

Education

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they had taken many history courses, they felt that this was the first time they got to experience and practice the ways professional historians use archival sources to construct narratives and write history, and they found this an exhilarating experience.

Summer Institute and Its Offshoots

Last June, the highly successful ALBA Summer Institute for High School Teachers brought a group of 17 teachers into the archive for



a week, where they learned about the archive contents and explored ways of incorporating the archive's themes and treasures into their teaching of history and Spanish.

In December and January, one of our institute alumni, Oscar Góngora, organized a special program for nine of his students from New York's High School of Business and Finance. On five Wednesday afternoons, they visited the archive, where they were introduced to the collection and to the practice of archival research by Mike Nash, Gail Malmgreen, and James D. Fernández. Oscar is already making plans to bring another group of students to ALBA next semester, this time students enrolled in his AP Spanish class.



In June 2009, the institute will be offered to a new set of teachers in New York. We will also inaugurate a new institute site in Tampa, Florida, led by Fraser Ottanelli.

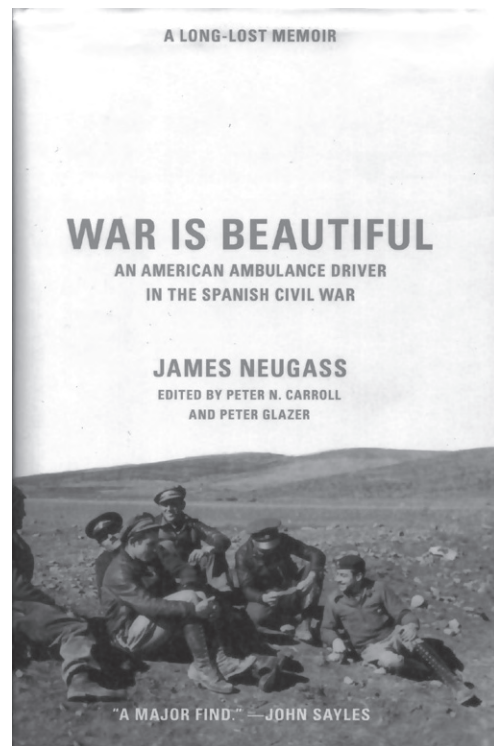
ALBA is now the most consulted collection housed at NYU's Tamiment Library. In addition to the scores of seasoned researchers from all over the world who come to consult the ALBA materials, thanks to our new educational initiatives, we now have dozens of young people—high school and college students—visiting the archive, giving new meaning to the acronym “ALBA”: A Living, Breathing Archive. We think the vets would be pleased. ▣

The newly discovered journal of an award-winning poet's experience on the front lines as a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade—*All Quiet on the Western Front* for the Spanish Civil War

In 1937, James Neugass, a poet and novelist praised in the *New York Times*, joined 2,800 other passionate young Americans who traveled to Spain as part of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade—an unlikely mix of artists, journalists, industrial workers, and students united in their desire to combat European fascism.

War is Beautiful was one of the fall picks from *Library Journal*.

The book is currently available through our website, www.alba-valb.org/books, and the ALBA office, 212-674-5398. Hardcover: \$26.95



Scenes of Bravery and Determination: Walter Rosenblum's Homage to the Spanish Republicans

Photography Exhibit, King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center, January 22-May 10, 2009

By Sebastiaan Faber

In the spring of 1946, the Unitarian Service Committee (USC) in Boston hired the American photographer Walter Rosenblum to document its extensive refugee relief work in Europe. Only 26 years old, Rosenblum had returned to New York less than a year before as one of the most decorated photographers of World War II. Drafted in 1943 as a U.S. Army Signal Corp combat photographer, he had landed on a Normandy beach on D-Day morning, after which he had joined an anti-tank battalion in its liberation drive through France, Germany and Austria. He took the first motion picture footage of the Dachau concentration camp.

Born in 1919 into a poor Jewish immigrant family living on New York's Lower East Side, Rosenblum had begun to photograph his neighborhood as a teenager, using a borrowed camera. In 1937 he joined the Photo League, a vibrant community of New York photographers, where he met Lewis Hine, Berenice Abbott and Elizabeth McCausland; studied with Paul Strand (who became a life-long friend); and worked on his first major project, the Pitt Street series.

Rosenblum embarked on his USC assignment in the late spring of 1946.

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Photographs in this article were taken by Walter Rosenblum in France in 1946. Courtesy of the Tamiment Library and the Rosenblum family.

