

**THE ANTI-FASCISM OF THE CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS
IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, 1936-1939**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis demonstrates that Canadian support for the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s was concentrated around the Communist Party of Canada and its sympathisers. The popular front strategy of the CPC strongly influenced the attitude of the supporters of the Spanish Republic in Canada and affected the perceptions and political ideas of the Canadian volunteers for the International Brigades. Although radical ideas and the Great Depression had an influence, the volunteers were not mobilised to promote Communism either in Canada or in Spain. Instead, the ideas of opposing Fascism and defending democracy, as constructed and promoted by the CPC, were the main motivations for the Canadians who fought in the Spanish Civil War.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CASD	Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy [Initially the Spanish Medical Aid Committee]
CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
CLDL	Canadian Labour Defence League
CLWF	Canadian League against War and Fascism
CNT	Confederación Nacional de Trabajo [National Confederation of Workers]
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CPC	Communist Party of Canada
CPUSA	Communist Party of United States of America
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International (Third International – Comintern)
FAI	Federación Anarquista Ibérica [Iberian Anarchist Federation]
FMPB	Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion
HCIB	Historical Commission of the International Brigades
LAWF	League Against War and Fascism
LSR	League for Social Reconstruction
POUM	Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista [Marxist United Workers Party]
PCF	Parti communiste de France [Communist Party of France]
PCE	Partido Comunista de España [Communist Party of Spain]

NKVD	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vnoutrennykh Diel</i> [People's Commissariat for the Interior]
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RCWU	Relief Camp Workers' Union
ULFTA	Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association
WUL	Workers' Unity League
YCL	Young Communist League

Introduction

The importance of the Spanish Civil War in modern history is undeniable. Spain in the 1930s was not unlike any European state where confrontations between Leftist and Rightist factions were frequent. Spain, however, was beleaguered by conflicts between old and new political, economic and social ideas that were particularly Spanish in essence. Spain had once been a major power in international relations with the discovery and conquest of the Americas. Its prestigious role declined and by the turn of the 20th century republican and monarchist forces were vehemently confronting each other. With the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931, political instability was part of the everyday life of Spaniards. Governments shifted from Central-Left to Central-Right and this instability further polarised radical minds. The Republican camp, which was led by the Popular Front alliance of 1936, wanted the restoration of Republicanism in Spain. Franco and his supporters wanted the restoration of the old order. Strong ideological rhetoric became used in Spain to describe opposing factions. The words Communism and Fascism became fashionable.

In an attempt to restore Spain's cherished historical role, part of the Army rose in July 1936 with the intent of overthrowing the Popular Front government. The Rebels did not obtain the backing of all Spaniards. The army rebellion soon failed and turned into a civil war, which lasted nearly three years. As a result, Spain quickly turned into an important theatre of war. People came from all parts of the world to side with either the Republican or the Nationalist camp.¹ Never before had a war crystallised so much

¹ Semantic usage during the Civil War deserves a better analysis. First, the Rebel coup of July 1936 was led by Army officers and part of their troops. The Generals Francisco Franco, José Sanjuro and Emilio

sympathy abroad. For many, because the Spanish war was set in the polarised Europe of the 1930s, it was seen as a confrontation between Fascism and Communism.² The Spanish Civil War became as much a cause for the Left as for the Right.³

In the midst of the 1930s both camps had been highly influenced by the political polarisation happening in Europe. In spite of the fact that Spanish political debates did not coincide with the debates in the rest of Europe, the need to use European rhetoric in Spain became a necessary impediment. Both camps became crystallised with the European political wording. The effects of the European polarisation process were acute on the Spanish political existence throughout the history of its republic. The ferocity of the language used to belittle the opponent's camp reflects the extent to which

Mola Vidal were the three leading figures. Initially, their movement was apolitical. Later, when the coup turned into a civil war, they became increasingly urged by Germany and Italy to adopt a clear political agenda, although this was never accomplished during the war. Franco who was named generalissimo on 1 October 1936 intensified his relation with the small Catalan Falange Española party. However, Franco and the Rebels did not have to associate themselves with the Falange Española as prior to the war they were already widely portrayed as Fascists. Although the Rebels were ideologically distant from Fascism and many historians and political scientists have assumed that the Rebels were never Fascists, the link still persists in popular literature and among a few historians. For these reasons, in this thesis, the Rebels are either depicted as Nationalists or Rebels but never as Fascists. On the other hand, the Republican camp is pictured as the Loyalists camp or the Popular Front camp, but never as the Communist camp. However, because of the pressure exercised by the PCE and Comintern agents in infiltrating all aspects of Republican life, it would almost be accurate to use the expression Communist camp to describe the Loyalist camps at the end of the war. In this present research only the word Republican will be used.

