support of the Spanish Republic. Since then the Trust has grown beyond our wildest dreams, with a membership of 800 people, many of them very active in promoting events and raising money. This is wonderful, and exactly as I hoped it would be – a grassroots organisation united in admiration of what the people of Britain did to support their comrades in Spain.

It would be wrong to curb that enthusiasm. But we all need to be aware of the wording of our constitution and consider well before we involve the name of the Trust in support of causes which we as individuals might rightly be very passionate about but which might cause offence to other members and have dire consequences in our relations with other organisations. Similarly, it is important that those who write or speak about events in Spain or the volunteers and their families should check their facts and not spread false information – enough of that goes on in the media as it is!

Time for me to step down

Next year will mark my 10th year with the IBMT and I give notice that I will not seek re-election at the annual general meeting in 2009. This will give us a chance during the coming year to plan what future path the Trust will follow. It is an exciting time and new ideas and energy are needed to carry it forward to greater things. I shall be very sorry to leave. I have made some wonderful friends and have been proud to serve the Trust in memory of my late partner, David Marshall, and his comrades, and hope I can continue to be involved in some way.

Left: The IBMT ran a stall for the first time at this year's Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival in Dorset. The July event attracted some 8,000 people – many of whom visited our stall. Pictured are IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway (centre) with IBMT Treasurer Mike Anderson (right) and IBMT member Chris Tranchell.

Remembering the 17 Sussex men

By Mike Anderson

It was standing room only as Jack Jones, IBMT Life President, welcomed nearly 150 people who had come to hear the story of "Sussex and the Spanish Civil War" in Lewes on 21 June. "As the years pass, it becomes more and more important to learn from history and to honour those who volunteered to make the stand against fascism," he said.

The connections between Sussex and the Spanish Civil War were then explored in song, verse and prose to an enthralled audience. At least 17 men who lived in or hailed from Sussex made the arduous journey to Spain between 1936 and 1938. Six of them were killed in Spain.

Jim Jump read poems written by father James, a journalist who had left Worthing for Spain and returned to marry Cayetana Lozano Díaz, a Basque refugee whom he had met in Sussex.

Bill Thornycroft, from Worthing, now in his 80s, told the audience how as an 11-year-old school-boy he had witnessed the arrival in Southampton by boat of 4,000 refugee children fleeing the bombing of their homes in the Basque Country by Franco's German and Italian fascist allies. His elder brother, Chris, had gone off to fight in Spain secretly, fearing that their mother would try to dissuade him despite being an outspoken opponent of Franco and a leading light in



Standing room only to hear the story of the Sussex men.

the movement to aid the Basque refugees.

The event, which was sponsored by the IBMT and Lewes and District Trades Union Council, also heard contributions from Marlene Sidaway, IBMT Secretary, who read poems by her partner David Marshall, one of the first volunteers to go to Spain.

In addition, there was a specially written contribution about Worthing's Edmund Updale by his daughters Eleanor and Frances.

The narrator was actor Chris Tranchell, with help from James Biddlecombe, Dave Brinson and David Nicholson.

Music from the period was played by Mary, David and Michael Motley, who are well known performers in Sussex folk clubs.

George Brown honoured in his native village

By Pauline Fraser

On 27/28 June, Inistioge, Co Kilkenny, paid homage to one of its sons, George Brown, who volunteered to fight for democracy in Spain and who was born in the village on 5 November 1906 and killed by a fascist bullet while lying wounded by the roadside near the battlefield at Brunete on 7 July 1937.

Among the several hundred who attended the



Jack Jones unveils the plaque to George Brown at Inistioge, with Bob Doyle, the last surviving Irish International Brigader, also in attendance.

events were Brigaders Jack Jones, who unveiled a plaque to Brown, and Bob Doyle.

Brown's parents had moved to Manchester to find work and it was the experience of life in that city that led to him to become a working class activist and to join the Communist Party during the General Strike of 1926. He became the full-time Manchester organiser of the party and was elected to its executive committee in 1935.

His widow, Evelyn Taylor, wrote to the *Daily Worker* after his death: "He went to Spain because he knew that if we allowed fascism to conquer in Spain, very soon we should be having to face the guns of fascism in England."

In 1938, Jack Jones married Evelyn and they stayed together until her death in 1998.

The events, centered on the local Anglican church, included lectures by Manus O'Riordan and Harry Owens. There were displays in the foyer of the church: a photo exhibition, "The Defenders of the Spanish Republic", by Pablo Vázquez Borruga and biographical information on the Spanish veterans compiled by Owens, as well as a selection of original letters and photographs about Brown. Plans are now being laid to organise an annual George Brown Memorial Lecture each year.

A full report of the events can be viewed at [www.geocities.com/irelandscw/ibvol-GBComm.html]. See [www.rte.ie/news/2008/0628/6news.html] for an Irish TV interview with Jack Jones on 28 June.

By Jack Jones

I had the pleasure on 1 September of opening an exhibition at the People's Centre in Liverpool about the International Brigades, in particular about the volunteers from Merseyside who went to Spain to fight the forces of reaction.

It was a marvellous event, attended by more than 200 people, including fellow veteran Jack Edwards, as well as many family members of Brigaders no longer with us.

Some 180 Merseysiders fought in the International Brigades and it is fitting that their part in the anti-fascist struggle in Spain is recognised while Liverpool is celebrating its status as Europe's "Capital of Culture".

My home city has a rich and proud heritage of radical and working-class activism, not least the commitment of many Merseysiders to help the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39.

The excellent Liverpool exhibition is only one of many events taking place this year. A few weeks earlier, I was also honoured to unveil the memorial to George Brown in Inistioge, Ireland. Like the Liverpool exhibition, it was another event with which I have a strong personal attachment.

This autumn sees our IBMT annual general meeting, which will be held in Dundee. We will remember the Brigaders from that city, who were among many brave Scots volunteers in Spain.

Then a week later I hope to be able to travel to Barcelona and join my old comrades from around the world in marking the 70th anniversary of the farewell to the International Brigades.

We have lost two more comrades since our last newsletter. They will be missed but, with your help, not forgotten. As long as people fight bigotry, oppression, militarism or fascism, in whatever guise they appear, I hope they will remember the example of international solidarity which was set by the International Brigades.

iSaludy suerte!



Jack Jones points to one of the exhibits at the People's Centre, Liverpool, where the story of the Merseyside volunteers in Spain is on display. (See page 6 for exhibition details.) His BBC interview for the opening ceremony can be seen at: [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/7599162.stm>].



Above: Andy Andrews at the 2007 Glastonbury festival.



Left: Andrews with Dorothy Rutter on the Teruel front in the winter of 1937/38, emerging from an ambulance with a pressure cooker containing sterilised surgical instruments.

Andy Andrews

By Jim Jump

Howard “Andy” Andrews was until his death on 7 May 2008, aged 100, the oldest British veteran of the International Brigades. Until only a few months before his death, he could still be seen on the streets of Taunton selling the *Morning Star*, collecting signatures against Trident nuclear weapons or opposing the Iraq war.