He spent several months traveling through France and Czechoslovakia, where the USC had a number of projects. In France, Rosenblum visited the USC rest home at St. Goin (Aquitane); the Walter B. Cannon Memorial Hospital and recreation center in Toulouse; the Camp Clairac (Lot-et-Garonne) for underprivileged French and Spanish children; the Meillon Rest Home in Pau, which housed Spanish Nazi victims; and a summer camp and canteen in Les Andelys (Normandie). Starting in October, his photos began appearing regularly in the Unitarians' monthly magazine, the *Christian Register*, which, under the editorship of Rosenblum's friend Stephen Fritchman, had emerged as an important venue not just for religious liberals, but also for more radical

voices of the Left. (Its contributors included Howard Fast, W.E.B. DuBois, Earl Browder, and Paul Robeson.)

At the annual meeting of the American Unitarian Association in May the next year, Rosenblum reported on his trip. "I can say that you have produced an epic story in the field of European relief, and history will judge it so," he stated. "[Y]ou are giving help to the finest elements of society, those people who began to fight back when we didn't even know the meaning of the word." By then, his photos had been picked up by mainstream media outlets such as the *New York Times* and *Liberty* magazine.

Established in 1940 by the American Unitarian Association (AUA), the USC was one of the

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most important U.S.-based refugee organizations working in Europe during and following World War II, assisting numerous refugee communities throughout the continent. At its height, the USC had an operating budget of more than a million dollars. This money came from a variety of sources, not only the National War Fund, the War Refugee Board, and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, but also the Spanish Refugee Appeal of Dr. Edward Barsky's Joint Antifascist Refugee Committee, which contributed close to \$300,000 over several years.

Two factors made Rosenblum's assignment especially timely and important. First, it would help remind the American public of the Spanish refugees and their cause. After Germany invaded France in 1940, thousands of exiled Spaniards had been killed and deported to German concentration camps. More important, Spanish guerrillas and veterans of the Civil War had been a key component in the Resistance and Free French movement. By the end of World War II, hundreds of thousands of surviving Spaniards remained in France. But they could not return home as long as Franco remained in the saddle. (The logic of the Cold War would quickly strengthen the dictator's hold on power, culminating in the admission of Franco's Spain to the United Nations in 1955.)

Second, Rosenblum's work would help improve the public image of the Unitarian Service Committee itself. As it turns out, the years following World War II were challenging

ones for the organization, which found itself at the heart of intense political conflict. When, at the end of 1945, the Joint Antifascist Refugee Committee became a target of the House Un-American Activities Committee, the USC, as the sole distributor of JAFRC funds in Europe, soon found itself in the spotlight as well. In October 1946, a seven-man USC delegation testified in a closed session before the HUAC, stating that they helped all refugees in need,



WHAT is to be the fate of Europe's D.P.s—hundreds of thousands of them? Nearly two years after V-E Day their problem is still as great as ever and no nearer solution.

Neither for that matter is a much other problem in displaced persons, the 100,000 exiles of the Spanish Civil War still stranded after eight long years and still with no hope in sight for a normal life.

Will central Europe's far greater numbers repeat their deplorable fate?

The accompanying photographs tell the poignant story of Spaniards whose homeland is just a fading memory.

The children have spent most of their lives in concentration camps and their parents have undergone further harrowing experiences—such as fighting on the French underground against Hitler.

The children, some have during a temporary stay at an American-financed children's rest home, get food, clothing, medicine, and other essentials from the U. S. Unitarian Service Committee.

Nursed mainly by Spanish personnel, the committee also provides hospitals and rest homes such as the one pictured.

These conditions, however, are merely a stopgap. And eight years is a long time to live in a stopgap.

Rosenblum's photos in *Liberty* magazine, March 1947

regardless of their political affiliation, "as long as there was no attempt to make use of the relief for political purposes." At the same time, they were forced to admit that they had no policy preventing the hiring of Communists as personnel. (One of the exhibits at the hearing was an

issue of the *Register*, whose cover featured one of Rosenblum's photos.)

To make things worse, around the time Rosenblum was in Europe, a representative of the rival International Rescue Committee wrote a letter that accused the two central USC figures in Europe, Jo Tempi and Noel Field, of giving Communists preferential treatment, of being CP-members themselves, and of working for the Soviet secret police. Similar accusations emerged from non-Communist Spanish organizations in Toulouse. Although a special investigation by a delegation of three Unitarian leaders in 1946 found no evidence to support these charges, the allegations were not entirely fictitious. Jo Tempi was indeed a Communist, as was Noel Field. And many of the USC's beneficiaries were affiliated with the Party, simply because many antifascists were. Field had assisted the OSS during the war in establishing contact with Communist leaders in the Resistance. Meanwhile, political conflict erupted within the American Unitarian Association, focusing on the Service Committee and the *Christian Register*, whose leftist slant had long irritated more conservative groups in the organization.

