¡NO PASARÁN!
International Brigade Memorial Trust ● 2-2019 ● £5

Remembering the seafarers
Saturday 6 July 2019 1pm-2pm

Music ● Speakers ● Remembrance

International Brigade Memorial
Jubilee Gardens, London Southbank
Followed by an informal gathering at the Camel & Artichoke,
121 Lower Marsh Street, London SE1 7AE

International Brigade COMMEMORATION

International Brigade Memorial Trust
www.international-brigades.org.uk
Civil war’s impact on English football and on the Barça-Real Madrid rivalry

An exploration of the links between football and the Spanish Civil War – some of which endure to this day – proved a popular draw for the 2019 IBMT conference day, with more than 150 people attending the event in Oxford on 23 March.

Both main speakers, Daniel Gray and Sid Lowe, have written books about the war in Spain and on football. Lowe, additionally, is The Guardian’s football correspondent in Madrid.

Gray traced the lives and footballing careers in England and Spain of six niños vascos (Basque children) who arrived in Southampton in May 1937. They were among nearly 4,000 other refugee children who were escaping the bombing of Basque towns by Franco and his allies.

As a left-winger for Wolverhampton Wanderers, Emilio Aldecoa, for example, became in 1943 the first Spaniard to play in the English league. He returned to his native Bilbao in 1947, signing for Atlético Bilbao before moving on to Real Valladolid and Barcelona.

Lowe’s talk challenged the assumption that Real Madrid is ‘Franco’s team’ and that sees Barcelona as a focus of resistance to his regime and legacy. This had arisen for various reasons, such as Real Madrid’s failure to highlight its historic ties to liberalism and the Spanish Republic. Meanwhile, many Barça fans had cultivated their club as a symbol of Catalan opposition to Franco and the Madrid government in general, while ignoring Barcelona’s equally close links to Francoism.

Two short films were also screened at this year’s Len Crome Memorial Conference – named after the Scottish-trained doctor who became a senior medical officer in the Spanish Republic’s army: a 1938 documentary by Henri Cartier-Bresson, ‘With the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain’, featuring footage of International Brigaders playing football, and ‘Capitán Republicano’, by Raúl Román and Antonio Vilaseco, screened on Spanish TV last year, which tells the story of Patricio Escobal, the former Real Madrid captain who wrote about his experiences as a prisoner of Franco.

The day ended with a rousing musical finale from Maddy Carty, Robb Johnson and Na-mara.
**Prizes and incentives galore**

IBMT Fundraising Officer John Haywood writes...

The IBMT’s No Pasarán Raffle will be an important boost to our funds – but its success depends on members buying and selling books of tickets to other people. As well as the first prize of £400 or a weekend for two in a Madrid hotel, there are numerous other prizes – all donated by the IBMT and our supporters.

Already several members have ordered more than the two books sent to them in the 3-2018 issue of our ¡No Pasarán! magazine. Please join them.

As an incentive, we are offering the member who sells the most books a prize of three wonderful CDs – Joe Solo’s impassioned ‘¡No Pasarán!’ and his latest and celebrated ‘Not on Our Watch’ as well as the fabulous ‘From Blantyre to Barcelona’ by the Lanarkshire Songwriters’ Group.

Second prize in the IBMT raffle is a case of specially selected Spanish wines. There are also five gift vouchers from Delta Force Paintball, each with 10 tokens for a day’s paintballing in any one of 40 paintball centres. Each voucher is worth £100. Plus there are CDs, books and t-shirts.

The raffle draw will take place on 4 October 2019 in London. Additional books of tickets (10 tickets per book) can be ordered from the IBMT (tel: 020 7253 8748 or email admin@international-brigades.org.uk).

No advance purchase is needed, just buy or sell the tickets and collect the payments and send the money with the ticket stubs to: IBMT, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU. Indicate who is sending the stubs and money. Only the buyer’s name and telephone number are needed on each stub.

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**Patrons** Professor Peter Crome, Hywel Francis, Professor Helen Graham, Ken Livingstone, Len McCluskey, Christy Moore, Jack O’Connor, Maxine Peake, Baroness Royall of Blaisdon, Mick Whelan

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Notts students find out how local volunteers are remembered

Third-year history and language students at Nottingham Trent University (pictured right) are welcomed by Alan Rhodes (centre, in suit), leader of Nottinghamshire County Council, in front of the International Brigade memorial on the wall of County Hall in Nottingham. With them are Jim Jump (eighth from left), IBMT Chair, and (top right) Kirsty and Karen Weatherall, granddaughter and daughter of local International Brigader Frank Ellis (1914-2007), from Linby, near Hucknall.

The visit, on 28 February, was part of a study topic on memory and the Spanish Civil War. Alan Rhodes explained to the students how the information board in front of the memorial (hidden in this picture) was removed when the Conservatives won county council elections in 2009 – but was promptly restored when Labour returned to power four years later. In a session inside the building, Jim Jump spoke about the enduring political and historical significance of the war in Spain, while the Weatherall family recalled the experiences and memories of their father and grandfather respectively.

The Nottinghamshire memorial, by sculptor Michael Johnson, is a bronze relief of bombed-out buildings and was unveiled by International Brigade veteran Jack Jones and Spanish Ambassador Alberto Aza in 1993.

ON SCREEN: Historian David Rosenberg (right), takes part in one of the latest videos jointly produced by the IBMT and the Marx Memorial Library to promote the library’s Spanish Civil War archives and the role of the IBMT in preserving the memory of the International Brigades. Two new films tackle themes of internationalism and anti-fascism. Speaking on internationalism, Rosenberg, who is the co-editor of Jewish Socialist, underlines the multi-ethnic make-up of the Brigades, especially the large number of Jewish volunteers in the British Battalion. Made by Platform Films, the videos, each just over four minutes long, are part of a series made for social media (see www.international-brigades.org.uk/content/ibmt-video). The two other films focus on trade unionists and women.

VISITORS: The IBMT welcomed Podemos activists from around Europe to the International Brigade memorial on London’s Southbank on 31 March. They were in the capital to attend their party’s international forum, at which the main topic of discussion was the forthcoming general election in Spain.

Searchable volunteer records now on the IBMT website

A database of nearly 2,400 International Brigaders from Britain and Ireland has finally been posted on the IBMT website (see www.international-brigades.org.uk/the-volunteers). It can be searched by name, birthplace, location of death in Spain and other details.

The list is the result of many years of work by IBMT archivist Jim Carmody, who died in 2016, and historian Richard Baxell, who was the IBMT Chair until October last year. Digitally converting the database and posting it online were made possible thanks to generous financial support from Unite SE/6239 Branch. Until recently the database was temporarily hosted on Baxell’s own website.
JOE LATUS

Spain. They were all working men, but none was the hardest and most dangerous occupation in the

Latus and DILYS PORTER

International Brigaders at the memorial’s

Relatives paid tribute to each of the Hull

MEMORIAL FOR THE VOLUNTEERS

He joined the International Brigades in 1937

He served in the English Channel, taking part in the evacuation of Dunkirk, the Irish Sea and the Mediterranean. He was one of the first to sweep landings. He made many friends among the Italian partisans while docked at Livorno, some of whom were to open a left-wing bookshop in Hull. He

Joe, along with other Hull Brigaders, was a member of the Communist Party and the Hull Socialist Youth Club. His second involvement with the law came during this period as a result of the Battle of Corporation Fields against fascist Blackshirts. He was arrested and received his second prison sentence.