At the age of 16, Andrews joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and was posted to India, where the poverty and injustice shocked him. “I became a red from the first time I set foot in India,” he said.

After discharge from the army in 1931 he worked at Queen Charlotte’s Maternity Hospital, west London, became active in his local branch of the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement. First he joined the Independent Labour Party, then the Communist Party, which was organising street protests against the fascist Blackshirts. On one occasion, in March 1936, he helped disrupt one of Mosley’s rallies in the Royal Albert Hall, though he ended up being kicked and thrown down several flights of stairs.

Andrews was one of the first Britons to volunteer to help the Spanish Republic. He travelled by ambulance through France, arriving in Barcelona at the end of August 1936, and remained in Spain until March 1938. As part of the newly-formed British Medical Unit, he first served at a field hospital at Grañén on the Aragón front, then from January 1937 he worked as an operating theatre

technician at the International Brigades’ main base at Albacete.

From Albacete he was sent to Teruel during fighting in and around the city in the winter of 1937/38, working in makeshift hospitals that regularly came under attack from German and Italian planes.

In 1939 he rejoined the British army and was sent to France with the Royal Artillery. At Dunkirk, awaiting evacuation in May 1940, he was once again strafed by German planes.

In 1955, Andrews settled in Somerset, where he worked as an assistant in the pharmacy of Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton. He became a union shop steward, helped establish a branch of the Cohse health workers’ union and was its secretary for many years.

Bernard McKenna

By Antonio Díez

Bernard McKenna who died, aged 92, on 31 July was born in Hulme, Manchester, into an Anglo-Irish family. The family was poor; for most of his childhood, his father was unemployed.

Though he had won a scholarship to St Gregory’s Grammar School in Ardwick, at 14, he was forced to leave school and earn his keep – working as a clerk in a textile mill. Politics were part and parcel of Bernard’s family life and he first joined the Labour League of Youth, then, aged 17, the Young Communist League.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, he spent evenings and weekends collecting money for food and medical aid to Spain. Then in February 1937, without telling his family, he bought a weekend train ticket for Paris and made contact with the International Brigades recruiting office.



Bernard McKenna’s last public outing was in March this year when he attended the unveiling of a blue plaque to International Brigade nurse Lilian Urmston at St Paul’s Primary School, Stalybridge, near Manchester, where she had been a pupil. He is pictured here with Lilian’s sister, Hannah.

After training in signals, Bernard was wounded on his first day of action at the Battle of Brunete in July 1937. He recovered and saw more action on the Aragón front, where he was wounded again by shrapnel, and then badly shell-shocked. He almost died in hospital, but recovered sufficiently to fight again.

In the spring of 1938, along with a group of US Brigaders, he was captured by the fascists at Calaceite and taken to the infamous San Pedro de Cardeña concentration camp near Burgos where he was interrogated by the German Gestapo. At one point he was led out of the camp and taken to the outskirts of town. “I was convinced I would be shot. That was the fate of most International Brigaders caught by the fascists,” he recalled later. However, he was instead randomly selected for a prisoner exchange and was released in October 1938. He retained until his death the Foreign Office repatriation bill for £4. He never paid it.

When the Second World War was declared, Bernard joined the RAF within two days. He wanted, he said, to have another go at the fascists. He spent six and a half years in the forces and fought in North Africa, the Middle East and Italy.

In 1946, Bernard successfully applied for emergency teacher training and found a new vocation, specialising in teaching the educationally disadvantaged and those who had fallen behind in learning. He is survived by his five children.

Also remembered...

● **Betty Papworth**, who has died aged 94, dedicated her life to campaigning for social justice and peace, *writes Dan Carrier*. Born in Stepney to a large Jewish family, as a young woman she helped man the barricades at the Battle of Cable Street in 1936. As war broke out in Spain, she helped organise public meetings and fund-raising events. Through this, she befriended the US singer Paul Robeson and even put him up for a night at her East End home when he was in London. After the Second World War, Betty worked in the rag trade. Her political activism never dimmed. She even went to Israel in 2004 to see the release of peace campaigner Mordechai Vanunu. It was her 90th birthday and she stood at the gates of the prison despite right-wing protesters hurling eggs and insults at her.

● The broadcasting executive and journalist Sir **Geoffrey Cox**, who covered the Spanish Civil War for the *News Chronicle*, has died aged 97. A New Zealander, Cox joined the newspaper after completing his studies at Oxford. He was sent to Spain to replace the paper’s celebrated correspondent Arthur Koestler, who had been flung in jail by Franco. Back in London in 1937, he speedily wrote a book, “The Defence of Madrid”. He later joined the *Daily Express* and afterwards was a pioneering influence in the growth of television news in Britain, launching “News at Ten” in 1967.



Above: Arm on arm, Ted Ward (left) and Geoff Jackson with supporters in Leicester on 16 May 1938 while on their way to Barcelona.



At the memorial to Franco's victims in Logroño in northern Spain.



The riders set off from Glasgow's Pasionaria memorial to the International Brigades.



The seven riders plus two helpers in the support van who completed the entire ride from Glasgow to Barcelona; from left: Charles Jepson, Alan Warren (helper), Merce Lluveras (helper), Chris Goode, Stuart Walsh, Terry Lynch, Ruth Coates, Martin Perfect and Anna Marti.

Glasgow to Barcelona 1938 and 2008

By Colin Carritt

Ray Cox and Roy Watts were just 22 and 23 when they died fighting for the liberty of the Spanish people as members of the International Brigades. They were ordinary working men who liked nothing better after a week's work than to climb on their bikes on a Sunday morning and go for a spin in the countryside in the company of like-minded men and women from the Clarion Cycling Club.

It was in their honour that the Clarion Cycling Club 1895 chose to re-enact this year the 1938 bike ride by two other Clarion cyclists, Ted Ward and Geoff Jackson, who biked from Glasgow to Barcelona through France and over the Pyrenees to raise money for Spanish children who had become victims of the war. Holding public meetings and collecting money from union branches and other sympathetic groups, their target was £70 but they raised close on £400—a significant sum in 1938.

The 2008 re-enactment, backed by the IBMT and the Basque Children of '37 Association UK, chose a different route, as the riders wanted to pay tribute to the victims of Franco and to visit the

battlefields of the Ebro valley. So the ride started at the Glasgow International Brigades memorial and travelled south to Portsmouth visiting memorials and other sites at Bolton, Rotherham, Leicester, Bristol, Southampton and Portsmouth. The cyclists then caught the ferry to Bilbao and continued their pilgrimage through Gernika, Logroño, the Ebro valley, the Sierra Pandols and their ultimate destination, Barcelona. Seven riders with two support drivers completed the full distance of over 1,000 miles, but many others (including myself from Stow-in-the-Wold to Barcelona) rode parts of the route and there were usually at least 15 riders on any one day.

If the purpose of the event was to raise awareness of the International Brigades and their role in Spain in from 1936-39, then it was spectacularly successful. The trip received extensive coverage in regional and national TV, radio and newspapers in Spain. At almost every stop the riders were received by civic dignitaries and small tokens of friendship were exchanged.

