

**'Mere sympathy is not enough': Glasgow and the Spanish Civil War**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
B.A.(Hons) in History. University of Sydney.**

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**2012.**

## *Abstract*

Despite its central role in the British efforts to combat General Franco and his fascist allies, previous studies on Britain and the Spanish Civil War have largely ignored Glasgow's contribution. This thesis examines the relationship between Glasgow and Spain, including Glaswegian volunteers fighting in Spain, Aid Spain movements in Glasgow and the lingering impact these events had on working-class memory and history in Glasgow and Scotland. It contends that Glasgow's experience of Spain differed significantly from other places in Britain, and that a top-down, national approach to such histories has concealed important local and regional complexities.

**Keywords:** *Glasgow, Spanish Civil War, International Brigades, volunteers, Aid Spain movements, radical politics, Scottish history*

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## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without a wealth of support from all my family and friends. In particular I would like to thank Sandra and James, my all-too-patient hosts while researching in Edinburgh, Nay and Billy, historical proofreaders extraordinaire, and Judit and the Fazekas family, for their warm hospitality. I would also like to thank Ian MacDougall, for allowing me access to his personal papers and answering a great number of silly questions. Finally, thank you to my supervisor, Cindy McCreery, who has had to deal with possibly the most-absent Honours student on record.

## Glossary of Acronyms Used

AEU – Amalgamated Engineering Union

CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain

GCA – Glasgow City Archives

FONS – Friends of Nationalist Spain

ILP – Independent Labour Party

IBA – International Brigade Association

IBAr – International Brigade Archives

IBMT – International Brigade Memorial Trust

ML – Mitchell Library

MML – Marx Memorial Library

NUWM – National Unemployed Workers Movement

NLS – National Library of Scotland

POUM – *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*

SAU – Scottish Ambulance Unit

STUC – Scottish Trade Unions Conference

YCL – Young Communist League

## Introduction

On 29 February 2008, a man passed away in his sleep in a Scottish nursing home.<sup>1</sup> Though elderly and bedbound, he retained an active mind and even in his final days entertained his carers with tales of his colourful youth.<sup>2</sup> His name was Steve Fullarton, and with his death a significant chapter in the history of Glasgow and Scotland seemingly came to an end.

Fullarton's youth was more colourful than most. Growing up during the worst of the interwar slump in Glasgow tenements, he served in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War. What dominated his reminiscences however was not his part in the world's struggle against Hitler and fascism, but rather his earlier, more personal, ideological struggle against the same enemy on the battlefields of the Spanish Civil War. Fullarton had fought in the Communist-organised British Battalion of the International Brigades as a teenager, joining men and women from sixty nations in defending the Spanish Republic against General Franco from 1936-39. He was the last living volunteer from Glasgow – indeed the whole of Scotland – and with his death the story of these men and women now passed beyond the reach of living memory.

Yet his passing did not go unnoticed or unmourned. Obituaries ran not only in the newsletter of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, the organisation dedicated to preserving the memory of the British men and women who fought in Spain, but also the premier newspaper of Scotland, *The Scotsman*.<sup>3</sup> A year later, the first book purporting to

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<sup>1</sup> Thesis title quote is from Alan M. Boase, letter to *Glasgow Herald*, 11 February 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4, File 7, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sandra Douglas (nursing home manager), Dalkeith, Scotland, 21 October 2011.

<sup>3</sup> 'Obituaries: Steve Fullarton', *IBMT Newsletter*, no. 20 (Spring 2008), p. 3, *Stephen Fullarton*, created 11 March, 2008, Obituaries hosted by *The Scotsman*,

deal with Scottish involvement in the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Caledonia* by Daniel Gray, was released to popular acclaim, with Glaswegians driving the narrative at every turn.<sup>4</sup> In 2009 a two-part documentary on Scottish volunteers was broadcast in Scotland, again to general acclaim.<sup>5</sup> Even four years after Fullarton's death, an event commemorating the Scottish volunteers drew an audience of well over a hundred in Glasgow's Mitchell Library.<sup>6</sup> Clearly the memory of Spain, the International Brigades and Glasgow's historical role has been at least partly preserved beyond living memory. But how has this memory been preserved? By whom? And for what ends?

It is clear from the outset that this history has not been kept alive by academic historians. Although a wealth of scholarly material dealing with Britain and the Spanish Civil War exists, it has done little to illuminate Glasgow's role.<sup>7</sup> Many fine accounts by academic historians like Richard Baxell, James Hopkins, Tom Buchanan and Jim Fyrth inform this thesis.<sup>8</sup> However, like many other authors they often conflate the English experience with

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<[http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/stephen\\_fullarton\\_1\\_1158904](http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/stephen_fullarton_1_1158904)>, viewed 17 May 2012.

Interestingly, Fullarton also appeared in a list of several dozen notables who died in 2008 that was published in *The Scotsman*, alongside such luminaries as Sir Edmund Hillary and Heath Ledger. See 'Those We Have Lost', *The Scotsman*, 27 December 2008, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia: Scotland and the Spanish Civil War*, (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2008). For positive press, see 'The women who fought Franco', *The Scotsman*, 20 November 2008, p. 40. The one scholarly review, by Richard Baxell, is also sympathetic, although it is mostly descriptive rather than analytical or critical. See Richard Baxell, 'Review of Daniel Gray's *Homage to Caledonia*', *Family and Community History* 13, no. 2 (November 2010), pp. 149-150.

<sup>5</sup> *The Scots Who Fought Franco*, Scottish Television (STV), aired 13 August 2009 and 20 August 2009. For a typical review, see 'Television Review', *The Scotsman*, 14 August 2009, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> 'Fighting Fascism, Fighting Franco: Scottish Volunteers for Spanish Freedom, 1936-2011', commemorative event held at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 15 October 2011. I attended this event in person.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Preston, writing in 2001, estimated that upwards of 20,000 books had been published on the Spanish Civil War. See Paul Preston, 'Spanish Civil War', *History Today* 51, no. 11 (November 2001), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> These historians are central to two major clashes that inform the first two chapters. Baxell and Hopkins disagree over the role of the Communist Party, while Fyrth and Buchanan are leading historians of the British political impact of Aid Spain movements on Britain. See Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War: The British Battalion in the International Brigades, 1936-1939*, (London: Routledge, 2004); James Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire: The British in the Spanish Civil War*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Tom Buchanan, *The British Labour Movement and the Spanish Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Tom Buchanan, 'Britain's Popular Front? Aid Spain and the British Labour Movement', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 31 (1991), pp. 60-72; Tom Buchanan, *The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain: War, Loss and Memory*, (Eastbourne: Sussex University Press, 2007); Jim Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain: The Spanish Aid Movement in Britain, 1936-1939*, (London: Lawrence and

the British experience.<sup>9</sup> Glaswegian identity is deemed to be of little significance or simply ignored entirely in these Anglocentric accounts. Furthermore, the lack of ‘famous’ Glaswegian volunteers limits their wider appeal as subject matter, particularly as authors have many prominent English artists, poets and writers to include in their narratives.<sup>10</sup>

In Scotland too, the historical profession has played a relatively minor role in keeping the local memory alive. No scholarly account of Scotland’s, let alone Glasgow’s, involvement in the Spanish Civil War has yet been written. Although academic historians such as Ian Wood and Victor Kiernan showed interest in the topic, none chose to expand their interest into a definitive account.<sup>11</sup> More recently, this gap has been unevenly filled by non-academic histories, from Gray’s *Homage to Caledonia* to local or biographical accounts by Mike Arnott and Chris Dolan.<sup>12</sup> These writers can be best understood as the internal record keepers of working-class efforts to remember Scottish volunteers, rather than as independent and critical observers.

The purpose of this thesis, however, is not to condemn such accounts and their parochial perspective. Rather, it argues that local history is incredibly important, especially in fields

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Wishart, 1986); Jim Fyrth, ‘The Aid Spain Movement in Britain 1936-1939’, *History Workshop Journal*, no. 35 (1993), pp. 153-164.

<sup>9</sup> Two examples, in which ‘British’ in reality means ‘English’, are Lewis Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and The British Left*, (London: Taurus Academic studies, 2007), L. Shelmerdine, ‘Britons in an ‘un-British’ war: domestic newspapers and the participation of UK nationals in the Spanish Civil War’, *North West Labour History* 22, (1997-1998), pp. 20-47.

<sup>10</sup> In the several major works on British artists in Spain, Glaswegians (and Scots in general) are conspicuously absent. See Hugh Ford, *A Poet’s War: British Poets and the Spanish Civil War*, (Philadelphia: Philadelphia University Press, 1965); Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, (Oxford, 1988); Valentine Cunningham, *Spanish Front: Writers on the Civil War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). The sole reference to Glaswegians in Robert Stradling’s book on writers in the International Brigades comes from a reference to their ‘drunken loudness’ in the eyes Welsh volunteer Tony Hyndman. Robert Stradling, *History and Legend: Writing the International Brigades*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p 28.

<sup>11</sup> Wood’s wrote a short feature article in the cultural magazine *Cencrastus*. Kiernan collaborated with Ian MacDougall in compiling and publishing oral history related to Spain, but did not write his own account. See Ian Wood, ‘Scotland and the Spanish Civil War’, *Cencrastus*, (Autumn 1984), pp. 14-16; Ian MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War: Personal Recollections of Scottish Volunteers in Republican Spain 1936-39*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1986); Victor Kiernan, ‘Foreword’ in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, pp. v-xi.

<sup>12</sup> Mike Arnott, *Dundee and the Spanish Civil War*, (Dundee: Dundee Trades Council, 2008); Chris Dolan, *An Anarchist’s Story: The Life of Ethel MacDonald*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2009).

such as the Spanish Civil War, in which an exclusively national perspective too often dominates historical writing.<sup>13</sup> Local and regional histories preserve and celebrate important differences in these wider stories. They remind us of the diversity of experiences across a country, often homogenised in nationally focused history. Above all, this account demonstrates that through its more focused and nuanced approach, local history gives broader accounts greater depth and analytical power. Examining the background, motivations and experiences of Glaswegian volunteers in Spain demonstrates that factors such as social networks, that are downplayed or outright ignored in existing accounts, have great significance. By studying the impact of the conflict on Glasgow itself, this thesis also challenges current thinking on the relationship between domestic politics and Spain, as well as the nature of anti-Republican movements.

In itself, the story of Glasgow and Spain is extraordinary. Although precise figures are unavailable, it is estimated that a staggering ten percent of all British volunteers were Glaswegian.<sup>14</sup> Many of them played significant roles in the leadership structure of the Communist Party of Great Britain and hence the British Battalion and the International Brigades. Additionally, Glaswegians were often at the centre of controversies that have dogged the history of the Brigades. On the 'home' front, Glaswegians also played a central

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<sup>13</sup> Examples of national perspectives are myriad. For Britain alone see Baxell, *British Volunteers*; Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*; and Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers For Liberty: Spain 1936-1939*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982). Exceptions to this rule tend towards the extremes of biographical writing or general overviews of the International Brigades. For example, see R. Dan Richardson, *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982); Michael Jackson, *Fallen Sparrows: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophy Society, 1994); Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, *Journey to the Frontier: Two Roads to the Spanish Civil War*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970). In Britain, the only truly non-English regional perspective on volunteers is provided by Hywel Francis' writing on Welsh miners, see Hywel Francis, *Miners Against Fascism: Wales and the Spanish Civil War*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> This was the biggest contribution of any British city excepting London. See Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War*, p. 19. Baxell's estimate of 200 Glaswegian volunteers is certainly an underestimate caused by his exclusive inclusion of those who gave a definite address when enlisting. Gray's estimate is closer to 250, half of the Scottish contingent of approximately 500-550 volunteers. See Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 19, 35.

role in the British Aid Spain movement, despite massive poverty and high unemployment. This unusually high level of involvement demands some explanation.

Glasgow's involvement in the Spanish Civil War also reveals a great deal about the city itself. Glasgow was a hotbed of radical politics in the interwar period, 'the politically most advanced city in Britain', and Spain had a large impact on this highly politicised society.<sup>15</sup> Spain was everywhere in Glasgow. Volunteers collected money on the streets, tens of thousands attended demonstrations and public meetings and news of the war was plastered across every newspaper. Many of the same fault lines that existed in the Spanish Republic existed in Glasgow. The radical political scene in Glasgow, at its peak in the interwar period, predated the rise of the Labour and Communist Parties and allowed space for groups like anarchists and the Independent Labour Party (ILP). As such, Glasgow experienced the internal conflicts on the Republican side, particularly the 1937 suppression of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM) in Barcelona, far more intensely than elsewhere in Britain and with longer lasting consequences.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, many working-class Glasgow Catholics faced a difficult choice between the demands of a pro-Franco church and international solidarity. As such, despite its solid working-class constituency, Glasgow played host to some of the most significant clashes between pro-Franco and pro-Republic partisans. This account therefore also seeks to contribute to the civic history of interwar Glasgow.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This title was bestowed by the Communist Party of Great Britain, and was referred to explicitly in the context of Glasgow's involvement in Spain. See Peter Kerrigan in the *Daily Worker*, 1 May 1939, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> This particular chapter of the Spanish Civil War was made famous by George Orwell's account, see George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1986), pp. 148-169. For recent interpretations, see Antony Beevor, *The Battle For Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*, (London: Phoenix, 2007), pp. 294-306; Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic At War 1936-1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 254-315.

<sup>17</sup> Material dealing with the history of Glasgow in the interwar years, or even the twentieth century, is surprisingly sparse. The most relevant works include William Knox, *James Maxton*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), Irene Maver, *Glasgow*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), S. G. Checkland, *The Upas Tree: Glasgow 1875-1975: A Study in Growth and Contraction*, (Glasgow: University

A wide variety of primary sources have been used to construct this account. I accessed material held in several archives in both England and Scotland.<sup>18</sup> These archives contain detailed information on individual volunteers, the Aid Spain movement in Glasgow and the history of the International Brigade Association. Several contemporary newspapers are referred to throughout, primarily the *Daily Worker*, *Forward*, *Glasgow Herald* and *Glasgow Observer/Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*. Oral history is a key source on individual volunteers and on Glasgow life. Wherever possible this account uses full, unabridged transcripts rather than the more commonly used published versions.<sup>19</sup> Finally, several published memoirs written by Glaswegians either directly or tangentially involved in events are examined.<sup>20</sup> While much of this material has been available to previous writers on Scotland and Spain, I am able to offer a significantly new perspective for two reasons. Firstly, with no personal or ideological ties to the subject, and with training in writing academic history, I am able to use these sources more critically, thoroughly and objectively than previous writers.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, my specific focus on Glasgow has allowed the detailed

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of Glasgow Press, 1976); Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace: Religious tension in modern Scotland*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> International Brigade Archive, Marx Memorial Library (London), Special and Named Printed Collections, National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh), Glasgow City Archives, Mitchell Library (Glasgow).

<sup>19</sup> This is especially relevant for the material contained in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*. The author kindly gave me permission to use his personal transcripts of the interviews, which are roughly fifty percent longer than the published version. The other key oral history source used is Ian MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches: Personal Recollections by Scottish Hunger Marchers of the 1920s and 1930s*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> These include Clifford Hanley, *Dancing in the Streets*, (London: White Lion, 1979), Jack Caplan, *Memories of the Gorbals* (Edinburgh: Pentland, 1991) and Ralph Glasser, *Growing up the Gorbals*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> One example of this is Gray's discussion of those Scots taken prisoner during the war. Gray only quotes volunteers on the state of the captives' morale when they show the Communist Party in a good light. In the section on San Pedro, Gray's discussion focuses instead on the poor conditions. Gray avoids the testimony of Garry McCartney, the senior British volunteer at San Pedro, who attempted to organise Communist-led resistance and boost morale, but faced apathy and outright hostility from his fellow prisoners, who blamed the incompetence of the Communist Party leadership for their plight. See Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 64-65, McCartney in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 252-253 and McCartney report to Political Bureau of the CPGB on the San Pedro Camp, Box C, File 3/1, IBAr, MML.

use of a broader variety of primary material, particularly with regard to oral history and published memoirs.<sup>22</sup>

The first two chapters demonstrate the importance of Glasgow's case to wider debates on Spain. Chapter One examines the Glaswegian volunteers in the International Brigades. It explains the unusually high numbers of Glaswegian volunteers through a close examination of the volunteers' backgrounds, both socioeconomic and personal, demonstrating the importance of the local frame of reference when discussing volunteers. It also argues that this Glasgow background influenced the volunteers' experience of serving in Spain, with specific reference to incidents of dissent and desertion. Chapter Two examines the impact of the Spanish conflict on Glasgow itself. The first two sections examine grassroots Aid Spain movements in Glasgow and the war's effect on Glasgow politics respectively. Both demonstrate that the Spanish Civil War had a deeper and longer-lasting impact on Glasgow than is usually assumed for Britain as a whole. The final section deals with the activities of Pro-Franco groups in Glasgow. It offers a re-evaluation of the effectiveness of these groups in a Glasgow context, while disputing the assumed anti-Republican status of the mainstream media.

The third and final chapter takes a broader historiographical perspective by examining how the relationship between local and national histories has developed in Glasgow and Scotland. Focusing on memorialisation, the arts and media and history writing, this chapter contends that longstanding traditions of local community remembrance and the more recent trend towards history informed by Scottish nationalism have been the key driving forces in preserving the memory of Glasgow volunteers. However, these forces have also led to the simplification and sanitisation of history, limiting their usefulness to wider debates and

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<sup>22</sup> Owing to the lack of referencing in existing work, particularly Gray's *Homage to Caledonia*, it is difficult to know exactly what archival material has been previously considered and in what context.

concealing the importance of Glaswegian and Scottish contributions and perspectives to the wider history of the Spanish Civil War.

**Chapter One: ‘Fae nae hair Te grey hair they answered the call’: Glaswegian  
Volunteers in Spain, 1936-1939**

*‘The title ‘most politically advanced city in Britain’ was never more worthily earned than in Glasgow’s contribution to the British Battalion in Spain’ – Peter Kerrigan.<sup>23</sup>*

**Introduction**

The majority of Glaswegians who volunteered to fight in Spain did so under the auspices of the British Battalion of the XVth International Brigade.<sup>24</sup> Although a few Glaswegians had been present in Spain since the early days of the conflict, the majority began to arrive in early 1937, with recruitment continuing until all volunteers were withdrawn in late 1938. They travelled initially in large groups organised by the Communist Party, leaving Glasgow by bus with mild secrecy, before the *Foreign Enlistment Act* was used to ban British citizens from fighting in Spain. Small groups continued to make the journey after the ban, staging ‘holiday’ trips to France and then trekking over the Pyrenees.

Several broad generalisations about these volunteers can be made. Most had working-class origins and occupations.<sup>25</sup> Over half were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain or joined the party while in Spain.<sup>26</sup> Glaswegian volunteers also seemed to have more

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Kerrigan, ‘Glasgow Men of the International Brigade’, *Daily Worker*, 1 May 1939, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Chapter title quote from John Maley and Willy Maley, *From the Calton to Catalonia*, (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Some exceptions exist, including John Dunlop, who was a trainee accountant. Dunlop in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, p. 117.

<sup>26</sup> Although being a Communist Party member was not necessary to obtain Communist aid in volunteering and travelling to Spain, non-Party applicants were usually interviewed to determine their appropriateness. See Fullarton in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 289-290.

military experience than other British volunteers.<sup>27</sup> There are several potential reasons for this: higher overall enlistment rates in Scotland, because the Territorial Army was an attractive prospect for the many un- or under-employed young men, or simply that those with military backgrounds were more likely to survive Spain and hence appear in sources.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, Glaswegians were highly represented in the leadership structures of the British Battalion. This was likely due to Glasgow's long history as a centre of violent industrial confrontation.<sup>29</sup> For the Communist Party, who organised the Battalion's leadership, a man who could direct a strike was a man who could direct a military unit.<sup>30</sup>

Yet the most striking oddity is their numbers. As many as one in ten of those who served in the British Battalion came from Glasgow, far disproportionate to Glasgow's population.<sup>31</sup> Among Scottish volunteers, who according to Daniel Gray were the most numerous in proportion to population of any country in the world, Glaswegians made up 40-50 percent.<sup>32</sup> Glaswegians were clearly a major driving force in the Scottish volunteering phenomenon, and played a vital role in the British Battalion and the International Brigades in general. Yet

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<sup>27</sup> Half of those interviewed by MacDougall had some form of military experience, well above the ratio estimated by Baxell for the British overall. See MacDougall, 'Introduction' in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From the Spanish Civil War*, p. 5. Baxell estimated that 300 or fewer of all British volunteers had any military experience, around 15 percent of the total. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> For some, the fact that it provided two weeks paid holiday was enough. See Phil Gillan in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From the Spanish Civil War*, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Although this reputation was arguably exaggerated, it was nonetheless widely believed at the time due to the mythical status of Red Clydeside. For discussion of Red Clydeside, with particular regard to its mythology, see Iain McLean, *The Legend of the Red Clyde*, (Edinburgh: Donald, 1983). McLean has been attacked as revisionist, particularly in Sean Damer, 'Review: The Legend of the Red Clyde', *History Workshop*, no. 18 (1984).

<sup>30</sup> Jackson, *Fallen Sparrows*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>31</sup> Glasgow's population at the time was approximately one million. A relatively fluid definition of Glasgow is used here, which includes satellite towns and immediate surrounds. This reflects the shared cultural identity, and importantly the degree to which Glasgow was the regional hub for working class organisation and politics. See Census of Scotland, 1931, Preliminary Report, BPP 1931 (n/a), p. xi.

<sup>32</sup> Gray's claim is somewhat problematic. Aside from the obvious problem of whether Scotland at the time could truly be considered as a 'nation', other quasi-nations at the time had similarly high or higher rates of volunteering, particularly the Jewish population of Palestine. In any case, the fact remains that Scottish (and Glaswegian) rates of volunteering were unusually high. See Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 19, Martin Sugarman, *Against Fascism – Jews who served in the Spanish Civil War*, no creation date, Jewish Virtual Library hosted by the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/spanjews.pdf>>, viewed 22 May 2012, p. 1.

the reasons why so many men and women from Glasgow chose to risk their lives in Spain, as well as many aspects of their experiences while in Spain, have so far remained unexamined by historians. Even explanations of high rates of volunteering among Scots have lacked nuance and explanatory power.