² This can be explained by the fact that Europe had become much polarised as a result of the growing tension engendered by the political and diplomatic gains made by Nazism in Germany. The political context of Europe at the time affected the Spanish political discourse. Some historians have concluded that the conflict emerged out of divergent positions promoted to modernise Spain, which was politically, socially and economically backward compared to the rest of Europe. Therefore, strong European ideologies – such as Communism and Fascism – only exacerbated the conflict in Spain. Paul Preston has commented that: “The Spanish Civil War is on the one hand very much a Spanish War.” Paul Preston, “Spanish Civil War: Right Versus Left in the 1930s” in *Modern History Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1991, p.2. Willard C. Frank also supports Preston's assumptions. He adds that although the Spanish conflict had its roots in Spain, its repercussions were significant outside the Iberian Peninsula. Accordingly: “A clear delineation of the contending blocs among the great powers was one of the clearest results of the war in Spain.” Willard C. Frank, “The Spanish Civil War and the Coming of the Second World War”, in *The International History Review*, Vol. IX, No. 3, August 1987, p.400. See also the following book for a fully elaborated study on the subject: Paul Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction and Revolution in the Second Republic* (New York 1994).

Fascism and Communism affected the two camps. Moreover, the military assistance of the Soviet Union, Germany and Italy further polarised both Spanish camps.

The Spanish Republic at war was greatly assisted by Communist forces. The International Brigades, which were organised and led by the Comintern, under Moscow's guidance, played an important role in fighting the Nationalist Forces. Volunteers came from throughout the world to fill up the ranks of the Brigades with the aim of defeating the Spanish Rebels. After more than two years of fighting the goal was not achieved. In February 1939, Paris and London recognised the Nationalist government in Madrid and the demise of Spanish Republicanism. Among the members of the Brigades, there were many Canadians. Many of them never came back from their Spanish journey.

It was a strenuous job during the Spanish Civil War to report on the story of the Canadian volunteers. Public attitude towards the Canadian contingent was split along lines that reflected their position towards the Spanish Republic itself. When, in late 1938 and early 1939 the Canadian contingent was brought back to Canada, eyes were directed towards other events happening in Europe. A few months later, the Germans were signing a pact of non-aggression with the Soviet Union and a few days later both marched on Poland. The Second World War had started.

The signing of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact was a detrimental blow to the sympathisers of Spanish Republicanism. Canadian volunteers were portrayed as traitors to the cause of anti-Fascism since they had supported the Soviet Union, the

³ David Cairns and Shaun Richards, "No Good Brave Cause? The Alienated Intellectual and the End of Empire", in *Literature and History* (Great Britain), Vol. 14, No. 2, 1988, p.195.

same Soviet Union which had struck a deal with Fascist Berlin. Little is known of the reaction of the veterans when the pact was signed. It would be conceivable to think that the sharp reversal of policy by Moscow must have fostered a feeling of isolation among the volunteers.⁴ This would have rendered the task of writing on the history of the Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War even more difficult.⁵

Although today the ideological conflicts of the 1930s have long disappeared, other obstacles impeded the task of writing on the Canadians volunteers. As the events took place more than 60 years ago, only a few veterans are still alive. The task is also circumscribed by the fact that few veterans left memoirs or wrote on their Spanish experience. What motivated them to go fight for the Spanish Republic is therefore established through the available primary sources and through historical extrapolation.

It has often been suggested that Communism was the driving force of the members of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. The linkage made between the Comintern as the chief organiser of the fighting unit, and Communism as the main objective of the volunteers, is a dangerous over-simplification. The true object of the Comintern in organising the Brigades was not the establishment of a Communist state in Spain, but the fulfilment of its new 1935 leading policy, which was to fight Fascism at all cost.

This link between Communism and the Brigadiers has been made by some in Canadian historical works. Some authors have assumed that the volunteers were

⁴ The Cold War ideological tensions were also another obstacle when writing on the history of the Canadian volunteers.

⁵ Of all Canadian volunteers, only Ted Allan and Hugh Garner were to become authors. This also limits the Canadian contemporary literature on the subject.

Communists.⁶ Others, without clearly making such a link, have been elusive on the political commitment of the Canadians volunteers.⁷ This confusion stands from the limited amount of research that has dealt with the subject in any depth. There is a profusion of historical research on the Spanish Civil War, but a scant amount on the history of the International Brigades and the history of the Canadian contingent. No historian has ever fully examined what motivated so many Canadians to join the International Brigades.⁸

⁶ Mark Zuehlke first comments that “many of the Canadians who went to Spain called themselves communists”, then in the next paragraph he states that “It is true, too, that most of the Canadians who went to Spain were more anti-fascist than anything else.” The order used to describe the Canadian volunteers leaves the reader with an unclear picture of who the Canadian volunteers were. Were they mostly Communists or anti-Fascists? Zuehlke, again, seems to suggest that they were first Communists and in second place anti-Fascist. The Gallant Cause : Canadians in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939 (Toronto 1996), p.xi. Norman Penner also makes allusion to the fact that the Canadian contingent fighting in the Spanish Civil War was composed of Communists. He says that: “The Canadian Communists under this new approach (Popular Front tactic) did some prodigious work in new interpretations of Mackenzie, Papineau, and Riel, whom they identified as revolutionary heroes of the Canadian past. By naming the Canadian Battalion that went to fight for the Spanish Republican Government in 1936, the “Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion,” they drew public attention to this revolutionary tradition.” Again, although the link between the Canadian volunteers and their membership to the CPC is not made specifically, one is left with the impression that the Battalion was made-up of Canadian Communists. The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Scarborough 1977). The authors of Canada’s Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1996 (Toronto 1982) clearly state that the Canadian volunteers were Communists: “Communists constituted the main core of the recruits who fought – and died – in Spain. In fact, the party lost a large section of its cadre in Spain,” p.127.