Colin Carritt's full account of the ride can be viewed at: [\[www.westoxlabour.org/Hominaje.pdf\]](http://www.westoxlabour.org/Hominaje.pdf).

Brunete battlefield walk

By Alan Warren

The second annual Brunete battlefield march was held on 5 July 2008. Over 70 people, including a TV crew from the UK, followed the original advance of the Republican army towards Quijorna. At General Modesto's command post, the panorama was impressive to behold and a brief description was given by our guide, who pointed out Villanueva de la Cañada and Quijorna, as well as Brunete in the far distance.

At Quijorna, below the trenches manned by the Frente de Madrid reenactment group, who recre-

ated the assault on Quijorna by Republican forces, a 1-16 Mosca fighter in Republican colours flew overhead to the delight of all those on the ground.

At Villanueva de la Cañada, the mayor, Ana Luisa Delcaux Bravo, welcomed the group and, even though she is a PP member, embraced International Brigader Bob Doyle. It was announced that a street in the town would be named after the Lincoln Battalion commander Oliver Law, who was killed at Brunete on Mosquito Ridge.

As a finale to the walk, the BBC actor Richard Harrington, whose grandfather Tim Harrington was wounded at Brunete, read the poem to George Brown who was killed in the assault on

Villanueva de la Cañada and, as he finished, he kissed his grandfather's 1937 diary which he had brought with him for the march. The TV crew were in the process of filming a programme for eventual release concerning Richard's exploration of his grandfather's experiences in Spain.

Severiano Montero, Ernesto Viñas Constantino and Ángel Rodríguez Pérez acted as guides for the group.

Viñas says he would be delighted to guide visitors around the Brunete battlefield and arrange tailor-made tours to suit individual requirements. His email is [\[evcos37@yahoo.es\]](mailto:evcos37@yahoo.es).

He has also pointed out that large Francoist **Continued overleaf**



The A2-sized poster for the Liverpool exhibition on the International Brigades is on sale for £5 plus postage and can be purchased from the People's Centre (see details below).

- **3-23 September 2008:** Exhibition "Merseyside and the International Brigades"; People's Centre, 50-54 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5SD; weekdays 9am-5pm; contact [info@thepeoplescentre.com] or 051-709 3995.
- **18 September 2008:** Screening of "Memories of a Future", a documentary about the 70th anniversary of the formation of the International Brigades; plus poetry and prose readings; Rich Mix Arts Centre, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road, London E1 6LA; [www.richmix.org.uk]; 6.30pm; £5.50 (£3.50 concs).
- **28 September 2008:** Talk "The Legacy of the International Brigades" by IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway; organised by the Leicester Secular Society; 6.30pm; The Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB.
- **9-12 October 2008:** Series of events centred on the IBMT's annual general meeting in Dundee; see back page for details.
- **23-26 October 2008:** Commemoration in Sitges and Barcelona of the 70th anniversary of the farewell to the International Brigades; more information on page 2.
- **28 October 2008:** "Viva la Pasionaria" evening in London; see front page for details.
- **6-9 November 2008:** A week in honour of the International Brigades at Benissa (Alicante); see [http://xrl.us/00q4z] for programme (not available in English).
- **8 November 2008:** "You are legend" concert in Manchester; see front page for details.
- **8 November 2008:** Rededication of the memorial to the International Brigades, Writers' Square, Belfast; more details from Ciaran Crossey: [ccrossey@hotmail.com]
- **8-9 November 2008:** Els Guaiemets; remembering the withdrawal of the International Brigades from the Priorat, Catalonia; details from [nojubilemlamemoria@yahoo.com].

Brigader Bob Doyle (centre) with friends at the Brunete walk in July.



From previous page

stone plaques are still in the Plaza Mayor, Brunete (built by the forced labour of Republican prisoners), despite the recent Law of Historical Memory and he feels that it could help if IBMT members protested to the Ayuntamiento de Brunete (the Brunete town council).

It is intended to continue the Brunete walk (as well as the Jarama walk each February) next year on the weekend closest to the July anniversary. For more information contact Seve Montero on [seve.montero@gmail.com].

Seamen's graves repaired

By Jim Jump

The Spanish graves of nine British merchant seamen who were killed in the Spanish Civil War while their ships were taking supplies to the Republic have been repaired thanks to the efforts of IBMT Committee member Geoff Cowling.

They are buried in what had been the near-derelict British Cemetery in Tarragona. Cowling visited the cemetery during his time as Consul General in Barcelona and with the aid of two colleagues carried out some temporary repairs to the two niches in the catacombs containing the seamen's remains. At the time they were open to view.

Cowling, who is now retired from the Diplomatic Service, put in a request to the embassy in Madrid for the graves to be properly restored. With the catacombs considered too dangerous to enter, his appeal was initially ignored. But he persisted in his behind-the-scenes campaigning,



Restoration work at the British Cemetery in Tarragona.

and in July this year the graves were finally repaired. Coordinated by the new Consul General in Barcelona, David Smith, the work was carried out by sailors from *HMS Bulwark*, which was on a visit to Barcelona at the time. The local Tarragona council also provided invaluable help.

From the Tarragona cemetery register, the details of the seamen (name, age and home town), all killed when their ships were attacked from the air in Tarragona harbour, are...

- Killed on the *Thorpeness* on 20 January 1938: George Sydney Mogg (26, Grimsby), Harry de Klerk (17, Grimsby), Arthur Frank Jerrot (40, Barry), Walter Jones (42, Bristol), Claude (Fred) Welsh (47, Chester), John James Walker (22, South Shields) and Thomas Taylor (27, Grimsby).
- Killed on the *Stanwell* on 15 March 1938: J Mulholland (52, Aldershot), T King (45, Ayrshire) and Capt Madsen (Danish "non intervention officer").

The British steamship *Thorpeness* was reportedly later bombed and sunk by fascist aircraft one mile off Valencia on 21 June 1938, carrying a cargo of wheat from Marseilles.

Cowling comments: "This begs the question: how many British merchant seamen were killed during the Spanish Civil War and under what circumstances? I have found no record of the eventual fate of the *Stanwell*."

He adds: "I am asking my contacts in Barcelona to check if there were any burials of British merchant seaman in Valencia during the Spanish Civil War."

New IBMT badge

An enamel badge of the Tom Mann Centuria banner has been commissioned by the Trust. Many members will be familiar with the iconic photo (see facing page) of the banner taken in September 1936 at the Karl Marx Barracks in Barcelona. Among those holding the banner is David Marshall, partner of IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway, and Tom Wintringham, a future commander of the British Battalion.

The badges – approximately 30mm in size – should be ready in October at the price of £5 plus postage and packing. If you would like to reserve a badge or badges, get in touch with IBMT Treasurer Mike Anderson (contact details on page 2).

By Carlos Miranda

When I was in my late teens my father gave me Hugh Thomas's "The Spanish Civil War" to read. It was at this point I discovered there was no one truth about what had happened in Spain during the Second Republic and the civil war. There was that of the victors, the official and widely-known truth, but there was also another one, that of the defeated, who knew of the official one but also had their own truth.

