

facturing slowdown, a new Republican White House, and the consequences of casino gambling, it is very difficult to share their optimism.

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D. P. (Pat) Stephens — *A Memoir of the Spanish Civil War: An Armenian-Canadian in the Lincoln Battalion. Edited and with an Introduction and Afterword by Rick Rennie.* St. John's, Newfoundland: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2000. Pp. 119.

Douglas Patrick (Pat) Stephens was one of the roughly 1,400 Canadians who joined the International Brigades and fought in the Spanish Civil War against the forces of General Francisco Franco. Stephens was a member of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion of the 15th Brigade in Spain and saw active duty from 1937 to early 1939. His first-hand account of the war will be of particular interest to historians of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, to historians of the Communist Party of Canada, and to general readers who are interested in soldiers' accounts of their combat experiences.

Stephens was born in Armenia in 1910 and emigrated with his family to Canada in 1926. Like many Canadians, he was hard hit by the Depression and moved from job to job from 1929 to 1936. He volunteered for the war in December 1936, using his association with Roy Davis, who was the Chief Organizer of the Young Communist League in Toronto. He and Davis had met through Stephens's connections in the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. Davis introduced Stephens to the Moscow-trained Communist Stanley Buchanan. Stephens was approved only after he had submitted a short autobiography and a statement about his and his family's political and financial disposition and had met with a certain Comrade John from the Recruiting Committee. He travelled to Spain via New York and Paris, arriving on February 14, 1937. He started as a machine gunner, moved on to a supply post position, and eventually served as a military investigator. Shortly before the war ended, Stephens was hospitalized because of a wound to his right hand that had festered. This marked the end of his combat experience in the Spanish Civil War. The memoir ends with Stephens's arrival in Newhaven, Britain, where he learned, through newspaper headlines, "Barcelona Fallen to Franco". It concludes with the line, "That was the sad end of my romantic attempt to make the world safe for democracy" (p. 117). This statement perfectly illustrates a number of unanswered issues and questions that face the reader; in this case, one is not certain whether the comment contains any irony.

Stephens does not address the fact that, while he may have thought that he was making the world "safe for democracy", he had in this battle allied himself with the Stalinist Soviet Union, which was anything but democratic. He served as a military investigator under the command of the SIM (*Servicio de Investigación Militar*) (p. 93), which was the Communist-dominated counter-espionage agency that operated

in the Republican zone. The Communists, of course, conducted an ideological war against the right as well as the left (and against the anarchists in particular) during the war. Stephens's duties involved establishing agents in each company who would in turn establish agents in each platoon. He was to submit reports on troop morale, on rumors and who had started them, on suspicious characters, on the military effectiveness of the battalions, and on the efficiency of their officers. He received a safe conduct pass from Divisional Headquarters and was able to travel in all parts of Republican Spain without hindrance. At one point Stephens was sent by his superiors to a concentration camp in Barcelona that held, in his words, "deserters, political unreliaables, and light criminals who had been conscripted for military service" (p. 110). He was to ascertain the character of the inmates and to comment on their loyalty to the Republic. Stephens writes, "I tried to be like one of them but they were too damn smart, they could 'smell' me.... There was nothing to indicate from their behaviour whether they were for or against the Republic, so I really did not glean much from this endeavour" (p. 110).

This political aspect to the war is not examined in any great depth. Stephens writes that his decision to volunteer was based on the "heady euphoria in the minds of leftist intellectuals" (p. 17) who wanted to join the fight against Fascism, as well as the fact that some of his friends had volunteered. Stephens does not, for the most part, comment upon the political control that was exercised on the Republican side by Comintern agents, nor does he examine this aspect of the war itself. He does not include in his account the fact that he underwent a series of interviews conducted by the War Commissariat of the International Brigades. This information is provided by Rick Rennie, the editor of the book, courtesy of material from the National Archives of Canada. Most interestingly, the Party Committee described Stephens as an "efficient, loyal, dependable soldier" who would make a good propagandist (p. 119). Stephens, by Rennie's account, was largely apolitical after the Spanish Civil War, serving in World War II and then settling down to a quiet life in Toronto. Rennie hints at Stephens's possible "disillusionment" at the end of his book, but Stephens himself makes no comment upon his political beliefs at the end of the conflict or upon whether or not he felt that his sacrifice had been worthwhile.

The account is readable and compelling, and it does offer a first-hand account of the military side of the war. Stephens interestingly suggests that a certain Quarter Master General, Comrade Gundulach, whom he met in Barcelona, looked strikingly similar to Walter Ulbricht, who served in the International Brigades and rose to prominence after the Second World War as SED (Socialist Unity Party) leader in the German Democratic Republic. In fact, he thinks that they were one and the same person (p. 79). Stephens met a number of interesting figures in the International Brigades — such as Oliver Law, Oscar Hunter, Steve Nelson, Robert Merriman, and George Wattis. A few celebrities and famous journalists make appearances — Ernest Hemingway, Louis Fischer, Herbert Mathews (*New York Times*), Robert Payne (*London Chronicle*), Vincent Sheehan (*Herald Tribune*), and Delmer Sefton (*London Daily Express*) (pp. 49, 97). Stephens met Hemingway, Mathews, Delmar, and Fischer at the Florida Hotel in Madrid and was somewhat repulsed by the comfort in which the reporters lived during wartime. He writes, "None of these men

really impressed me, not even Hemingway. They were cold and impersonal, and seemed to not care what happened in Spain, or for that matter in the world" (p. 50). This leads directly to another of the larger issues suggested by Stephens's book. Spain itself is incidental to the larger conflict between Fascism and Communism; most of the volunteers do not seem to have known much about the Spanish nation before they arrived, and the Spanish troops on the Republican side are presented as secondary characters when they are presented at all.

Rick Rennie provides a short introduction and a brief afterword, along with a very limited chronological account of the Spanish Civil War and a useful listing of the major engagements of the 15th Brigade. A more thorough chronology would be of great use to non-specialists who are unfamiliar with the major events of the war; such readers would similarly benefit from a more thorough editorial introduction containing an overview of modern Spanish history and the causes of the Spanish Civil War in particular. Canadianists who read this memoir will not gather much information on the Spanish aspect of the war or on the role of foreign intervention by the Fascist powers and the Soviet government in the war itself, while those familiar with Spanish history would have benefitted from an extended chapter on the reaction of the Canadian government to the war and to Canadians who volunteered to fight in Spain. There are a few lines on the Canadian government's *Foreign Enlistment Act* of July 1937 and the attitude of the Canadian government and the RCMP toward the repatriation of volunteers in the postwar years, but more commentary would have been welcome. Rennie includes a number of interesting footnotes that suggest further sources on the International Brigades. The book would profit from the inclusion of an index.

Rennie's at times heavy-handed editorial decisions are open to debate. He writes in his introduction that he "deleted some material which was clearly superfluous", "made corrections in some cases where Stephens was factually wrong about something" (an editorial footnote would have been more appropriate), created chapter breaks and chapter titles, and, more problematically, took the decision to omit names in cases when Stephens related "potentially embarrassing or defamatory anecdotes about certain individuals — ordinary volunteers like himself" (p. 12). Rennie's justification is that "there was little to be gained at this stage by naming names" (p. 13). Since Stephens himself thought it useful to include the specific names, this decision is rather unfortunate. The utility of Stephens's account is that it is a primary document on foreign intervention in the Spanish Civil War. It would thus have been of greater use to the historical record for Rennie to have left the manuscript more or less as he acquired it. Historians prefer to judge for themselves whether or not certain material is of historical value.

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