⁷ G.P. de T. Glazebrook talks about: “Some hundreds of volunteers went to fight for the Republican cause, and others felt that it was the crisis of the developing conflict between democracy and fascism.” G.P. de T. Glazebrook, A History of Canadian External Relations. Vol.II: The Empire and the World, 1914-1939 (Montreal 1970) and Ramsay Cook assumes that: “En dépit de la neutralité de leur pays, quelque 1300 Canadiens se portent volontaires pour aller défendre la démocratie espagnole dans le bataillon Mackenzie-Papineau. Ramsay Cook, “Triomphe et revers du nationalisme 1900-1945”, in Paul-André Linteau, Ed., (French Edition) Histoire générale du Canada (Montréal 1990 (1987- English edition)), p.550.

⁸ There exists however, some Canadian research on the subject: William C. Beeching, Canadian Volunteers Spain, 1936-1939 (Regina 1989); Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion : the Canadian contingent in the Spanish Civil War (Ottawa 1986 (1969)); Mark Zuehlke, The Gallant Cause, Canadians in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939 (Vancouver 1996); Myron Momrik, “‘For Your Freedom and For Ours’ Konstantin (Mike) Olynyk, A Ukrainian Volunteer From Canada in the International Brigades”, in Canadian Ethnic Studies/Études Ethniques au Canada, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1988, pp.124-134; Randy Gibbs Ervin, “The Men of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: A case study of the involvement of the International Communist Movement in the Spanish Civil war”, M.A.Thesis, Carleton University, 1972.

The work of Hywell Francis is, however, an example of research on the International Brigades. Francis has completed a substantial study on “The Background and Motives of Welsh Volunteers in the International Brigades, 1936-1938”.⁹ Never before has there been such a genuine effort to establish what the motives and the background of the volunteers were.¹⁰ Francis has relied on a plethora of data as the basis of his assumptions on the Welsh volunteers. The strength of his work lies in the fact that he has conducted a wide quantitative study on the background of the volunteers. In his research, Francis had direct access to the South Wales Miners’ Library material and his historical knowledge of the Welsh volunteers is extensive. Although Francis’ endeavour could be used as a model, this present thesis has favoured another approach. Exclusively focussing on a demographic approach leads to inconclusive results when trying to determine the motives of the volunteers. Biographical descriptions of the volunteers, although extensive, inform the researcher only superficially on the true motivation of the volunteers. Knowing that one was a member of the Communist Party explains only very little about why he became a member in the first place. It is necessary to uncover what was the context in which the Canadian volunteers were recruited for Spain. Part of our intention is therefore to draw a broad picture of the Canadian socio-economic context of the 1930s. In addition, a demographic approach, like that of Francis, is exceedingly time-consuming. This has prompted us to follow another path in the present thesis.

⁹ Hywel Francis, “The Background and Motives of Welsh Volunteers in the International Brigades, 1936-1938”, in *International Journal of Oral history*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1981, pp.84-108.

¹⁰ This assumption is based on the study of Western European and North American literature. There exists a multitude of work on the history of volunteers. These works do not, however, reveal the motives of the volunteers but mostly recount the history of the volunteers. For this reason, there is a definite need to uncover what motivated so many to join the fight in Spain.

The intent of this thesis is twofold. It is first intended to overview the Canadian context at the time of the Depression. When put into the later context, the aims and motivations of the Canadians who volunteered for the International Brigades are sought. The second portion of the thesis will answer this essential question. What motivated the many Canadians who joined the International Brigades has never been systematically researched. Similarly, no explanation exists on the substantial size of the Canadian contingent in the International Brigades. Historians have not adequately expanded on both subjects.

Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds' book The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (originally published in 1969) is still today viewed as a major contribution to the historiography of the Canadian participation in the Spanish Civil War. The importance of this work is not in question. However, a few of the authors' assumptions need to be rectified. First, the assumption that the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was truly a Canadian unit is misleading. It will be demonstrated that the Battalion was not, at any time of its existence composed of a majority of Canadians. This in turn, misleads the reader when the history of the Canadians in Spain and that of the members of the Battalion are examined interchangeably. On page viii the authors talk about "the Canadians who served in the International Brigades" and in the paragraph below they talk about "the Mac-Paps".¹¹ Careful distinction is needed when talking about the two groups. Hence, this thesis will shed some light on the history of the Canadian volunteers who were not members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and those who were.

¹¹ Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.viii.

Secondly, Howard and Reynolds, like other historians, have also linked Communism with the majority of the Canadian volunteers. The authors state that:

There is no way of telling just how many of the Canadian volunteers actually belonged to one of these organizations (the Communist Party of Canada or the Young Communist League). One figure of 60 per cent has been proposed for the entire body of the internationals; the likelihood is that the Canadian percentage would be somewhat higher, given the particularly aggressive direction taken by the working class during the years prior to the outbreak of the conflict in Spain.¹²

This is also misleading. As is going to be demonstrated in this thesis, Communism was not the foremost driving force of the Canadian volunteers, but rather the Communist anti-Fascist position. The authors refrained from trying to find reasons why Canadians joined both the CPC and the International Brigades. By assuming that CPC members were a majority in the Canadian contingent, Howard and Reynolds accepted that Communism constituted a strong motivation for the Canadians to volunteer. This is a weak and risky oversimplification of the nature of the Canadian involvement in Spain.