In order to heal past wounds, both near and far, and to be able to enjoy a sincere reconciliation, it is necessary to know both sides of the truth. I am not speaking about having to take sides with those having most cause, which might be better. I am only speaking about shedding light on what the other side suffered.

Forty years of dictatorship in Spain crushed and drove to oblivion not only the Republic's side of the truth but also the knowledge of its existence.

Undoubtedly, the law known as the Law of Historic Memory, which was approved on 26 December 2007 "so that certain rights may be recognised and broadened and measures will be established in favour of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and the dictatorship", sets out to heal those wounds. After the death of the dictator, the recuperated democracy failed to heal them, for those who, in Spain and later in Europe, fought against fascism and Nazism or suffered because of it.

The truth of the defeated

An indication of my ignorance thanks to Franco, but also that of many people in Spain, was the fact that, when I arrived here in 2004, I did not know that in Jersey, around 1,500 of my compatriots had been mistreated during Nazi Germany's occupation of the Channel Islands. Those slave-workers suffered great hardship and some died. In 2006 I paid homage to them during the annual 9 May commemorative ceremony in Jersey. It was the first time a representative from the Spanish embassy in London had attended.

I understood then that no satisfactory relationship existed between the embassy of Spain in the UK and those Spaniards who, for different reasons, had a link with the Spanish Republican exile after the civil war. Since then, I have tried, as I believed it was my duty, for those of us who now come to the UK from Spain, because we want to, to get closer together with those as well as their families who left Spain years ago, having been forced into exile.

In the same vain, after Jersey, I also had the opportunity to address the members of the International Brigades that same year in July. I also participated in the inauguration of a mosaic entitled "Echoes of Spain". On another occasion I offered a reception for the courageous Spaniards who, during the Second World War, had enrolled in the British army to continue fighting and

defend democracy and who were stepping foot in the embassy for the first time. I will never forget what one of them said to me: "For me, the war has ended today". Last year I was invited to pre-side over the commemorative ceremony of the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Basque children in the *Habana*, which was a great honour for me.

In all these occasions I have said, and will do so again today, that what we have today in Spain is what those who were forced into exile, like their families, had fought for in their day: a democracy. Their sacrifices were not in vain; the memory of their histories and their own fight contributed to Spain becoming a democratic country again.

In this endeavour, in this determination, I have been able to count on the invaluable help of many present here today, like: Gary Font [from Jersey] and Marlene Sidaway [IBMT Secretary]. However, among these friends, there was always one person who was a constant help: Manuel Moreno, who has made an exceptional effort in recuperating facts from the past of the Spanish exile and bringing them into the present day.

This is the speech given by Carlos Miranda, the Spanish Ambassador, when presenting the decoration of "Oficial de Merito Civil" to Manuel Moreno, President of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK in London on 13 May 2008.

My Pyrenees crossing inspired by Nat Cohen and Laurie Lee

By Dan Carrier

They came out of the mist and were as surprised to find me as I was to run into them. I was 1,500 metres above sea level, on the cusp of a rocky outcrop. The Spanish border police fired rapid questions: I understood little, but my dishevelled state spoke volumes.

After explaining why I was wandering through the Pyrenees, and after they had checked I was in a fit state to reach my destination, they pointed into the fog behind them and told me it would take around six hours walking.

I had set out on a week-long journey. My aim was to retrace the steps taken by the British volunteers who joined the Spanish Republican army to fight fascism during the country's civil war of 1936 to 1939.

I had been inspired by my family's involvement – my great uncle Nat Cohen was one of the first of 40,000 volunteers who saw that the war was a



Dan Carrier's great uncle, Nat Cohen (second from left), beside Ramona in Barcelona in September 1936.

precursor to the larger conflict that would soon engulf Europe. He left Stepney on a bicycle in June 1936 to take part in the Workers' Olympiad. Due to be held in Barcelona, it was an alternative competition for those who did not want to go to the Berlin Olympics. He arrived just a few days before General Franco's coup: instead of turning round and going home, he joined a workers' militia and was in a small group who tried to re-take the island of Mallorca from Italian troops.

He then helped set up an English-speaking unit, called the Tom Mann Centuria, which was to become a precursor to the International Brigades. He was shot in the knee and invalided

home and, when he returned, the streets of the East End turned out. He was pictured in the *Daily Mirror* being greeted by hundreds of people, with his new Spanish wife Ramona. Later Arnold Wesker wrote about him in his seminal play "Chicken Soup with Barley", which contains the line: "That Nat Cohen is a terror".

In the Pyrenees I was retracing the route taken by Laurie Lee, author of "Cider with Rosie", who had as a 23-year-old travelled through France to join in the fight.

The British and the French governments had set up a non-intervention pact. It meant volunteers, such as Lee, had to sneak over the border.

Lee describes his time in Spain in the book "A Moment Of War". Where the Spanish police stopped me was the same area Lee was taken to by French shepherds under the cover of night. I had been walking for three days, a similar length of time it took Lee to do the same stretch.

I was following well-marked paths on a route map: Lee had tried, and failed, to find a guide. Instead, he writes: "I knew I simply had to go up, over and south. "Behind me, as I climbed the gentle slopes, the foothills fell away to Perpignan and the sea, while the steep bulk of the Pyrenées Orientales filled the sky with their sunlit peaks."

His journey started on 5 December 1936 and was to face some bitter weather. I walked out in June 2008 and my admiration of his achieve-

Continued overleaf

From previous page

ment increased. Even in summer, the Pyrenees can be unforgiving to the single traveller. When I was greeted by the border guides, I had not seen a soul for 48 hours. I was cold, stricken by bouts of vertigo, and worried I had got hopelessly lost in the mists.

I had taken one wrong turn when I was at the top of a peak. The map proved to be little help: the paths on the paper did not seem to marry those on the ground in front of me. I decided to turn back.

I found the spot where I had taken a turning – instead of heading upwards my path sent me along the side of a mountain, through a beechwood, and as I came out the other side, I saw the town of Las Illas nestling in a valley, which was my first stop. Las Illas is a tiny hamlet that saw nearly 500,000 refugees pour through it at the end of the war. I stayed in an inn that hosted the Catalan president during the Spanish Republic, Lluís Companys, as he fled. I reached the inn and crashed out, exhausted. Lee's first night was less comfortable. He slept outdoors, and he was caught out in a December blizzard.

"Looking down, the foothills had disappeared and been replaced by a blanket of swirling vapour," he writes. "The shining peak of Canigou began to switch on and off like a light house... then the wind rose to a thin-edged wail, and I felt the first stinging bite of snow." Lee stumbled, fortuitously, across a "rough little stone built shelter. It was half in ruins, and there was nothing inside it but straw, but I suppose it may have saved my life."

The last day on the mountains was tough. My



Dan Carrier at the memorial to the International Brigades in Figueras.

knees were agony, and the weather, for the morning and much of the afternoon, atrocious. It was here I met the Spanish police and was given the fillip of knowing I was nearly there. Then, the wind got up more fiercely than before and the skies cleared. I was still a good three hours away, with a valley to scramble down, but I could see the sun shining on my destination.