He joined the International Brigades in 1937 when he was 25. He was a machine-gunner and observer and an explosive expert. He saw action at Belchite, Caspe, Calaceite, Gandesa and the Ebro, where he blew up a bridge to halt the fascists’ advance. He was repatriated in August 1938, after fighting in the Sierra Pandols left him wounded in his hand and head, though not badly.

Joe was one of the lucky ones who returned from Spain relatively unscathed, though a fever delayed his homecoming. He wanted to join the army when the Second World War broke out because of his experiences in Spain and the skills he had developed there but was turned down. So he resumed his previous occupation as a trawlerman. He had been a ship’s mate and quickly passed his skipper’s ticket and went to war again in command of a Hull trawler converted into a minesweeper.

He served in the English Channel, taking part in the evacuation of Dunkirk, the Irish Sea and the Mediterranean. He was one of the first to sweep ashore in the first assault in the southern France landings. He made many friends among the Italian partisans while docked at Livorno, some of whom had fought in Spain.

After the war he had two ambitions. One was the nationalisation of the fishing industry and the other was to open a left-wing bookshop in Hull. He achieved the latter and, in spite of leaving school at 14, became manager of Collets bookshop in Carr Lane. He left there many years later to become a publisher’s rep, working for Heinemann among others.

Throughout his life he was passionate about rugby league. He was an ardent fan and, latterly, a director of Hull FC. Indeed, he wrote columns in the Hull Daily Mail and the Rugby Leaguer under the pen-name ‘Old Faithful’. He also wrote a biography of Clive Sullivan, the legendary rugby league player who was the first black captain of any British national sports team.

Joe never returned to Spain. He vowed never to return while Franco lived. He pre-deceased Franco by a year and died, young, at the age of 62 in 1974.

The young do not remember fascism and the old would prefer to forget it. These names on this monument are there to remind us of what they fought and died for. Winston Churchill called them ‘adventurers’ and so they were. But I prefer La Pasionaria’s naming of them as ‘history’ and ‘legend’.

JACK ATKINSON

grew up in extreme poverty. At just 14 years old he went to live with his sister in Australia and there he joined the Communist Party. As a member of the unemployed workers’ movement, he was at the forefront of trying to prevent landlord rent evictions in Brisbane and elsewhere.

It would not be the last time that he found himself arrested and in court for taking direct action.

Jack returned to Hull in 1933 after stowing away on a ship that found him living in Edinburgh for a while. Back in Hull, he was politically active with the rise of the far right. Jack was part of a group of Young Communists who regularly disrupted fascist rallies across the city. He also stood in the local elections as a Communist Party candidate.
Inevitably Jack was sometimes arrested for his activities. When appearing in court, he would wear his trademark red shirt to show magistrates where his political allegiances lay. When the fine was dished out, Jack would usually shout from the dock: ‘I refuse to be bound over’

In July 1936 Mosley and his British Union of Fascists attempted to hold a rally at Corporation Fields. Along with 10,000 dockers and railwaymen, Jack and local communists made sure Mosley was not welcome in the city and his rally was abandoned after 20 minutes in what became known as the Battle of Corporation Fields.

With the outbreak of the civil war in Spain, thousands of communists and socialists from around the world went to fight fascism there. In early 1937 Jack was joined on his train journey to London to join the International Brigades by fellow volunteer Tommy James from Rotherham.

When Jack was being assessed for recruitment it was noted that his trigger finger was missing, but he got round this by claiming he was left-handed.

Jack was soon in action at the brutal Battle of Jarama, which saw many British casualties. It was during that battle that he was killed by a sniper’s bullet. He was 26 years old.

As his relative I am proud to say he is my hero. ‘No pasarán, Jack – not then, not now, not ever.”
IBMT backs Spanish activists in pressing local council to save Tarancón’s International Brigade hospital

With the support of the IBMT, local activists in the Spanish province of Cuenca are increasing pressure on the local council in Tarancón to preserve the abandoned building that housed the town’s Hospital No.2 for injured International Brigaders.

One of the highlights of February’s annual international commemoration of the Battle of Jarama is a ceremony at the memorial in Tarancón to the 39 Scots killed at Jarama. Tarancón was the site of at least two International Brigade hospitals during the battle in February 1937, which took the lives of 152 British and Irish volunteers in the fighting south-east of Madrid.

On the day before this year’s commemoration on 15 February, IBMT Scotland Secretary Mike Arnott joined Máximo Molina of ARMH Cuenca at a press conference to propose guided tours around the sites at Tarancón, Huete and Uclés.

Arnott commented: ‘We’re working closely with our friends in the local ARMH to save the hospital building. Much depends on local politics, but it’s heartening to know that the presence of the memorial to the Scots has had a wholly supportive effect on the campaign.’

The Tarancón hospital was part of a network of International Brigade hospitals in Cuenca province – at Castillejo, Huete, Uclés, Valdeganga, Villa Paz and Villanueva de la Jara. Many British medical personnel served at these establishments.

Over 100 people paid their respects at the Tarancón memorial this year. The ceremony was part of a weekend of activities organised by AABI, the Spanish International Brigades memorial association. These were centred on a march across the Jarama battlefield on the following day, with IBMT members joining their counterparts from around the world to remember and celebrate the International Brigades.

Unveiled in 2013, the memorial to the Scottish volunteers was the brainchild of Allan Craig, whose Dundee-born father, also called Allan Craig, was wounded at Jarama on 17 February 1937 and died five days later at Tarancón.

In 2017 the memorial was vandalised with red paint, presumably by local neo-fascists, on the eve of the annual commemoration.

WRITING ON THE WALL: Tarancón’s former Hospital No.2, known locally as ‘El Hospitalillo’ [little hospital] or the Hospital Santa Emilia, now lies abandoned. Activists hope the building can be restored as a museum. The painting pictured here is by Javi Córdoba and the graffiti says: ‘Next opening: Republican health service museum’.

LEFT, FROM TOP: • Gathering at the Scottish memorial in Tarancón’s municipal cemetery. • The memorial lists the names of the 39 Scots who died in the Battle of Jarama. • Part of this year’s annual Jarama memorial march on 16 February.
Barcelona cemetery alert

Ruth Muller, daughter of International Brigader and former IBMT Chair Sam Lesser, and her husband Mike have alerted us to a potential threat to the cemetery of the Fossar de Pedrera, an emblematic site in Barcelona that holds memorials for anti-fascists who fought in the Spanish Civil War and for those who supported the Republicans against Franco’s dictatorship.

The cemetery, which is located on Montjuïc, has been a resting place for many anti-fascists, including Lluís Companys, the Catalan President executed by the Francoist regime. Since the completion of the Civil War, the cemetery has been protected under the Spanish state as a national shrine.