After his return from Europe, Rosenblum documented several domestic USC projects. By the middle of 1947, however, his closest contacts among the Unitarians—USC director Charles Joy, the *Register's* editor Stephen Fritchman, and Jo Tempi, who headed up the Paris office—had been fired or forced to resign. While political controversy hampered fundraising, federal funds for relief

work were drying up fast. By 1948, the number of USC-run programs had dropped by more than half. In early 1949, Noel Field, who had left the USC in December 1947, mysteriously disappeared, and over the following three years his name was prominently featured at a series of show trials in Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, where he was branded as an American spymaster. Rosenblum himself, meanwhile, had accepted a position at Brooklyn College, where he taught from 1947 until his retirement in 1986.



"My love affair with the Spanish people goes back to my childhood," Rosenblum wrote in 2003. "When I was a youngster, I distributed leaflets on the streets of New York in support of the struggles of the Spanish Republicans in their fight against Franco." In France, he writes, "I had expected to find dejected and tired people, but instead discovered bravery and determination."

Rosenblum's portraits of Spanish

refugees are unlike any of the images that had been published until then. The photographs and films documenting displaced Spaniards early in the war, the mass exodus into France, and life in the concentration camps had invariably portrayed the Spaniards as helpless and hapless victims. Even in Robert Capa's most gripping shots, the refugees appear as anonymous, almost generic, representatives of collective suffering. Not so in Rosenblum's work. Whether his subjects look directly into the camera or not, and regardless of their age and



Walter and Naomi Rosenblum receive the ICP Lifetime Achievement Award in 1998.

a renaissance painting. Other photos exude health and happiness, such as the group shot of children posing on a winding staircase at the USC rest home in St. Goin (an image used on the cover of a fundraising booklet from the Joint Antifascist Refugee Committee under the slogan "Help Us Climb the Stairway to Life"). The portrait of a doctor examining a child at the USC dispensary in Toulouse, published in the November 1946 issue of the *Christian Register*, looks like an ad for a drug company. (Interestingly, medical advertising was among the few commercial assignments that Rosenblum ever took on.)

The Rosenblum archives hold 46 photos of Spanish refugees. Two were first published on the covers of the December 1946 issue of the *Christian Register* and the 1946 holiday issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. A wider selection appeared in the March 1, 1947, issue of *Liberty*. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Rosenblum's images were used in fundraising materials for the USC, the Joint Antifascist Refugee Committee, and UNESCO refugee campaigns. Starting in the late 1940s, Rosenblum included them sporadically in exhibits. In 2001, the Reina

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reporting on the Spanish Civil War was a job fraught with emotional and political tensions. Several prominent journalists abandoned neutral objectivity in favor of a deeply-felt commitment to the Republican cause. Photographers, too, had a hard time distinguishing reporting from advocacy and the moral imperative to provide immediate help.

In January 1939, Capa was in Catalonia covering the exodus toward the French border. On the 15th, his camera frames a young girl laying exhausted on a couple of sacks at a refugee transit center in Barcelona. "She must be very tired," he notes, "since she does not play with the other children; she does not stir. But her eye follows me, one large dark eye follows my every movement. It is difficult to work under such a gaze. It is not easy to be in such a place and not be able to do anything except record the

suffering that others must endure." Capa—a displaced leftist Jew himself, after all—has a hard time accepting his passive role; but it is also clear that he hopes his images will sway someone else to take action. If the girl's gaze made him uncomfortable, he knew that a photograph of that gaze could move thousands of viewers.

Given their sympathy for the Republican cause, it is not surprising that photographers and filmmakers were quite willing to let relief organizations use their images of refugees to raise awareness and relief funds among the public. In the framework of a leaflet or ad campaign, the moral dimension of the images, often left fuzzy in the press coverage, was suddenly crystal clear: right next to them was a direct appeal to the viewer's conscience and a clear recipe for action. "80,000 children look to us," says an early leaflet from

the Social Workers Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, entitled "Children in Concentration Camps." The text leaves little room for ambiguity: "What you do today makes their world tomorrow," "They have suffered too much," "Send your check, your money, or money-order today."

Fundraising materials like these show that their editors fully realized the power of images. And they clearly preferred those that combined notions of innocence and suffering—women, children and families—with the kind of gaze that sent a chill up Capa's spine. In fact, the Social Workers leaflet features some of the Hungarian's most touching refugee portraits: a mother in a French camp blowing her son's nose; a dark-haired girl of about 10, a sleeping baby in her lap, looking earnestly, almost defiantly, into the camera, while a boy lies at her feet. Their misery was palpable, but helping them was easy: a donation of \$1.50 buys a Play and Work Package with crayons and a drawing book; \$400 will bring a child to the Americas.