This chapter argues that the unique Glaswegian background of these volunteers led to the high rates of volunteering and influenced volunteers' experiences while there. Two main categories of factors that primed Glaswegians for service in Spain are discussed in the first two sections. The first section is concerned with broader, socio-economic factors that were felt especially keenly in Glasgow and are linked to the decision to volunteer, such as unemployment and the rise of radical political groups. The second section examines the decision to volunteer on a personal level, discussing the influence Glaswegian society and culture had on individuals' decisions to volunteer. The final section hypothesises that local origins could influence the experience of volunteering itself. It examines the apparent tendency of Glaswegians to become involved in controversial incidents, an aspect of volunteering that has been avoided or downplayed by existing accounts. Overall, this chapter seeks to establish that a local perspective not only reveals important variations in the volunteering phenomenon, but can also improve existing explanations by examining their local permutations and impacts.

This chapter is not a narrative account of Glaswegians in Spain. Such an account, albeit not from an exclusively Glaswegian perspective, is provided by Gray. Nor does this chapter discuss the activities of other groups in Spain. The ILP volunteers, particularly the specific case of Glaswegian Bob Smilie, have been adequately dealt with elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> Likewise,

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<sup>33</sup>For the ILP volunteers in general, see Christopher Hall, *'Not Just Orwell': The Independent Labour Party Volunteers and the Spanish Civil War*, (Barcelona: Warren and Pell, 2009). For the Bob Smilie case in particular, see Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 155-166; Tom Buchanan, 'The Death of Bob Smilie, the Spanish Civil War, and the Eclipse of the Independent Labour Party', *Historical Journal* 40, no. 2 (1997), pp. 435-464.

Glasgow Anarchist Ethel MacDonald has received significant attention in recent years.<sup>34</sup> No Glaswegian is known to have volunteered on the Nationalist side in any capacity.<sup>35</sup> Finally, the Scottish Ambulance Unit (SAU) is not discussed here, except with regard to those members who eventually joined the International Brigades.<sup>36</sup> Discussion of these groups and individuals is limited to their relevance to Glasgow politics and fundraising in the second chapter.

### **Paving the Way: The socioeconomic background of Glaswegian volunteers**

A central weakness of many existing accounts that deal with International Brigade volunteers is their broad focus. By concentrating on large-scale, macro trends that affected volunteers and non-volunteers alike, authors often fail to uncover the link between social trends and individual experiences and decisions.<sup>37</sup> Widespread unemployment, for example, has been cited as a major reason why so many young men decided to cast off their ties and go abroad to fight a war. Yet unemployment affected millions in Britain alone, and only a tiny minority volunteered. Moreover, a large proportion of volunteers were employed when they chose to fight in Spain.<sup>38</sup> Although these larger social trends are important – it is no coincidence that these events took place during the Depression – a more convincing account of volunteering requires deeper analysis of the impact and implications of such trends.

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<sup>34</sup> See Dolan, *An Anarchist's Life*; Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 167-176; Angela Jackson, *British Women and the Spanish Civil War*, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 148-153, 228.

<sup>35</sup> This may also be true for Scotland as a whole. Judith Keene's account of English-speaking volunteers on the Nationalist side is the definitive work on the subject, and no Scots, let alone Glaswegians, are mentioned therein. See Judith Keene, *Fighting For Franco*, (London: Leicester University Press, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> See Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*, pp. 181-191 and Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 85-92.

<sup>37</sup> Jackson comments on the difficulty of linking wider social trends with the volunteers. Some new accounts, such as Baxell's, attempt a more grass-roots approach. See Jackson, *Fallen Sparrows*, pp. 47-50, Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 25-46.

<sup>38</sup> Only four of the volunteers MacDougall interviewed were unemployed when they left for Spain. Ian MacDougall, 'Introduction' in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, p. 5.

This section seeks to build on existing macro social analyses by considering their impact on a local level. Ultimately, individuals were not influenced so much by international events and social trends in and of themselves, but by their local interpretations and manifestations. Traditional explanations for volunteering, such as unemployment and economic depression, the importance of the Glasgow radical scene and especially the influence of protest movements like the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM), are examined here in terms of their implications for Glasgow society, and in turn their influence on Glaswegian volunteers.

Unemployment, and the government's methods of dealing with it, had important and sometimes unexpected local consequences. The creation of the Means Test, which stipulated that any household with even one employed family member was ineligible to receive welfare payments, is one such example.<sup>39</sup> This weakened family ties and encouraged independence, as unemployed family members left home in order to keep their payments. It also encouraged cheating. Communities often cooperated in order to thwart government inspections. As Glaswegian Emily Swankie remembered:

Means Test inspectors used to pay unexpected visits to homes where they thought this ploy was being carried out. The unemployed person in the house then had to hide...neighbours would tell one another when they thought the inspectors were on their way.<sup>40</sup>

Glaswegians' responses to unemployment were as important as the fact of unemployment itself. Although the effect of unemployment and poverty in fostering working-class solidarity has been noted previously by scholars discussing International Brigaders, the

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<sup>39</sup> This was along with other cost-cutting measures, such as the reduction of payments and reducing the maximum period for the unemployment benefit to 26 weeks. See John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *The Slump: Britain in the Great Depression*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2010), pp. 79-81.

<sup>40</sup> Emily Swankie in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 227-228

nature of the link is not always fully defined.<sup>41</sup> In Glasgow, agency-enhancing responses to poverty paved the way for broader political activity, while increased individual mobility and independence reduced ties keeping potential volunteers at home. Additionally, the spectre of unemployment played a role even for volunteers who had jobs. Job security became more and more tenuous as unemployment rose, with conditions and wages deteriorating.<sup>42</sup> Giving up an ill-paid, menial job in order to volunteer therefore had less impact on an individual or family's long-term financial security than it might otherwise have done.

Concerns about financial security were also allayed by the Communist Party's promise to take care of volunteers' dependants. While the claim that many volunteers signed up for monetary gain or adventure has been convincingly refuted, the prospect of relative financial security was still an influential factor.<sup>43</sup> As Michael Clark explained to his wife:

They could guarantee would be a better livin' wage for your wife or dependants...you'll be looked efter, you and the kids. Yerrent'll be paid, I know for a fact, and ye'll get more than anybody's getting oot the buroo.<sup>44</sup>

With the prospect of financial security better than or equal to that offered by the British state or private employers, volunteering in Spain did not amount to a great financial risk for

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<sup>41</sup> Alexander, *British Volunteers For Liberty*, pp. 37-38, Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 30, 42-43. The exceptions are those accounts that take a regional focus, including Hopkins, who charts the relationship between unemployment and militant activism in Manchester and South Wales, and Francis with regards to Wales. See Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, pp. 144-147, Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, pp. 190-194, 199-209.

<sup>42</sup> In 1934, over 70 percent of Glaswegians had an annual income of less than £200, and unemployment remained well above the national average throughout the decade, with jobs being particularly unsafe because of structural change in almost every local industry. Those still with a job in heavy industry faced wage cuts of up to twenty percent. See Chris Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Twentieth century Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 47-48, 85; Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> This claim has its origins in Hugh Thomas' general account. See Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977 (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.)), pp. 454-455. Most recent texts are far more sympathetic towards the rank and file volunteers. See Alexander, *British Volunteers For Liberty*, pp. 29-39, Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, pp. 142-143 and Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>44</sup> All quotes in this chapter appear as they were transcribed in the original source. '[sic]' has been largely avoided due to the fundamental uncertainty surrounding spelling in the Glaswegian dialect. Michal Clark in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 167.

employed and unemployed alike.<sup>45</sup> The tough interwar years had taught many the importance of avoiding absolute poverty in Glasgow, but at the same time, even the small level of support offered by the Communist Party could be an acceptable substitute for a wage or the dole. Without such guarantees from the Communist Party, many volunteers would have been unable to go to Spain for fear of leaving their families destitute.

For some volunteers, unemployment shaped their entire adult lives before Spain. Phil Gillan, the first Glaswegian in Spain, claimed he ‘was unemployed for about ten years, from about 1928 or ’29, when I was sixteen, until some months after I came back in 1937.’<sup>46</sup> Another, Michael Clark, was unemployed for ‘about fourteen years’ before rearmament revitalised heavy industry.<sup>47</sup> For the unemployed, turning to radical politics provided an outlet for frustration and anger at the capitalist system. Equally important, political activism provided valuable opportunities to socialise and make friends. For young men and women with little but free time, the social activities organised by the radical left were enticing. The ILP was especially well known for its social activities. Volunteer and ex-ILP member John Lochore remembered ‘a lot of socialising in the ILP... it was really in the roots of the people, very close to them indeed.’<sup>48</sup> Mary Johnston, a Young Communist League (YCL) member, recalled that while her cycling club ‘wasn’t a YCL club’, they still ‘used to sit and have a lot of political discussions.’<sup>49</sup> At least one of her fellow YCL cyclists would later die in Spain.<sup>50</sup>

Radical political groups’ role as a haven for the unemployed is vital to understanding why a large pool of potential Glaswegian volunteers was available. Historians have focused

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<sup>45</sup> The dole had been reduced to a maximum of 15s 3d per week. Wages for industrial workers were usually between £2 and £3 per week. See Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, pp. 25, 79.

<sup>46</sup> Phil Gillan in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 133.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Clark in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 164.

<sup>48</sup> Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 316.

<sup>49</sup> Johnston in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 243.

<sup>50</sup> This was Tommy Flynn, see Lochore and Johnston in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 243, 319.

particularly on the role of the Communist Party in providing this recruitment pool.<sup>51</sup> One Glasgow volunteer estimated that most volunteers 'were Communist Party members, at the very least 75%' and by the end of the war 'over 90% had joined.'<sup>52</sup> In Glasgow, however, it is important to consider the complicated interplay between the various local left-wing groups.

Glasgow during the 1930s played host to the most diverse political scene of any city in Britain. Garry McCartney, a Commissar in Spain, recalled:

Glasgow at the week-end was a forum of meetings. All over the city, street corners, the centre of the city, we had tramp preachers, we had the YCL, we had the Independent Labour Party, we had the Labour Party, we had the Communist Party – it was a whole seabed of discussions, all aiming in one direction: how do we get socialism.<sup>53</sup>

It was not just the streets that played host to such interaction. Institutions like the Socialist Sunday School not only helped educate and radicalise young Glaswegians, but were a melting pot of different parties:

They had all kinds in the Socialist Sunday School. It was a mixture of Labour Party, ILP, Communist Party. The Communists came in latterly but they didn't really take much part in it except that they started to join the demonstrations. You used to have demonstrations at that time intae Glasgow Green. I mean, you didn't just go to Glasgow, you marched into it.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 40-41, Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, pp. 42-57.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from John Dunlop to Victor Kiernan, Dunlop Papers, File 3, Acc. 12087, NLS.

<sup>53</sup> McCartney transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>54</sup> Henry in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 50.

This broad demographic of radicalised Glaswegians greatly strengthened the Communist Party in Glasgow. Although many of the volunteers were members of the Communist Party or Communist Youth when they went to Spain, a sizeable proportion had been members of other parties before deciding on the Communists.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, even those who decided on Communism initially often did so after a balanced consideration of the other parties available. Tom Fern, after hearing socialism explained by the local Socialist Party, ‘came to the conclusion that the Communist Party was the party that was putting up the greatest fight on behalf of the working class’ and joined up.<sup>56</sup> The Communist Party’s proactive approach to campaigning won them a great deal of support amongst this demographic of radical, disenfranchised young men and women, for whom direct action, and hence volunteering, was highly appealing.

The most important element of Communist action was the NUWM. This movement became famous for leading multiple Hunger Marches to London in protest against unemployment and the Means Test.<sup>57</sup> Its Glasgow activities were organised by Harry McShane, a well-respected local Communist who was a ‘living legend of Red Clydeside.’<sup>58</sup> While widely seen as being Communist controlled, the vast majority of members were not members of any particular party.<sup>59</sup> Tom Fern described a typical Glasgow branch:

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<sup>55</sup> See Brown transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS, Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 316.

<sup>56</sup> Fern in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 137.

<sup>57</sup> For a summary of NUWM activities, especially in Scotland, see Ian MacDougall, ‘Introduction’ in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches: Personal Recollections by Scottish Hunger Marchers of the 1920s and 1930s*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), pp. 1-11.

<sup>58</sup> Ralph Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*, p. 39. For McShane’s own account of his work in the NUWM, see Harry McShane in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 16-28. Many other marchers viewed McShane’s leadership very positively, see Gillan, Ferns and Clark in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 135, 141, 162.

<sup>59</sup> Other left-wing parties were rarely represented, as they were suspicious of Communist control over the movement. See McShane and McVicar in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 21, 174.

The Maryhill branch I would say had about 200 members. And ye could say about a dozen o' them at the most were members of the Communist Party. But they were the driving force in it.<sup>60</sup>

The NUWM was a vital source of Glaswegian recruits for the International Brigades.<sup>61</sup> John Lochore claimed that 'from Glasgow and district I can think of numbers going into dozens' of men who volunteered, including 'half dozen of us from the Youth contingent.'<sup>62</sup> The timing of the last major Hunger March was significant; it took place during November 1936, as news of the international volunteers reached Britain amidst heightened media coverage. Lochore remembered that 'even on the Hunger March there were complete discussions about Spain all the time' and that it was on this March that they first heard of early Glaswegian volunteers like Phil Gillan.<sup>63</sup> It is no coincidence that the first major group of volunteers departed Glasgow within weeks of the end of the 1936 Hunger March.<sup>64</sup> Guy Bolton directly connected the winding down of the Hunger Marches with the coming of the Spanish Civil War:

That was the last Hunger March. The Spanish War was on then. And a' the battles then wa' tae get foodstuffs for Spain – clothing, scarves, jerseys and foodstuffs.<sup>65</sup>

Lochore expressed similar sentiments:

The campaign for Spain which developed during our period on the road sapped some energy from the support for the March. The trade unionists, Co-operators,

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<sup>60</sup> Fern in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 138.

<sup>61</sup> This fact has been noted by multiple historians, yet most existing accounts have noted the pattern of NUWM members volunteering without closely examining the relationship. See Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left*, p. 210; Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>62</sup> Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 326.

<sup>63</sup> Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 320.

<sup>64</sup> Clark and Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 167, 326.

<sup>65</sup> Bolton in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 346.

church people who provided us with food, clothing and shelter on our March were the same people who led the campaign for food for Spain. For me it is hard to separate Spain and the March. I see them as one.<sup>66</sup>

While the NUWM was important for International Brigade recruitment across Britain, it was particularly vital in Glasgow. Here, the Hunger Marchers were the pre-eminent protest movement of the time, not least due to higher unemployment. For the 1935 march, the *Glasgow Herald*, a middle-class newspaper with little sympathy for the cause, estimated that 3,000 marchers were sent off by 40,000 supporters as they left Glasgow.<sup>67</sup> Marcher Tom Clarke recalled ‘a tremendous reception again in Glasgow...it showed you also at that time the spirit of the people.’<sup>68</sup> McShane, their leader, boasted that their contingent was ‘away ahead o’ everybody else’ in terms of cohesiveness, organisation and spirit.<sup>69</sup> The Hunger Marches gave great impetus to the Communist Party in Glasgow, cementing their reputation for hard action, and paving the way for cooperation with the local organisations that would eventually provide the backbone of the Aid Spain movement.

Joining a Hunger March was an important step towards volunteering overseas, particularly for Glaswegians. These marches made activism mobile; for the first time fighting the system went beyond simply staying at home. Walking to London was no easier than making the journey to Spain, and equally revolutionary. Hunger Marches also had stark violent overtones. Each marcher carried a heavy stick, purportedly for walking with but with the expectation that it might be used for violent confrontation with police along the way.<sup>70</sup> Glasgow marchers were almost always able to avoid confrontation through negotiation and

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<sup>66</sup> Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 327.

<sup>67</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 25 March 1935, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> Clarke in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 299.

<sup>69</sup> McShane in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 26.

<sup>70</sup> McShane in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 19.

quiet intimidation, empowering them and legitimising violent tactics.<sup>71</sup> Finally, the experience of marching from Glasgow to London, the longest distance any major group of marchers travelled, fostered faith in the Communist Party organisational system. McShane, who led the marches personally, was highly adept at keeping the marchers comfortable, well-fed and healthy, as well as negotiating with hostile officials.<sup>72</sup> While by themselves these factors did not induce participants to volunteer, they did make volunteering seem less radical and more of a natural extension of their previous activities.

### **The Importance of Being Local: Glaswegians and the decision to volunteer.**

Building on the previous discussion of Glasgow society, this section examines how the Glasgow context actively influenced individuals' decision to volunteer. In existing literature on Scottish volunteers, discussion of this 'personal' choice to volunteer is limited to discussion of personal ideological factors.<sup>73</sup> This can partly be seen as a product of the volunteers' own testimony, which makes up the bulk of available sources, yet requires a critical approach to be useful. It is natural that many volunteers focused on large, overarching ideological themes such as defeating fascism when discussing their service, particularly since history has largely judged their cause to be right. Yet ideology alone, despite its obvious importance in motivating volunteers, does not explain volunteering. Conflicts before and since Spain have stoked ideological fervour, and even during the Spanish Civil War only a minority of ideologically committed activists volunteered. It is therefore not sufficient to point to the ideological commitment of the volunteers in order to

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<sup>71</sup> McShane and Reilly in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 19-22, 151.

<sup>72</sup> See Gillan, Ferns and Clark in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 135, 141, 162.

<sup>72</sup> Fern in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 138.

<sup>73</sup> See Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 26-35. It is also noticeable in writing on British volunteers; see Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 25-26.

explain why they volunteered. This section therefore takes a broader approach, examining the importance of social factors such as friendship and peer pressure as well as ideology for volunteering.

Despite such caveats, the ease with which internationalist left-wing ideology could internalise the Spanish Civil War was important in making volunteering attractive in a local sense. Volunteers believed that they were not simply fighting a coup in Spain; they were fighting against unemployment and the manifestation of fascism in Glasgow and Britain. John Lochore felt especially strongly about such connections:

I made a speech at a mass unemployed meeting ... I got quite a severe telling-off afterwards... [as] it was purely a demonstration against the [Unemployment Assistance Board] and here I was talking about recruiting for the International column in Spain. The two issues, for me, were connected.<sup>74</sup>

Gary McCartney provided another popular justification:

It should be remembered that we didn't go to Spain to usher in communism or anything like that. We went to Spain to continue the fight for the freedom of a people to put a cross on a ballot paper.<sup>75</sup>

The most common of all justifications was that by beating fascism in Spain, volunteers could have defeated fascism in Europe and prevented the Second World War.<sup>76</sup> Volunteer

Tom Murray claimed that:

It was the view of everyone who went to Spain to fight for the Republic that if Franco were defeated Mussolini would collapse. And if Mussolini collapsed it

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<sup>74</sup> Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 320.

<sup>75</sup> McCartney transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS, for later repetition see McCartney in *Glasgow Evening Times* 25 February 1981, p. 25 and Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>76</sup> Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 31-35.

would undermine Hitler and probably destroy the dangers of the Second World War.<sup>77</sup>

The quotes used here, and others like them, have been the basis of the analysis of personal motivations for volunteering in the existing literature on Scottish volunteers. This approach is based on selecting prominent, quotable snippets from volunteers' oral testimony – which ex-volunteers were very willing to provide. However, a closer examination of these oral testimonies, as well as other sources, reveals a much more complex picture.

One key group, with similar but distinct ideological motivations, was the Jewish community in Glasgow. Although overlooked, Jewish volunteers formed a significant minority in the International Brigades. Martin Sugarman, a Jewish archivist, claims that their lack of prominence is partly due to the influence of the 'old fashioned Stalinists', the anti-Zionists who controlled the memory of the International Brigades in most countries.<sup>78</sup> Other possible explanations are that many Jewish volunteers later emigrated to Israel, and that many Jewish volunteers served under an alias.<sup>79</sup> Certainly, no Scottish Jews were interviewed by MacDougall for his book, nor do any Jews feature in Gray's account.

Glasgow's tight knit Jewish community was centred on the Gorbals district. Several sources indicate that a significant number of Glasgow Jews volunteered to fight in Spain. Jack Caplan, a Gorbals Jew, recalled that 'many of [his] friends left Glasgow to join the British battalion', although he does not specify their names or religion.<sup>80</sup> Ralph Glasser is more specific. He claimed that his friend, fellow Gorbals Jew Bernard Lipchinsky, played a major

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<sup>77</sup> Tom Murray transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS. For modern repetitions, see Alexander, pp. 257-260.

<sup>78</sup> Sugarman, *Against Fascism*, p. 1. Several British authors acknowledge the large role played by Jews but say little specific, only claiming that racial and religious distinctions were not considered important at the time. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, p. 18 and Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty*, p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> Sugarman mentions these factors but lays smaller emphasis on them. Sugarman, *Against Fascism*, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Caplan, *Memories of the Gorbals*, p. 55.

role in the International Brigades as an internal security officer before becoming disillusioned and deserting.<sup>81</sup> However, the latent anti-Communism of Glasser's account casts doubt on his sensational claims about the nature of the International Brigades.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, no Bernard Lipchinsky appears on the list of Scottish volunteers.<sup>83</sup> Finally, Alec Marcovitch was interviewed by James Hopkins in the 1990s.<sup>84</sup> This interview informs the second part of this chapter, but it does not touch greatly on his Glasgow Jewish background. The Glasgow Jewish community and their volunteers would be a fruitful avenue for further research.

Ideology, however, was not everything. Far more subtle motivations were also important. Glaswegian political parties, in their efforts to provide social functions for their flock, did more than create cadres of young revolutionaries. They created groups of friends. These friendship circles are vital to understanding why individuals chose to volunteer, yet have been ignored or dismissed as 'not a cardinal factor' in previous research.<sup>85</sup> George Murray summed up its significance succinctly:

Well, a lot of my mates were going, you know, and I decided to go. I mean, it was one of the things you wanted to do at the time.<sup>86</sup>

The testimony of Glasgow volunteers makes it clear that volunteering was not a solitary act. Steve Fullarton 'told [his] pal Gauntlet that [he] was going. 'Oh' he said, 'I'll go too'', even

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<sup>81</sup> Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*, pp. 125-129.

<sup>82</sup> Glasser, for instance, claimed that a Welsh volunteer attempted to assassinate Lipchinsky because there were doubts about his loyalty. No known account corroborates this or other claims. See Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>83</sup> It may well have been a pseudonym. Yet, although some Glaswegians were involved in the internal security section of the Brigades, none match the given description of 'Lipchinsky.'

<sup>84</sup> Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, pp. 258-264.