Howard and Reynolds have also not accounted for the fact that the Canadian contingent was the second largest *per capita* among all the countries represented in the Brigades. This is rather a puzzling achievement taking into account the geographical distance that separated Spain from Canada and the small size of the Spanish population living in Canada at the time. However, the object of their research can justify the shortcomings. Their aim was not to reveal what incited many Canadians to join the fight

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 35-36. They use Robert A. Rosenstone, "The Men of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion", in The Journal of American History, LIV, September 1967, p. 335.

in Spain but to write a general history of the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.

Other authors later pursued Howard and Reynolds' endeavour. William C. Beeching, who was himself a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, has also written on the history of the Canadian participation. His work, Canadian Volunteers, Spain 1936-1939 deals mostly with the campaigns and military feats in which Canadians took part. As it was not the aim of the author, this research contributed little to finding what motivated the Canadian volunteers to join the Brigades. It was, however, a useful undertaking and contributed to our general understanding of the history of the Canadian volunteers.

Finally, Mark Zuehlke published a book on the Canadian involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Zuehlke's book, The Gallant Cause: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939, overviews, in a journalistic style, the life of the Canadian volunteers in Spain.¹³ Chapter fifteen, where the author discusses the returning of the Canadians and the struggle they had with Canadian authorities, is quite interesting. It describes the grim general context with which the Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War were faced because of the reluctance of the Canadian authorities to repatriate them.¹⁴ Although a pleasant reading, Zuehlke's book has no direct quotations. The author has used a wide range of sources that are not consistently organised. For this reason the importance of Zuehlke's assumptions is limited.

¹³ His writing style resembles the popular style of Pierre Berton.

¹⁴ "The Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion reported regularly on the Canadian government's endless bureaucratic foot-dragging. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, claiming that the Mac-Paps were mercenaries and communists who would foment armed revolution upon their return, vigorously opposed their repatriation." Mark Zuehlke, *op. cit.*, p.245.

Theses were also used in the present research. Randy Ervin's M.A. thesis, "The Men of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: A Case Study of the Involvement of the International Communist Movement in the Spanish Civil War" contributed little to the advancement of the historiography. Since Ervin was concerned with the Communist involvement in organising the Canadian volunteers, he did not try to find the motives of the volunteers for joining the Brigades. He was mostly concerned with the analysis of the relation between the CPC and the Canadian veterans. He therefore did not try to find out why so many Canadian volunteers were members of the CPC. The relation between the impulse to join the CPC and the Brigades is not made explicit in Ervin's thesis.

The thesis of Martin H.P. Lobigs, "Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939" was also used in this present research. Lobigs' thesis is substantial in many ways. It includes an indepth analysis of the recruitment campaign conducted in Canada using a variety of sources. He made good use of the RCMP reports of the surveillance on the recruitment campaign conducted in Canada.¹⁵ Using the records, he demonstrated how the campaign was conducted. He also integrated in the discussion, the Canadians who played a role in influencing the Canadian volunteers. However, the scope of the thesis was limited. For this reason, Lobigs, like Howard and Reynolds, did not distinguish the Canadian volunteers from the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, assuming that an analysis of the one would lead to a full comprehension of the other. Yet, Lobigs knew that many Canadians who were fighting in Spain were not members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. On page 126 he comments that :

However, a statement of Saul Wellman, an American who became a political commissar of the Mac-Paps, suggests that even after the Mac-Paps were founded, many Canadians preferred to fight with the battalion of their European countrymen. In fact, the number appears to have been so high that it is likely that without the American volunteers filling the ranks of the Mac-Paps, the battalion would not have been able to survive.

Lobigs seems to understand that the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and the Canadian volunteers were not the same group. The characteristics of the two groups were similar yet they were distinct.

In Chapter one, Lobigs draws a broad picture of who the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion were and what their motivations were for joining. This analysis overlooked two important characteristics of the Canadian volunteers: Why was the Canadian response to join the Brigades so great, and what was the role of the CPC in shaping the volunteers' perceptions of Spain?

On page 111 he summarises the reasons that incited the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion to volunteer:

Several reasons stated by the volunteers or close relatives at the time the men went to Spain suggest that adventurism and hopes for financial rewards were not decisive. More important appears to have ideals, principles and political concern. Economic hardship and degradation experienced in Canada appear to have influenced the views many volunteers held on the significance of the Spanish Civil War.¹⁶

This quotation points to one of the flaws of his thesis. In the first instance, he points to the motives given by the volunteers of the Mackenzie-Papineau to join the Brigades. He then points to the fact that "ideals, principles and political concerns" were a product

¹⁵ RCMP Records. File "Recruiting for Spanish Army (10 October 1936 – 29 August 1979)".

of the Depression and led the volunteers to join the Brigades. In the chapter, he did not make the connection between the motives that were given by the volunteers, and the role the Depression climate had on constructing their ideals and political concerns towards Spain. What factor contributed to the association made, in the minds of the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, between Spain and the Depression? The answer seems to be that the Communists constructed the political concerns and ideals of most Canadian volunteers and Battalion members. The views held by the volunteers "on the significance of the Spanish Civil War" were produced by the CPC.