Human suffering above and beyond politics

Capa's work is a good example of the blurring border between news coverage and relief efforts in the wake of the Spanish conflict. Although he had left Spain on January 28 and gone on North, Capa returned to southern France in March to visit the camps at Argelès-sur-mer, Bram, and Le Barcarès, in part as an assignment for the Comité international de coordination et d'information pour l'aide à l'Espagne républicaine, the French counterpart to the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. As soon as the North American

Committee in New York received a set of prints, they incorporated them into their own publicity. But they also sent them on to the American media, alerting them to the Committee's one-million-dollar relief campaign.

Capa's photos from his March trip are as powerful as ever: famished Spaniards wrapped in blankets in front of improvised tents and huts in the sand; a corpulent French gendarme impassively contemplating a long row of identical wooden crosses on what can only be fresh graves; five squatting men with their trousers on their ankles in an endless, feces-covered expanse of beach. The Committee's efforts paid off: on April 16, the *New York Times* printed three of Capa's images in its Sunday photo section on a full page dedicated to Spain, mentioning the campaign. In May, the *New Masses* did a full-page photo spread on the Spanish "heroes": "These refugees, tempered in the blast furnace of fascism, are 400,000 living witnesses to the crimes of Franco. They are the most important refugees in the world." The large cache of negatives from Capa, Taro, and Seymour that were recently recovered includes 10 rolls covering the French camps. A selection will be shown at the symposium on May 1. Throughout 1939, the New York office of the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign (SRRC)—headed up by Herman Reissig, with Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, serving as honorary chairman—undertook a number of projects involving its more than 100 chapters throughout the country. In addition to leaflets and photos, their most ambitious program that summer was a screening campaign of a new

half-hour documentary on the French camps. The film, entitled *Refuge*, was a dubbed-over and shortened version of *Un peuple attend*. This documentary, directed earlier that year by Jean-Paul LeChanois, alias Jean-Paul Dreyfus, and edited by Irving Lerner, combined newsreel with original footage, including sequences shot in the camps with a camera hidden in a grocery bag. Long thought lost, a 16mm print of *Refuge* has recently surfaced among ALBA's collection and will be screened at the symposium on May 1, along with other rare footage.

The politics of humanitarianism

Refuge was the SRRC's last large fundraising project before it succumbed to the political tensions undermining the Left's relief efforts in

hundreds of organizations in many countries had drummed up support for Spain. Although from the beginning much of the fundraising had been geared toward humanitarian aid (in part because other forms of support were prohibited by legislation demanding neutrality or non-intervention), almost all of the organizations involved were clearly identified with either the Republicans or the Nationalists. (The main exceptions were the Quakers and the Red Cross.) During the war, most groups had focused on political work, particularly mobilizing public opinion in favor of one side or the other. Franco's victory confronted these organizations with a different reality. Pro-Franco groups could tranquilly disband. But most of those supporting the Republic recognized that, even if they

The large cache of negatives from Capa, Taro, and Seymour that were recently recovered includes 10 rolls covering the French camps; a selection will be shown at the symposium on May 1.

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Sofía museum in Madrid purchased a set of 30; in 2005 they were part of a Rosenblum retrospective at PhotoEspaña in Madrid. The 25 photographs displayed at the King Juan Carlos Center until May were given as a gift to the Tamiment Library by the Rosenblum family. It is the first time a large set from the series has been shown in the United States.

Rosenblum's photographs for the USC form an integral part of his career. Following in Hine's footsteps, he recorded the impact on ordinary people—particularly children—of some of the major events of the 20th century, from economic depression to colonialism and armed conflict.



Working in East Harlem, Haiti, Europe, and the South Bronx, he was drawn to situations that revealed the experiences of immigrants and the poor. Early on, he made an important discovery. "I realized," he said, "that I worked best when I was photographing something or someone I loved and that through my photographs I could pay them homage." ■

the wake of the Spanish war. The Refugee Relief Campaign had initially come out of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. But while the Committee's goals were political in nature (as its name clearly indicated), the SRRC explicitly profiled itself as purely humanitarian—a "non-political relief organization made up of hundreds of individuals who are interested in aiding the Spanish refugees." "This," an informational handout emphasized, "is its sole purpose. It has no connection with any political group and does not engage in any other activity."

It was an important distinction. During the previous three years,

refused to give up the fight against fascism, the new situation in Spain called for different tactics and priorities. To be sure, the political struggle continued after April 1939—the goal now was to block international recognition of the Franco regime—but humanitarian work took center stage.

The decision to scale down political profiles and to focus on humanitarian aid was as tactical as it was pragmatic. Of course it was overwhelmingly clear that the hundreds of thousands of Spaniards in France—among whom were also some former International Brigadiers—required urgent help. What was needed more

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