<sup>85</sup> MacDougall, 'Introduction' in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, p. 5. Baxell is a partial exception to this, although he emphasises the importance of shared ideology over local connections. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, p. 46.

<sup>86</sup> George Murray transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS. The Murray family is perhaps the best example of close ties leading to 'clusters' of volunteers, with three siblings volunteering in various roles. See Anne Murray in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, p. 289.

though 'Gauntlet' was not previously politically active.<sup>87</sup> John Lochore remembered 'I had decided that I was going to join the International Brigade and I encouraged Alex Donaldson to do so, too.'<sup>88</sup> Geographic ties also played an important role, with clusters of volunteers coming from tight knit neighbourhoods. Steve Fullarton recalled at least four volunteers from the small network of closes in which he grew up.<sup>89</sup> The impact of such friendships did not have to be immediate. As David Stirrat remembered,

One particular friend of mine was a chap named Tommy Flynn, who had gone to Spain early on and been killed... So I had some emotional involvement in that sense.<sup>90</sup>

In other conflicts the role of friendship and peer pressure in the decision to fight is well documented. Perhaps most famously, during the First World War Kitchener's 'Pal Scheme' encouraged groups of friends to enlist together with the promise that they would be allowed to serve in the same unit.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, by fostering social groups and friendship amongst their membership, the Glasgow Communist Party had inadvertently created the perfect atmosphere for encouraging recruitment for the International Brigades. The prominence of such groups in Glasgow, which were fostered partly due to the necessity of competing with the social functions of the ILP and other parties, provides a vital link in explaining the large number of Glaswegian volunteers.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Fullarton transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>88</sup> Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 320.

<sup>89</sup> A 'close' is the Scottish term for a lane or alleyway, usually providing access to the tenement housing surrounding it. See Fullarton in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>90</sup> Stirrat transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>91</sup> See Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The raising of the new armies, 1914-16*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

<sup>92</sup> Morgan, Cohen and Flinn note that it was only in Glasgow and London that there 'existed the critical mass to sustain a network of social and cultural institutions.' K. Morgan, G. Cohen and A. Flinn, *Communists and British Society, 1920-1991*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007), pp. 7-8.

The inspiration and leadership provided by some individual members of the Glasgow Communist Party is also important. Phil Gillan, the first Glaswegian volunteer and a well known member of the YCL, was wounded in the battle for Madrid and invalided home.<sup>93</sup> Gillan's role as an inspirational figure was magnified by his return home and his subsequent vigorous campaigning for the Spanish Republic. John Lochore remembered Gillan as the 'inspiration for all us others.'<sup>94</sup> Others cited Gillan's speeches as their main reason for volunteering.<sup>95</sup> Communist Party figures such as Peter Kerrigan, later a commissar in Spain, were also important inspirational figures.<sup>96</sup> Combined with the domino effect created by the social groups discussed above, inspiring even a few extra volunteers could have a large impact on recruitment.

The communal nature of volunteering can be seen as intrinsic within the accounts of those who made the journey to Spain, as well as those who ultimately chose to stay home. The under-utilised accounts of those potential volunteers who remained in Glasgow reiterate the importance of friendship and inspirational leadership in the choice to volunteer.<sup>97</sup> Some, such as John Carrol, were simply not deeply integrated into the Glasgow scene and received less pressure:

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<sup>93</sup> Gillan transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>94</sup> Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 320.

<sup>95</sup> See McCartney transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS; Stirrat in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, p. 263.

<sup>96</sup> Dan Burns in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 157.

<sup>97</sup> I was able to find six individual accounts of such 'near-misses' for Glasgow alone, five of which come from MacDougall's oral collection on Hunger Marchers and one from an individual memoir. The reason they have remained obscure is likely because such sources were not explicitly connected to Spain or volunteering, and only a researcher interested in the history of Glasgow itself during the 1930s would be likely to find them. See Brown, McVicar, Davidson, Bolton and Carrol in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From the Hunger Marches*, pp. 61, 179, 253, 346 and 351; Caplan, *Memories of the Gorbals*, pp. 55-56.

I thought about goin' tae Spain masel', I really thought about it. It widna ha' took much, you know. If there had been a boy there that said, 'Right, get on wi' it,' we might ha' been on it.<sup>98</sup>

William McVicar, who joined the RAF just before the Spanish conflict had broken out, was convinced by friends like Michael Clark to volunteer, but ultimately was unable to.<sup>99</sup> Key to his explanation of his eventual decision not to desert the RAF was that the local group of Greenock communists decided that 'they couldn't guarantee that I could get out of the country before the RAF would start lookin' for me.'<sup>100</sup> John Brown had a different reason for resisting the influence of his peers:

My pal went tae Spain, Tommy Hughes. He wanted me tae go along wi' him. But I think it was more ma mother that kept me frae goin', ye know, well, I mean wi' ma father bein' killed in the First War. So I didn't actually volunteer but I got close tae it.<sup>101</sup>

Other 'near-miss' accounts stress the role of the British ban on volunteering in preventing them leaving.<sup>102</sup> All of these justifications rely on a third party, be it parent, the evaluation of one's peers or intervention from the government. These excuses are not always particularly convincing; circumventing the British ban on volunteers, for example, was common practice for most of the conflict. Clearly, volunteering in Spain was tied to an individual's acceptance in left-wing circles, and conversely, not going carried with it the threat of social stigma. Each of these men chose a socially acceptable excuse that relieves

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<sup>98</sup> Carrol lived in a Glasgow satellite town, Blantyre, with a much weaker Communist presence. Carrol in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 351.

<sup>99</sup> McVicar in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 179.

<sup>100</sup> McVicar in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 179.

<sup>101</sup> Brown in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 61

<sup>102</sup> Caplan, *Memories of the Gorbals*, pp. 55-56; Guy Bolton in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 346.

them of agency in the matter, showing again the importance that local connections and friendships had on the decision to volunteer.

### **Controversy, Dissent and Desertion: Aspects of the Glaswegian volunteering experience**

The first two sections have focused on explaining the large numbers of Glaswegian volunteers, but not their experiences in Spain itself. In most previous accounts, differences in the actual experience of volunteering are commonly considered to be non-existent.

MacDougall, for instance, claimed that:

The experiences in Spain of the Scots volunteers were much as those of the other 50 or so nationalities represented in the International Brigades. Within the British contingent itself, the distinctive contribution of the Scots volunteers was their disproportionately high number.<sup>103</sup>

However, I argue that differences, while subtle, did in fact exist. This section examines one particular aspect of service in Spain: dissent and desertion. There are two reasons for this focus. Firstly, the apparent trend that Glaswegians were disproportionately involved in such incidents. This claim is speculative given the limited variety of source material, and the tendency was definitely not universal. However, it appears that coming from Glasgow influenced one's likelihood of clashing with Communist authorities in Spain. This conclusion is supported by the numerous examples of other Glaswegians, who, despite not

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<sup>103</sup> Paper presented to University of Aberdeen Symposium, 'The Scottish Soldier Abroad', Ian MacDougall Papers, File 35, Acc. 10481, NLS.

being volunteers in the International Brigades, publically or privately fell out with the Communists in Spain.<sup>104</sup>

Secondly, in addressing a traditionally downplayed issue, an examination of Glaswegian dissent and desertion in the Spanish Civil War fills a gap in current scholarship. For instance, Gray's chapter dedicated to such issues, 'Far From Perfect? Criticism and Dissent', seeks to defend the reputation of the volunteers.<sup>105</sup> It argues that most volunteers were honest and dedicated anti-Fascist fighters, and that they were 'neither stooges nor fools.'<sup>106</sup> However, the reality of service in the International Brigades is more complex than this. One can acknowledge the failings and internal conflict without impugning volunteers' motives. Moreover, if, as Gray has argued, these men were honest and intelligent, then one must take their dissent all the more seriously. Conversely, even if all dissenters and deserters are condemned as 'a few seemingly incorrigible men' or as having 'failed to grasp the horrors service in Spain would bring', explaining why so many of both types were Glaswegian is still important.<sup>107</sup> Rather than dismissing the existence of widespread dissent, or questioning the dedication of Glaswegian volunteers, this section examines the nature, origins and implications of dissent and desertion to again emphasise the importance of Glaswegian background and identity in Spain.

### **Dissent**

Glaswegians' dissent in Spain manifested itself through major disputes as well as petty incidents. Rank-and-file volunteer Barney Shields, for instance urinated in a commissar's

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<sup>104</sup> See for example David Murray, who in his correspondence went from praising the Communists for the International Brigades, to calling them 'a rotten bunch of Stalinist toerags.' See letters from David Murray to Neuman, 22 January 1937 and David Murray to Dott, 4 August 1937, David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>105</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 191-198.

<sup>106</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 193.

<sup>107</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 197.

boots because he felt that they were ‘non-combatant busybodies’ and that ‘he didn’t need any commissars to tell him why he needed to fight.’<sup>108</sup> More seriously, Alec Marcovitch openly protested the introduction of Soviet-style discipline, censorship and punishment in the British Battalion, and faced heavy censure from the Communist party.<sup>109</sup> Marcovitch, although a party member, was possibly the only British volunteer to have so openly defied Communist control over the International Brigades. It was only in the 1990s that the extent of his protest, and the reaction to it, became available with the opening of Communist archives in Moscow.<sup>110</sup>

Dissent and discord were not limited to the rank and file. Many Glaswegians in leadership positions in the International Brigades fell out with the Communist party during their time in Spain. Battalion Commander Jock Cunningham, one of the most celebrated leaders in the International Brigade, left the party following his recall from Spain amid severe infighting and became a recluse.<sup>111</sup> George Aitken, another influential Glasgow Communist, was recalled with Cunningham, also leaving the party as a result.<sup>112</sup> Wilfred McCartney, originally slated to become the first Battalion Commander, was accidentally shot by fellow Glaswegian Peter Kerrigan while the two were alone in McCartney’s room.<sup>113</sup> Hamish Fraser was a leading Glasgow communist in the interwar period.<sup>114</sup> He was the only Scot to

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<sup>108</sup> Dunlop transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>109</sup> Alec Marcovitch in Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, pp. 260-262.

<sup>110</sup> Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, p. 264.

<sup>111</sup> Cunningham was popularised as by leading Communist party officials as ‘Our Chapayev’, a comparison with the ‘worker whose natural qualities of leadership and military genius made him famous during the civil war in Russia.’ See Harry Pollitt in *Daily Worker*, 15 March 1937, p. 1; Peter Kerrigan in *Daily Worker*, 29 March 1937, p. 1; ‘Report of the Central Committee to the 14<sup>th</sup> National Congress, Communist Party of Great Britain’, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 26, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>112</sup> Gray provides a more detailed account of this incident. It was the only controversy involving Scots that he allows was ‘serious’, see Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>113</sup> This example does not entirely belong on this list, as neither McCartney or Kerrigan ever wavered from the accident story, and although McCartney left Spain he did not leave the Communist Party afterwards. The strange circumstances did however provoke a wide range of conspiracy theories. See Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 49.

<sup>114</sup> See Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 316.

serve at 'Brigade Staff level in the capacity of a SIM officer.'<sup>115</sup> Although he returned to Scotland without incident, the experience left him disillusioned and hastened his resignation from the party as well as his conversion to Roman Catholicism.<sup>116</sup> Bernard Lipchinsky, who purportedly also served with the SIM, had to flee Spain after his loyalty to the Communist Party was called into question.<sup>117</sup> Although many Glaswegian Communists remained loyal, these examples represent a sizeable proportion of the influential Glaswegian Communists who served in Spain.

Glasgow's rich and varied left-wing discourse helps explain some of these cases. For example, despite Alec Marcovitch's Communist Party membership, he was clearly familiar with a much broader spectrum of socialist thinking. His objections to Battalion structure, namely the lack of democratic input and the establishment of a privileged hierarchy, are similar to many of the contemporary anarchist critiques of the Communist system.<sup>118</sup>

Glasgow's streets, steeped in an egalitarian tradition dating back to Burns and beyond and teeming with the vocal interaction of theoretical perspectives, are the most likely place for Marcovitch to have received such an education.<sup>119</sup> His dissent in Spain can be seen as a direct product of his Glasgow upbringing, where actively comparing, critiquing and debating socialism was the norm. A Glaswegian's embrace of the Communist Party was often not out of romanticism or middle-class angst, it was due to hard-headed pragmatism and discussion.

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<sup>115</sup> Letter from Hamish Fraser to Ian MacDougall, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 26, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>116</sup> Fraser later wrote a book defending the Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War, although throughout his life he refrained from impugning individual volunteers. See Hamish Fraser, *The Truth About Spain*, (Oxford: Catholic Social Guild, 1949); Letter from Hamish Fraser to Ian MacDougall, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 26, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>117</sup> See earlier for doubts regarding Glasser's account of Lipchinsky in the International Brigades.

<sup>118</sup> Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, p. 261. For some of the contemporary Anarchist critiques of the totalitarian Soviet state, see Guy Aldred in *Regeneracion*, 3 October, 1936, pp. 1-2.

<sup>119</sup> While Marcovitch had a particular disdain for the ILP and its leaders, he interacted with a broad range of parties who attempted to recruit him. Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, p. 259.

Such factors were even more pertinent for the Glaswegian leadership. Figures like Aitken, Cunningham and Fraser were socialists before the Communist Party even existed.<sup>120</sup> Such a background would make it easier to first critique and then become disillusioned with the role that the Communist Party played in Spain, as these men had not spent their formative years in the cut and dried, ‘party-knows-best’ atmosphere that took hold in the period. While Glaswegians, leaders or not, were no more likely than others to be intelligent or original thinkers – Peter Kerrigan, for instance, was remembered as not having the brains to ‘know anything about anything beyond the Party line’ – they did come from a cultural environment that taught them to use what faculties they had.<sup>121</sup>

The violent, hyper-masculine and confrontational aspects of Glaswegian culture could also create and foster conflict. John Dunlop remembered an episode towards the end of Jock Cunningham’s tenure as Battalion commander, in which he ‘was threatened by Jock Cunningham with his pistol and with the state he was in...it is quite probable he would have done it.’<sup>122</sup> Likewise, Dunlop recalled Barney Shields, mentioned earlier for his choice of urinal, as being ‘like a lot of Glasgow fellows... a fighting man [who] wanted to get in and have a fight on the right side.’<sup>123</sup> While not all Glaswegians fit these stereotypes, such typical Glaswegian ‘characters’ exacerbated the potential for conflict in Spain.

## Desertion

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<sup>120</sup> All of these figures had had experience in activism before the Communist Party was created in 1920. Glasgow’s radical history pre-dated the Communist Party significantly, and the formative radical experience for many of these men would have been ‘Red Clydeside’ in 1919, which contrasts with activists from many other regions, for whom the General Strike of 1926 is often considered formative. See Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 180.

<sup>121</sup> McShane in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches* pp. 23-24.

<sup>122</sup> Letter from John Dunlop to Victor Kiernan, John Dunlop Papers, File 3, Acc 12087, NLS.

<sup>123</sup> Dunlop transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

Like dissent, propensity for desertion can also be linked to volunteers' roots. Many of the high-profile cases of desertion from the British Battalion featured Glaswegian actors.<sup>124</sup> One such prominent case was that of three Glasgow deserters, who claimed to have a petition signed by thirty-four Glaswegian volunteers stating their desire for repatriation.<sup>125</sup> While Gray does not openly disbelieve their account, he quotes two statements made by other British Battalion members claiming that the petition was falsified and that 'the deserters were all yellow' and '[deserted] their comrades in the thick of the fight.'<sup>126</sup> However, these statements should not be regarded as the last word on the topic. If a disgruntled minority did exist, it is unlikely that they would have openly dissented the publication of such statements. Furthermore, the official response from Kerrigan is vague and did not refute many of the deserters' claims.<sup>127</sup> While published interviews in newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald* may have been paid for and should be seen as anti-Republican propaganda, the 'deny everything' responses of the Communists should be seen in a similar light.

It is no coincidence that this case followed the Battalion's baptism of fire at Jarama.<sup>128</sup> From the perspective of the NUWM recruits especially, the shock of the reality of warfare in Spain could not have been greater. Unlike the easy, well-organised Hunger Marches, Spain was difficult and bloody. The faith of many of these volunteers would understandably have

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<sup>124</sup> Due to the incompleteness of available sources, it is impossible to determine whether Glaswegians had a higher overall desertion rate than other Britons – indeed, existing estimates of the overall desertion rate are not particularly accurate. According to Baxell, the total number of desertions was between 250 and 300. See Baxell, *British Volunteers*, p. 137.

<sup>125</sup> This is one of the examples covered by Gray, see *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 24 April 1937, p. 2; 1 May 1937, p. 2; Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>126</sup> Bill Gilmour, quoted in Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>127</sup> *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 8 May 1937, p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> Jarama and the problems volunteers faced are discussed in greater depth below. The first mention of the desertions by the Glasgow press was in the *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 24 April 1937, p. 2, two months after the Battle of Jarama.

been shaken, resulting in increased desertion rates and, if genuine, the extraordinary petition.

Possibly the most infamous deserters of all were Glaswegians Alex Kemp and Pat Glacken. They were charged with desertion with the intent of defecting to the Nationalist forces and sentenced to death, the only time such a sentence was passed in the British Battalion.<sup>129</sup> The penalty was imposed because Kemp and Glacken were ‘prepared to betray the lives of [their] comrades by giving information to the fascists.’<sup>130</sup> In the end, only the perceived ringleader, Kemp, was shot. Glacken was reassigned first as a baker and then to a penal company where he was killed in action.<sup>131</sup> The Communist Party went to some lengths to cover up the incident, claiming that the men died in action, purportedly to ‘save their families the shame of knowing.’<sup>132</sup>

Discontent rose with the harshness of the conditions. Morale, according to rank-and-file volunteer Eddie Brown, was at its lowest when ‘some of the lads that ye knew were a’ passin out wi’ getting killed.’<sup>133</sup> The confused issue of repatriation and terms of service could also sap volunteers’ spirits. At one point ‘the rumour-mongering got so serious’ that a special assembly was called:

We knew that some of them had longingly hoped for the repatriation which was alleged to be on the way...the [assistant commissar] was given the task of making a

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<sup>129</sup> John Dunlop, although he mistakenly claimed they were English, provided a relatively full account. See Dunlop in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 151-152. See also Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 140-141. Baxell notes that two other volunteers were likely executed unofficially.

<sup>130</sup> Bob Cooney in Corkill and Rawnsley (eds.), *The Road to Spain: Anti-fascists at War*, (Dunfermline: Borderline Press, 1986), p. 121.

<sup>131</sup> Baxell, *British Volunteers*, p. 141.

<sup>132</sup> Dunlop transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>133</sup> Brown transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

statement to strengthen the feelings and the morale of those people who had been constantly talking about going home.<sup>134</sup>

Gray claims that such issues caused a spike in the desertion rate amongst Scottish volunteers, although this is hard to substantiate.<sup>135</sup> What can be substantiated is that the ultimate test of Communist authority was being taken prisoner. While not strictly desertion, the experience of being captured can be seen as engendering a similar response from ordinary volunteers. Following the Battle of Calaceite, where many Glaswegian volunteers were captured, their morale and loyalty was severely tested.<sup>136</sup> Public and private accounts of what happened in Nationalist internment camps differ greatly. Glaswegian captive Garry McCartney not only provided oral testimony to MacDougall, but also authored a secret report on their imprisonment for the Communist Party. In his public testimony, McCartney emphasised the unity and calm defiance of the British prisoners, under the leadership of 'the semblance of a Committee in the camp.'<sup>137</sup> His secret report, however, revealed a different picture:

[Non-communists] expressed violent reactions to the Party and Battalion leadership. The Party was held responsible for the general administration of the Battalion and that the Battalion leadership was ineffective. But for this, it was held, no-one would have been taken prisoner.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Tom Murray transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>135</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 193-194.

<sup>136</sup> Of the ten Glaswegian volunteers who were interviewed by MacDougall at some stage, at least three were captured at this battle: Dan Burns, Michael Clark, and Garry McCartney. Some evidence suggests that Glaswegians tended to serve together in small subunits, which may explain why so many were captured at once. See correspondence of Alec Park with Annie Park, especially letters dated 20 February 1938 and 21 February 1938, Box A-12, File Pa, IBAr, MML; McCartney transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>137</sup> McCartney in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 252-253.

<sup>138</sup> McCartney, 'Report to Political Bureau of the CPGB on the San Pedro Camp', Box C, File 3/1, MML, p. 4.

McCartney accused these non-communist elements of colluding with the Nationalists over the degree of defiance that they would show.<sup>139</sup> Even ‘a number of party members took up a bad attitude’ and resented the assumption of authority by McCartney and his committee.<sup>140</sup> Although McCartney names no names, it is reasonable to assume that Glaswegians were amongst those angry at Communist leadership. Aside from being another instance of a Glaswegian at the centre of controversy, McCartney’s report provides a hitherto unexplored source on the experiences of international prisoners in Nationalist Spain.

Discontent with the conditions in Spain and subsequent desertions can also be linked to the NUWM origins of many of the Glasgow volunteers. While it is unknown whether individual deserters were NUWM recruits, the post-Jarama deserters likely were, as the deserters did not claim to be members of a political party and at least one of them was unemployed.<sup>141</sup> The rampant dissatisfaction and disillusionment reported by McCartney amongst the prisoners following Calaceite can be seen in a similar light.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, the fact that most volunteers served alongside close friends from home would have given Glaswegian volunteers trusted confidantes with whom they could discuss topics like desertion without fear of exposure. The same factors that encouraged NUWM Hunger Marchers to volunteer to fight in Spain, such as faith in the Communist Party’s ability to provide relative comfort, support and overall leadership, and the influence of close peer groups, were also factors that caused disillusionment and discontent in Spain.

The unwillingness of Scottish authors like Gray to acknowledge the failings of the Communist Party leadership in Spain conceals the ambiguity surrounding the desertion

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<sup>139</sup> McCartney, ‘Report to Political Bureau of the CPGB on the San Pedro Camp’, Box C, File 3/1, MML, pp. 4-6.

<sup>140</sup> McCartney, ‘Report to Political Bureau of the CPGB on the San Pedro Camp’, Box C, File 3/1, MML, p. 16.

<sup>141</sup> One man was attacked while claiming welfare on his return home, see Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 195.