Finally, although Lobigs summarised the support the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion had in Canada, he did not clearly explain the position adopted by the Canadian intellectuals. He claims that support for the battalion was "largely due to increasing militancy in the Canadian public in response to Nazi and fascist aggression in Europe." The increased interest of the Canadians for the Spanish Civil War or the Battalion did not come from involved intellectuals in spite of the fact that British and American intellectuals were definitively influenced by the war in Spain. Again, the CPC seems to have constructed and monopolised the anti-Rebel discourse and the support for the members of the Battalion in Canada. Our criticism of Lobigs' work, which is still an important contribution to the history of the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, partly justifies the writing of this thesis.

Gregory Page has also written an M.A. thesis on the subject of the Canadian involvement in the Spanish Civil War. He was mostly interested in examining the level of ideological commitment of the Canadian volunteers. He concluded that most

¹⁶ Martin Lobigs, "The Men of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion", p.111.

Canadian volunteers were deeply committed to the cause of fighting Fascism and defending the Republic. According to Page, “the Canadian volunteers for the Spanish Civil War had volunteered because they believed in the cause of the Brigades and the Republic. In other words the volunteers were motivated by ideology more than by anything else.”¹⁷ Although there is much truth in Page’s comment, still his thesis lacks an explanation of how the Canadian volunteers became strongly influenced by ideologies and by the events happening in Spain. Although he rightly points to the fact that a high number of immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe, were members of the Canadian contingent, he relies mostly on the fact of their national origin to explain why they were ideologically committed. Being immigrants only facilitated the acceptance of the Communist ideal but is not the main reason why they became Communist cardholders or sympathisers. The Depression climate favoured Communist propaganda. With the Spanish rebellion, this propaganda was further accepted by a large audience that included immigrant Canadians.

Apart from these shortcomings and a weak understanding of the actual events happening in Spain, Page’s thesis is insightful in other respects.¹⁸ On pages 38 to 47 he

¹⁷ Gregory Page, “Ideology and the Canadian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-9”, M.A. thesis, University of New-Brunswick, 1998, p.6.

¹⁸ Page does not seem to fully grasp what was at stake in Spain for a portion of the army rose in July 1936. He comments for example on page 19 that the republic received support only “from France, who sent small amounts of equipment”. Mexico also sent a large amount, in respect to the size of its economy, of equipment. On page 20, Page also comments that “Stalin *immediately* began shipping large quantities of supplies and instructors” [Italics added]. This thesis later demonstrates that Stalin’s reaction was not so immediate. On page 20 he states that “the Comintern was able to drum up enough *proletarian* feeling to provide unofficial support for the Republican effort” [Italics added]. It is far from being proven that Republican support world-wide was proletarian in nature. On page 31 he introduces Hazen Sise as a worker. I am sceptical of calling Sise a worker. After all, he was an architect coming from a wealthy family. Finally, on page 63, he claims that “all of the Western capitalist democracies had signed the Non-Intervention Agreement.” The United States and Canadian government, although in favour of it, never signed the Agreement.

clearly demonstrates how ethnic groups in Canada were closely associated with the Left in Canada. His analysis points to the past history of their homeland to indicate how immigrants arriving in Canada became sympathetic to leftist ideas. Finally, Page has drawn detailed tables on the background of the Canadian volunteers. The quantitative segments of his thesis are useful in drawing the general picture of who the volunteers were.

Mary Peck has written an M.A. thesis on the Canadian media reaction to the Spanish Civil War.¹⁹ Her findings described the information, which circulated in the press at the time. Her work was used to better put into context the period of the Depression and the Spanish Civil War in which the Canadian volunteers' motivations found their roots. Similarly, the works of both Art Cawley and Marc Charpentier have also been used.²⁰ They have helped to make a satisfactory assessment of the information that was circulated in the leading newspapers of Montreal, in the case of Charpentier, and in the English Canadian Catholic press in Cawley's case. Among their findings, it seems as if the support for both camps in the war was not solely based on language and religious distinction but was rooted in a wider complex system of belief which was induced by ideological, economic and humanitarian commitments.

Myron Momryk has also written on the participation of Konstantin Olynyk, a Ukrainian-Canadian in the Spanish Civil War. This biographical article draws a general picture of the Ukrainian-Canadians who were, according to Howard and Reynolds,

¹⁹ It was published later as a book. Mary Biggar Peck, Red Moon Over Spain: Canadian Media Reaction to the Spanish Civil War (Ottawa 1988).

²⁰ Marc Charpentier, "Columns on the March: Montreal Newspapers interpret the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939", M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1992; Art Cawley, "The Canadian Catholic English

numerous in the Canadian contingent. Momryk summarises the life of Olynyk and the context in which he lived. In the last portion of the article, Momryk outlines what “largely influenced” Olynyk to join the International Brigades. He adequately concludes that the fact of having lived in Eastern Europe had definitively shaped Olynyk’s political beliefs.²¹

Published RCMP reports for the years 1936 to 1939 were also utilised in this thesis.²² The RCMP “Weekly Summary: Reports on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitation in Canada” were a valuable source of information on the activities of the CPC and its affiliate organisations. These reports, which were produced by the intelligence services of the RCMP, varied greatly in depth of analysis. In some instances a report on one CPC meeting might take up a dozen pages while others are only briefly mentioned. On the whole, however, CPC activities seem to have been well documented. However, there exist many flaws in the analysis of the writers of these reports. This is especially true in reference to their analysis of the events happening in Spain during the Civil War.²³ For

Language Press and the Spanish Civil War”, in Study Sessions: Canadian Catholic Historical Association, 1982, pp.25-51.