However, the cemetery is facing a threat from landslides that have occurred in the area. Mike Muller visited Barcelona recently and brought back photos that show the state of the cemetery. The landslides have been highlighted as a potential danger for the site, which has been designated as a cultural heritage site.

The Fossar de Pedrera is a key site for the study of the Spanish Civil War and the role of the International Brigades. The cemetery includes memorials for international volunteers who fought on the Republican side and for those who died in the conflict.

The IBMT has been working to preserve and protect the cemetery, and has expressed concern about the potential impact of landslides on the site. The organization has called for increased awareness and action to prevent further damage to the cemetery.

Editor’s Notes

Better finances allow us to plan ahead

IBMT membership has reached a new record level. Trustees were delighted to learn at their Executive Committee meeting on 2 February that for the first time membership has gone into four figures, with the total for the end of 2018 totalling 1,002. This includes individual members and affiliated organisations, mainly unions.

We were also pleased to see that, thanks to careful management and strict budgeting, our finances have been stabilised following three difficult years when the Trust operated with deficits and we had to draw on our reserves to keep doing all things members want us to do. The signs are that the 2018/19 financial year will record only a small loss and, based on this performance, our prospects for 2019/20 and beyond look brighter.

A move that is now being considered is the long-held ambition to employ a professional worker with campaign and communication skills. This will be considered when Trustees next meet, and would involve agreeing a long-term plan to significantly boost income over the next few years through increased membership and various fundraising initiatives.

The overall aim is to create a viable organisation that will be around for many years to come, telling the story of the International Brigades and inspiring new generations of anti-fascists.

With the continuing support of all our loyal members, we are confident we can achieve this.

Mixed message from Spanish PM

Bravo that Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez made a point of paying tribute to the International Brigades during a ceremony in Mexico City on 30 January to remember the many thousands of Spaniards who were given sanctuary in Mexico following the defeat of the Spanish Republic.

Speaking alongside Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador – more commonly known as AMLO – Sánchez praised Mexico for providing a home for many of the half a million of his countrymen and women. He was a ‘debt that could never be paid’. He also thanked Mexico for its efforts during the Spanish Civil War – when it was a staunch supporter of the Spanish Republic – and went on to praise the International Brigades ‘for fighting in a country that was not their own in order to defeat fascism’.

However, the meeting between Sánchez and AMLO came at a tense moment diplomatically with Spain backing President Trump’s bid to topple Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro. Meanwhile Mexico joined Uruguay and other countries in calling for a negotiated settlement to Venezuela’s political crisis. It’s interesting to speculate what International Brigaders would have thought about a Spanish socialist prime minister effectively supporting a coup against a constitutional government. Most, I suspect, would have taken a very dim view of it.

GEOFFREY SERVANTE
THE FINAL FAREWELL

Geoffrey Servante, almost certainly the last surviving British member of the International Brigades, died on 21 April 2019, aged 99 – just four weeks short of his 100th birthday. Geoffrey joined the fight against General Franco’s fascist-backed rebellion in June 1937, 11 months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. As an 18-year-old merchant seaman, he jumped ship in Valencia and caught a train to the International Brigades’ main base in Albacete. Because he was not yet 21 he was refused admission into the British Battalion and was instead assigned to an Anglo-American artillery unit known as the John Brown Battery.

Initially deployed in Extremadura in south-west Spain, the battery was transferred to the Toledo front south of Madrid in December 1937. There Geoffrey remained until the final months of the civil war, which ended with Franco declaring victory in April 1939.

Born on 18 May 1919, Geoffrey Servante was hardly typical of the 2,500 volunteers from Britain and Ireland who joined the International Brigades, 534 of whom were killed in Spain. Most were labour movement activists and communists. Geoffrey, brought up in London and educated by Jesuits, had never been in a political party.

Indeed, he claimed in later life that he had only travelled to Spain for a £100 bet – which he never recovered – after someone in a Soho pub had said it was no longer possible to join the International Brigades because the French border had been sealed.

However, in Spain Servante joined the Communist Party, and he remained throughout his life extremely proud to have fought for Spanish democracy. He was also delighted in 2009 to accept Spain’s offer of citizenship to all surviving members of the International Brigades, travelling to the embassy in London to sign the papers.

During the civil war, with ammunition scarce, the John Brown Battery saw little action and rarely did much more than take pot shots at enemy lines. Geoffrey recalled in an interview with historian Richard Baxell in 2018, which was published in ¡No Pasarán!, that one such speculative shell that he had fired missed its target by miles – but it later transpired that he had accidentally scored a direct hit on a fascist officer’s car, instantly killing him and his aide-de-camp.

Early 1939 the John Brown Battery’s members were withdrawn to Valencia, then on to Barcelona. From there, a train took them half-way to the French frontier and they joined the columns of fleeing refugees to walk the remaining 50 miles to the border, harassed all the way by Franco’s aircraft. Eventually Geoffrey and the other Britons were repatriated via Paris and Dieppe.

Within a year, he was called up into the British Army, serving for three years in Egypt with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. After the Second World War he worked in engineering, finally joining Vauxhall Motors in 1957 and staying with the Luton carmaker until early retirement 20 years later.

The IBMT was only able to make contact with Geoffrey in the final years of his life, when he was living close to his family in a nursing home in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. This was thanks to a locally-based journalist, Carmelo García, who found out about his existence and realised that this was in all likelihood the last known British survivor of the International Brigades.
With the unveiling on 2 March of a memorial in Glasgow to seafarers who defied fascist bombs and u-boats during the Spanish Civil War, **Jim Jump** tells this unsung story of courage and sacrifice of the crews of British ships who continued to trade with Republican Spain.

Glasgow’s new Blockade Runners’ Memorial at last gives public recognition to those seafarers who risked and in some cases gave their lives to break Franco’s blockade of Spanish Republican ports. Designed by sculptor Frank Casey and funded by rail and maritime union RMT and its Glasgow Shipping Branch, the memorial stands proudly overlooking the Clyde and only a stone’s throw from Arthur Dooley’s landmark Pasionaria memorial to the more than 500 Scottish volunteers of the International Brigades.

While the UK government and the Royal Navy for the most part turned a blind eye to attacks on British ships, the blockade-busting seafarers brought vital supplies to Spaniards fighting the fascist-backed uprising against their elected Popular Front government. Big cities such as Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao remained loyal to the Republic, while much of their agricultural hinterlands fell into fascist hands. Swollen by refugees, these urban centres became dependent on imports. Food shortages and starvation were an ever-present reality.

Later in the war, British ships and crews played a key role in taking thousands of Republican refugees to safety, again running the gauntlet of German, Italian and rebel mines and bombs.

The Spanish Republic’s embassy in London reported that in the first two years of the war, up to June 1938, 13 British merchant ships had been sunk, 51 others bombed from the air, two had been damaged by mines, five were attacked...
by submarines and 23 had been seized or detained by Franco’s forces.

Thirty-five crew members were killed in these attacks on British merchant ships and nearly 50 badly injured. The Royal Navy also lost eight sailors when in May 1937 the destroyer HMS Hunter struck a mine laid by Franco’s navy south of Almería.