<sup>142</sup> Calaceite was the first (and last) battle that many later volunteers fought in. See McCartney in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, p. 249.

issue. Gray is candid regarding the difficulties volunteers faced in battle and in daily life, yet his obvious sympathy for the volunteers' hardships does not translate into acknowledging their root causes. When issues such as training, tactics or equipment are mentioned however, there is never any question of assigning responsibility for shortcomings.<sup>143</sup>

However, leadership and organisational failures were rife in Spain. Upon arriving in Spain in early 1937, the first volunteers were given just a few weeks' training.<sup>144</sup> Even later, George Murray remembered receiving 'a month of training – which was more or less useless.'<sup>145</sup> They were then thrown into battle, often without functional equipment. Tom Murray, when asked to explain the massive casualty rate, replied:

Because we hadn't the equipment. We hadn't the spades to dig trenches...we were blasted by shells.<sup>146</sup>

Although many shortages were tied to the arms embargo enforced by the Non-Intervention committee, the supply of Soviet-made munitions did not always alleviate the problems.

John Dunlop remembered the faulty bolts on many Soviet-made rifles:

The simplest thing would have been to get fresh bolts made and throw away the old ones. But instead they sent them to the Spanish Republic. I don't know how many men may have lost their lives or how many Fascist attacks may have been successful because of this.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> For some of Gray's commentary on the volunteers' lives, see Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 47-56, 69-77.

<sup>144</sup> George Watters in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>145</sup> George Murray transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>146</sup> Tom Murray transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>147</sup> It should not be imagined that all Soviet aid was useless – indeed, some volunteers remembered the particular effectiveness of the anti-tank guns issued to the British Battalion. Overall, however, equipment remained in very short supply. See Dunlop transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

Issued with the wrong ammunition for their machine guns in their first major action, they were thrown into the lines in a desperate effort to stop the Nationalist advance at Jarama.<sup>148</sup> The accounts of survivors paint the picture of tactical confusion, lack of support and above all the lack of effective leadership.<sup>149</sup> While the tenacity of the volunteers eventually halted the Nationalists, victory allowed the serious faults of the Communist command to go unscrutinised and uncorrected. While the British Battalion was commonly referred to as ‘shock troops’ thereafter, a more accurate term would be ‘cannon fodder’.<sup>150</sup> Compared to the competent support that Glaswegian volunteers were accustomed to when campaigning with the Communist Party, their disillusionment is understandable.

The examples covered in this section have, for the most part, already been acknowledged in existing history writing. However, isolated and sometimes minor examples of controversy and dissent in the wider literature form a pattern when a geographical filter is used. This section has shown that not only is such a pattern distinguishable, but also that many of the factors that explain the large numbers of Glaswegian volunteers also help explain why Glaswegians were more prone to being involved in controversial activities while in Spain.

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<sup>148</sup> Although Glasgow volunteers certainly participated at Jarama, none of those interviewed by MacDougall took part. Other Scottish accounts have been used to fill in the gap. In this case, see Donald Renton in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, p. 25.

<sup>149</sup> Renton, Tom Clarke and John Londragon in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 25-26, 61-62, 175.

<sup>150</sup> Jackson is particularly eloquent and outspoken on this issue. See Jackson, *Fallen Sparrows*, pp. 102-109.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of local origins of International Brigade volunteers has received minimal attention from nationally-orientated scholars. This chapter has shown that using Britain, or even Scotland, as a frame of reference has obscured many of the complex local variations and cultures which influenced volunteers from a city like Glasgow. Through this lens, Glasgow's extraordinary contribution to the International Brigades can be seen as more than the product of the city's exceptionally dire economic straits. The unique social and cultural climate of Glasgow in the 1930s not only encouraged individuals to become radicalised, but also socialised the phenomenon. The resulting combination of heightened ideological awareness along with social factors such as friendship and peer-pressure proved extremely effective in encouraging Glaswegians to volunteer. These local factors, although perhaps especially pertinent to Glasgow, also suggest analytical tools that could aid broader accounts. It is clear, for example, that not only the numerical strength of the Communist Party in a given region or city is important, but also the nature of its activities there and its competitive relationship with other progressive movements.

This chapter also hypothesises that these local variations did not immediately fade away upon entering Spain, and that one's origins could influence one's experiences in Spain. Until now, it has been assumed that such differences played little or no part on the experience of actually volunteering. Yet, as the evidence presented here suggests, different backgrounds could impact on the experience of volunteering in Spain. In Glasgow's case, being Glaswegian may have made Communists more willing to take stands on personal or ideological principle, and the non-Communists more likely to become disillusioned and demoralised by the harsh realities of war in Spain. So too could the trend for groups of friends from Glasgow to volunteer together empower Glaswegians in Spain to support each other in defecting or dissenting from the Party line. This is only one facet of volunteering;

further research could reveal ways that the backgrounds of Glaswegians and others impacted on the volunteering experience. In turn, such work can help build a more complete and nuanced understanding of the volunteering phenomenon in Britain and elsewhere.

**Chapter Two: 'Bringing the war in Spain down to St. Andrew's Halls': The Glasgow Civil War, 1936-1939**

*'There can be no doubt that there are many in this city – a growing number, in all walks of life and of all political opinions...who feel that mere sympathy is not enough' – Professor Alan M. Boase.*<sup>151</sup>

*'The honest Basques hate the Reds even more than the rest of Spain does. It is just what we Scots would feel, with our blood impregnated with race pride and religion, if the Red riff-raff of Europe and Spain, thickened like a devil's broth by other hordes let loose from our jails and convict establishments, were turned loose amongst us to do their worst by fire, sword, and bombs, plus hidden horrors of Russian origin.'* – Anon.<sup>152</sup>

**Introduction**

As well as influencing the decisions and experiences of the volunteers, so too did the peculiarities of Glasgow life, culture and politics shape the impact of the Spanish Civil War on the Glaswegians who stayed at home.<sup>153</sup> Aside from Glasgow's role as a hub for the widespread solidarity movements, the uniquely varied left-wing political scene in Glasgow closely reflected the tension and internal turmoil that plagued the Spanish Republic. Additionally, the presence of a large Catholic minority and an associated history of sectarianism made Glasgow a key flashpoint for pro- and anti-Republican forces in Britain. This chapter examines the ways that the Spanish Civil War affected life in Glasgow between 1936 and 1939, as well as challenging the assumption that the Spanish Civil War

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<sup>151</sup> Alan M. Boase, letter to *Glasgow Herald*, 11 February 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4, File 7, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>152</sup> Anonymous, letter to *Glasgow Herald*, 31 August 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4, File 7, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>153</sup> Chapter title quote is from an untitled newspaper clipping, 14 April 1938, David Murray Papers, Box 4, File 7, Acc. 7915, National Library of Scotland (NLS).

was without long term implications for British politics and society. As with the first chapter, a Glasgow perspective reveals substantial variation between national level accounts and their local permutations.

This chapter looks at three major ways that the Spanish Civil War affected Glasgow life. The first section examines the pro-Republican solidarity movements that raised funds and awareness for Republican Spain. The second section deals with the impact that the Spanish conflict had on Glasgow politics, with a focus on local party politics and the Glasgow Corporation. Finally, the third section looks at the activities of the various pro-Franco groups in Glasgow, and provides a re-evaluation of their role and effectiveness.

Although Glasgow was acknowledged at the time as a key centre of pro-Republican activity in Britain, the scarcity of relevant sources has led to Glasgow's relative obscurity in existing accounts. Most records of key organisations such as unions, Co-Operative societies or local Aid Spain committees have been lost.<sup>154</sup> Major, middle-class newspapers such as the *Glasgow Herald* limited their reporting to major events. Although party newspapers like the Communist *Daily Worker* do provide more detailed accounts of Aid Spain activities in Glasgow, initiatives from other parties were often ignored. Moreover, copies of the ILP *New Leader* are missing for the years 1933-1940, although scattered clippings survive in personal collections.<sup>155</sup> Accordingly, while a relatively complete picture of the movement's broader impact and nature can be arrived at, important details remain obscure.

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<sup>154</sup> Iain MacDougall speculated to me that many such institutions in Scotland did not appreciate the future historical value of such documents and routinely destroyed them after a relatively short period of time. Interview with Iain MacDougall, Edinburgh, 30 August 2011.

<sup>155</sup> Collections missing these years include the National Library of Scotland and the Library of Congress. While according to footnotes in secondary sources these issues do exist somewhere, it proved impossible to find in the time available. One reason for their absence may be the sharp decline of the ILP in the period resulting in reduced efforts to preserve their archives.

### **Funds, Flags and Fish 'n Chips: Glasgow's Aid Spain movements**

The Aid Spain movements, in Britain and across the world, are a defining feature of the Spanish Civil War. Along with the volunteers fighting in Spain, they represent the most important way that the progressive world expressed solidarity and support for the Spanish Republic. The British movements and their domestic impact are the subject of several studies, notably those of Jim Fyrth and Tom Buchanan.<sup>156</sup> However, as these accounts do not deal with Glaswegian Aid Spain movements in any detail, this section outlines some of their fundamental features. Determining what activities these various pro-Republican campaigns involved, who took part in them and how successful they were in providing support for Spain is vital for understanding the Spanish Civil War's impact on Glasgow. Above all, this section shows how much Spain mattered to Glaswegians, and whether their extraordinary contribution of ten per cent of British volunteers was also matched on the 'home' front.

The first organised fundraising activities in Glasgow were collections taken at meetings of sympathetic organisations such as trade unions. The Glasgow District Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) is one of few Glasgow unions to have preserved their records from the period.<sup>157</sup> Within a month of the war's outbreak, this body resolved 'that the Chairman make an appeal for financial assistance on behalf of the Spanish Workers.'<sup>158</sup> Responses from Glasgow AEU branches came quickly, sending both cash and demands for further action. One branch sent back a reply within days:

The sum of £1:17:3d. was collected on behalf of the Spanish Workers. On a Motion being submitted it was unanimously agreed – 'To request D.C. [District Committee]

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<sup>156</sup> Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*; Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement*.

<sup>157</sup> AEU Glasgow District Committee Minutes, File TD1051, Glasgow City Archives (GCA), Mitchell Library (ML).

<sup>158</sup> AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting, 12 August 1936, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

to issue collecting cards to Shop Stewards and make an appeal to Branches for grants from Local Purposes Fund to assist our Spanish Comrades.<sup>159</sup>

By October, AEU branches had collected over a hundred pounds for their ‘Spanish Workers’ Fund.’<sup>160</sup> This total, by itself substantial, does not include donations made by branches to other funds – a notable enough trend that the Committee specifically condemned the practice.<sup>161</sup> Glasgow AEU branches raised an additional £377 by the end of the conflict.<sup>162</sup>

Most other unions would have had similar fundraising schemes in place, whether internal or for funds organised by larger bodies.<sup>163</sup> One useful comparison is the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC), who gave £181, approximately ten percent of its annual budget, to the Spanish Workers’ Fund in 1937.<sup>164</sup> Glasgow Co-Operative societies were also a major source of donations. While information on individual branch donations is mostly unavailable, Scottish Co-Operative societies had collectively promised £1,500 for Spanish Relief by early 1937.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting, 19 August 1936, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

<sup>160</sup> AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting 14 October 1936, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

<sup>161</sup> Although not specified, such donations probably went to political party funds, depending on the political loyalties of the branches’ members. AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting 14 October 1936, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

<sup>162</sup> AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting 1 March 1939, File TD1051, GCA, ML. Calculating present value is difficult. On a retail inflation measure, £377 would be worth approximately £20,000 in 2010. However, as Fyrth notes, a better measure should take into account relative wages and purchasing power, which brings the present value of £377 to approximately £58,000, a multiplier of approximately 150. See Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*, pp. 14-15, calculations made using *Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1245 to Present*, created 2006/updated 2011, Application hosted by MeasuringWorth, <<http://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/#>>, viewed 22 May 2012. A similar tool hosted by the National Archives was initially used, but proved to be less up to date and provided significantly more limited data.

<sup>163</sup> The Communist *Daily Worker* published the (generally modest) donations of multiple Glasgow unions such as the Corporation Transport Section, Glasgow Transport and General Workers Union, Glasgow Railwaymen and Shop Assistants Unions and Glasgow Operative Plasterers in 1936 alone. See *Daily Worker*, 10 August 1936, p. 5; 17 August 1936, p. 5; 4 September 1936, p. 3; 22 September 1936, p. 5.

<sup>164</sup> STUC Report 1937, Box b/4, File q/8, International Brigade Archive (IBAr), Marx Memorial Library (MML), pp. 172-173.

<sup>165</sup> Unfortunately no accurate breakdown of this sum by region is available. *Glasgow Herald*, 14 September, 1936, p. 6; 20 February 1937, p. 11.

Union and Co-operative members were also mainstays of other fundraising and awareness raising methods. The first two major demonstrations dedicated solely to the Spanish issue in August and September 1936, with over eight thousand and ten thousand marchers respectively, were organised by the Glasgow Trades Council.<sup>166</sup> Unions such as the AEU organised contingents of marchers.<sup>167</sup> Political parties were also vital in providing speakers, support and numbers. Although organised by the Glasgow Trades Council, the August 1936 demonstration featured ILP, Socialist, Communist and Labour Party speakers.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Spanish issue became entwined with all other working class causes.<sup>169</sup> The *Daily Worker* reported that at a separate Glasgow rally in early August 1936, 'all references for support to the struggling Spanish workers... were greeted with enthusiasm.'<sup>170</sup> By the 1937 May Day celebrations, the primacy of the Spanish cause for the Glasgow labour movement had been cemented. In rallies featuring tens of thousands of workers, the *Daily Worker* claimed that the 'banners most prominent were those dedicated to the comrades of the International Brigades.'<sup>171</sup> However, despite the publicity, such demonstrations were unsuccessful in raising funds.<sup>172</sup> Closely tied to the demonstrations were public meetings. These meetings were usually organised by local political party branches and often featured a prominent speaker. The *Daily Worker* provided broad coverage of such events held by the Communist Party in Glasgow. In December 1936 alone, meetings were addressed by Communist luminaries like

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<sup>166</sup> By way of comparison, the 23 August 1936 march in London to see off the British Medical Unit to Spain had 10,000 marchers, *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1936, p. 6, Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*, p. 43.

<sup>167</sup> AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting, 2 September 1936 File TD1051, GCA, ML.

<sup>168</sup> *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1936, p. 6.

<sup>169</sup> Lochore in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 327

<sup>170</sup> *Daily Worker*, 4 August 1936, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Ian Wood claimed that this May Day demonstration was the largest since 1926. *Daily Worker*, 3 May 1937, p. 5; Ian Wood, 'Scotland and the Spanish Civil War', p. 16.

<sup>172</sup> One typical example is the August 1936 rally, with less than £9 collected from eight thousand marchers. *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1936, p. 6. An example of these rallies featuring in the mainstream press can be found in *Glasgow Herald*, 21 September 1936, p. 8.

Peter Kerrigan, William Gallacher, Finlay Hart and George Middleton.<sup>173</sup> Such meetings were often far more effective than demonstrations at raising funds, despite attracting fewer attendees.<sup>174</sup> The indoor venues and smaller crowds amplified speakers' effectiveness, and the more intimate surroundings doubtless made donating harder to avoid. While usually hosted by a single party, some meetings featured multiple speakers from different groups, such as a successful January 1937 meeting in Knightswood which raised sixty-one pounds.<sup>175</sup>

Another effective fundraising tool was the 'flag day.'<sup>176</sup> On such days, organisers received permission from the Glasgow Corporation to collect donations in the streets and door-to-door. Organised and staffed by volunteers, such events raised relatively large amounts of money. The first such event in Glasgow, organised by the ILP in late August 1936, raised nearly £260 despite a boycott from the Communist Party.<sup>177</sup> Flag days were used by a wide range of pro-Republic groups, ranging from political parties like the ILP, individual trade unions, and by the later stages of the war, dedicated Aid Spain committees.<sup>178</sup> Use of the format peaked in mid-1938, where within five weeks three separate Aid Spain organisations held flag days.<sup>179</sup> Although the concept was successful, permission from the Glasgow

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<sup>173</sup> *Daily Worker*, 7 December 1936, p. 3; 26 December 1936, p. 1; 29 December 1936, p. 1.

<sup>174</sup> Each of these meetings raised more than the August mass demonstration. See *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1936, p. 6; 7 December 1936, p. 3; 26 December 1936, p. 1; 29 December 1936, p. 1.

<sup>175</sup> *Daily Worker*, 13 January 1937, p. 6.

<sup>176</sup> Flag days were so-named because of the flags or badges given to donors to mark their support of the charity in question.

<sup>177</sup> The Communist Party objected to the ILP's insistence on sending the funds directly to its political allies in Spain. *Daily Worker*, 1 September 1936, p. 3.

<sup>178</sup> For an example of a union-organised flag day, see Possilpark Tramway Union, *Glasgow Herald*, 2 September 1936, p. 12. For a flag day organised by a committee, see South Side Medical Aid Committee, AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting, 18 May 1938, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

<sup>179</sup> Spanish Medical Aid, Dependents' Aid, and South Side Medical Aid Committees on May 28<sup>th</sup>, June 11<sup>th</sup> and July 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively. Overall, at least ten large-scale flag days were held in Glasgow during the Spanish Civil War. See AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting, 18 May 1938, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

Corporation to hold such events was never guaranteed, especially in the early stages of the conflict.<sup>180</sup>

While many individual Aid Spain committees were founded throughout Glasgow, it was not until 1938 that a Glasgow-wide organising group was established.<sup>181</sup> A conference of all interested parties was held on 30 January 1938 to establish the Glasgow and District Joint Committee for Spanish Relief.<sup>182</sup> Glasgow was late in establishing such a committee, perhaps because of the focus on working-class fundraising in Glasgow compared to the middle-class nature of such dedicated organisational committees elsewhere.<sup>183</sup> The committee nonetheless swung into action, publishing a statement several days later:

Glasgow must play its part. A joint committee for that city and district, with representatives of over seventy organisations, is now in existence. Our motto is: 'Help Spain Now.' In the name of humanity we urge every man and woman in Glasgow who has shuddered at the accounts of the bombing of Barcelona to come to the help of innocent sufferers in Spain.<sup>184</sup>

The activities of such dedicated organisations, although clearly important for the Aid Spain movement, remain mysterious. However, a broad appreciation of their impact can be arrived at. Their work, made respectable by the involvement of prominent individuals like the Duchess of Atholl, attracted a wealthier section of society than many pre-existing organisations. Previously, only the Scottish Ambulance Unit (SAU) could attract such

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<sup>180</sup> See initial reaction to Possilpark Tramway Workers' request for fundraising permission, *Glasgow Herald*, 3 February 1937, p. 14.

<sup>181</sup> Fyrth estimated that 'there were more than twelve separate committees' in Glasgow. See Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*, p. 203.

<sup>182</sup> AEU Glasgow District Committee Meetings, 19 January 1938 and 23 February 1938, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

<sup>183</sup> Mates claims that in England, most such committees were middle class, and run on a humanitarian basis, not political. See Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left*, pp. 179-207.

<sup>184</sup> 'Aid Spain Now', statement published in *Glasgow Herald*, 3 February 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4, File 7, Acc 7915, NLS.

donors, such as at a concert hosted by the Lord Provost of Glasgow at the National Academy of Music in February 1937.<sup>185</sup> The scale of fundraising activities also increased; a Gala day organised by the Joint Committee on 26 August 1938, attracted 20-30,000 attendees.<sup>186</sup> Aside from attracting a broader range of benefactors, such activities also legitimised the actions of working class groups attempting to fundraise for Spain.<sup>187</sup>

Glasgow's contribution to the Aid Spain effort cannot be measured by money alone. Many campaigns focused on collecting food, clothing and medicine. Some, like several 'foodship' schemes, were large-scale, heavily publicised and successful.<sup>188</sup> Less successful were concepts such as 'Voluntary Industrial Aid For Spain', backed by the AEU, which attempted to refit motorcycles and trucks for use in Spain.<sup>189</sup> This particular scheme failed to gather momentum; one Glasgow AEU branch bitterly bemoaned the 'lack of support' they received.<sup>190</sup> ILP member David Murray was perhaps the most prolific and creative proponent of alternative campaigns. Murray proposed appealingly bizarre schemes such as sending Scottish herring to Spain, so that 'loyal Spaniards could enjoy Scottish fish and chips.'<sup>191</sup> Murray also advocated sending direct aid to individuals and families through a variety of postal schemes, including one inventive proposal to overload the British postal system with parcels on a set date, thereby forcing the British Government to break its own

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<sup>185</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 9 February 1937, p. 9.

<sup>186</sup> 'News From the Committees', n.d., clipping in Tom Murray Papers, Box 2, File 1, Acc. 9083, NLS.

<sup>187</sup> The work of Sir Daniel Stevenson was a key factor in the decision of the Corporation to overturn a fundraising ban on tramway workers. See *Glasgow Herald*, 3 February 1937, p. 14; 10 February 1937, p. 10.

<sup>188</sup> Such schemes attempted to raise money and collect goods in order to charter a boat to deliver foodstuffs to Spain. One example is the Youth Foodship Committee, run largely by the Communist Youth League, which collected significant amounts of both food and cash in Glasgow. A Scottish Foodship organised by the STUC, with at least £1300 out of £3500 donations coming from Glasgow, was sent in October 1938. See *Daily Worker*, 13 January 1937, p. 6; STUC Report 1939, Box b/4, File q/10, IBAr, MML, p. 76.

<sup>189</sup> AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting, 19 May 1937, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

<sup>190</sup> Submission of Parkhead 5<sup>th</sup> Branch to AEU Glasgow District Committee Meeting, 27 April 1938, File TD1051, GCA, ML.

<sup>191</sup> The Scottishness of the chips in question was established through the Scottish origins of many of Spain's potato plants. Media Release: 'Fish and Chips for Spain', 5 February 1938, David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

blockade.<sup>192</sup> Although many of Murray's schemes came to nothing, he remained active in supporting groups and individuals in Spain through informal means, frequently sending money directly to his friends in Spain.<sup>193</sup>

Despite the plethora of fundraising activity in Glasgow, the overall financial contribution of Glaswegians to the Aid Spain movement was proportionally quite small. The Duchess of Atholl, chair of the National Joint Committee, estimated that in 1936-38, £538,717 was raised in Britain with a further £100,000 contributed in kind.<sup>194</sup> Extrapolating from the hard figures quoted in the sources used here, at least £11,000 of this total came from Glasgow. As the available sources are significantly lacking, particularly the lack of material on funding from individual unions and non-Communist political parties, this figure should be revised upwards towards £15,000. Applying the nation-wide ratio quoted above, one pound in donated goods for every five pounds in cash should also be added. Accordingly, a fair yet conservative estimate of Glasgow's contribution to Spanish Relief would be in the range of £15-20,000. This figure is considerable, yet it falls well short of the extraordinary Glaswegian contribution of one-tenth of British volunteers.<sup>195</sup>

By themselves, however, such numbers are a poor reflection of Glasgow's commitment to the Aid Spain movement. Glasgow had not yet recovered from the extended slump of the interwar years, which started earlier and lasted longer than in the south of Britain.