I took a train to Figueras and laid flowers at a memorial to the Brigaders who stayed there. Lee eventually made it to the Spanish border, but was greeted with suspicion. He too made it to Figueras, but it was not long before he was arrested. No one believed he had walked over the Pyrenees in winter carrying just a violin and a saucepan, as his memoirs suggest. After a 50-odd mile walk of my own, without having to dodge border guards, my respect for Lee and the sacrifice he and his comrades were willing to make for the progressive political philosophy they believed in was underlined.

Why I joined the International Brigades

By Bob Doyle

I was born in 1916 in the Dublin slums, and joined the IRA in my teens. In 1934 I left the IRA to join the Republican Congress set up by Peadar O'Donnell, Frank Ryan and Kit Conway. The time had come to support the fight of tenants against landlords, of workers against anti-union employers and to take on the Blueshirts in the streets. We were still republicans but now we were social revolutionaries too.

Had we stayed in the IRA as it was then, many of these employers and landlords would have still supported us and the IRA's purely nationalist policies. We had to form coalitions with groups who might have differed from us in the past but now shared our campaigns for social justice and fighting the rising tide of fascism.

In 1936 we realised that this struggle was being fought even more brutally elsewhere, especially in Spain. This is what led me and my ex-IRA comrades to join the International Brigades. We were with volunteers from 53 countries who also saw that their fight was the same as the Spanish people's; our slogan was "Bombs on Madrid means bombs

LETTERS

International Brigades doctor is 100

I have just received the IBMT Newsletter No.20 and I hasten to add one good piece of news, which I thought you should have. One of the doctors who looked after the International Brigade members during the civil war was Dr Moises Broggi. The news is that he was 100 years old on 18 May and we all celebrated, family and friends, in a grand manner. There were 425 of us at the luncheon party. Dr Broggi is a very busy man, with a splendid memory which has enabled him to write his fantastic memoirs in two volumes. Of course, they are in Catalan. *Amèlia Trueta*
Barcelona

Hammersmith banners

When the International Brigade memorial on the South Bank was unveiled in 1985 there was a reception in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. When we got there there were a number of banners on display from the time of the 1936-1939 Spanish war.

Many of them were from Hammersmith. I have, somewhere, photos of them. Does

anyone know where they are now? I have a photo of my dad, Frank West, standing in front of one of them.

It would be good to trace them as they would make a magnificent display. I do hope someone can help – they are real history.

Dolly West-Shaer
d.westshaer@ntlworld.com

Happy birthday Penny

Many thanks for Newsletter no.20 – truly fantastic!

Please pass on my many happy returns to Penny Fyvel for her very young-looking 99th birthday. A few years ago she sent me as a gift her autobiography, entitled "English Penny".

On the other hand I was very sad to read of the death of Milton Wolff. He too was very generous to me and the library.

Prof. Juan Carlos Cesarini
Buenos Aires

We were "criminal left-wing intellectuals"

Many thanks for your latest newsletter, which arrived this morning.

From 1940 onwards I was taken into forced labour camps by the German-Austrian-Hungarian Nazi fascists. After 35 months of hard labour I succeeded in escaping with one of my closest friends and colleagues from the Carpathian mountains.

During this time our parents were deported to Auschwitz. Our concierge in Szombathely, Hungary, a war prisoner for 2½ years, had joined the Red Army under Trotsky. He was not Jewish. Back in Hungary he witnessed the occupation of Hungary from March 1944. According to him, everything of ours was taken away in a big Nazi lorry which included all my father's correspondence with Miguel de Unanuno, José Ortega y Gasset and Pablo Neruda.

The fascists treated us as "criminal left-wing intellectuals". They made no distinction between socialists, communists or humanists. Anyone who expressed sympathy with the Spanish Republic was considered criminal in the regime of Hungarian dictator Admiral Horthy, faithful ally of Mussolini and Franco.

Pierre Mosonyi
London N17 6TP

on London” and, as I saw for myself, this slogan was proved all too true.

With the betrayal of the Spanish Republic by Britain’s Tory government and their French and American allies of big business, Hitler, Mussolini and Franco won the war in Spain. Six months later the Second World War began and bombs began to fall on cities everywhere, as they still do today.

Yet despite the Allied victory in 1945, we now find that fascism, raw capitalism, is thriving, and using spin doctors instead of racist speeches, while more powerful weapons are being developed supposedly to protect us and our environment is in crisis. This crisis cannot be solved by capitalism, because capitalism is now its cause.

My generation’s vision of a world without exploitation, where we live in harmony with our environment, seems as distant as ever, while globalisation, which is the worldwide triumph of money over organised workers, undermines our democracies. The fight today is as vital as it was in Spain, but remember we are fighting for an idea, and though we must at times defend ourselves, guns cannot impose an idea: the four weapons of victory today are: education, organisation, civil disobedience and unity.

From my lifetime of struggles, these are the lessons which I have learnt. Take up the fight, and let us fight together, for the liberation of mankind. La lucha continua.

¡Viva la República!

Speech made by Bob Doyle at Inistioige on 27 June 2008 at the unveiling of a memorial to fellow International Brigader George Brown.

MEMBERSHIP

300 still owe 2008 membership subs

By Pauline Fraser

Thanks to all those members who have promptly paid their 2008 IBMT subscription after receiving the spring Newsletter, or who have set up a standing order to do so. About a third of cheque and cash payers responded to the call.

This leaves about another 300 members who still owe the Trust their subs. If you need to check whether you have paid this year or not, please contact me, preferably by email.

Subscriptions and donations are the life-blood of any organisation, but particularly of a small, organisation such as ours, run entirely by volunteers. So please renew your subscription as soon as possible.

Pauline Fraser’s email is [paul.balf.paul@googlemail.com]. Her other contact details are on page 2.

● IBMT researcher Jim Carmody is looking for more information on the following three volunteers:

– **Stanley Flanagan:** Prior to leaving for Spain in January 1937, he lived at 32 Byron Street, Longsight, Manchester; apparently he did not return from Spain, though he is not listed on any of the British Battalion’s casualty lists or on the Roll of Honour; no relation to Andrew Flanagan of Birmingham.

– **James Greenwood:** His address was given as 27 Gerrard Street, Ashton under Lyne; also apparently did not return from Spain, though not listed anywhere.

– **John Howarth:** He was from 29 Clifford Street, Manchester; listed on the Roll of Honour as killed at Gandesa in July 1938; most likely he was killed in the March-April 1938 Aragón retreats.

If you can help, contact: [jamescarmody@yahoo.co.uk].

● Alan Lloyd has written to say that he intends to find the “time and energy” to write the “long-promised” book on the men and woman with Hampshire (and Isle of Wight and Bournemouth) connections who went to fight fascism in Spain. There are still some minor gaps in the lives of some, but an almost total lack of information on a handful. Can anyone help Alan by providing more information or leads about the following:

– **Harry Abbott:** repatriated after being wounded at Jarama, a member of Nalگو trade union, his wife worked at Coldeast Hospital at Sarisbury, near Southampton.