The final tally by the end of the war in April 1939 was much higher. At least 26 ships were sunk or wrecked – though the number of British seafarer deaths is not recorded.

The attacks on British shipping were played out against the background of Britain’s cynical policy of ‘non-intervention’ in the Spanish Civil War. This meant an arms embargo on Spain’s legitimate government – while turning a blind eye to the troops, weapons and airplanes that Hitler and Mussolini were sending Franco.

Under the international non-intervention agreement drawn up by the European powers, the Italian dictator – whose navy was responsible for many of the attacks on British and other ships trading with Republican Spain – was farcically entrusted with policing the agreement along Spain’s Mediterranean coast, while the Royal Navy patrolled the country’s Atlantic seaboard.

Yet the Royal Navy was not allowed to clear mines around Bilbao and other northern Spanish ports to facilitate the free passage of British ships.

Speaking on behalf of the Conservative-led government, Home Secretary John Simon told the House of Commons on 14 April 1937 that such action would constitute intervention in favour of the Spanish Republic. An angry Clement Attlee, the Labour leader, accused the government of giving up trying to protect British shipping.

Many British ships, however, defied the government’s warning not to try to beat the blockade of Spain’s Atlantic ports. Some did turn back or were even intercepted by Royal Navy ships off the Basque coast. This is what happened to the Marie Llewellyn, whose master, Capt David ‘Potato’ Jones, had already made a name for himself in his native Swansea for his dismissive pronouncements about Franco’s naval officers ‘strutting about the quarter-decks of their miserable ships intimidating the British navy and interfering with British shipping’.

However, it was another Cardiff-registered vessel, the Seven Seas Spray, that eventually broke the blockade, entering Bilbao on 20 April 1937, having sailed through the night with its navigation lights off. Thousands of inhabitants greeted the ship’s arrival, shouting: ‘Long live the British sailors! Long live liberty!’

Other ships soon followed, ignoring
Francoist warning shells fired across their bows, while Royal Navy ships looked on. They too were cheered by enthusiastic crowds as they docked in the Basque port.

It’s true that there was good money to be made by shipowners trading with Republican Spain. The war had doubled freight rates, and the Basque government offered generous incentives to masters beating the blockade. The National Union of Seamen (NUS) negotiated a 50 per cent wage bonus for its members entering the war zone following the refusal of several crews to set sail for Spain without a guarantee of danger money. This allowance was later doubled.

But it was clear where most seafarers’ sympathies lay. Many, indeed, jumped ship in Republican ports to join the International Brigades – including Londoner Geoffrey Servante – the last surviving British volunteer – who walked off his ship in Valencia in June 1937 and promptly caught a train to the International Brigade base in Albacete.

So angry were seafarers on the Glasgow-registered Oakgrove, who were fired on as they took badly needed provisions to Santander, that they reportedly waived their pay as a protest at the shameful stance of the British government. The crew of the Newcastle-registered Backworth made a similar gesture.

The food crisis in Bilbao had worsened sharply in April 1937, as the city and nearby towns were bombed by German and Italian planes. A Basque government representative appealed for help on 29 April, fearing a mass raid like the one that had flattened Guernica three days earlier: ‘The fearful possibilities of an air attack on Bilbao are obvious. The population has increased from 300,000 to 500,000, including 100,000 children. The food situation is acute, and the wharf is crowded with children begging the crews of British ships for food.’

Soon British ships were taking refugees to safety in France. A total of 10,000 lives were saved, mostly women and children, half of them in a single convoy of nine freighters on 3 May. Bilbao fell to Franco on 19 June, but British ships continued to ferry refugees from remaining northern Republican-held ports of Santander and Gijón to safety in France until October 1937. In doing so several were bombed, intercepted or captured by Franco’s warships who operated within Spain’s three-mile limit and therefore outside international waters and the attention of the Royal Navy.

On the Mediterranean coast a similar sealift would take place in the dying days of the Republic in March 1939. The last two ships to leave Alicante were the African Trader and the Stanbrook, who between them took nearly 4,000 Republicans to safety in French Algeria as enemy forces were about to enter the city.

Attacks on British ships in the Mediterranean were even worse during the war, with Italian submarines operating along the coast and the ports of Barcelona, Tarragona, Valencia and Alicante regularly targeted by German and Italian bombers and warships. The only time the British government made a credible threat to take retaliatory action was in the summer of 1937 following a spate of attacks by Italian submarines – which immediately ceased as a result. Significantly, the British response was led by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, who resigned a few months later in protest at the government’s abject policy of appeasement.

The new Blockade Runners Memorial in...
Glasgow lists the names of many of these British ships that were attacked. They include the Thorpeness, bombed from the air while at anchor off Tarragona on 20 January 1938. Though seven crew members were killed, and another seven injured, the ship proceeded to Barcelona to discharge her cargo following temporary repairs.

Franco, meanwhile, brazenly threatened to continue his attacks. A statement issued by his authorities accused 12 named British ships of carrying arms to the Republic: ‘Britain has an easy remedy to stop the bombing of her merchant ships, by prohibiting the use of the British flag to protect the undignified contraband traffic in arms to the Republican zone.’

In Britain, the NUS was so alarmed by the attacks and loss of seafarers’ lives that, along with the Committee of Shipowners Trading to Spain and the Merchant Navy Officers’ Federation, it commissioned a news film to be shown in cinemas. Made in 1938 by the Progressive Film Institute and directed by Ivor Montagu, ‘Britain Expects’ pointed the finger at Neville Chamberlain for being the first British Prime Minister to deny the merchant navy adequate protection.

But the film was banned by the British Board of Film Censors, underlining the sensitivity of the authorities to criticism of the government’s policy of appeasement.

Another film shot by Montagu in 1938, ‘Prisoners Prove Intervention in Spain’, showed footage of the bombed wreck of the British-flag Stanwell in Tarragona harbour, in which two British crew members were killed. It also featured footage of a captured German pilot of one of the planes involved in the raid.

Outraged at the British government’s failure to act, NUS General Secretary William Spence invoked the Royal Navy’s record in protecting British shipping in the past and asked: ‘Where was the strong arm of England now?’

Anticipating the rout of the Tories in the 1945 general election, Spence wrote in his union’s journal in June 1938: ‘Neville Chamberlain, faced by the pseudo Christian Spanish gentleman Franco, the murderer of thousands of defenceless women and children, was tragic in his futility. These things would be remembered by seamen in the next general election.’

Top: RMT General Secretary Mick Cash (left) with (from right) Brian Reynolds, Graham Wallace and Dan Henderson, officers of the union’s Glasgow Shipping Branch. Below: Sculptor Frank Casey speaking before the unveiling.
In the early hours of 14 October 1975, a bomb exploded in the heart of Paris’s Latin Quarter. The blast, which could be heard throughout the Left Bank, smashed several windows and damaged over 30 cars. The target was the premises of the Spanish publishing firm Éditions Ruedo Ibérico, notorious for its bold investigations – banned in Spain – into the dictatorship of Francisco Franco and the Spanish Civil War which had brought him to power. A squad of Francoist ultras soon claimed responsibility for the attack, leading the firm’s founder, José Martínez Guerricabeitia, to conclude that the supporters of the regime were finally going on the offensive.