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<sup>192</sup> Murray credits two of his unnamed younger colleagues for this particular idea. Such schemes became necessary after events made it difficult for the ILP to support outlawed sister parties like the POUM directly. Media Release, 14 August 1938, David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>193</sup> Murray, perhaps uniquely amongst Scottish radicals, had spent some time in Spain before the war and had cultivated a wide range of contacts there. See Murray Spanish Correspondence, especially between Murray and Neumann, David Murray Papers, Box. 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>194</sup> 'Spanish Relief in Great Britain 1936-1938: Report', Tom Murray Papers, Box 2 File 1, Acc. 9083 NLS, p. 2. This estimate, which does not include the final months of the war or some funds controlled by political parties, is certainly an underestimate. Fyrth quotes one estimate which put total funds raised in Britain at around £2 million. See Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>195</sup> £20,000, taking into account relative wages as discussed earlier, would be worth just over three million pounds in 2010.

Unemployment remained high, and even employed families and individuals lived with extremely small margins between themselves and destitution. For many of those dedicated to aiding the Spanish Republic, each small donation meant a corresponding sacrifice. One Glaswegian worker who donated several shillings wrote that this small amount represented his cigarettes for the week, which he was forgoing for the sake of the Spanish workers.<sup>196</sup> High unemployment also undermined the strength of institutions such as the unions, who faced shrinking membership and increasing financial pressure in the period.<sup>197</sup> That many Glaswegians managed to make even the smallest contribution from their meagre incomes speaks volumes for their commitment to Spain.

Many Glasgow Aid Spain movements were also limited by their inability to attract funding from well-off donors.<sup>198</sup> A fascinating source on the nature of the Aid Spain movement in Britain is the nation-wide *Daily Worker* ambulance fund started in November 1936, which raised £1,700 within two weeks.<sup>199</sup> Over several issues in December, the *Daily Worker* publically acknowledged the amount and source of each donation. Analysing these donations reveals that the fund's success was driven by individual donations of around twenty or even fifty pounds, presumably from wealthy sympathisers. None of these donations came from Glasgow. Although many Glaswegians did donate to the fund, their contributions were small. Only the proceeds of collections taken at several public meetings run by the Communist Party in Glasgow provided any donations over one pound, resulting in a lacklustre overall contribution.<sup>200</sup> These figures support the claim that Glasgow Aid

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<sup>196</sup> *Daily Worker*, 5 December 1936, p. 5.

<sup>197</sup> Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p. 296.

<sup>198</sup> Labour figure Patrick Dollan complained that the only significant contribution from wealthy Glaswegians was the funding of the Scottish Ambulance Unit. See P. Dollan, quoted in Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 108.

<sup>199</sup> *Daily Worker*, 24 November 1936, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>200</sup> See *Daily Worker* 7 December, 1936. p. 3; 8 December 1936, p. 3; 9 December 1936, p3; 10 December 1936. p. 10.

Spain movements attracted larger numbers of relatively poor working-class participants, resulting in greater social and political, but less financial, impact.

Spain was important to Glasgow in more ways than just fundraising. Politicised Glaswegians were given a grand cause to believe in and work for. Never before, and perhaps not again until the Vietnam War, had progressive movements campaigned so actively on a foreign issue.<sup>201</sup> Spain also affected the apolitical. The frequent demonstrations, flag days and public meetings of the pro-Republican movements took place in the very heart of Glasgow. They occupied the commercial and cultural centres of the city, filling locations like Glasgow Green, George Square and the City Hall. Even the 'periods between weekly demonstrations [were] filled with mass canvassing, street meetings and factory gate meetings' and 'slogans were whitewashed in every possible spot.'<sup>202</sup> Combined with the constant media coverage – the Spanish Civil War was consistently the most written about international issue in the *Glasgow Herald* from 1936-38 – it was near impossible for Glaswegians to remain unaware of the Republic's plight in Spain.<sup>203</sup>

Spain's importance in Glasgow is also reflected by the sustained commitment to campaigning and fundraising made by activists. The Aid Spain movements could not be sustained by organising committees alone. Holding events like flag days, door-to-door collections and especially demonstrations required an army of dedicated volunteers to succeed. That many Glaswegians continued to give up their time and money over a period of nearly three years speaks for itself. Nor did the importance of Spain fade quickly after the conflict's conclusion. Janey Buchan, future MEP for Glasgow, remembered decades later

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<sup>201</sup> Previous major campaigns and actions were entirely domestic. Red Clydeside, for instance, was sparked by housing and rent concerns. See Sean Damer, 'Housing, Class and State: Glasgow 1885-1919' in Joseph Melling (ed) *Housing, Social Policy, and the State* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 73-112; McLean, *Legend of the Red Clyde*. See also Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, p. 148.

<sup>202</sup> *Daily Worker*, 21 August 1936, p. 1; 19 August 1936, p. 5.

<sup>203</sup> Even in 1939, Spain was out-reported only by Germany and the Second World War. See *Glasgow Herald Index (Vols. 1936-1939)*.

‘selling flags as a nine-year-old for one of the many Aid Spain Groups’ as a key moment in her politicisation, as it was with many future activists.<sup>204</sup> Through its domination of public space and the media, and its role in shaping the political lives of thousands, the Spanish Civil War had an immediate and lasting effect on Glasgow life.

### **Unity and Division: Glasgow politics and the Spanish Civil War**

While the influence of the Spanish Civil War on fostering grassroots Aid Spain movements in Britain has been well documented, it is generally thought that the conflict had little impact on domestic politics.<sup>205</sup> This generalisation does not hold true for Glasgow. The complicated political arrangements in Glasgow, especially the continued representation of the ILP on local and national levels, made the situation uniquely susceptible to influence from events in Spain.<sup>206</sup> This section looks at how events in Spain affected the political status quo, and argues that not only did Spain produce winners and losers in Glasgow politics, but that these events helped shape the post-war structure of the local political system. This section focuses on intra-left wing politics, with the clash between progressive and conservative elements addressed in the following section.

The early days of the Spanish Civil War were characterised by attempts, especially by the Communist Party, at fostering left-wing unity.<sup>207</sup> Early mass demonstrations usually saw a united political platform featuring the major left-wing groups in Glasgow, frequently

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<sup>204</sup> Janey Buchan, quoted in untitled newspaper clipping, n.d., John Dunlop Papers, File 5, Acc. 12087, NLS.

<sup>205</sup> Fyrth is the exception to this rule, but his argument focused on national-level politics, and is also no longer widely accepted by historians. See Jim Fyrth, ‘The Aid Spain Movement in Britain’, pp. 160-161; Buchanan, ‘Britain’s Popular Front?’, pp. 60-72; Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left*, pp. 209-226.

<sup>206</sup> Buchanan’s account mentions the Glasgow political situation specifically, but mostly in relation to the impact of political Catholicism. His position that the political status quo survived because of the lack of an alternative to Labour for Catholic voters ignores the shift in political power within the labour movement, which is the focus here. See Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement*, p 186.

<sup>207</sup> Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*, pp. 209-210.

including the Labour Party.<sup>208</sup> Although unity prospects dimmed following the Labour Party conference of October 1936, which formally adopted Non-Intervention, in practice this had few consequences for the Aid Spain movement in Glasgow.<sup>209</sup> Labour had little grassroots presence in Glasgow.<sup>210</sup> In any case, Glasgow Labour remained supportive of the Spanish Republic and local Aid Spain movements, even forcing the resignation of one Labour Magistrate who publically supported Franco and attempted to hinder fundraising activities. The local Labour paper, *Forward*, commented that 'in such circumstances resignation was possibly the best way out...Labour in Glasgow is definitely 100 per cent. on the side of the Spanish Government.'<sup>211</sup> The Glasgow Labour Party supported the Republic as much as it could within the confines of National Labour policy.

The ILP was the other major left-wing electoral force in Glasgow. The ILP had previously been a powerful left-wing faction of the Labour Party, but disaffiliated in 1932 led by James Maxton. Its national standing shrunk rapidly, and by 1936 their representation was limited to Glasgow. Ideologically, the ILP was pacifist, anti-Stalinist and revolutionary. Its support of armed conflict in Spain was contingent on its revolutionary nature, rather than merely supporting the Spanish Republic.<sup>212</sup> Informally, the ILP and the Communists co-operated in organising early demonstrations and public meetings, and presented a united front on the problems caused by the Catholic Church in key working-class neighbourhoods.<sup>213</sup> It was common for ILP members to support Communist Party funds, particularly those supporting

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<sup>208</sup> *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1936, p. 6.

<sup>209</sup> For a full account on Labour's early debates on Non-Intervention, see Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 37-72.

<sup>210</sup> I. Hutchinson, *Scottish Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) pp. 62-66.

<sup>211</sup> *Forward*, 13 March 1937, p. 1.

<sup>212</sup> For ILP policy, especially as it related to Spain, see Knox, *James Maxton*, pp. 118-133.

<sup>213</sup> For instances of ILP and Communist cooperation, see *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1936, p. 6; 13 January 1937, p. 6. With regard to ILP and Communist cooperation on the Catholic issue, see *Daily Worker* 19 August 1936, p. 5; ILP propaganda from John McGovern, *Why Bishops Back Franco*, (London: Independent Labour Party, 1936); Communist support of this propaganda, *Daily Worker*, 22 December 1936, p. 1. The Labour Party also aided such campaigns, see 'Catholics and the Civil War in Spain', November 1936, Box 13, File f/10, IBAr, MML.

the International Brigades.<sup>214</sup> This was despite the separate funding arrangements organised by the ILP with the POUM in Barcelona, with whom a contingent of ILP volunteers were serving.<sup>215</sup> Despite having no formal alliance with the Communist Party, friction between the two groups was minimal, especially compared with previous disagreements surrounding earlier campaigns like the Hunger Marches.<sup>216</sup>

Although a semblance of unity had been forged, the ILP's contradictory attempts to pursue an independent anti-Communist policy in Spain, while simultaneously seeking a domestic alliance with the Communist Party, put the ILP in a difficult situation.<sup>217</sup> The events surrounding an alleged anti-Government uprising in Barcelona by the POUM and others in May 1937 brought this issue to the forefront.<sup>218</sup> The Communist version of events, in which Anarchist and Trotskyist elements in Barcelona staged an uprising in support of Franco, largely held sway in Britain, resulting in minimal impact on the political arrangements supporting the Aid Spain movement.<sup>219</sup> This was not the case in Glasgow, however, where ties with the POUM and other Anarchist groups in Barcelona were strong.<sup>220</sup> The ILP and Anarchists were well placed to receive very different accounts of events, namely that the Communist Party were forcefully suppressing rival political groups in order to destroy the workers' revolution in Barcelona.<sup>221</sup> Although the ILP hesitated at abandoning the common front on Spain, the relentless attacks on them and their allies in the Communist press forced

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<sup>214</sup> See testimonials of ILP members in *Daily Worker*, 5 December 1936, pp. 5-6; David Murray Correspondence with Dott, David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>215</sup> See Hall, 'Not just Orwell', pp. 1-10.

<sup>216</sup> McShane in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>217</sup> Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 77.

<sup>218</sup> For a relatively pro-Anarchist and POUM perspective on these events, see Ronald Fraser, 'The popular experience of war and revolution 1936-9' in Paul Preston (ed.), *Revolution and War in Spain 1931-1939*, (New York, Methuen, 1984), pp. 225-239.

<sup>219</sup> Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>220</sup> Aside from the ILP connections, this was largely due to the presence of Guy Aldred, a notorious figure in left-wing politics in Glasgow. Revolutionary, radical and supremely critical of every British political party, he nonetheless commanded respect for his staunch beliefs and integrity. See Guy Aldred, *No Traitor's Gait! The autobiography of Guy A. Aldred*, (Glasgow, 1955-1959).

<sup>221</sup> Angela Jackson claims that Glasgow may well have been the first city outside of Spain to hear the alternate version of events, thanks to Ethel MacDonald. See Jackson, *British Women and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 151.

their hand.<sup>222</sup> The infighting of the Spanish Republicans led to a heated propaganda war in Glasgow.

Although sporadic defences of the ILP position appeared from mid-1937, clashes began in earnest following the return from Spain of ILP MP John McGovern.<sup>223</sup> The publication of his pamphlet, *Terror in Spain*, was sensational.<sup>224</sup> For the first time, a senior left-wing figure publically criticised the Communist Party's role in Spain. He claimed that Stalinism had taken root in Spain, ushering in censorship, secret police and the suppression of other radical groups.<sup>225</sup> Unfortunately for the ILP, this was seized upon by the right-wing press as confirmation of the Republic's inherent flaws, justifying their consistently neutral or pro-Franco stances.<sup>226</sup> This in turn was used by the Communist Party to portray the ILP as aiding reactionary forces in destroying the Spanish Republic.<sup>227</sup> While the pamphlet was intended to expose the betrayal of what they saw as a once-pure revolution, the ILP's complex message was quickly and unfavourably reinterpreted by left and right alike.

As the home of McGovern and the ILP, Glasgow was already at the centre of the ensuing clash, but the emergence of the Bob Smilie case heightened emotions further. Smilie, a prominent ILP youth member who had volunteered in the POUM militia, died in Communist custody in Spain in mysterious circumstances. This was seized upon by Glasgow anarchist Ethel MacDonald, who claimed Smilie had been murdered because of

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<sup>222</sup> Headlines such as 'Is the ILP For Winning The War Or Aiding Franco?' began to appear from late May 1937. See *Daily Worker*, 21 May 1937, p. 3.

<sup>223</sup> An example of an early ILP defence is David Murray in *Left News*, 31 July 1937, clipping, David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>224</sup> John McGovern, *Terror in Spain: how the Communist International has destroyed working class unity, undermined the fight against Franco, and suppressed the social revolution*, (London: Independent Labour Party, 1937).

<sup>225</sup> McGovern, *Terror in Spain*, pp. 3-7.

<sup>226</sup> The Catholic media especially was not above gloating. See *Glasgow Observer*, 15 January 1938, p. 1.

<sup>227</sup> See William Gallacher in *Forward*, 1 January 1938, p. 3.

his POUM connections in several articles in the *Sunday Mail* in December 1937.<sup>228</sup>

MacDonald supported the anti-Stalinist position of the ILP and their claims that a Russian-style secret police organisation had been set up in Spain.<sup>229</sup> A three-way public feud developed in *Forward*, with McGovern and David Murray of the ILP, Communists William Gallacher and Harry McShane, and the Anarchist Ethel MacDonald exchanging blows in articles and letters.<sup>230</sup>

The ILP's response to the Smilie issue was shaped by David Murray, who had been in Spain at the time and had conducted a semi-official inquiry into Smilie's death.<sup>231</sup> Murray concluded that there was no evidence of foul play, and the ILP followed his lead, largely playing down the Smilie issue in the public debate that followed.<sup>232</sup> Murray went so far as to publically criticise MacDonald for her continued exploitation of the case.<sup>233</sup> Refusing to use Smilie as anti-Communist propaganda weakened the ILP's chances of successfully discrediting the Communist position. It also alienated potential allies on the left, with MacDonald writing that:

ILP members believe that the ILP is the one and only body that is entitled to speak on matters that are of vital interest to the working class in Britain and that all others who claim such a right are to be the subject of abuse and slander.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> The first article was published in the *Sunday Mail*, 12 December 1937, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>229</sup> MacDonald in *Forward*, 28 December 1937, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>230</sup> The David Murray Papers contain a large number of clippings from this series of exchanges: Murray and Gallacher in *Forward*, 25 December 1937; McShane in *Forward*, 1 January 1938; MacDonald in *Forward*, 8 January 1938; McShane in *Forward*, 15 January 1938, clippings in David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS. The feud reignited in August, with Gallacher in *Forward*, 13 August 1938; Murray in *Forward*, 20 August 1938; McGovern in *Forward*, 27 August 1938, clippings in David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS. An exasperated editorial note in the 27 August issue stated that no further dialogue between the parties would be accepted for publication.

<sup>231</sup> 'Bob Smilie Report', David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>232</sup> 'Bob Smilie Report', David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS, p. 6.

<sup>233</sup> Murray to *Forward*, 25 December 1937, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>234</sup> MacDonald in *Forward*, 28 December 1937, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4/5, Acc. 7915, NLS.

The failure of the ILP to exploit the Smilie issue, whether based on principle or the need to moderate their criticism of Communism in Spain, effectively destroyed their last chance of winning the hearts and minds of the broader left in Glasgow. Smilie had been popular, and his death touched a nerve in Glasgow, to the extent that some Glaswegians still feel strongly about his death.<sup>235</sup>

However, this was not a war that the ILP and their temporary Anarchist allies were ever likely to win. The Communists, as an integral part of the Spanish Government, were much better placed to influence the 'official' line on the incident and the mainstream media in Britain were largely content to accept their version of events. For most, Anarchism and Trotskyism were labels that carried extremely negative connotations, even if they were inapplicable or carried different meanings in the Spanish context.<sup>236</sup> With the Communist Party's embrace of liberal parliamentary democracy in Spain, they were better placed to appeal to the traditional values of the British left. Their 'commonsense' position that the defeat of Franco and fascism should be the first priority played well to such an audience.

A large part of the battle took place within the political press. Here too the ILP and Anarchists were at a disadvantage. The *Daily Worker* was, as the name suggests, published daily, giving the Communists a distinct advantage over the weekly ILP *New Leader*. Anarchist publications were even more sporadic, and dogged by lack of money and resources.<sup>237</sup> The *New Leader* could also not compete with the lack of editorial scruples of the *Daily Worker*, whose Spanish material was compiled by the likes of Peter Kerrigan and

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<sup>235</sup> At the 'Fighting Fascism, Fighting Franco: Scottish Volunteers for Spanish Freedom, 1936-2011' event at Glasgow's Mitchell Library, the longest audience discussion was related to Smilie and his death.

<sup>236</sup> A good summary of the nature of Spanish Anarchism is Julian Casanova, 'Anarchism and Revolution in the Spanish Civil War: The Case of Aragon', *European History Quarterly* 17, no. 4, (October 1987), pp. 423-451.

<sup>237</sup> Guy Aldred attempted to publish at least three separate newsletters on Spain: *Regeneracion*, *Barcelona Bulletin* and *Popular Affront!!*. *Regeneracion*, the longest lasting, was still plagued by financial trouble and featured numerous pleas for cash. See *Regeneracion*, 3 October 1936, pp. 1-2.

Harry Pollit, whose wholehearted embrace of the party line of the moment were legendary.<sup>238</sup> With the ILP clearly willing to moderate their criticism, holding back on key issues such as Smilie, it was unable to counter the vicious attacks on their allegiances, actions and integrity.

This episode spelled the end of the ILP as a force in Glasgow politics. Although the Second World War delayed elections and allowed the ILP to keep its seats in Westminster, their moral authority disintegrated. While disaffiliation from the Labour Party had been a blow for their status as a nation-wide party, it was the Spanish Civil War that destroyed the grassroots system in Glasgow that was the source of its remaining strength.<sup>239</sup> Tarrred as fascist-sympathisers by the British left, the ILP had little to show for its efforts.<sup>240</sup> Its sister party, the POUM, was suppressed by first the Communists and then Franco. Without the proud memory of the International Brigade volunteer monopolised by the Communist Party, the ILP was no longer respected by the working classes of Glasgow, who had worked so hard to support the Spanish Republic.

The most lasting political outcome of the ILP's fall was the solidification of control by the Labour Party. Without the ILP splitting the vote, Labour was able to command comfortable majorities in Glasgow municipal politics for decades.<sup>241</sup> Additionally, the remaining ILP MPs eventually defected to the Labour Party, making the region a national Labour stronghold for the rest of the century.<sup>242</sup> This outcome was far from assured; up until the Spanish Civil War, the ILP with its strong grassroots presence and tenacious hold on seats

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<sup>238</sup> For opinions of both, see McShane in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, pp. 23-24. For the *Daily Worker*, see Kevin Morgan, 'The Communist Party and the Daily Worker 1930-56' in Andrews, Fishman and Morgan (eds.), *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the British Communist Party*, (London: Pluto Press, 1995), pp. 142-159.

<sup>239</sup> Histories of the ILP generally concentrate on the 1932 disaffiliation as the key moment in the ILP's downturn. See for instance McKinlay and Morris (eds.), *The ILP on Clydeside, 1893-1932: from foundation to disintegration*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

<sup>240</sup> Hall, 'Not Just Orwell', p. 3.

<sup>241</sup> See Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes*, p. 101.

<sup>242</sup> Harvie notes the impediment that the ILP provided for Labour in winning Glasgow parliament seats until the late 1930s, see Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes*, p. 97.

in Parliament had prevented any one party from claiming Glasgow as its own. Without such a catastrophic defeat, it is unlikely that they would have faded quite so quickly. The post-war structure of Glasgow politics can, to some extent, be seen as an enduring consequence of the Spanish Civil War.

### **Papists, Toffs and Moguls: Pro-Franco groups in Glasgow**

While Glasgow was the Scottish hub of volunteering, fundraising and other pro-Republic activities, it was also where pro-Franco groups were the most active. Although the activities of these groups in Glasgow are quite thoroughly dealt with in existing accounts, their efforts have been largely dismissed as ineffective and isolated.<sup>243</sup> Gray, for example, concludes that Scotland had 'nailed its colours to the mast' in support of the Spanish Republic.<sup>244</sup> This not only ignores the extent to which Glasgow was divided by the Spanish Civil War, but also contrasts with his own claims regarding the malevolent meddling of the mainstream media.<sup>245</sup> This section, therefore, is a re-evaluation of the success of pro-Franco movements in Glasgow. Rather than simply comparing the size of demonstrations, or amounts collected in fundraising, a truer measure of the relevance of pro-Franco campaigns was their ability to interfere with the success of Aid Spain movements, and in preserving the status quo that benefitted Franco's rebels.