– **William Thomas George Beales:** born in Cambridge in 1910; a “road locomotive driver”, he gave as his contact address the landlady of a pub in the Isle of Wight; missing, presumed killed, during the retreats through Aragón – nothing else is known.

– **George Robert Greig Burton:** from Landport in Portsmouth; worked for Portsea Island Coop; served in the Palestinian Police during the Second World War, then disappeared; believed to have emigrated to Canada.

– **Henry Stuart Johnson** (known in Spain as Lionel Lesley East): born in Aldershot in 1907, the son of a master baker living in Cargate Avenue in 1938; taken prisoner, repatriated, and nothing further known.

– **Margaret Duncombe Finlay:** born on the Isle of Wight in 1913, a nurse who returned with the British Battalion’s wounded in December 1938; went on a countryside tour with other Brigaders to raise money and support for Spain – then nothing further known.

– **Michael Edward John Livesay:** born in 1915, the son of a Royal Navy paymaster commander living in Bury Road, Gosport; he came from a noted line of architects in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight area; nothing else is known except that he left from a London address to go to Spain, giving his occupation as an architect although, still only

21, he could not have qualified yet, but was used as a cartographer and observer; killed at Segovia in early June 1937.

– **George William Palmer:** probably born in London, but was registered, firstly as a service voter in 1934 and then probably as a lodger or friend for a couple of years, with the O’Briens at Enham, Andover.

– **Charles James Simmons:** painter, ex British army, his parents lived at 5 Berkeley Street in Southsea in 1938; nothing else is known; killed at Arganda Bridge in February 1937.

– **Robert Arthur (Ronnie) Symes:** born in Saltford, Keynsham, Somerset, in 1905; the Hampshire connection is suggested in a poem by another Brigader but nothing else is known; killed at Casa de Campo, November 1936.

Anyone who can help should contact Alan Lloyd at [alan.lloyd121@virgin.net] or write to editor Jim Jump (see address on page 2).

● Eamonn O’Neil is researching his uncle **Eamon (Edward) McGrotty**, originally from Derry, and his short and tragic time with the International Brigades in Spain. He was a committed socialist and Irish republican activist and a very strong Irish language advocate. He was killed at the Battle of Jarama in February 1937, probably the 27th. Eamonn believes that his uncle arrived in Spain some time in December 1936. He was for a while thought to be attached to the British Battalion and later the Lincoln Battalion. He had been a member of the Irish Christian Brothers (a Catholic teaching order) from the age of 15 to 21, during part of this time he was a Christian Brothers teacher who taught classes through the medium of the Irish language. He left the Christian Brothers in November 1932. The remaining four years to his death are what nephew Eamonn is trying to research.

Anyone who can help should contact Eamonn at [mistereamonn@eircom.net].

● Karin Ingram writes: “My cousin and I are looking for information about our uncle, **Robert Macdonald** from Glasgow. We believe that he died when the *Ciudad de Barcelona* was torpedoed in May 1937. My cousin remembers hearing of the existence of a letter of condolence sent by the Communist Party to Robert’s mother (our grandmother). Another cousin remembers hearing that he was buried in Spain – I would presume in Malgrad de Mar. There are no members of Robert’s generation in our family still alive, so we’re really working with very little information. My cousin and I intend to travel to Malgrad later this year, but we would like to know as much as possible before we set off. We intend to do some research in the Marx Memorial Library, but would be most grateful for other avenues of exploration.”

Karin’s email is [editor@boxandfiddle.com] if anyone can help.

In brief...



● **Na-Mara** are the folk duo who entertained the audience so superbly at the IBMT's Jubilee Gardens commemoration in July. Rob Garcia (above, right), who plays guitar and mandolin, and Paul McNamara (left), guitar and vocals, also performed at the "Viva la República" celebration in April. At both events they played "The Bite", a song inspired by the life of International Brigader George Wheeler, and "Sólo por Tres Meses" ["Only for Three Months"], which tells the story of the Basque refugee children who arrived in Southampton in May 1937. Rob is the son of one of the *niños vascos*. Na-Mara have released two CDs, "The Kingshill Valley" and "Only for Three Months". More information can be found on their website: [www.na-mara.com].

● The BBC World Service broadcast "**Spain – The Legacy of the Disappeared**", on 28 August, a programme which examined the

Spanish Civil war in the context of the newly passed law of Historic Memory. Reporter Mike Williams visited an exhumation of Republican victims of Franco's terror and asked the families concerned why keeping the memory of the civil war is important. The programme can be accessed on [http://xrl.us/ooto6].

● Alice Mellalieu-Campbell has written a book about her experiences living in Whalley Range, Manchester, where her mother kept a boarding house – "**The Mad Hatter's Castle**" – which became home to refugees from many nations during and after the Second World War. Alice remembers Brigader Sam Wild, the last commander of the British Battalion, pleading with her mother, Mabel, to take "just one more". Mellalieu-Campbell's book, "My Story", can be found in the libraries of Manchester, Middleton, Haywood and Trowbridge in Wiltshire; or ring her on 0161-202 6162.

● Jonathan Whitehead has written in to point out that the Spanish Ministry of Culture has released an excellent **archive of photos** taken by Republicans during the Spanish Civil War. The Archivo Rojo, named after Vicente Rojo, one of the generals who led the defence of Madrid, includes several photos of the International Brigades. See [http://pares.mcu.es/ArchivoRojo/inicio.do].

Caudwell's tribute to Scots volunteers



This poem was written for the British Battalion's Burns Night celebration at Madrigueras on 25 January 1937 by Christopher Caudwell (pictured), the name used by Christopher St John Sprigg. Born in Putney in

1907, he worked as a reporter for the *Yorkshire Observer* before becoming a full-time author, writing poetry as well as books on physics, aeronautics and Marxist literary criticism as Christopher Caudwell and several detective novels under his real name.

He joined the British Battalion in December 1936 and was killed less than three weeks after Burns Night, on 12 February 1937 during the Battle of Jarama.

The poem has been sent in by Cornish historian James Whetter, who organised the placing of a plaque at the Atlantic Inn in Porthleven, Cornwall, where Caudwell stayed for several months in 1935. The poem is understood to be found in the Caudwell archives held at the University of Texas in Austin and is published here probably for the first time. However, it will appear, in Spanish, in a planned Spanish edition of "Poems from

Spain: British and Irish International Brigaders on the Spanish Civil War" (edited by Jim Jump, Lawrence & Wishart, London 2006).

From an English Guest

O wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
To read your Burns, at least in parts.
But we are simple Sassenachs,
We do not understand your cracks –
For instance, what the hell are 'airts'?

And then we'd understand your lingo –
Give 'stane' for 'stane' and 'hame' for 'hame'.
Instead we smile or shake the head
And trust it fits with what you said.
Of course we know you do the same.