Martínez, an exiled anarchist from Valencia, had a simple objective: to weaponise the printed word against the myths and distortions propagated by the Franco dictatorship.

Given the poor output of historians in Spain, it was left to foreign writers to undertake the challenge of researching the civil war in a scholarly and objective manner. Works by the likes of Hugh Thomas and Herbert Southworth helped launch a historiographical tradition which modern scholars have inherited. Ruedo Ibérico’s legacy hasn’t been limited to the footnotes of academic articles either. The contraband books – translated into Spanish and smuggled into the peninsula from the Canary Islands or France – were sold from under the counter to Spaniards still living under the shadow of dictatorship. They were the very first examples of civil war history not written by the victors, and they exposed no end of inconvenient truths. Small sales did not necessarily mean a small readership, with writer Alfonso Cerva assuring us that Ruedo Ibérico books ‘were the most stolen from our homes by our own friends’.

Today, the firm has slipped into obscurity. Ian Gibson, whose breakthrough came when José Martínez published his book on the wartime assassination of poet Federico García Lorca, doubts that younger Spaniards have ever heard of it. It comes as no surprise that, despite his countless interviews on Spanish radio and television, the topic ‘hardly ever comes up’. Its legacy, as Gibson himself argues, deserves to be better understood.

Éditions Ruedo Ibérico was founded in March 1961 by five Spanish exiles living in Paris, two of whom had to sell their cars to get the project off the ground. The driving force from beginning to end was José Martínez, whose libertarian family had sided with the Republic when the military rebelled.
FROM PREVIOUS PAGE
in July 1936. With the victory of Franco’s Nationalists in 1939 came spells in a reformatory, prison and military service. Undeterred, the obstinate anarchist soon got back to distributing illegal literature throughout his local area before deciding to join the growing ranks of Spaniards seeking political refuge in France. He arrived, on foot, in 1948. He immediately encountered the same problems of finding work, lodgings and documentation which had been faced by his predecessors. One of his friends at the time reminds us that: ‘In ’48 life in Paris was still hard for the French, but for young Spaniards it was impossible. I remember his [Martínez’s] anguish when he broke his only pair of glasses and spent a few days in jail for problems with documentation.’

France could already boast a sizeable community of exiled Spaniards by the time its newest arrival crossed the border. Paris was well on its way to becoming a centre of intellectual opposition to the Franco regime. The founding of the Union of Spanish Intellectuals in 1944 was followed by a string of other institutions devoted to Spanish politics and culture. Martínez himself participated in the activities of the Spanish Students’ Federation before realising longer-term goals were needed if the exiled opposition were to pose a meaningful threat to the dictatorship. With the Americans feting Spain as a Cold War front against communism, Franco seemed stronger than ever and sporadic protest no longer seemed sufficient.

Without ever renouncing his anarchism, Martínez desperately wanted to overcome the factionalism of the left in order to create a cohesive counter-narrative to that propagated by the victors of the Spanish Civil War. In doing so, he thought it essential to give to the democratic opposition within Spain a voice of its own. The founders of Ruedo Ibérico in faraway Paris assumed there must be sheaves of unpublished manuscripts in the desk-drawers of Spaniards still stuck on the wrong side of the Pyrenees.

While Martínez was busy formulating his ideas in Paris, Spanish society was undergoing momentous changes. Government technocrats in Madrid had finally abandoned Franco’s ill-advised drive for self-sufficiency and had set Spain on a course of economic integration with the rest of Europe. The country was hurtling towards industrialisation on an unprecedented scale, surpassed only by Japan, and suddenly found itself a country of consumers. Many Spaniards – especially those born after the war – began to expect more from their government. Workers went on illegal strikes, dissatisfied with the absence of independent unions, while university students demanded the same political freedoms enjoyed by the German and Swedish tourists now flocking to the Spanish costa. Born after the war, these were precisely the people who, in the words of José Martínez, wanted to ‘respond to a series of whys, to recover their own identity… to know the causes of the war, the consequences of the trauma, the configuration of Francoism’. The consequence, according to historian Aránzazu Sarria Boil, ‘was a period from the end of the ’60s to the end of the ’70s when the book became a weapon of political struggle’. The state could censor, but it was struggling to convince.

The mountains of unpublished material Martínez had hoped for never materialised. Fortunately, an English historian by the name of Hugh Thomas had recently taken on the suggestion of a literary agent and embarked on writing a history of the Spanish Civil War. He admitted years later that, as a young academic searching for an interesting topic, he might just as easily have written about the Turkish Revolution had it been proposed to him. As it was, his book on Spain – entitled, quite simply, ‘The Spanish Civil War’ – was published to positive reviews in the US before catching the eye of Martínez, who commissioned a Spanish translation as Ruedo Ibérico’s first title. Published in 1968, it was the first attempt at an objective, comprehensive account of the war. The 5,000 copies smuggled into Spain soon sold out. Though few in number, copies were constantly passed around and discussed. Officials betrayed their deep anxiety by sentencing Octavio Jordá, a 31-year-old smuggler caught at the border with two suitcases packed full of the book, to two years’ imprisonment for ‘spreading communism’.

A lecture in military history delivered at the University of Zaragoza in the same year the book appeared gives a good indication as to how the war was ‘officially’ represented in Spain at the time. The minutes don’t refer to a civil war at all, but rather a ‘War for National Liberation’, parroting the official line that Franco had ‘liberated’ Spain from godless anarchy by leading a three-year crusade for the country’s Catholic redemption. Hugh Thomas had fundamentally challenged this narrative, leaving readers with little doubt that the conflict had begun as a premeditated military coup against a democratically elected government. Most shocking of all were the details of mass killings in Franco’s rebel zone. When asked about this, Franco responded with the absurd claim that he had commuted various death sentences during the Civil War – something for which there is simply no evidence.

Ruedo Ibérico’s second title was a translation of Gerald Brenan’s 1943 classic, ‘The Spanish Labyrinth’. Whereas Hugh Thomas had concentrated on great men and high politics,
Brenan’s left-wing sympathies impelled him to take into account Spanish class structures and their influence on the coming catastrophe of war. At the time he decided to write the book, Spanish historiography, whatever the period in question, was still dominated by old-fashioned political accounts. Having lived in Spain himself, and having fled soon after the outbreak of war, Brenan was more interested in explaining why Spanish history had taken the disastrous course it had. Supplementing his own experiences with extensive research, he managed to produce an extraordinarily vivid portrait of Spanish society on the brink of war; a portrait in which the landless labourer figured every bit as prominently as the cabinet minister, and in which regional variations in rainfall mattered just as much as election results.

Nothing at the time could compare to the sheer analytical scope of the book. Raymond Carr described it as a ‘revelation’. When the Spanish translation was smuggled into Spain in the 1960s, he writes, it became ‘the sacred text for the democratic opposition to Franco’. When the Spanish translation was smuggled into Spain in the 1960s, he writes, it became ‘the sacred text for the democratic opposition to Franco’. Nor did Spain forget about Brenan in the years after Franco’s death. In 1984 the townspeople of Alhaurín el Grande launched a successful campaign to bring ‘Don Gerardo’ back to Spain after it was discovered he was living in a retirement home in London. In 1987 Brenan died in the country he loved so much, aged 92. Today, Alhaurín is home to some 5,600 books donated from the author’s personal library.