Three major groups in Glasgow are examined. Firstly, the Catholic Church was perhaps the most consistently outspoken proponent of a Franco victory throughout the war. Glasgow, especially after an influx of Irish immigrants in the nineteenth century, was host to the

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<sup>243</sup> See Wood, 'Scotland and the Spanish Civil War', pp. 14-16; Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 125-140.

<sup>244</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 140.

<sup>245</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp. 126-130.

largest Catholic minority in Scotland and had a history of violent sectarianism.<sup>246</sup> The hearts and minds of the large number of working-class Catholics were therefore a key battleground for pro- and anti-Republican movements. Secondly, the Friends of Nationalist Spain (FONS) were the major official group set up to counter the fundraising and propaganda work of the Aid Spain movement. In Scotland, most of its activities took place in Glasgow. Although the FONS were unable to campaign as broadly or consistently as the various pro-Republican groups, they successfully provided an alternative voice on Spain and caused political headaches for the Labour Party. Finally, the mainstream media were frequently accused of promoting the Nationalist side. For many pro-Republicans, it was an article of faith that the mainstream press was ‘virtually fascist’, a viewpoint accepted uncritically in current scholarship.<sup>247</sup> This final segment shall consider the degree to which the media in Glasgow was biased, and if so, what sort of nature this bias had.

### **Glasgow Catholics and Franco**

By the 1930s Catholics made up between a quarter and a half of Glasgow’s population.<sup>248</sup> The Catholic Church, although well aware of socialism’s attraction for its largely impoverished flock, was resolutely anti-Communist.<sup>249</sup> This, combined with the well-publicised anti-clerical atrocities that marked the early days of the Spanish conflict, made supporting the Nationalists immediately attractive. The Church itself was closely related to the Irish Catholic Church, and had inherited a close relationship with the papacy and hence

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<sup>246</sup> For an overview of the history of modern Glasgow sectarianism, see Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace*, pp. 1-7.

<sup>247</sup> David Murray, quoted in Gray *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 129.

<sup>248</sup> Catholic sources at the time claimed that half a million Glaswegians were Catholic, out of a total of about a million in the city itself. This figure is likely an overestimate. Gallagher puts the number at a far more reasonable 294,400. See *Glasgow Observer*, 26/3/38, p. 1; Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace*, p. 356.

<sup>249</sup> Catholic media was quite concerned with issues of social justice, albeit combined with strict denunciations of communism. See ‘The Labour World – Politics and the Masses: The Struggle for Existence’, *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 1 August 1936, p. 2.

with Franco's rebellion.<sup>250</sup> From the beginning, Catholic media reported on Spain in lurid terms, featuring headlines like 'Barcelona Horrors, Priests Decapitated and Nuns Stripped Naked' and 'Government Attacks on Church Property – Communists and Anarchists Spread Ruin.'<sup>251</sup> Throughout the war, the Catholic Church in Glasgow was the most consistent pro-Franco voice in Glasgow, using its considerable resources to actively defend and promote the Nationalist cause.

The weekly newspapers *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald* and *Glasgow Observer* were the key propaganda tools possessed by the Church. Both contained roughly the same content and editorial line within slightly different formats, intended for Glasgow and the surrounding Lanarkshire district respectively. On their pages, Franco was consistently portrayed as a kindly Christian gentleman, a crusading Christian hero ridding Spain of the godless Reds.<sup>252</sup> Their pages provided a rallying point for anti-Republican intellectuals in Glasgow, the most prominent being Douglas Jerrold, whose semi-fascist philosophies and pro-Franco writings appeared regularly.<sup>253</sup>

Aside from being noteworthy anti-Republican propaganda powerhouses, these papers are also key sources for understanding the pro-Franco tactics utilised by the Church. Many Church attempts to match the success of Aid Spain movements were spectacularly unsuccessful. The fund competing with 'Red' fundraising grew slowly; by December 1936 only seventy-three pounds had been raised.<sup>254</sup> This failure baffled some Catholics:

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<sup>250</sup> For discussion of the Irish influence on Glasgow Catholics, see Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace*, pp. 134-161. David Murray referred to pro-Franco Catholics in Glasgow as 'a few Irish Roman Catholics'. See Letter from David Murray to Neuman, 24 January 1937, David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>251</sup> *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 8 August 1936, pp. 3, 10.

<sup>252</sup> The first endorsement of Franco as the saviour of Catholic Spain was in *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 8 August 1936, p. 5.

<sup>253</sup> See for example the series of weekly articles beginning in *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 19 June 1937, p. 9.

<sup>254</sup> This contrasts with the funds organised by English-based Catholic papers such as *The Universe* and *The Catholic Times*, whose funds raised £12,500 and £7,000 respectively by the end of 1937. See *Lanarkshire*

I cannot understand the Catholics of Glasgow, many of whom could give much, others little, but only a few of whom answer your appeal... If each Catholic family in Glasgow alone sent a sixpenny [Postal Order], just think of the wonderful results.<sup>255</sup>

This relative paucity of fundraising has led authors such as Gray to dismiss Catholic action as the raging of a reactionary clergy that enjoyed little popular support. Yet Catholic efforts to support Franco went beyond positive measures. Heavy emphasis was also placed on undermining progressive efforts to support the Spanish Republic. The Glasgow District Board of the Ancient Order of Hibernians was the first major group to adopt such a strategy, calling upon:

Catholic members of the trade unions and kindred organisations to see and determine that none of the funds to which they contribute shall be used in support of a campaign having for its objective the extermination of Christianity in Spain or any other country.<sup>256</sup>

This strategy was expanded after Scottish Co-Operative societies began pledging money for Spanish relief, with Catholics being instructed to ‘withdraw their shares and other capital holdings as a protest against their unwarranted and unjustified action.’<sup>257</sup> These efforts were not wholly in vain, with the Scottish Co-Operative Wholesale Society compromising that their donations would only be made ‘provided whatever action is taken does not conflict with the neutrality of the British government.’<sup>258</sup> Local Catholics also gained a small victory by preventing the Kilmarnock Co-Operative Society from donating any money at all.<sup>259</sup>

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*Catholic Herald*, 5 December 1936, p. 1; Michael Alpert, ‘Humanitarianism and Politics in the British Response to the Spanish Civil War’, *European History Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1984), pp. 429-430.

<sup>255</sup> Letter to *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 31 November 1936, p. 7.

<sup>256</sup> This group was made up of Irish Catholic immigrants. Resolution of the Glasgow District Board of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, reported in *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 15 August 1936, p. 1.

<sup>257</sup> The same article also suggested examining the constitutional legality of individual trade union donations. *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 3 October 1936, p. 9.

<sup>258</sup> *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 17 October 1936, p. 1.

<sup>259</sup> *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 24 April 1937, p. 1.

That these campaigns were at least somewhat effective in preventing the full participation of trade unions and co-operative societies in Republican fundraising is shown by an article in the *Daily Worker* in late 1936, which noted 'instances of reactionary opposition (mainly of a Catholic character) to aid for Spain making itself manifest in the Trade Union movement.'<sup>260</sup> So too did the ILP *New Leader* note the disruption of their Glasgow flag day by 'religious folks [convinced] by capitalist organs that the Spanish workers are an unruly mob, beset on murder.'<sup>261</sup>

The effect that such resistance had on Glasgow fundraising is impossible to calculate without a more detailed record of individual trade union and Co-Operative society minutes.<sup>262</sup> Possibly more significant were the concessions that Catholics gained, especially from Co-Operative societies, promising that funds raised would be neutrally distributed. By making the case that both sides should receive humanitarian aid, Catholics were able to decrease direct support for the Republic and aid the Nationalists in one stroke.<sup>263</sup> The overall success of Catholic support of Franco needs to be reassessed with regard to the effectiveness of their negative strategies.

Catholic papers also encouraged Catholic members of left-wing parties to 'sever their connections' because of Spain.<sup>264</sup> Such attempts received a frosty response in the Labour paper *Forward*:

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<sup>260</sup> The same article gave a list of arguments that unionists might use to demonstrate the 'anti-Union' credentials of the Franco government. *Daily Worker*, 23 November 1936, p. 2.

<sup>261</sup> *New Leader*, 4 September 1936, p. 1.

<sup>262</sup> The AEU was the only such body to preserve records on a district level, let alone an individual branch level, that I was able to find.

<sup>263</sup> For example, Catholics ensured that the Clydeside Co-Operative Society's 'Milk for Spain' campaign did not favour Republican children. See *Glasgow Observer*, 18 December 1937, pp. 1, 14.

<sup>264</sup> As the article put it, because of the 'affinity of these parties with the followers of Anti-Christ.' *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 3 October 1936, p. 9.

[The Church's] whirlwind effort to stampede voters into the Moderate camp was so obviously stupid that there was a reaction in favour of Labour. The Catholic workers in Glasgow know that municipal politics in their city have nothing to do with civil war in Spain.<sup>265</sup>

Despite this bravado, *Forward's* dismissal of Catholic political power and the Spanish issue was premature. As shown in the previous section, Spain could and did influence Glasgow politics. Even threatening to boycott Labour was a potent weapon, which relied on Catholic votes not just in Glasgow but nationwide. As the situation favoured the Nationalists, being able to contest the political and physical space in which the pro-Republican groups campaigned was vital. Preventing effective political action was more important than fundraising. An early example of such activity was an anti-Republic petition circulated in Glasgow by the Catholic Church, which managed to gather over fifteen thousand signatures by September 1936.<sup>266</sup>

The case of ILP MP John McGovern is the most striking example of the Catholic Church's ability to physically contest protesting space. On returning from his first visit to Spain in December 1936, McGovern wrote a pamphlet targeting working-class Catholic supporters of Franco, seeking to justify anti-clericalism in terms of the centuries of repression by the Catholic Church in Spain.<sup>267</sup> The Glasgow Catholic press swung into action, subjecting McGovern to regular front-page attacks.<sup>268</sup> With McGovern representing Shettleston, a largely Catholic district, the Catholic Church's attacks represented a very real threat to his political survival. McGovern, however, stood his ground, declaring that 'if I had a thousand

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<sup>265</sup> *Forward*, 24 October 1936, p. 3.

<sup>266</sup> *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 19 September 1936, p. 4.

<sup>267</sup> McGovern, *Why Bishops Back Franco*, pp. 1-12.

<sup>268</sup> These attacks continued for weeks, see *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 12 December 1936 p. 1; 19 December 1936 p. 1; 9 January 1937 p. 1; 16 January 1937, p. 1.

seats, I would lose them on this issue', leading to one of the largest direct confrontations between pro- and anti-Republican partisans in Glasgow.<sup>269</sup>

After a public challenge from Catholic intellectual Douglas Jerrold, a debate between him and McGovern was organised for June 1937. Four thousand spectators, evenly split between both sides, bought tickets for an unprecedented exchange between camps. Naturally, the Catholic press declared Jerrold the clear victor, with the left-wing press doing likewise for McGovern.<sup>270</sup> The *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald* and *Forward* carried verbatim transcripts of the speeches, although the Catholic papers were later accused of editing out unfavourable portions.<sup>271</sup> Both sides, however, noted the intense hostility McGovern was subjected to from the Catholic section.<sup>272</sup> Not only were Catholic pro-Franco supporters able to match the Republican supporters in sheer numbers, they also proved to be louder and more partisan than their counterparts.

While the Catholic Church in Glasgow was more effective at supporting Nationalist Spain than has previously been acknowledged, their efforts were clearly not in proportion to their theoretical numbers. Only a small minority of the hundreds of thousands of Glasgow Catholics contributed to the fight. One reason for this might be the impact of the Depression and unemployment, which acted to strengthen class solidarity while weakening religious influence. Evidence of this can be seen in the recollections of NUWM members:

There were a' unemployed whether they were Orange or Catholic. And it was great how they a' mingled up, ye know, especially if ye were goin' on a demonstration...

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<sup>269</sup> McGovern, quoted in Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, p. 131.

<sup>270</sup> *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 12 June 1937, pp. 1-3; *Forward*, 12 June 1937, pp. 1, 7, 10.

<sup>271</sup> *Forward*, 19 June 1937, p. 2.

<sup>272</sup> *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 12 June 1937; p. 1, *Forward*, 12 June 1937 p. 1.

In normal times they could ha' been belting each other because one was Orange and one was Catholic!<sup>273</sup>

In the circumstances, the bravado of the Catholic Church's propaganda can be seen as an attempt to disguise their falling influence over the political allegiance of their flock.<sup>274</sup>

Especially compared to the Irish Catholic contribution to Franco's cause, Glasgow Catholic action was largely unimpressive.<sup>275</sup> Yet their ability to maintain the façade, and to actively contest the pro-Republican dialogue both in the media and on the streets, ensured that Catholic action was at least partly effective.

### **Friends of Nationalist Spain**

FONS was a nationwide group founded to counter the various Aid Spain movements in Britain, with a Glasgow branch established in 1938.<sup>276</sup> FONS never received the levels of popular support received by pro-Republican groups in Glasgow. For a brief period, however, it featured in some of the most important confrontations over Spain in Glasgow. Its clashes with opposing groups in Glasgow's public spaces inspired a divisive political feud that threatened the established political order. Its inaugural public meeting was largely unremarkable.<sup>277</sup> It drew only a few interruptions from scattered 'Red supporters', but the stage was set for dramatic escalation.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Michael Clark in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, p. 165.

<sup>274</sup> Gallacher noted this trend, but did little to explain it, as at least one critic pointed out. See Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace*, pp. 291-342; William Ferguson, 'Review of Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace: Religious Tension in Modern Scotland and Edinburgh Divided: John Cormack and No Popery in the 1930's', *Scottish Historical Review* 68, no. 185, pp. 100-102.

<sup>275</sup> The strength of the Catholic Church in Ireland was such that it was the only country from which more volunteers fought for Franco than the Republic. In contrast, no Glaswegian is known to have volunteered for Franco. See Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Keene, *Fighting for Franco*.

<sup>276</sup> Their first meeting was announced in the *Glasgow Observer*, 29 January 1938, p. 1.

<sup>277</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* did run a short, disinterested preview of the event, see *Glasgow Herald* clipping (n.d.), in David Murray papers, Box 4, Files 6/7, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>278</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 5 March 1938, p. 1.

Following the Glasgow Chief Constable's warning that police were unable to guarantee the safety of public property given the likelihood of 'disturbances' organised by pro-Republican groups, Glasgow Labour magistrates revoked permission for the planned FONS meeting at St. Andrew's Hall.<sup>279</sup> The ruling prompted an immediate outcry from the FONS and Catholic press.<sup>280</sup> This outrage was echoed throughout Glasgow, with a broad cross-section of opinion viewing it as an attack on free speech. The *Glasgow Herald* letters page featured numerous condemnations of the Labour Party, including one correspondent who without any apparent irony called on the military to 'do something' about Labour in order to prevent fascism in Britain.<sup>281</sup> Aside from external criticism, several Labour representatives broke party lines and voted against the decision.<sup>282</sup> Rebel Bailie Mitchell defended himself:

I did not surrender my liberty as a free man and a free citizen when I joined the Labour party. I do not intend to surrender it now. Nor do I intend to allow the Labour Party to be put in the position of curtailing the liberty of others.<sup>283</sup>

In a tense meeting, the Glasgow Labour party decided against expelling the rebel members, settling on a motion of censure.<sup>284</sup> Following the resignation of Labour representatives on the issue of fundraising, further high-profile resignations or expulsions could well have resulted in the disintegration of the Glasgow Labour Party.

Bowing to criticism, the event was approved and rescheduled in early April. In Glasgow left-wing folklore this event is remembered as a key moment in directly confronting fascism. Jack Caplan, a Glasgow Jew, recalled sneaking into the meeting in order to heckle,

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<sup>279</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 28 March 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>280</sup> Such criticism was, needless to say, also vehement— 'Corporation Hitlers Ban Franco Meeting – City Hall Let Revoked – Free Speech For Socialists Only?', *Glasgow Observer*, 26 March 1938, p. 1.

<sup>281</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 25 March 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>282</sup> According to Fyrth, four out of fifteen magistrates broke party lines, although he incorrectly states that all were expelled from the Labour Party. See Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>283</sup> Unlabeled newspaper clipping, 8 June 1938, in David Murray Papers, Box 2 File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>284</sup> *Scottish Daily Express*, 23 June 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 2 File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

before being assaulted by the stewards and ending up in hospital.<sup>285</sup> Other activists managed to unfurl a large red banner from the balcony, interrupting the meeting for several minutes.<sup>286</sup> According to newspaper reports, seventy-one policemen were needed to protect the meeting, along with ‘stewards’ hired by FONS in a private capacity.<sup>287</sup> These stewards were openly encouraged to take decisive violent action against interlopers, with the *Glasgow Observer* crowing that ‘these Communists...are very brave when they are attacking defenceless priests and nuns, but they run away when they are faced with serious opposition.’<sup>288</sup> This meeting was the crest of violent confrontation over the Spanish issue in Glasgow.

The FONS quickly lost impetus after this spectacular beginning. It held just one more public meeting, addressed by Lady Maxwell-Scott, a local aristocrat who had written on her visits to Nationalist Spain.<sup>289</sup> Future activities were limited to more exclusive affairs, such as a private dinner celebrating the fall of Barcelona in February 1939. This met with disgust by one observer:

Do they realise that their mode of celebrating a great human tragedy arouses feelings of horror and resentment, not alone amongst ‘Communist’ demonstrators, but among the mass of decent citizens? Probably not; after all, the victims...though they are numbered by the hundred thousand, are mere ‘Reds’.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Caplan, *Memories of the Gorbals*, p. 57.

<sup>286</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 9 April 1938, p. 1.

<sup>287</sup> Unlabeled newspaper clipping, 14 April 1938, David Murray Papers, Box 2 File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS

<sup>288</sup> *Glasgow Observer*, 9 April 1938, p. 1.

<sup>289</sup> *Glasgow Herald* clipping, 21 April 1938, in David Murray Papers, Box 2 File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS. See *Glasgow Herald*, 12-14 April 1938 for samples of her articles and responses.

<sup>290</sup> *Glasgow Herald* clipping, 7 February 1939, David Murray Papers, Box 2 File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

The winding down of the FONS to a self congratulatory dinner-party circuit does not simply reflect its lack of drive or support.<sup>291</sup> It became increasingly clear over the course of 1938 that the Spanish Civil War was going to be won by Franco's Nationalists, as even some of the more pragmatic Republican supporters admitted.<sup>292</sup> FONS lost its relevance not because of left-wing resistance, but because of the success of its wider cause. In terms of propaganda, FONS was remarkably successful in shifting the terms of the debate, winning broad sympathy in the face of 'official' repression and nearly crippling the Glasgow Labour Party.

### **Glasgow Media and the Spanish Civil War:**

Many pro-Republicans believed the mainstream media of the 1930s was generally aligned against them. This oft-repeated claim has greatly influenced writing on the subject, with the most recent text on British volunteers writing that 'the coverage of the Spanish Civil War in the British press has come under considerable, and justifiable, criticism for the extent of its flagrant bias.'<sup>293</sup> While bias from right-wing and tabloid-style newspapers is undeniable and unsurprising, more serious are claims that the respectable, establishment papers were similarly biased.<sup>294</sup> If so, one must regard the establishment media, and by extension their readers, as a significant pro-Franco grouping in Glasgow and elsewhere.

The *Glasgow Herald* is the most notable manifestation of middle-class media in Glasgow. It was accused of bias by volunteers themselves, particularly Roderick MacFarquar who cited

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<sup>291</sup> Fyrth goes further and claimed that the 'small' crowd of 1,500 at the April event demonstrated their lack of significant support all along. This analysis is somewhat problematic, not least because as an indoors event it could not have fitted a much larger crowd. See Fyrth, *The Signal Was Spain*, p 35.

<sup>292</sup> One volunteer admitted that he knew the war was lost even before he left for Spain in 1938. See George Drever transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>293</sup> Baxell, *British Volunteers*, p. 35.

<sup>294</sup> Traditional media was certainly growing more conservative in the interwar period. Hutchinson found that by 1939, the old balance between liberal and conservative leaning papers in Scotland had been utterly upset, with the majority of papers either 'neutral' or openly Unionist. See Hutchinson, *Scottish Politics in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 31-32.

the ‘relish’ with which it anticipated the fall of Madrid as the catalyst for his decision to go to Spain.<sup>295</sup> At home, correspondents such as David Murray accused it of ‘colouring’ its news, and claimed its coverage ‘may be designed to discourage Government supporters in this country.’<sup>296</sup> This publication is therefore used here as a case study, testing the extent to which such publications actively undermined the Republican cause. A close examination reveals, however, that the *Glasgow Herald*’s coverage of Spain was largely neutral. The continued assumption of bias in modern accounts can be understood as the conflation of neutrality with partisanship, as well as some observers’ desire to frame Spanish solidarity movements as an internal class struggle in Britain and find scapegoats for the failure of the Republican cause.

The *Glasgow Herald* certainly printed stories that showed the Spanish Republic in a poor light, such as early eye-witness accounts of anti-clerical violence.<sup>297</sup> Bias is apparent in the work of several individual correspondents, such as one early anonymous piece entitled ‘How Present Situation Developed: Revolt Against Spread of Communism.’<sup>298</sup> In 1938, an article written by Lady Maxwell-Scott, an outspoken Franco supporter, appeared in its pages.<sup>299</sup> Such examples do not build a picture of unreasonable bias. Anti-clerical violence certainly occurred, and other, occasional examples of extreme bias appear to be the work of individual correspondents and not the result of any particular editorial line.

The *Glasgow Herald* was in fact one of a number of mainstream Glasgow papers attacked for perceived anti-Franco bias. Following the report of a commission into Franco’s use of aerial bombing, the *Glasgow Evening Citizen* claimed that a majority of Glasgow

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<sup>295</sup> Roderick MacFarquar transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>296</sup> David Murray in *Glasgow Herald* 17 February 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 4 File 7, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>297</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 24 July 1936, p. 12.

<sup>298</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 1 August 1936, p. 12.

<sup>299</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 12 April 1938, p. 9.

newspapers had an 'anti-Franco cast' to their headlines.<sup>300</sup> Similarly, 'well-known Glasgow Catholic' J. Lynch, claimed that:

The British Press had in its handling of the Spanish situation been entirely wrong, and so consistently and comically wrong that it could be relied upon to give exactly the opposite opinion to that which we, as intelligent men, should hold.<sup>301</sup>

These accusations, coming from such partisan sources, certainly do not prove that bias against Franco was widespread. They do however highlight the danger of accepting partisan views on press bias as evidence.