²¹ Myron Momryk, “For Your Struggle and For Ours’ Konstantin (Mike) Olynyk, A Ukrainian Volunteer From Canada in the International Brigades”, in Canadian Ethnic Studies / Études Ethniques au Canada, Vol. XX, No. 2, 1988, p.133.

²² G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: “The Depression Years, Part III, 1936” (St. John’s 1996), RCMP Security Bulletins: “The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937” (St. John’s 1998) and RCMP Security Bulletins: “The Depression Years, Part V, 1938-39” (St. John’s 1998).

²³ The authors of these reports misunderstood the ideological fighting present during the Spanish Civil War. They did not understand the role played by the Comintern in the conflict by overestimating the revolutionary role of the Spanish war. In report number 867 dated the 17 August 1937, the authors stated that: “The opportunity to train Canadians in practical revolution in Spain was welcomed by the C.P. leadership”. This is wrong. All revolutionary sentiment that existed in the first months of the war, especially in Barcelona, had been destroyed during the spring of the same year. The goal of the report, which was to comment on the revolutionary organizations and agitation in Canada, might explain this overstatement. On the next report, the authors assume that: “The Trotskyist inspired *Friends of Workers’ Spain* at Montreal is now holding an exhibition of Spanish posters and paintings in Strathcona Hall in an endeavour to emphasise the strength and unity of the force behind the Madrid-Valencia Government.” As stated above, the same Madrid-Valencia Government had eradicated revolutionary factions, especially the Trotskyist ones, earlier in Spain. This statement is incorrect. See G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: “The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937”, p.335 and 349.

this reason, these reports need to be used carefully. A strict evaluation of the content of the reports was followed throughout its use in this thesis.

Two National Archives of Canada fonds were also utilised: “The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Collection”, and “The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fond.” The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fond is composed of four file lists; File List 1 to 3 and File List 6.²⁴ The first one is entitled: “Documentary Material of the Commissariat of War of the International Brigades and of the Commissar-Inspector of the International Brigades (L. Longo)²⁵, 1936-1939²⁶.” Divided into 14 files, it contains many combat and supply reports, lists of personnel, personal and personnel information, correspondence of volunteers and other technical matters. File List 2 is composed of “Documentary Materials of the International Brigades' Base and Central War Administration of the Ministry of National Defence of the Spanish Republic, 1936-1939.” It is divided into 15 Files. It contains army organisational structures of the Army of the Spanish Republic and the International Brigades, service notes to personnel, various lists of personnel and their appointments, file list compiled by the Base Medical Commission on the battle capacity of the wounded and various diaries, inspirational writings and correspondence of International Brigadiers.

The third file list, “Documentary Material of the 35th and 45th Divisions, Mixed Brigades of the Republican Army, Interbrigades and Other Formations, 1937-1939” is

²⁴ See George Bolotenko article “The National Archives and Left-Wing Sources from Russia: Records of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, the Communist Party of Canada and Left-Wing Internationals”, in *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol.37, Spring 1996, pp.179-203.

²⁵ Luigi Longo (1900-1980) member of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) was first Political Commissar to the XII Brigade (mostly composed of Italians in the Garibaldi Battalion) then Inspector General or Commissar-Inspector of the International Brigades.

divided into 12 files. This file list is surely the most interesting one. The first six files are composed of Brigade Commissariat matters, such as military discipline and exchanges between Headquarters. Files 507 to 512 are highly insightful. These comprise many lists of personnel and statistical information on members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Files 509 to 512 contain a valuable questionnaire that was filled by 398 members of the 60th Battalion (Mackenzie-Papineau) which totals 729 pages. These last files offer many overtures for demographic historical research.

The last file list is also interesting. Divided into 42 files, the file, which is entitled "Documents on Volunteers of the Interbrigades, Participants of the National-Revolutionary War in Spain, 1936-1939", contains much detailed information on Canadians serving in Spain. It contains various lists with detailed information on Canadian volunteers in Spain, including name, nationality, profession, education, family status, address, political affiliation, service in Spain, unit. File 539 also contains two roster lists from the "General Inventory of the Index Card Library of the XVth Brigade, of Canadian Nationality". It lists 825 Canadians who served in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. It also holds another list from the "Inventory of the Index Card Library of Comrades of Canadian Nationality in Various Units", which lists 314 Canadian participants. Finally, files 541 to 576 also contain interesting information. They are divided by surnames and contain in some cases much detailed information on Canadian volunteers such as personal information from the War Commissariat, political reliability and military ability

²⁶ Instead of the years 1936-1939, it should be read 1936-1938 since the International Brigades were dismantled officially and in practice in September 1938.

assessment by the Central Committee of the PCE, freehand assessments by officers and commissars, and other material such as personal correspondence.