In the summer of 1965, Ian Gibson, an Irish doctoral student with a passion for Lorca’s poetry, settled in Granada to write his thesis on the poet. After discussions with various locals he decided instead to focus on the taboo topic of his murder. ‘It was a wild, romantic thing to do,’ Gibson writes, ‘shelving the thesis and changing direction the way I did during that year off, but I was powerless to resist the urge.’ The lengths he went to in order to obtain information about wartime Granada were truly extraordinary, and help explain why Graham Greene found the subsequent book to be ‘as interesting as a detective story’. Posing as an English teacher, turning up unannounced to ask for interviews and secretly taping conversations with those he held responsible for the poet’s assassination were all part of his investigative arsenal. He also got to know various people who had known Lorca who were still living in Granada in the 1960s. Despite people’s terrible fear of discussing the repression and the consequent difficulty of obtaining accurate information, Gibson completed the book – only to have it repeatedly rejected by publishers. He was, by his own admission, a ‘complete beginner’, with no contacts in the publishing world. Then someone suggested Ruedo Ibérico.

‘Martínez desperately wanted to overcome the factionalism of the left in order to create a cohesive counter-narrative to that propagated by the victors of the Spanish Civil War.’

In 1971 the definitive account of Lorca’s assassination – written in English in the hope that it might eventually be translated into Spanish – appeared under the title of ‘La represión nacionalista de Granada en 1936 y la muerte de Federico García Lorca’. The small but revelatory book placed responsibility for the murder squarely on the shoulders of local reactionaries and
Published in France and smuggled into Spain, the banned books of Ruedo Ibérico constituted a challenge beyond the control of the Juntas de Censura.

Published in France and smuggled into Spain, the banned books of Ruedo Ibérico constituted a challenge beyond the control of the Juntas de Censura. If anything, government censorship helped shape the thematic priorities of Ruedo Ibérico, which José Martínez came to regard as an ‘anti-ministry’. Despite their inability to prosecute authors due to their tactical use of pseudonyms, ministers were made aware of the urgent need to update their approach to official historiography. This became increasingly urgent as Spain entered the 1960s with an eye to shortening its international reputation. The Centre for Civil War Studies was accordingly established under the auspices of the Ministry of Information. Its director, Ricardo de la Cierva, himself the author of numerous books in defence of Francoism, was charged with launching the dictatorship’s intellectual counter-attack against Ruedo Ibérico. That it felt the need to do so demonstrates, in the opinion of Sarria Buil, the importance that the regime granted to the writing of history, and its obsession to control it.

One of Ricardo de la Cierva’s most ambitious attempts to reclaim the regime’s intellectual credibility was an enormous Spanish Civil War bibliography, published in 1968. The result—more propaganda than scholarship—was a disaster. It listed hundreds of authors that didn’t exist and several books that had never been written. Herbert Southworth wrote scathingly that it was an ‘intellectual scandal’. As the owner of the world’s largest collection of books about the Spanish Civil War, he was well-placed to make such a judgement. The eradication and precision Southworth had demonstrated in ‘El mito de la cruzada de Franco’ was something Ricardo de la Cierva could never compete with. Moreover, by financing the publication of the book himself, Southworth had saved Ruedo Ibérico from economic collapse. Unsurprisingly, he and Cierva would remain irreconcilable enemies until the end.

In November 1975, with Ruedo Ibérico still stubbornly undefeated, Spanish television announced the death of Franco. An amnesty for Francoist criminals and a ‘pact of forgetting’ between the new political parties smoothed the delicate transition to democracy, but left little room for José Martínez’s lifelong project of recovering Spain’s uncomfortable past. Meanwhile, his greatest opponent, Ricardo de la Cierva, went on to become a senator, government adviser, and Minister of Culture in the new democratic Spain. Struggling to find its place in the new order, Ruedo Ibérico finally closed in 1982.

There is no question that the books it published, many of them not mentioned here, represent a remarkable contribution to our understanding of Spain. The group of writers brought together under the banner of Ruedo Ibérico was truly extraordinary. Brenan, Southworth and Gibson were not typical, academic historians. They wrote their pioneering works of history because of a deep-seated desire to take on the systematic lying of the Franco regime, which still, in the words of Paul Preston, receives a ‘relatively good press’. Some of them are household names in Spain, more famous there than in their own countries. This remarkable legacy was never assured. As José Martínez himself asked: ‘…which Spanish distributor or bookseller in his right mind would accept to distribute and sell our books at the risk of going to jail or being heavily fined for it? And let’s not talk about the readers, who, in case of police registration, ran similar risks.’

Incredibly, the readers were willing to take those risks. Like them, anyone at all interested in the history and culture of Spain owes Ruedo Ibérico an extraordinary debt.

After graduating from UCL in 2013, Adrian Pole worked in Barcelona and Madrid as an English teacher. He now teaches in Leicester. He thanks Ian Gibson and Aránzazu Sarria Buil for their help in researching this article.
Like contemporaries The Unthanks and Comshed Sisters, Teesside’s The Young’uns are evidence of a thriving song-based tradition in England’s north-east folk scene. Lively and politically charged, the trio’s repertoire is a mix of outrage and deep-felt compassion, whether singing about the suicide of a young gay Muslim man or the historic Battle of Cable Street. 'The Ballad of Johnny Longstaff' (CD available from www.theyounguns.co.uk/shop) grew out of one such composition on the 2017 ‘Strangers’ album, inspired by the real-life experiences of its eponymous hero in that bloody confrontation with police and Mosley’s Blackshirts.

Longstaff is a fascinating figure. He was a veteran of the hunger marches, the mass trespasses which established the right to roam and the struggle against Franco’s fascists in Spain – all while still in his teens. His piss-and-vinegar determination to remain true to his heart and political conscience resonates today. Sean Cooney, David Eagle and Michael Hughes, themselves teenagers when they began to sing unaccompanied in the pubs of their native Stockton-on-Tees, have fleshed out Longstaff’s story into a multi-media stage show.

In a bold move, they are joined in concert on audio by the real Johnny Longstaff, recorded in 1986 for the Imperial War Museum. His candid recollections of life in the 1930s reveal an impish wit and rousing selflessness. Interleaving his words with songs and back projections, the resulting performance is one of remarkable depth and complexity.

The Young’uns sing with understated musical embellishment throughout, tempered with unexpected flashes of humour and tenderness. Opening with a portrait of unimaginable poverty and neglect, ‘Any Bread?’, echoed later in the heart-breaking ‘No Hay Pan’, ‘Carrying the Coffin’ and ‘Hostel Strike’ chart Longstaff’s political awakening, while ‘Cable Street’ catches it in the first bloom of youth. By the time of his encounter with the plain-speaking recruitment officer in ‘Robson’s Song’, he is an old hand.