More important are attempts by the *Glasgow Herald* to be even-handed. For example, it published a broad array of hostile responses to Maxwell-Scott, with four letters angrily denouncing her article appearing the next day.<sup>302</sup> The letters page of the *Glasgow Herald* featured a broad range of opinions, often evenly split along pro- and anti-Republican lines.<sup>303</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* was also willing to publish material from correspondents with distinctly pro-Republican sympathies. One article in mid-1937 sought to rationalise anti-clerical violence as a result of the character of Spanish Catholicism, arguing that 'it was a Church more permeated by materialism than any in Europe.'<sup>304</sup> Significantly, the initial

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<sup>300</sup> *Glasgow Evening Citizen*, 6 September 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>301</sup> This address to a Catholic Youth group was reported in the Catholic *Glasgow Observer*, which interestingly noted that the same address, entitled 'The British Press in Spain', was delivered to 'A Left organisation in Glasgow' to similar acclaim. So long as he avoided direct examples, the simple message that 'the British press is biased' probably would have been agreed with by partisans on both sides, if for wildly different reasons. See *Glasgow Observer*, 27 November 1937, p. 9.

<sup>302</sup> *Glasgow Herald* letters page, clipping in David Murray Papers. Box 4, File 7, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>303</sup> See for example *Glasgow Herald*, 19 March 1938; 25 April 1938; 16 June 1938, clippings in David Murray Papers, Box 4, File 7, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>304</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 24 June 1937, p. 9.

reports of an uprising in July 1936 were quick to brand it as ‘fascist’ in nature, and if anything prematurely celebrated the Government’s swift suppression of the rebellion.<sup>305</sup>

Furthermore, the *Glasgow Herald*’s reporting on Glaswegian fundraising and International Brigade volunteers was largely positive. This applied not only to ‘respectable’ groups like the SAU, which was reported as doing ‘excellent work’, but also ILP and Communist efforts.<sup>306</sup> The first Glaswegian volunteers, for example, were given a ‘hearty send off’ by ‘cheering crowds.’<sup>307</sup> Unlike more reactionary papers, the *Glasgow Herald* also let volunteers give positive accounts of their time in Spain, such as in a March 1937 interview with Phil Gillan.<sup>308</sup> Extensive coverage was also given to demonstrations and fundraising, almost always in neutral or positive terms.<sup>309</sup> Through such coverage the *Glasgow Herald* aided the activities of pro-Republic groups in Glasgow far more than it harmed them.

The *Glasgow Herald* did not appear to have an overtly anti-Republican editorial line. Cases of flagrant bias appear to be confined to the work of individual correspondents, or reporting on issues like anti-clericalism which arguably portrayed the Republic in a bad light. One major exception to this conclusion is the *Glasgow Herald* position on non-intervention. A firm editorial line was swiftly adopted supporting the ‘correct attitude towards the present civil war’ being taken by European governments.<sup>310</sup> In the eyes of most Republican partisans, this support of non-intervention is enough to condemn the *Glasgow Herald* for being anti-Republican. The Non-Intervention Pact was a crippling blow to the ability of the Republic to fight the war. It has justifiably been highlighted as a key factor in their defeat, with many authors arguing that Britain used this policy to deliberately undermine and

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<sup>305</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 21 July 1936, p. 9.

<sup>306</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 21 December 1936, p. 7.

<sup>307</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 26 December 1936, p. 12.

<sup>308</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 3 November 1937, p. 11.

<sup>309</sup> For a general selection of such articles see *Glasgow Herald*, 19 August 1936, p. 11; 8 September 1936, p. 10; 21 September 1936, p. 8; 23 September 1936, p. 21; 7 December 1936, p. 9; 11 January 1937, p. 12; 15 February 1937, p. 8; 8 November 1937, p. 11; 21 November 1938, p. 14.

<sup>310</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 29 July 1936, p. 10.

betray the Spanish Republic.<sup>311</sup> Supporting the policy was allegedly no different to supporting a Franco victory.

When examining British domestic support for non-intervention, however, such blanket categorisations are not particularly useful. Numerous groups in Britain, including many overtly sympathetic to the Republic, supported non-intervention. Many, like the Labour Party, supported the theoretical basis of the scheme from a desire to avoid bloodshed in Spain and prevent escalation to a wider war. Such groups often became vocal critics of the implementation of the scheme, whose rules were clearly flaunted by Franco's allies while imposing severe limitations on the Republic. Their embrace of non-intervention can, therefore, be seen in a less cynical light.

The *Glasgow Herald* did cover and condemn the breaches of the Non-Intervention Pact by Italy and Germany, especially following attacks on British shipping that mounted throughout 1938. One correspondent questioned how 'Italy can send whole divisions of soldiers to Spain as volunteers, but Britain must not even protect her own ships in Spanish ports.'<sup>312</sup> The restrictions and attacks on British shipping appear to have been a major catalyst for criticism of the Non-Intervention Pact, with even otherwise conservative correspondents acknowledging the injustice of the arrangements.<sup>313</sup> By September, the paper's editorial line acknowledged that especially after the planned withdrawal of foreign volunteers, the Republic should be free to buy arms on the open market, essentially repudiating non-intervention.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> See for example Douglas Little, *Malevolent Neutrality: the United States, Great Britain, and the origins of the Spanish Civil War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), Gerald Howson, *Arms For Spain: The Untold Story of the Spanish Civil War*, (London: John Murray, 1998), pp. 246-251.

<sup>312</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 25 June 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>313</sup> For example, *Glasgow Herald*, 28 June 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

<sup>314</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 23 September 1938, clipping in David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6, Acc. 7915, NLS.

This case study does not disprove the wider claim that British, or even Glaswegian, media was biased against the Spanish Republic. Yet it demonstrates the need for wider consideration of whether the media was truly a bastion of pro-Franco support in Britain. Currently, historical writing follows the heavily partisan position that there was no difference between being neutral and being pro-Franco. Historians have justified their acceptance of this line by pointing to the consequences of the Non-Intervention Pact as proof that neutrality was in reality implicit support for Franco. Yet this claim again ignores important nuances in a complicated issue even for supporters of the Republic. It may be that focusing on media bias, with connotations of 'establishment' conspiracy and class struggle, is far more palatable for progressive observers than acknowledging the fact that some pro-Franco groups were able to successfully harness popular support even in the working-class heartland of Glasgow.

## **Conclusion**

It is impossible to fully appreciate the history of Glasgow in the 1930s without referring to the Spanish Civil War. As with other Britons, many Glaswegians supported the Republic wholeheartedly, donating their services and limited means generously. Yet unlike the rest of Britain, Glasgow's experience of Spain was also traumatic. It was in Glasgow that the fault lines at the heart of the Spanish left were best mirrored. Likewise, conflict between reactionary and progressive forces was unusually vehement, and not nearly as one-sided as previous accounts might suggest. Assuming that Glaswegians were, by their very nature, automatically and firmly on the side of the Spanish Republic for the duration of the war overlooks the true complexity of the situation. Refusal by previous authors to acknowledge this complexity has concealed the fact that the repercussions of the Spanish conflict have been far more significant and lasting in Glasgow than almost anywhere else in Britain. Once again, national conclusions have proven inappropriate for explaining the history of Britain and Spain at a local level.

Despite these divisions, the Spanish Civil War impressed itself on the fundamental fabric of Glasgow life. From the whitewash on the pavement, the banners and marchers on the streets, the volunteers collecting food donations in wheelbarrows and the constant media coverage of every stripe, Glasgow lived and breathed Spain for nearly three years. In much the same way that Red Clydeside helped politicise and inspire a generation of activists and became a founding myth of modern Glaswegian radicalism, so too did Spain forge a new generation of working class standard-bearers. Unlike the legacy of Red Clydeside however, the process of historicisation and memorialisation in Glasgow following the end of the Spanish Civil War is yet to be seriously examined. Such issues are the focus of the third and final chapter.

### **Chapter Three: Memory, Myth and History: Remembering the Spanish Civil War in Glasgow**

*'I appeal to those interested in our fight for help in establishing an archive of relics and recordings of the experiences of survivors of that war. There are not so many left of us now and it is now becoming a matter of urgency to record material which will be of inestimable value to historians researching this period of world history. Unfortunately, financial resources are practically nil and there is little being done in this field of historical research in Scotland'* – John Dunlop (1983).<sup>315</sup>

#### **Introduction**

The Spanish Civil War, and Glasgow's role in fighting it, has had a remarkable grip on Glaswegian imagination for the better part of a century, despite being virtually unknown outside of Scotland and receiving no scholarly attention. This final chapter examines how Glaswegian volunteers have been remembered, particularly in this absence of scholarly historical work. Strikingly, efforts to remember these volunteers have been heavily decentralised and local. It is the agency of local working-class groups, artists and families, and the creation of small-scale memorials celebrating local volunteers, that has preserved the memory up until the present day. Even though some recent popular histories have taken a 'national', Scottish perspective, control over the memorialisation process is still remarkably concentrated in the hands of the individuals and organisations that originally preserved it locally. While this case highlights the degree of working-class agency that existed and continues to exist in Scotland, it also has worrying implications for the writing of scholarly Scottish history.

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<sup>315</sup> John Dunlop, 'Letter to the Editor', *Evening News*, 3 February 1983, clipping in John Dunlop Papers, File 5, Acc. 12087, NLS.

This chapter links the emphasis placed in the first two chapters on the importance of local history, and its ability to inform broader histories, with the process of memorialisation and historicisation of International Brigade volunteers that took place in Glasgow and Scotland. The first section deals with the creation of memorials to volunteers, and argues that this memorialisation process stemmed from and reinforced the trend toward localised remembrance. The second section examines the portrayal of volunteers in Scottish arts and media, and how it has both driven and been influenced by the local and national paradigms. Finally, the third section examines how history writing in Scotland has dealt with the volunteers and their story. The weakness of Scottish academic history, it is argued, has led to a reliance on popular history, which has failed to provide satisfactory scholarly accounts on a local and national level.

### **Memorialisation and the International Brigade Association in Glasgow**

As with many other wars fought by British soldiers, an important tool for remembrance has been the war memorial. By the 1990s over fifty memorials dedicated to International Brigade volunteers were built in Britain, eleven in Scotland.<sup>316</sup> Glasgow is host to perhaps the most striking of these memorials. A statue of Spanish revolutionary icon La Passionara stands tall on the banks of the River Clyde in commemoration of the 62 Glaswegian volunteers who died in Spain.<sup>317</sup> This section briefly examines the key features of these memorials, and discusses the influence of the International Brigade Association (IBA) and its successor organisation, the International Brigade Memorial Trust (IBMT), in their erection.

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<sup>316</sup> Williams, Alexander and Gorman, *Memorials of the Spanish Civil War*, (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1996). No more recent official list yet exists, but memorial building has continued since the 1990s, and the number of Scottish memorials has increased significantly.

<sup>317</sup> Williams et al, *Memorials*, pp. 32-34.

The main Glasgow memorial shares several important traits with the other memorials across Scotland. First is its local orientation – the statue is dedicated solely to the Glaswegian volunteers who fought for Republican Spain. No single memorial in Scotland is dedicated to the collective memory of Scottish volunteers.<sup>318</sup> Secondly, impetus and support seems to have been provided largely by local groups. The families of volunteers and working class groups, especially trade unions, proved vital in the drive to raise the necessary funds.<sup>319</sup> Thirdly, the support of local government and politicians was equally necessary. In Glasgow, the support of the then Lord Provost Sir William Gray was vital in gaining approval.<sup>320</sup> In Edinburgh, Tory councillors attempted to block council funding because the memorial was not dedicated to ‘both sides’ that died in Spain.<sup>321</sup> Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Scottish section of the IBA was the key organising body, coordinating fundraising, lobbying and planning. This was particularly vital for the larger memorials in Edinburgh and Glasgow, but they still played an important role in the creation of other memorials across Scotland.

The first three commonalities of the Scottish memorials speak strongly to the local character of the efforts to remember the International Brigades. In Glasgow and elsewhere, families of volunteers as well as local groups, politicians and media all combined to establish memorials to their local heroes. Indeed, this ‘local’ trend was so strong that in 1986, the Lord Provost of Glasgow refused to write a letter of support for Steve Fullarton to take to an

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<sup>318</sup> See Williams et al, *Memorials*, pp. 28-51.

<sup>319</sup> See IBA circular letter appealing for funds for Glasgow statue sent to local trade unions and sympathetic individuals, Box 40, File B/145, IBAr, MML.

<sup>320</sup> ‘Lord Provost’ is a Scottish equivalent of mayor. See ‘Appeal for funds for Glasgow Memorial’, Box D-3, File D/10, IBAr, MML.

<sup>321</sup> The Edinburgh Labour Party also donated money directly to the project. The Tory position was compared to asking ‘the Luftwaffe to do a fly-past at Churchill’s funeral’ by the *Weekend Scotsman*. See *Weekend Scotsman*, 16 July 1983, clipping in John Dunlop Papers, File 5, Acc. 12087, NLS see also note on Edinburgh Labour Party donation, Box 21, File F/9, IBAr, MML.

international memorial service purely because Fullarton had since moved to Edinburgh.<sup>322</sup>

That so many communities across Scotland had the desire, vision and determination to see through such projects indicates that even without nation-wide historical attention being paid to volunteers, an active process of remembrance continuously existed at a grassroots level.

The Scottish IBA was perhaps the only organisation with any interest in promoting a more cohesive national-level appreciation of Scotland's role in the Spanish Civil War. In practice, however, the IBA in Scotland was organised on a local basis, with only nominal regional representation on the IBA executive committee in London.<sup>323</sup> These arrangements reflected the weakness of the IBA, whose strict constitution stipulated that only ex-volunteers could become full members.<sup>324</sup> The Stalinist nature of the IBA constitution and leadership also became a liability as many grew disillusioned with Soviet-style communism.<sup>325</sup> From a post-war peak of 150 full members in Glasgow alone, by the 1970s the IBA was in contact with only 50 members across Scotland.<sup>326</sup> By the 1980s, Ian MacDougall was only able to find twenty Scottish volunteers to interview, some of whom, like David Stirrat, had little interest in the IBA's activities.<sup>327</sup> With such a limited membership base to draw on, fundraising and organising events became increasingly difficult over time.

The IBA managed to stay relevant and promote the memory of the International Brigades in Glasgow and Scotland through clever tactics. In the post-war decades, the volunteers

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<sup>322</sup> Steve Fullarton correspondence with Lord Provost's office, in John Dunlop Papers, File 2, Acc 12087, NLS.

<sup>323</sup> In the IBA constitution, Scotland was guaranteed two places on the IBA Executive Committee. The IBA was organised along a regional basis throughout Britain, with the Executive Committee meeting in London. See IBA Constitution, Tom Murray Papers, Box 4, File 1, Acc. 9083, NLS.

<sup>324</sup> IBA Constitution, Tom Murray Papers, Box 4, File 1, Acc. 9083, NLS.

<sup>325</sup> The constitution, for instance, allowed for the expulsion of any member 'proved to be working against the best interests of the Association', as determined by the Executive Committee. One outgoing Glasgow Committee member reassured the Executive Committee that the new Glasgow secretary and treasurer 'are not likely to indulge in heretical or heterodox viewpoints.' See IBA constitution in Tom Murray Papers, Box 4, File 1, Acc. 9083, NLS, 'Glasgow IBA to Nan Green', Box 40, File B/106, IBAr, MML.

<sup>326</sup> IBA Executive Committee meeting minutes, 14 June 1946, Tom Murray Papers, Box 4, File 1, Acc. 9083, NLS, Scottish IBA Address list, Box 40, File B/141, IBAr, MML.

<sup>327</sup> Stirrat transcript, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 1, Acc. 10481, NLS.

continued to enjoy prestige in working-class circles, which could be translated into opportunities to raise both funds and their public profile. At a Scottish Miners Gala Day in the 1970s, the small IBA contingent was prominent, and given the opportunity to spread awareness.<sup>328</sup> At another rally in 1976, the presence of an IBA contingent amongst the marchers garnered media attention.<sup>329</sup> Furthermore, by linking contemporary struggles to the history of the International Brigades, the IBA not only confirmed their ongoing relevance but also were able to educate working-class audiences on their history.<sup>330</sup> Even by the 1980s, the IBA could demonstrate the importance of the International Brigade volunteers to the Scottish labour movement. In 1986 hundreds attended a Memorial Day and discussion forum commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the conflict's start. Organised by the Scottish Labour History Society, it proved to be the largest event ever run by this organisation.<sup>331</sup>

The IBA also used its dwindling pool of active members to maintain a media presence. Key figures such as Phil Gillan, John Dunlop and Steve Fullarton were in great demand to provide quotes for feature articles on the International Brigades in Scottish newspapers. These articles were usually timed to coincide with peaked interest such as the anniversary celebrations in 1986, which also coincided with the height of Thatcherism and Scottish efforts to confront it.<sup>332</sup> Such articles have a monotonous quality to them, using similar quotes, stories and even the same stock photos.<sup>333</sup> Yet they served as a valuable starting

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<sup>328</sup> See IBA invitation and Miners Gala Day programme. Box 21, Files F/7 and F/12, IBAr, MML.

<sup>329</sup> Unknown newspaper clipping, Box 21, File F/14a, IBAr, MML.

<sup>330</sup> For example, see speech by Peter Kerrigan linking the Spanish Civil War to the Vietnam War, Peter Kerrigan Speech on Vietnam War, c1970, Box 34, File b/3, IBAr, MML.

<sup>331</sup> Interview with Ian MacDougall, Edinburgh, 30 August, 2011.

<sup>332</sup> Two such examples are *Weekend Scotsman*, 12 July 1983, *Evening News*, 17 July 1983, clippings in Ian MacDougall Papers, File 26, Acc. 10481, NLS. For Scotland's reaction to Thatcherism, see Andrew Marr, *The Battle for Scotland*, (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 169-171; for the link with Scottish nationalism especially, see Brown, McCrone and Paterson, *Politics and Society in Scotland*, (London: MacMillan, 1998), pp. 116-118.

<sup>333</sup> For some examples of this, see the *Weekend Scotsman*, 12 July 1983, *Evening News*, 17 July 1983, *Courier*, 4 April 1983, clippings in Ian MacDougall Papers, File 26, Acc. 10481, NLS, see also *Evening News*,

point for ensuring that many in Glasgow, and the rest of Scotland, remained aware of the history of the International Brigades.

The IBA's success in preserving the memory of the International Brigaders is shown best by the continuing work done by its successor organisation, the IBMT. The IBMT, founded in the late 1990s after unprecedented debate amongst the few remaining ex-volunteers, primarily consisted of the friends and family of the original volunteers. The influx of members has allowed the IBMT to become more active in Scotland, holding meetings in Glasgow and other locations, and increasing the pace of memorial building, including a refurbishment of the La Passionara statue in Glasgow.<sup>334</sup> For the first time as, truly national attempts were also made to celebrate the contributions of Scottish volunteers as a whole.<sup>335</sup>

The IBA in Glasgow and Scotland reinforced the trend towards the celebration of local participation. Organisational weakness, driven by dwindling membership and lack of discretionary funds, meant that their efforts were largely limited to the local level. Yet the IBA was extremely successful in fostering local interest and support for the memorialisation of volunteers, and used their prestige in working class circles adroitly, adapting themselves to causes of the day, from industrial unrest in the 1970s to opposing Thatcherism in the 1980s. Their efforts meant that the new, more flexible and dynamic organisation, the IBMT, was able to attract pre-existing groups of interested and informed potential members across Scotland.

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26 January 1983, clipping in John Dunlop Papers, File 5, Acc. 12087, NLS. Some of the same quotes were still resurfacing even 20 years later, such as in 'A Few Good Men', *The Scotsman*, 18 July 2006, p. 18.

<sup>334</sup> For example see 'Repaired Glasgow statue returns to plinth', *IBMT Newsletter*, no. 27 (Autumn 2010) p. 3, 'Perth memorial is unveiled', *IBMT Newsletter*, no. 27, (Autumn 2010), p. 3, 'In brief – Dunbartonshire', *IBMT Newsletter*, no. 30 (Autumn 2011), p. 7.

<sup>335</sup> For example the most recent memorial event, 'Fighting Fascism, Fighting Franco: Scottish Volunteers for Spanish Freedom, 1936-2011', although being held at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, had a broad focus on commemorating all Scottish volunteers.

### **‘Glasgow should be proud ae them!’: Spain in the Arts and Media**

The arts and media have both memorialised and popularised the stories of volunteers in Glasgow and Scotland.<sup>336</sup> Almost uniquely for an English-speaking nation, no artistic work of national or international significance dealing with Spain was ever produced in Scotland.<sup>337</sup> It has therefore fallen to the work of locally-orientated artists to commemorate Glaswegian involvement in Spain. This can be understood as reinforcing the tendency towards the celebration of local, rather than national, involvement in Spain. Two plays, *A Greater Tomorrow* and *From the Calton to Catalonia*, are discussed here in relation to this trend.<sup>338</sup> Aside from their topic matter and contents, plays are a particularly interesting medium because of their relatively wide audience and tendency to receive mainstream critical attention. Efforts have also been made to portray the Scottish involvement in Spain on a national level, particularly in radio and television. This section argues that the audience and reception of these works is indicative of contemporary demands on popular history, and discusses the twin demands of parochialism and nationalism on such work.

*From the Calton to Catalonia* was written in 1990 by John and Willy Maley, the sons of prominent Glaswegian volunteer James Maley. While loosely based on their father’s experiences in Spain, the play is ultimately an homage to Glasgow. The play’s focus on the Glaswegian volunteers and their role on an international stage is made immediately clear in the prologue:

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<sup>336</sup> Title quote from Maley and Maley, *From the Calton to Catalonia*, p. 5.

<sup>337</sup> Scotland’s most prominent poet of the period, Hugh MacDiarmid, explained his lack of interest in Spain: ‘Communists may be too interested in Greece, Spain etc. to trouble about Scotland... but I’m in Scotland and regard that as my job.’ MacDiarmid in Alan Bold (ed), *The letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, (London: Hamilton 1984).

<sup>338</sup> It should not be assumed that plays were the sole art form through which the Spanish Civil War was portrayed in Glasgow. They have simply proven the most convenient to consult here, given the relatively wide audience and critical reaction they received. See Maley and Maley, *Calton to Catalonia*; Hector MacMillan, *A Greater Tomorrow*, (unpublished), Box 21, File f/20b, IBAr, MML.