The second fond: "The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Collection", was less used. This collection was compiled by Victor Howard and was ultimately used by him and Mac Reynolds in writing their book. The collection was compiled from 1935 to 1986 and contains 1.160 meters of material. It is further divided into the Victor Howard (Hoar) Papers, the Edward Cecil Smith Paper, papers from The Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and the Walter E. Dent Papers. In it one can find series of Howard's correspondence with veterans, a series of draft histories written by Edward C. Smith, correspondence between volunteers and the Friends and some 600 photocopies of biographical cards of Canadian volunteers. Finally, it also holds historic material that was compiled by Walter E. Dent, a veteran and long time executive of the Veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.²⁷

Of both fonds and all files, the detailed questionnaire of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades (File List 3, Files 509 to 512) is the most interesting. In the questionnaires, one can find the answers of many Canadians on what motivated them to join the brigades. Although this fond was of much use in this research, its value is of moderate capacity. It would be misleading to refer exclusively to the answers given by the volunteers to conclude on what motivated them to join the International Brigades. Most of their answers were limited to a mere sentence each. These responses leave the historian with only an overall view of what might have animated them to volunteer for Spain. It

indicates what the aim of the volunteers was in fighting in Spain but reveals little on what was the root of their political and ideological convictions. A much broader analysis of the 1930s era must be conducted in order to arrive at an all-encompassing picture of all sources of motivation.

This thesis demonstrates that Canadian support for the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s was concentrated around the Communist Party of Canada and its sympathisers. The popular front strategy of the CPC strongly influenced the attitude of the supporters of the Spanish Republic in Canada and affected the perceptions and political ideas of the Canadian volunteers for the International Brigades. Although radical ideas and the Great Depression had an influence, the volunteers were not mobilised to promote Communism either in Canada or in Spain. Instead, the ideas of opposing Fascism and defending democracy, as constructed and promoted by the CPC, were the main motivations for the Canadians who fought in the Spanish Civil War.

In undertaking this analysis, the political context of Canada prior to the start of hostilities in the Iberian Peninsula will first be analysed. It will be demonstrated that Canada, although on a smaller scale than in Europe, was also faced with a politically radicalised atmosphere. This provided an ideal ground for the CPC propaganda which conclusively influenced the Canadian volunteers. Secondly, the Canadian perception of the events in Spain, after July 1936 will be studied. A wide range of available sources of information will be examined to understand what the Canadian perception was of

²⁷ The Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion seems to have been founded on 20 May 1937. According to Howard and Reynolds, the Veterans Association was created after September 1938 and

Spain prior to and during the war. Contemporary travel literature and the content of the leftist press in Canada will be analysed in this portion of the research.

Thirdly, an analysis of the political forces that became actively influential in the campaign of support and assistance of the Spanish republic will be conducted. The substantial role taken by the CPC in organising recruitment in Canada and its success as an alternate political option throughout the 1930s will be examined. Fourthly, an overall biographical overview of the Canadian volunteers will be conducted. It will point to what the background of the volunteers was. Finally, on the basis of this analysis, the last chapter of the thesis will determine what the sources of motivation of the Canadians who served in Spain were. The questions of what were they fighting for and for which purpose will specifically be answered. It will be demonstrated that hatred of Fascism and the need to fight for democracy was what united the Canadian volunteers and constituted their purpose in Spain. Because of the volatility of the Communist doctrine at the time and because of the new modus operandi of Popular Front unity, anybody could become a Communist, provided that they were not Fascists.²⁸ For this reason, many people were readily associated with Communism. The last chapter also includes a critique of the classifications used by other historians to group the volunteers according to their motivations.

lasted until 1949. Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.238.

²⁸ Those who supported the policy of Popular Front sided with the Communists. This promoted the idea that such support by one for Popular Frontism made one a Communist. Franz Borkenau, in 1939, cynically commented on the irresolute state of the Communist doctrine in the 1930s: "It is interesting to note that in 1930 Trotskyism was what communism is to-day and that communism then was what is to-day called Trotskyism." Frank Borkenau, World Communism: A History of the Communist International (New York 1939).

Chapter 1 – Political Radicalisation

The historical context of the 1930s explains in part what motivated the Canadian volunteers to join the International Brigades. The socialisation of the volunteers to politics was tied to the living conditions in the time of the Great Depression. The Depression was a fertile ground for radical ideas and these ideas prompted many Canadians to join the fight in Spain. Most importantly, parties of the left such as the CPC and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) demonstrated leadership in confronting the crisis of capitalism. In doing so, they gained wide support. The gains made by the CPC during the Depression, were important in recruiting support for the International Brigades.

The living conditions of the Depression years incited many Canadians to look for nonconformist ideas and served as a catalyst for mounting radicalism. The rise of radicalism induced the polarisation of the discourse of the inter-war political spectrum. Although the extent of Canadian radicalism was never as acute as in Europe, it was a political direction that should not be disregarded. Most of the Canadians who went to Spain were directly a product of this polarisation.