The Young’uns mix naive earthiness on the ribald growl of ‘Noddy’ with genuine pathos. They perform the gorgeous ‘Ta-ra to Tooting’ in front of a faded photo of Longstaff and his mates giving the clenched fist salute of the Spanish Republic. They are barely out of short trousers.

The show does not shy away from the horror and cruel privations of the war in Spain but its story is one of hope and faith in human goodness. The wider truth about the 35,000 men and women who volunteered to fight fascism with the International Brigades is still to be fully told.

But for now, we have The Young’uns and ‘The Ballad of Johnny Longstaff’. This review first appeared in the Morning Star of 31 January 2019.

NEIL MUDD recommends a brilliant musical tribute by The Young’uns (above) to Johnny Longstaff (inset), a previously unsung working-class hero.

REPRINTED: To mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War, Manifesto Press have published two out-of-print pamphlets about the war under a single cover. ‘Two Pamphlets from the Spanish Civil War’ contains Johnny Campbell’s 1937 critique of ultra-left opposition to the Spanish Republic’s Popular Front government, along with a 1984 essay by Bill Alexander, former commander of the British Battalion in Spain, questioning key aspects of George Orwell’s Spanish Civil War memoir, ‘Homage to Catalonia’. Tom Sibley has written an introduction. The 34-page publication costs £6, including p&p, and can be ordered via the Manifesto Press website (https://manifestopress.org.uk).

Scottish Volunteers: The Wonder Fools theatre group’s acclaimed drama, ‘549 Scots of the Spanish Civil War’, is being revived this year. The play was premiered in February 2018 in two weeks of sell-out shows at Prestonpans and the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow. The production will now go on a four-week tour of 10 venues in Scotland, starting on 21 May. There will also be two performances at London’s New Diorama Theatre on 22/23 June. See www.wonderfools.org/549 for more information and booking.
Cold War distortions

‘Historians at War: Cold War Influences on Anglo-American Representations of the Spanish Civil War’ by Darryl Anthony Burrowes (Sussex Academic Press / Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies, 2018).

Paul Preston, in an incisive preface to this book, points out that it concentrates on analysing the way in which perceptions of the Spanish conflict were coloured by the Cold War. To do this, Australian author Darryl Burrowes looks at the writings and lives of four authors, all of whom had some direct experience of the Spanish Civil War: Burnett Bolloten, Gerald Brenan, George Orwell and Herbert Southworth. While these Anglo-American authors all started as staunch anti-Francoists, only Southworth remained wholly loyal to the Republican cause. The other three’s work, in one way or another, was appropriated by the US and British intelligence services in their efforts to undermine the Soviet Union’s growing influence following the Second World War.

Bolloten, Brenan and Southworth were serious ‘writer-historians’. All three, to varying degrees, had a grasp of aspects of Spanish history and an understanding of the immediate situation in 1936 and the challenges facing the Republican Popular Front government.

By contrast, as Burrowes acknowledges, Orwell was no historian, but has morphed, by public acclaim, into being regarded as a leading authority on the civil war. Orwell went to Spain without any knowledge of the Spanish labour movement and no experience in the anti-fascist struggle. He was already an anti-communist, as he admits in a 1938 letter to the poet Stephen Spender: ‘I looked upon you as a sort of fashionable successful person, also a Communist or Communist sympathiser, and I had been very hostile to the CP since about 1935.’ And yet after six months, largely on an inactive front, Orwell could write in his omniscient style and without further research what many came to believe was the seminal book on the war in Spain. This was mainly thanks, as Burrowes shows, to the substantial promotion of ‘Homage to Catalonia’ by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the International Research Department (IRD), a secret wing of the British Foreign Office.

Gerald Brenan was part of the Bloomsbury Group literary set in the 1930s and was regarded as a second-rate novelist. In 1943, when the ‘Spanish Labyrinth’ was first published, he faced both ways when assessing the communists’ role in the civil war. He praised them for their military leadership, for their clarity of vision and their unity of purpose. But at the same time he damningly criticised their sectarianism and their constant changes of line in order to gain advantage for the Communist Party in their efforts to replace the socialists and anarchists as the foremost party of the left.

Burrowes describes how Brenan’s desire to settle in Spain in the early 1950s influenced his writings. His pre-1939 views underwent a major revision. He sought to appease the Franco regime and benefited substantially from his links to CIA-funded magazines and the major Cold War publishing house, Hamish Hamilton.

Though his books were banned in Spain until 1974, the Spanish authorities put no pressure on him. In return Brenan exercised self-censorship in his writings, which were published abroad. He trimmed his views and steadily moved towards a political amnesty with Francoism.

Burnett Bolloten was a Welsh journalist sent to Spain in 1936 as a United Press correspondent. Unlike Orwell, he steeped himself in Spanish history and in the detail of the civil war.

While in 1936 he considered joining the Communist Party, he later became increasingly influenced by anarchist and Trotskyist ideas. By 1965, when he published his most important work, ‘The Grand Camouflage’, he was firmly in the anti-communist camp. In 1936 anti-fascism was the cause to support. But when the Cold War arrived in the 1940s, the smart side to be on for publishing possibilities was with the anti-communists.

So, in his books Bolloten, who generally supported the ineffectual Largo Caballero as Spanish prime minister, became a trenchant critic of Caballero’s successor, Juan Negrín. He
Herbert Southworth had the distinction of working as a political journalist both for the Spanish Republican cause (in the Republic’s New York Information Bureau between 1938 and 1941) and the US Office of War Information and other agencies between 1941 and 1945. Both jobs serving the anti-fascist cause were confirmation of Southworth’s deep-seated commitment, one that he maintained for the rest of his life.

After 1945 he lived in Tangiers, where he worked as an intern for the International Brigade Memorial Trust. His main strength is the forensic analysis of the personal lives of three of the four authors. Surprisingly, in view of the facts, Orwell is mainly spared from accusations of moral turpitude. His shameful naming to the IRD of up to 100 alleged communists impacts the work of this book. A particularly interesting episode in this account took place in 1942 when 10 volunteers joined the Chinese Expeditionary Force serving with US troops in India following the Japanese invasion of Burma. An illuminating passage highlights observations from a number of the volunteers who witnessed American soldiers’ racism towards the Chinese and their preoccupation with ‘girls and food’. This surprised the medics, whose previous experience with international forces had been with their comrades in Spain.

Mamlok describes this history as a ‘tribute’, underlying ‘they were fighting for your freedom and their own’. In collating this previously untold episode in 20th century history, he certainly succeeds in this goal.

Tom Sibley

Among Tom Sibley’s publications is a biography of former Canadian International Brigader Bert Ramelson, ‘Revolutionary Communist at Work’ (Lawrence & Wishart, 2011). He has also co-edited and written an introduction for ‘Two Pamphlets from the Spanish Civil War’ (Manifesto Press, 2019) – see page 19.

Meirian Jump is the Archivist & Library Manager at the Marx Memorial Library.

The range of medical complaints and conditions – from malnutrition, fleas and lice to infectious diseases such as malaria and dysentery that were rife in wartime refugee camps – which the physicians encountered during their stay.