Fascists of every colour an' country came up against the men an' women ae no mean city...Fae nae hair Te grey hair they answered the call. Many never came back. They wur internationalists. They wur Europeans. They wur Scots. Glasgow should be proud ae them!<sup>339</sup>

All the major characters speak in a broad Glaswegian dialect, with the action following a small group of Glaswegian volunteers in Spain.<sup>340</sup> The action in Spain is frequently complemented by scenes demonstrating the efforts of those at home in Glasgow to support the volunteers' struggle.<sup>341</sup> Overall, the play is a specific celebration of Glasgow, commemorating its unique culture and the contribution it made to Spain.

The Maleys' play was well received and has been professionally produced several times throughout Scotland.<sup>342</sup> The IBA's endorsement of its contents was also important, as without it a key audience might have been alienated. James Maley was an IBA insider and a lifelong Communist who 'moved steadily to the left' as he aged.<sup>343</sup> Bill Alexander, then the leader of the IBA, provided a glowing foreword for the published version, reinforcing the play's credentials in Communist circles.<sup>344</sup> The play was shrewdly targeted; by emphasising local characters, human interest and action, it appealed to a relatively broad audience. Furthermore, by sticking to an anti-revisionist line, it was an attractive narrative for the Communist stalwarts who still ran the IBA. The reception of the play demonstrates the key to success for artistic work dealing with Spain in Glasgow: unrelenting positivity and avoidance of complexity.

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<sup>339</sup> Maley and Maley, *Calton to Catalonia*, p. 5.

<sup>340</sup> This is established by the second scene. See Maley and Maley, *Calton to Catalonia*, pp. 15-27

<sup>341</sup> For example see Maley and Maley, *Calton to Catalonia*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>342</sup> The play was produced four times in the 1990s and was revived in 2004. 'Homage to Calton' in *The Scotsman*, 24 November 2004, p. 34.

<sup>343</sup> John Maley quoted in 'Homage to Calton', *The Scotsman*, 24 November 2004, p. 34.

<sup>344</sup> Maley and Maley, *Calton to Catalonia*, pp. 1-3.

*A Greater Tomorrow*, by Hector MacMillan, did neither. It followed the experiences of Glaswegian Jock Cunningham, the Battalion Commander discussed briefly in the first chapter. This focus contrasts with *From the Calton to Catalonia*, as Cunningham represented a controversial figure in the history of the British Battalion. Cunningham was also relatively obscure, leaving behind few records and disappearing entirely from the political scene following his return from Spain, necessitating a great deal of creative interpretation from the author. This drew flak from IBA observers, who criticised its political position as ‘tainted by special pleading... which ultimately springs from ILP/Trotskyist sources’ as well as its unsubstantiated presentation of Cunningham’s views on the war.<sup>345</sup> The play’s mild anti-Communism came under attack in the IBA newsletter review, criticising MacMillan’s ‘wrong conclusions’ and lamenting that ‘Harry Pollitt is strongly and [wrongly] attacked.’<sup>346</sup>

The IBA review conceded that the play was ‘well written and acted’ and had the potential to be the ‘finest play about the International Brigade.’<sup>347</sup> Mainstream critics were less enthused. Cunningham’s lengthy soliloquies form the bulk of the play, with the *Observer* complaining that ‘for more than two hours, nothing happened.’<sup>348</sup> This review also noted that the target audience was clearly political radicals seeking sentimental reminders in the post-ideological world.<sup>349</sup> Yet with broad swathes of this potential audience alienated by the political angle taken, MacMillan’s play lacked wide appeal even for this audience. Without the local flavour of *From the Calton to Catalonia*, without a sense of celebration and collective achievement, the grittier and more controversial themes of *A Greater Tomorrow* failed to engage local audiences both in Glasgow and throughout Scotland.

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<sup>345</sup> Letter from ‘Hugh’ to John Dunlop, n.d., John Dunlop Papers, File 2, Acc. 12087, NLS.

<sup>346</sup> IBA Newsletter, June 1997, John Dunlop Papers, File 4, Acc. 12087, NLS.

<sup>347</sup> See IBA Newsletter, June 1997, John Dunlop Papers, File 4, Acc. 12087, NLS.

<sup>348</sup> Review of ‘A Greater Tomorrow’, *Observer*, 13 May 1997, clipping in John Dunlop Papers, Dunlop Papers, File 4, Acc. 12087, NLS.

<sup>349</sup> Review of ‘A Greater Tomorrow’, *Observer*, 13 May 1997, clipping in John Dunlop Papers, Dunlop Papers, File 4, Acc. 12087, NLS.

During the 1980s Scottish volunteers became regular subject matter in the Scottish media. Aside from the newspaper articles discussed above, the first major media effort to discuss the volunteers came in 1987, when BBC Radio Scotland produced a two-part radio series based on the oral recordings made by MacDougall while compiling *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*.<sup>350</sup> In 1990, a Scottish production company proposed to interview surviving volunteers like John Dunlop for a television documentary on the Scottish volunteers, although the company went bankrupt before it could be made.<sup>351</sup> Along with documentary efforts, the passing of the last volunteers became more prominent, with obituaries of volunteers like John Dunlop and Steve Fullarton featuring in national newspapers like *The Scotsman*.<sup>352</sup>

This trend culminated in the documentary, *The Scots Who Fought Franco*, aired in two parts in 2008.<sup>353</sup> By this stage, remembrance of Glaswegian volunteers was taking place not just on the local level, but also as part of a wider celebration of the role of Scotland in Spain as a whole thanks to the efforts of the IBMT and Daniel Gray. Based on the material in Gray's *Homage to Caledonia*, the documentary is celebratory of Scotland's role in Spain and it met with broad critical acclaim in Scotland.<sup>354</sup> As the cases of *From the Calton to Catalonia* and *A Greater Tomorrow* demonstrated, there is no room for negativity or complex moral messages when portraying Scottish volunteers on either a local or national level. The

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<sup>350</sup> Ian MacDougall correspondence with the BBC, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 26, Acc. 10481, NLS.

<sup>351</sup> Letter from 'Big Star in a Wee Picture' to John Dunlop, 21 August 1990, John Dunlop Papers, File 2, Acc. 12087, NLS.

<sup>352</sup> Earlier obituaries, such as those for Roddy MacFarquar in the 1980s, were usually a matter for local press. See *West Highland Free Press*, 22 December 1989, clipping in Dunlop Papers, File 5, Acc. 12087, NLS. For Dunlop and Fullarton obituaries respectively, see *John Dunlop*, created July 5, 2006, Obituaries, hosted by *The Scotsman*, <<http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/john-dunlop-1-1124427>>, viewed 18 May 2012, *Stephen Fullarton*, created 11 March, 2008, Obituaries hosted by *The Scotsman*, <[http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/stephen\\_fullarton\\_1\\_1158904](http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/stephen_fullarton_1_1158904)>, viewed 18 May 2012. Note that the available archive of the printed version of *The Scotsman* does not include individual obituaries, necessitating the use of the online version here.

<sup>353</sup> This is one of a seemingly endless series of documentary titles following the formula of 'The Scots who did X, Y or Z.' There is no better example in the media of the continued celebration of Scottish exceptionalism.

<sup>354</sup> See for example 'Television Review', *The Scotsman*, 14/82009, p. 42.

reliance of the media on popular historical accounts, in the absence of scholarly work, for information also limits the potential complexity of their accounts.

These twin trends, local and national, in portraying the Spanish Civil War in Scottish art and media reflect two major demands on history in contemporary Scottish society. The surge in family history research, genealogy and local history writing reflects a desire to establish a greater sense of self or local meaning, to differentiate oneself or one's home from an increasingly homogeneous world, a trend not limited to Scotland. On the other hand, the recent resurgence of Scottish nationalism has led to increased demand for certain varieties of Scottish history. Scotland's non-national status since the 1707 Act of Union has led to the need for a different sort of national narrative that does not depend on the nation-state as the primary actor. Like any nationalist project, modern Scottish nationalism needs mythology. One key way in which a national narrative has been fostered is through the actions of exceptional Scottish individuals and their 'disproportionate' role in shaping the modern world.

Some elements of this grand narrative are domestic in nature, celebrating Scottish philosophers, economists and inventors. However, the narrative also draws on Scots who have 'gone forth' into the world and made a difference. Here too one can appreciate an established model of Scottish interaction with the world as migrants, soldiers, explorers and administrators, often as the 'engineers' of the British Empire; responsible for the glory, but not the darker misdeeds.<sup>355</sup> The Spanish Civil War complements this model superbly. As a major historical flashpoint in which individual Scots played a disproportionate role, Spain falls neatly into the grand narrative of Scottish exceptionalism. The progressive nature of modern Scottish politics makes Spain especially attractive, particularly because the

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<sup>355</sup> For discussion of Scots' role as imperialists, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp 117-131. For Scots as migrants, see Tom Devine, *To The Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750-2010*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

Communist Party in Scotland emphasised the safe, non-revolutionary nature of the Spanish Republic. The manifestation of these local and national trends in history writing dealing with Scotland and the Spanish Civil War are the subject of the final section of this chapter.

### **Serving Two Masters: Scottish history writing and the Spanish Civil War**

Historical accounts of Scotland and the Spanish Civil War can be divided into two groups: scholarly work of limited scope, and popular history written by amateur historians. The former were written or compiled by a small group of academic historians during the 1970s and 1980s. However, none chose to expand their interest in the topic into a definitive scholarly account. Ian Wood, for instance, chose to write a short, unreferenced overview for a cultural magazine rather than a scholarly article.<sup>356</sup> Ian MacDougall was an academic outsider, who rose to prominence through the Scottish Labour History Society.<sup>357</sup> His focus has been the collection and collation of working-class sources rather than his analytical or interpretive work, and he specifically warned that his book on Scottish volunteers should not be considered a scholarly account.<sup>358</sup> These historians' work, despite its limitations, was successful in stimulating both local and national interest in the topic, as well as preserving important sources.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Wood, 'Scotland and the Spanish Civil War', pp 14-16.

<sup>357</sup> MacDougall was the founding secretary of this body, a position he held for nearly thirty years. He worked very closely with Victor Kiernan of Edinburgh University, who had conducted some oral interviews with surviving volunteers himself, and wrote the foreword to MacDougall's book on the subject. See Kiernan, 'Foreword in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*; pp v-xi; Ian MacDougall, Interview with J. Fraser Raeburn, Edinburgh, 30 August 2011.

<sup>358</sup> Ian MacDougall, 'Introduction' in MacDougall (ed.), *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, p. 2.

<sup>359</sup> MacDougall in particular was a key driving force in preserving many of the key sources. As well as his work in collecting oral histories, it was through his mediation that many personal papers of volunteers were preserved at institutions like the NLS, and he campaigned for the preservation of records like trade union minutes. See Ian MacDougall, *Labour Records in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Labour History Society, 1978).

Recent popular accounts, despite having greater access to sources, have in some ways regressed from these origins. While Kiernan, Wood and especially MacDougall were academic historians, none of the newer writers are professional historians. Mike Arnott is a trade union official, functioning also as the Scottish representative of the International Brigade Memorial Trust— a background which speaks volumes for his enthusiasm for working-class history, but not his objectivity and historical training.<sup>360</sup> Chris Dolan, the biographer of Ethel MacDonald, has a literary and journalistic background.<sup>361</sup> The pull of the local and national historical trends described above is increasingly evident in the work of these authors, with Mike Arnott writing specifically on the Dundee volunteers, while Ethel MacDonald is probably the ‘exceptional Scot abroad’ *par excellence*.<sup>362</sup>

The author at the forefront of both popularisation and nationalisation, however, is Daniel Gray. Based largely on the material collated by MacDougall, as well as Gray’s own archival research, his book has been referred to frequently throughout this thesis.<sup>363</sup> Despite being comprehensive and having obvious sympathy for its subjects, *Homage to Caledonia* falls short of being either a scholarly or definitive account of Scottish involvement in Spain. The referencing is particularly disappointing, with almost no footnoting and a secondary bibliography of twelve books, none of which are directly referred to in the text.<sup>364</sup> As discussed in both previous chapters, Gray’s account often uncritically accepts the biases and prejudices of its subjects, and largely ignores criticisms of the Communist Party’s role in the International Brigades. Whether this is due to his own partisanship or a lack of critical engagement with the source material and secondary literature is unclear, but it makes

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<sup>360</sup> See list of executive members, *IBMT Newsletter*, no. 30 (Autumn 2011), p. 2.

<sup>361</sup> See biographical details in *Chris Dolan*, no creation date, updated 2011, Writers Directory hosted by the British Council (Literature), < <http://literature.britishcouncil.org/chris-dolan>>, viewed 18 May, 2012.

<sup>362</sup> Angela Jackson also used MacDonald as an example of a ‘local level’ legend in Glasgow. See Jackson, *British Women and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 179.

<sup>363</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp 213-214.

<sup>364</sup> Gray, *Homage to Caledonia*, pp 212, 215.

*Homage to Caledonia* unsatisfying as the definitive account of Scotland and the Spanish Civil War.

Despite (or perhaps because of) these weaknesses, history writing has nonetheless been instrumental in fostering the memorialisation of volunteers. The rapid increase of interest in Scottish volunteers in the 1980s coincided with the publication of MacDougall's *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*.<sup>365</sup> Likewise, Gray's *Homage to Caledonia* helped stimulate recent nationwide interest, especially through the related documentary series. Although such interest can hardly be condemned, the absence of scholarly work has meant that popular history writing has followed the path of least resistance by conforming to either the local or national fashions, not least because it guaranteed a receptive audience. This has had both positive and negative implications for the historical memory of Glasgow's role in the Spanish Civil War.

One key benefit has been that the persistence of local, grass-roots memory has meant that historical agency still resides with those who created the history, their descendants and more broadly within the Glasgow working-class movement. The strength and persistence of such history from below, particularly given the lack of agency such individuals or groups have traditionally had in historical writing, should not be lightly dismissed. The robustness of the memory, which has outlasted the last surviving volunteer and shows no signs of flagging, must also be considered as highly positive.

This is especially true given the relative weakness of modern Scottish history as a discipline, where even in Scotland it is only a priority in a few universities. Although it can be argued that Scottish history survives in the broader discipline of British history,

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<sup>365</sup> MacDougall's book informed a wide range of activity, including the BBC Radio Scotland programme, which utilised his transcripts and recordings. See MacDougall correspondence with BBC Scotland in Ian MacDougall Papers, File 26, Acc. 10481, NLS.

twentieth-century Scottish history in general, and Glasgow working-class history specifically, still receive very little scholarly attention. Limited talent and resources are available to preserve the history of Glasgow and Spain other than this variety of proactive, grassroots activism.

On a national level too, it is hard to argue that history has been severely misappropriated. The Scottish Nationalist project is admirably restrained, dedicated to democratic and constitutional methods and attempts to project a positive vision of an independent, progressive Scotland. There is no reason that Scottish nationalists, or for that matter the Scottish labour movement, should not foster their own mythology. Considering that Scottish nationalism has previously revolved around the celebration of various attempts to kill as many Englishmen as possible, the wholly peaceful nature of the current movement is to be welcomed.

Yet as the first two chapters of this thesis have demonstrated, the history of Glaswegian involvement in Spain is rich, multifarious and above all complicated. Neither local nor nationalist histories have any interest in celebrating these complexities, the unwelcome details that do not fit the mould of a positive and inspiring story.<sup>366</sup> Family members of volunteers and the communities and movements that supported them want no questions of the righteousness of their forebears. The nascent Scottish nation also has no interest in preserving the memory of those individuals or events that do not fit their model of the ideal Scot and their role in the world. In order to preserve a fuller, more complex history, a voice at least somewhat independent of local and national concerns is necessary.

This problem is compounded by the lack of meaningful debate or disagreement on the subject in Glasgow or Scotland. With all writers on the subject coming from similar

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<sup>366</sup> See Chris Harvie, 'Modern Scotland: Remembering the People' in Rosalind Mitchison (ed.), *Why Scottish history matters*, (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1997), pp. 78-79.

backgrounds with similar agendas, the prospects for serious criticism or interaction between opposing viewpoints are slim. No historian can be judged to be completely neutral, especially on a topic that remains as divisive as the Spanish Civil War. There remains however a vast difference between an academic historian with training and experience in critical analysis and appreciating the complexity of historical memory, and amateur writers captured by their own motivations or the desire to write 'popular' history. Even if the historian is simply prejudiced in a different way, interaction between differing opinions fuels the best historical writing. While a place for both scholarly and non-scholarly work certainly exists, the complete absence of the former in this case has been detrimental to the quality of existing histories.

To appreciate this one need only compare the writing on the subject of Scotland and Spain with that of England. It is clear that the much larger amount of attention paid to 'British' history at home and overseas has produced far more detailed, true to life and provocative historical accounts.<sup>367</sup> The growing maturity of such accounts is particularly visible over the past three decades, as new generations of historians interacted with the traditional narratives of the Spanish Civil War. This is despite the fact that many English historians such as Richard Baxell, the author of the most recent account of the British volunteers, also enjoy close ties with the IBMT.<sup>368</sup> The impact of even one dedicated, professional historian can have on the field is aptly demonstrated by the work of Hywell Francis, who translated a lifelong passion for Welsh miners and their involvement in Spain into an original and highly relevant scholarly account.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> These include, amongst others, Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*; Tom Buchanan, *The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain. War, Loss and Memory*, (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2007); Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left*; Baxell, *British Volunteers*; Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*.

<sup>368</sup> Baxell is also a member of the IBMT executive. See list of executive members, *IBMT Newsletter*, no 30 (Autumn 2011), p. 2.

<sup>369</sup> See Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, pp. 23-26.

Increased interest in Scotland and its history should lead to more nuanced, sophisticated history. Such history can preserve remarkable local stories such as that of a small band of Glaswegian volunteers and give them context and explanation, as well as importance on a broader stage. It can help current and future generations understand the past not simply as a black and white morality tale, a time when good and evil did battle on the fields of Spain. Rather, history shows us the past as a place not too different from the present, where every grand struggle exists in a complex world void of moral imperatives and absolutes. Mythology and memorialisation can create simple parables, but those interested in the history of Glasgow and Scotland can find a much more interesting story.

### **Epilogue: Memory Lives On**

In late 2011, Tom Watters was pronounced to be alive. Like Steve Fullarton, Watters had volunteered to travel to Spain as a young man, joining men and women from sixty nations in the fight against General Franco in defence of the Spanish Republic. Watters' existence had eluded the various researchers interested in Scottish volunteers for the simple reason that he had moved to England in his later life. He had in fact never been part of the International Brigades; his service in Spain had been with the Scottish Ambulance Unit, with whom he served for the duration of the unit's existence. He was still however the last living volunteer from Glasgow, indeed the whole of Scotland, and with his discovery the final link with an important chapter in Glasgow's history had seemingly been resurrected.

The pronouncement of Watters' existence was delivered at an event commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. It was a meeting that I was fortunate enough to attend in person while doing research for this thesis.<sup>370</sup> The large auditorium at Glasgow's Mitchell Library was fuller than I expected, and featured addresses from volunteers' family members, as well as several of the authors that have been mentioned throughout these pages. It was hardly a lively event, but in some ways this made it more interesting – well over a hundred guests had paid a significant entrance fee in order to sit through the often dull proceedings. Clearly, these men and women were dedicated.

Although Watters had come to the attention of the International Brigade Memorial Trust in 2009, and had participated in several local events, this was the first major gathering where the good news could be widely delivered. The announcement, delivered by IBMT Scottish

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<sup>370</sup> 'Fighting Fascism, Fighting Franco: Scottish Volunteers for Spanish Freedom, 1936-2011', commemorative event held at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 15 October 2011.

Secretary Mike Arnott, caused a brief stir in the audience, before the topic changed back to more prosaic matters. Arnott spent more time describing the work being done to put up memorial plaques to dead volunteers in small Scottish towns than he did discussing the sole living volunteer.

Although those present seemed pleased to hear of Watters' existence, it did not really affect their purpose that day. These men and women were already dedicated to preserving the memory of Scotland's International Brigaders; a newfound living link with the past changed little. They were there because they were proud of the history of their family, their community or the wider working-class movement. Many of those around me were the sons, daughters or grandchildren of volunteers; some discussed plans to travel to Spain in order to visit the battlefields where their ancestors fought. The final link with an important chapter in Glasgow's history had not been resurrected, because it had never died in the first place.

Watters did not survive much longer in any case, passing away several months later in February 2012. His passing drew wide interest, despite his name being unknown only a few years previously. An article, aptly called 'Gone...but not forgotten', commemorated his life in *The Scotsman*.<sup>371</sup> Segments on his death were run on Scottish evening news.<sup>372</sup> The story even made it outside Scotland, with media outlets from the *Independent* to the BBC running obituaries.<sup>373</sup> A sign, perhaps, that the memory of Scottish volunteers has only grown stronger in the five years since Fullarton's death.

Watters' brief years of fame can be seen as one more remarkable incident in the strange, decades-long story that this account has followed and sought to explain. It began in 1930s Glasgow; a dynamic, active society, where every new obstacle of poverty, unemployment

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<sup>371</sup> See 'Gone...but not forgotten', *The Scotsman*, 3 March 2012, p. 26.

<sup>372</sup> Segment on *STV News*, Broadcast by Scottish Television, 27 February 2012.

<sup>373</sup> 'Thomas Watters', *The Independent*, 24 March 2012, p. 46, *Last Spanish Civil War Scot Thomas Watters dies*, created 27 February 2012, BBC News Online hosted by British Broadcasting Corporation, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-17179945>>, viewed 18 May 2012.

and oppression brought a fresh reaction from its citizens. Stranger still, of all the causes that united and divided Glaswegians in that time, it was a civil war in a far-off country that drove them to their greatest exertions. That so many Glaswegians chose to travel there to fight is remarkable enough, more so is the tenacity of the mythology surrounding them, mythology that has lasted, indeed grown stronger, to the present day. This story continues to have relevance to Glasgow and Scotland today, and not simply because many Glaswegians still ascribe importance to remembering it. It demonstrates clearly the complex nature of modern Scottish society and its history. More than that, it demonstrates the broader significance that such history can have. Local histories, given the proper framework, can critique, amend and complicate even stories as established and frequently told as that of Britain and the Spanish Civil War.

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Box A-12.

Box B/4 (Local Aid Spain Movements).

Box C.

Box D-3.

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