But never mind – we're anti-Fascists:
We tread the same grey Spanish dust.
We know you're fighters, like your ways –
And though we don't know what he says
We'll take your Rabbie Burns on trust –

As soldiers' poet – full of failings,
And of your famous Scottish pride,
Poet clear as Highland spring
Through whom ten million Scotsmen sing –
A people's poet till he died.

Christopher Caudwell

By Jim Jump

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the publication of "Homage to Catalonia", George Orwell's eyewitness account of the "May Days of 1937", when supposed allies against General Franco in the Spanish Civil War fought each other on the streets of Barcelona. It was a defining moment



for Orwell and his memoir retains to this day considerable influence on popular perceptions of the Spanish Civil War.

The central message of the book and the lesson drawn from it by many readers is that Stalin's allies in Spain were engaged in a blatant bid for power that required

their opponents to be crushed. The treachery and mendacity of the communists fatally weakened the Spanish Republic, leading to its eventual defeat.

However, not everyone – especially experts on the Spanish Civil War – agrees. One such is Paul Preston, IBMT patron and history professor at the London School of Economics. "I would rank 'Homage to Catalonia' alongside Spike Milligan's 'Adolf Hitler: My Part in His Downfall', another interesting book by someone who was a foot-soldier playing a tiny part in a much wider conflict."

He adds: "The problem is not that 'Homage to Catalonia' is a bad book. It isn't. The trouble with it is that it's often the only book that people have read about the Spanish Civil War, and on that basis they form judgements about an immensely complex set of events. Yet Orwell spent most of his time on the Aragón front when not much was happening and then he was a rooftop spectator to the fighting in Barcelona."

Another historian willing to take a swipe at Orwell is Julián Casanova, a professor at the University of Zaragoza and the author of several studies of Spanish anarchism and the civil war. Delivering the IBMT's annual Len Crome Memorial Lecture last year at London's Imperial War Museum, he bemoaned Orwell's clichéd depiction of Republican Spain. "Homage to Catalonia", he reminded his audience, claims that in the egalitarian fervour that lasted until May 1937 "practically everyone wore rough working-class clothes, or blue overalls or some variant of the militia uniform".

Casanova proceeded to show a newly restored newsreel of the funeral of Buenaventura Durruti in November 1936 – only a few weeks before Orwell arrived in Barcelona – in which an estimated half a million people thronged the streets to watch the anarchist leader's coffin being taken for burial. For some 10 minutes the camera pans slowly over the crowds and we see a mass of conventionally attired men and women, most of them in suits, hats, ties and coats.

A relatively small point, maybe, but if Orwell was an unreliable witness when it came to people's dress, what else must the reader treat with great scepticism? Much more, if we are to believe an

Time to stop paying homage to Orwell's version of events

exhaustive study of the events of May 1937 that was published in Spain last year to coincide with their 70th anniversary.

The author is Ángel Viñas, university professor and diplomat (he was once the European Union's ambassador at the United Nations). In London for a presentation of his book, he was adamant about what took place in Barcelona. "I have spent months going through the archives in Moscow and have found nothing to prove that Stalin was involved."

By selling arms to the Republic, Viñas added, the Soviet leader was motivated chiefly by the desire to draw Britain and France into an anti-Nazi German alliance. The creation of a communist state in Spain—as implied by Orwell—would have run counter to that objective and was therefore never his aim.

"Homage to Catalonia" depicts the revolutionary militias who clashed with the Republican police in Barcelona as innocent parties acting only in self-defence. Viñas—who delivered this year's IBMT lecture at the Imperial War Museum—has no hesitation in describing their actions as an insurrection in "El Escudo de la República"* ["Shield of the Republic"].

He insists too that armed anarchist militias were pulled back from the Aragón front and were arriving in Barcelona in the weeks leading up to the eruption of violence. Simultaneously there was an assassination attempt on the city's chief of police and a local communist union leader was shot dead amid calls for the setting up of a revolutionary junta and the restoration of "proletarian justice".

The order to disarm the militia occupying the Barcelona telephone exchange—the spark that ignited the outbreak of street fighting—came from the Catalan interior minister, a member of the ERC Catalan left party. Orwell wrote that he had the impression that the communist-led police had acted without government orders. Equally, the decision to deploy police reinforcements from Valencia was taken and fully endorsed by, among others, the Republic's liberal president and socialist prime minister. Viñas also cites eyewitness accounts of anarchist tanks on the streets, a story that Orwell described as "invented".

To be fair to Orwell, "Homage to Catalonia" was

written immediately after he returned to Britain in June 1937. He had spent six months in Spain, having enlisted with the militia of the POUM, an anti-Stalinist revolutionary communist party. Orwell acknowledges that his testimony might contain factual errors: "It is very difficult to write accurately about the Spanish war, because of the lack of non-propagandist documents."

The six days of fighting in Barcelona took place against the background of a long escalation of social problems in the refugee-swollen city, particularly over food supplies. Meanwhile, the Republican government—a Popular Front coalition of liberals, socialists, communists, anarchists and regional nationalists—was taking steps to establish centralised control over the war effort following the disastrous military defeat at Málaga. This meant incorporating the militias into the newly formed Popular Army. The government also wanted to remove them from Barcelona's Telefónica building and other public installations still held by them since Franco's uprising in July 1936.

Resisting these moves and advocating a revolutionary alternative were a Catalan-based faction of the CNT anarchist movement and the POUM. Only after repeated appeals by the CNT national leadership to its members to stop fighting and the arrival of more police did the government forces prevail.

The POUM, meanwhile, became the target of a vicious smear campaign in the communist press in Spain and abroad, which portrayed it as a fascist fifth column and implied that its entire membership were traitors. The party was outlawed and its leaders hunted down and arrested, with general secretary Andrés Nin murdered while in the custody of Russian security specialists—a crime that was deplored by the Republic's prime minister, Juan Negrín.

But was there a grain of truth in the accusations of fascist-inspired treachery, or at least interference, among those involved in the Barcelona May Days? Quoting contemporary confidential reports, Viñas says it was likely that pro-Franco agents provocateurs were active in fomenting the clashes. While the

fighting was going on, Mussolini's foreign minister, Galeazzo Ciano, told Franco's ambassador in Rome that Italian spies were taking part in the "uprising in Catalonia". Franco himself was at the same time boasting to Wilhelm Faupel, the Third Reich's envoy, that the events in Barcelona had been instigated by 13 of his agents in the city.

Of course, Ciano and Franco may have been seeking credit for events already under way. But Viñas also refers to a telegram sent a fortnight before the outbreak of hostilities by the generalissimo's brother and secretary, Nicolás Franco, to the rebel army's northern regional commander with instructions to the Francoist spy network to take "urgent action" in Barcelona.

There are other pointers to foreign interference, says Viñas. Mussolini, through one of his anarchist spies, Bernado Cremonini, had already financed a supposedly anti-fascist publication featuring fiercely anti-communist content. And the Italian dictator's secret police, Polpol, is now known to have infiltrated the Spanish anarchist movement and the POUM with the explicit aim of inciting anti-communism. On the day before fighting broke out around the telephone exchange, activists from the Catalan nationalist Estat Català party—which Franco claimed to have infiltrated—opened fire on anarchists in the building: a coincidence or a deliberate provocation?