He cites diaries and letters of the volunteers highlighting, for example the contrasts in their welcome to Spain – with fists raised and international songs – to that in China. He also underlines the importance of medical improvements made in the battlefront hospitals of the civil war in Spain, including the treatment of fractures and blood transfusion, and how they were adapted to conditions in China.

Personal details of the men and women who volunteered both in Spain and China bring the account to life. Alexander Volokhine, the son of White Russians living in France, turned his back on the anti-Soviet position of his parents to join first the International Brigades and then the International Medical Relief Corps in Spain and China, but Kent committed suicide on 4 December 1961. When Maresen then attempted to join her son and sister in the US she was refused entry due to her Communist Party membership.

A central theme of the book is how the nascent civil war between Chiang Kai Shek’s nationalists and Mao Tse Tung’s communists impacted the work of the volunteers. The medics were largely motivated to serve in communist-controlled areas, while the nationalists – who controlled the Chinese Red Cross – treated them with great suspicion and restricted their activity in these areas. This frustration was magnified as, once the volunteers had arrived in China, war broke out across Europe. Many felt impotent, unable to work, as they had hoped, for communism in China, nor to return to fight fascism in their homelands.

Southworth’s enemies, and there were many in the US liberal establishment, accused him of being a Stalinist, a fellow traveller and stooge for the Soviet Union. Burrowes confines that he was none of these, but calls into question his academic impartially – though interestingly doesn’t get round to examining Orwell’s impartiality. Burrowes adopts a biographical methodology for his book. He subjects us to a number of judgements which take on moral tones on the personal lives of three of the four authors. Surprisingly, in view of the facts, Orwell is mainly spared from accusations of moral turpitude. His shameful naming to the IRD of up to 100 alleged enemies of the state is noted, but Christopher Hitchens is wheeled in to excuse Orwell’s snitching. According to the ex-Trotskyist, then neo-con, nobody was hurt, so no harm was done! This is a well written and researched book. Its main strength is the forensic analysis of the extensive efforts of American and British state agencies to distort the facts so as to present a specific anti-Soviet, anti-communist view of the war in Spain. For deepening our understanding of this process Burrowes is to be thanked.

Meirian Jump

Meirian Jump is the Archivist & Library Manager at the Marx Memorial Library.

íNO PASARÁN! 21
Wrexham hosted a festival on 6 April in appreciation of the achievements and example of Tom Jones, the town’s most famous anti-fascist and trade unionist.

Known locally as Twm Sbaen (Tom Spain), Tom Jones (pictured below) was a North Wales coalminer who fought Franco’s fascists in Spain and later became the Wales Secretary of the Transport & General Workers’ Union (TGWU), now Unite the Union. Sponsored by Unite, the Gwyl Twm Sbaen (Tom Spain Festival) began with a rally and parade through the town led by the Cambria Band to the Ty Pawb (People’s House), where there were songs from the Wrexham Community Choir – including ‘Twm Sbaen Is Fighting For Me!’. This was followed by sessions exploring the memory and legacy of the International Brigades and Spanish Civil War, featuring speakers from Brazil, Chile and Catalonia, as well as IBMT Chair Jim Jump and Trustee Dolores Long. Next came a screening of the film about fellow International Brigader and TGWU leader Jack Jones and in the evening there was poetry from Evrah Rose and music from Joe Solo, Nick Ellis, Isabella Crowther, Sphelm and Paint Your Guru.

Tom Jones (1908-1990) was born in Lancashire to Welsh parents. He worked for 14 years as a miner in Hafod, Vauxhall and Bersham collieries, near Wrexham, where he took part in the 1926 General Strike and, as a trade unionist and political activist, suffered victimisation for challenging the callousness of the mine-owners. In May 1937 he joined the International Brigades. With the XV Brigade’s Anti-Tank Battery, he saw action at Brunete, Belchite and Teruel before transferring to the British Battalion’s machine-gun company. In September 1938 during the Battle of the Ebro he was injured, taken prisoner and later sentenced to death at a show trial in Zaragoza. This was commuted to 30 years of imprisonment.

His family initially believed him to be dead – a memorial meeting was even held for him – but he was eventually released from jail in Burgos in the spring of 1940, becoming the last British volunteer to be repatriated.

Jones resumed his union activism, this time in the TGWU, and ended his working life as the union’s first Wales Secretary. He also played a prominent role in the establishment of the Wales TUC in 1974.

He is remembered on a plaque unveiled in 2013 at Rhosllanerchrugog, near Wrexham. A room is also named after him at the Unite offices in Cardiff.

Fascism has nothing to offer to the peoples of the world except continuous war, a general lowering of the standard of living and a complete smashing of all culture, arts and learning. Fascism can only lead the world to the valley of death and destruction and to barbarism… I am proud to say that Wales is well represented in the British units here by its sturdy and freedom-loving coalminers. The Welsh national anthem has been sung more than once in the trenches on the Madrid and Aragon fronts and by now many brave Welsh miners have been killed. They died to preserve democracy not only for Spain but also in Wales. History will prove that these Welsh miners did not die in vain.’

You can help make a special contribution to our essential work by becoming a Friend of the IBMT.

Donate more than £50 a year and your name will be listed as a Friend of the IBMT in our magazine. If you dedicate your donation to a particular International Brigade volunteer, this will be published along with your name. We’ll also send you an exclusive Friend of the IBMT badge (above) to wear with pride.

- Send a cheque for £50 or more made out to the IBMT, along with your name and address, to: IBMT, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU. If you are a UK taxpayer and wish to make a Gift Aid declaration with your donation, you can request a form from admin@international-brigades.org.uk

- Alternatively, click the Donate button on our website (www.international-brigades.org.uk) and make a donation of at least £50 via PayPal. If you do this, please email admin@international-brigades.org.uk to notify us.

Thank you for your support. ¡No pasarán!
Help us inspire new generations with the story of the men and women who fought fascism and defended democracy in Spain from 1936-1939.

To make a donation or become a Friend of the IBMT go to www.international-brigades.org.uk and click the donate button.

SAVE THE DATE
The IBMT’s Annual General Meeting will take place in London on Saturday 5 October 2019 as part of a weekend of social, cultural and commemorative activities in the capital over that weekend.

¡No pasarán!
They shall not pass!
Merchandise from the IBMT

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

Free postage & packing on goods totalling £30 or more for orders within the UK and Europe.

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

For multiple orders in the UK up to a value of £30 (excluding p&p) calculate total p&p by taking the highest p&p among items ordered, halving the p&p of the remaining items and adding them together.

For orders outside the UK or to pay by credit card or PayPal, go to the merchandise page on our website: (www.international-brigades.org.uk/catalog) where there are also other items listed for sale.

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

Keyring in colours of the Spanish Republic: Large badge size 15.5cms diameter. £3.99 plus £2.99 p&p.


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

IBMT badge: Solid metal badge with International Brigade Memorial Trust and ‘International Brigade Memorial Trust’ around the edge. £3.99 plus £2.99 p&p.

Tin-plated badge: Shows image of La Pasionaria and in the background the medal given to International Brigaders when they left Spain. In Spanish Republican colours. £1.99 plus £2.99 p&p.

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