"The communists had definitely come into power," Orwell wrote of the period after May 1937. "No one doubted that they would smash their political rivals as soon as they got a quarter of a chance."

He was wrong. The Popular Front coalition held until the final days of the Republic. The belief that Stalin was responsible for the Republic's failure has persisted nonetheless. It has produced some very odd bedfellows. Apologists for Franco, anxious to portray the civil war as an anti-communist crusade, end up sharing the same arguments as Trotskyists who have continued to argue the merits of revolution over constitutionality. Then there is the strange spectacle of rightwing academics, for whom the Republic is irrevocably tainted by association with the Soviet Union, writing sympathetically about the Spanish revolutionaries.

Preston dismisses this echoing of Orwell as another ploy to bash the communists. He is just as scathing about the notion that following the events of May 1937 the Republican government, especially its military, was being run by the communists. He points to the coup staged by Republican army units in March 1939 following the fall of Barcelona to the fascists. "The communists wanted to fight on, but it took just three days for the junta which sought to negotiate a surrender to take power—hardly a sign that the communists had an iron grip on the army."

Orwell was clearly right about the dishonest and brutal way that the POUM was crushed after May 1937. But the myth that "Homage to Catalonia" has fostered, that Stalin and the communists betrayed the Republic on the streets of Barcelona, does not stand up to scrutiny. As Preston puts it: "Stalin has a lot to answer for, but not for Franco's victory."

*Published by Editorial Crítica, Barcelona, 2007.



The newly inaugurated memorial to the International Brigades in San Francisco was defaced in August by graffiti invoking the name of George Orwell. The "Durruti" of "Viva Durruti y Orwell" is a reference to anarchist leader Buenaventura Durruti, who was killed during the defence of Madrid in November 1936.

Programme and agenda for IBMT annual general meeting in Dundee

Thursday 9 October

● 6pm-8pm: Reception in Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, hosted by Bill Butler MSP; anyone wishing to attend should contact IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway (contact details on page 2).

Friday 10 October

● 7.30pm: Evening reception; Wellgate Library, Victoria Road; exhibition: "Dundee and the Spanish Civil War".

Saturday 11 October

- 10.30am: Assemble in City Square.
- 11am-11.45am: Procession behind pipe band up Reform Street to Albert Square for rededication of Dundee International Brigade memorial.
- 12 noon-1.15pm: Public meeting in Steps Theatre, Wellgate Library.
- 1.30pm-2pm: Buffet lunch for annual general meeting delegates; City Chambers, City Square.

- 2pm-4pm: AGM; City Chambers; City Square.
- Agenda:*
- Chairman's opening remarks
 - Apologies for absence
 - Minutes of previous AGM
 - Matters arising
 - Secretary's report
 - Membership Secretary's report
 - Treasurer's report
 - Election of officers
 - Any other business
 - Date and place of next AGM
 - Chairman's closing remarks.
- 7.30pm: Social; City Quay Suite, Apex Hotel.

Sunday 12 October

- 10am: Screening of documentary "The Guernica Children" (to be confirmed).
- 1pm: Unveiling of Basque children's colony plaque; 17 Mall Park Road, Montrose (free bus transport from Dundee and back); anyone wishing to attend should contact Mike Arnott (see below).

Accommodation

- Dundee Apex Hotel: An allocation of 20 rooms is being held for the nights of 10 and 11

October 2008 at a rate of £60 per room per night (room only). Guests should make reservations by phoning 0845-365 0000 and quoting block reference VET1010.

- Alternatives: Hilton Dundee Hotel (01382-480 033); Travelodge Dundee Central Hotel (08719-846 301); Craigtay Hotel (01382-451 142); Hoppo Hostel (01382-224 646).

More information about the AGM from Marlene Sidaway (see details on page 2); contact Mike Arnott about the Dundee arrangements: 07951-443 656 or [dundeetuc@hotmail.com].



Dundee memorial to the International Brigades.

Brigaders told: you inspired anti-Franco resistance

By Jim Jump

The sacrifices of the International Brigades helped pave the way for the restoration of democracy and freedom in Spain, the Spanish Ambassador told British veterans of the International Brigades, their families, friends and supporters at the annual day of remembrance for the volunteers from Britain and Ireland who fought in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39.

Carlos Miranda told the 350-strong gathering at the International Brigade memorial in Jubilee Gardens on London's South Bank that he had come to salute "the valiant 'Brigadistas' who went to Spain during the civil war to fight for

freedom and defend the Republic and its democracy".

Listening to him appreciatively on 19 July were veterans Bob Doyle, Jack Edwards, Jack Jones, Lou Kenton and Sam Lesser.

He told them: "The blood shed during that dreadful fratricidal war at the end of the 1930s also irrigated the hearts of those, who following your example, would go on to resist Franco, filling them with courage."

He added: "The Republic you fought for, under a flag I respect, was a democracy. That is what we have today in Spain. Our democracy flourishes under a parliamentary monarchy, like the UK. While we fly another flag today, which is different to that of the Republic, it is also yours because

the sacrifice of the 'Brigadistas' in the 1930s was instrumental in the restoration of the democracy we enjoy today."

Miranda turned to veterans and added: "Your fight during the civil war and in its aftermath had not been in vain even though Franco and his good friends Hitler and Mussolini seemed to carry the day for a while. You inspired courage and set an example for those who, after you, continued to fight through different means during Franco's dictatorship."

Other speakers included the IBMT Patron, Paul Preston, who cited the testimony of three leg-

endary newspaper correspondents in the civil war, Ilia Ehrenburg, Martha Gellhorn and Herbert Southworth, to emphasise the point that International Brigaders and others who supported and fought for the Spanish Republic had done so in the cause of human dignity. Yet they were reviled as communist stooges by those who betrayed the Republic and allowed Spanish democracy to be crushed by fascism.

Praising the volunteers who went to Spain, Preston, who is a history professor at the London School of Economics and author of numerous books on the civil war and its aftermath, said: "We will never see their like again."

Tony Lloyd, Labour MP for Manchester Central and the chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party, said he felt humbled and honoured to be invited to address the commemoration. The example of international solidarity and sacrifice shown by the International Brigades would live on for generations to come.

Presided by IBMT Chair Sam Lesser, the meeting heard Trust Secretary Marlene Sidaway read the farewell speech made by Dolores Ibárruri (La Pasionaria) to the International Brigades as they were given a tearful send-off in Barcelona on 28 October 1938. Lesser himself read out the poem "Jarama" by Brigadier Lon Elliott.

Xavier Solano i Bello, London delegate of the Catalan government, brought greetings from the Generalitat.

Folk duo Na Mara entertained those present with songs about the civil war. And they led the singing of "Jarama Valley" and "The Internationale" at the close of the meeting.



IBMT Chair Sam Lesser welcomes the crowd at Jubilee Gardens, watched by fellow Brigaders Bob Doyle (seated, left) and Jack Edwards (seated, right).