Eric Hobsbawm uses the phrase “The Fall of Liberalism” to describe the ascendancy of Rightist ideas to power in Europe during the inter-war period.¹ Although Hobsbawm is not interested in the political history of Canada when addressing the fall

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century* (London 1994). Chapter two of this book is entitled: “The Fall of Liberalism”. Hobsbawm’s thesis is that “While the economy tottered, the institutions of liberal democracy virtually disappeared between 1917 and 1942 from all but a fringe of Europe and parts of North America and Australasia, as fascism and its satellite authoritarian movements and regimes advanced” (p.7). He later in chapter 4 states his assumptions on why Rightist groups rose in Europe. “The rise of the radical Right after the First World War was undoubtedly a response to the

of Liberalism, his conclusions support the idea that there was, in the 1930s, a polarisation of the political discourse.

The encounter of Canadians with radical political ideas was accomplished by many groups of both Right and Left inclinations. The Canadian Left, which ranged from Communism upheld by the CPC to a mild Socialism of the CCF, was presented in the early 1930s with new opportunities. The division that existed in the ranks of Canadian unions favoured the creation of radical new unions. The Workers' Unity League (WUL) which was CPC affiliated made an energetic debut in the early 1930s. Its strength lay in the fact that unlike other unions, it organised the unskilled workers. This new approach found many supportive voices among the Canadian workers. Although the popularity of the CPC was enhanced among the workers, the WUL was abruptly disbanded in 1935.² However, the gains made by the CPC in organising the unskilled workers were beneficial and lasted longer than the WUL. When the Spanish Civil War began, the CPC found an audience to promote its policies amongst the unskilled workers.

The Communists were, by the mid-1930s, a successful radical political alternative. Because of the Depression, unemployment was at the highest level ever reached in Canada. Many workers wandered around in search of employment. The situation of the farmers was similar when in addition to not being able to sell their farm products, the Prairie Provinces were confronted with droughts. According to Norman

danger, indeed to the reality, of social revolution and working-class power in general, to the October revolution and Leninism in particular." (p.124).

² The WUL was disbanded in 1935 by the CPC following a policy of the Comintern which demanded the merger of small revolutionary unions into wider reformist unions. See Robert Comeau, Les

Penner, CPC success was closely associated with the Depression because the party gave “expression to the discontent of the Depression and [initiated] imaginative, militant, and effective extra-parliamentary activity on a whole host of domestic and foreign policy questions.”³ The CPC proposed solutions to the Depression and actively pursued the improvement of the life of the Canadian workers.

On the contrary, the policy of the federal government seemed to be insufficient. In face of the drastic living conditions, the federal government organised a nation-wide system of relief camps for the unemployed. The fate of the federal system of relief camps was, however, fragile. The camp system was motivated not so much by a will to ameliorate the poor living conditions of the workers but by the danger they represented to Canadian political stability. The vagrancy of the unemployed was cause of much concern for the federal authorities. Being unemployed and having to live the hardship of the Depression was enough to induce them to radical ideas. Ottawa considered that the unemployed represented a menace to law and order.⁴ This rationale better explains the creation of the system of relief camps. Humanitarian sentiment towards the unemployed was not the primary motivating factor.

The CPC, under the auspices of the WUL, soon became active in leading relief camp internees and created the Relief Camp Workers’ Union.⁵ The Union had the initial goal of organising the grievances of the workers. It mobilised them against their shoddy living conditions. Later, in 1935, the Union intensified the tone of its campaign

Communistes au Québec 1936-1956 (Montréal 1980), p.3. For the revolutionary role of the WUL see Tom McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red: from blacksmith to revolutionary* (Toronto 1974), p.141.

³ Norman Penner, *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Scarborough 1977), p.170.

⁴ Michiel Horn, *The Great Depression of the 1930s in Canada* (Ottawa 1984), p.12.

⁵ Jack Williams, *The Story of Unions in Canada* (n.p. 1975), pp.149-151.

and led camp walkouts as signs of protest. The CPC, through the dynamic policies of the WUL, successfully fuelled the image that it was active in promoting better living conditions for the workers.

The On-to-Ottawa-Trek was later organised by the WUL. It had for its objective to reach Ottawa in order to directly present the grievances of the internees to the Prime Minister. Because of the good discipline of the Trekkers, the group succeeded in gaining wide support throughout Canada. However, this indispensable support was not enough for the trek to reach Ottawa. The group was halted in Regina and clashed with police forces. As a result, one policeman died and many workers and policemen were injured. The scare left by the skirmish was to be detrimental to many workers. Among this group, a good portion volunteered for the International Brigades.⁶

The success of the CPC was also helped by the fact that the CPC diversified its activities. It created and supported many political groups that had a somewhat strong following in Canada. The CPC supported the Canadian Labour Defence League (CLDL) and the League Against War and Fascism (LAWF). The LAWF, which was the first anti-Fascist popular front group of the period, was successful and further enhanced the image of the CPC among the Canadian population.⁷ However, as

⁶ Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion : the Canadian contingent in the Spanish Civil War (Ottawa 1986 (1969)), p.29.

⁷ The CLDL was created by the CPC in 1925 and the LAWF was created in October 1934: Norman Penner, Canadian Communism : the Stalin Years and Beyond, p.134. According to Walter D. Young, the initial success of the League is also proved by the fact that many members of the CCF supported its activities. The Anatomy of a Party : The National Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation, 1932-1948 (Toronto 1968), p.261. For a history of the CLDL see J.Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: The Origins and Activities of the Canadian Labour Defence League, 1925-1940" in Labour/Le Travail, Vol. 10, Autumn, 1982, pp.39-63.

identified earlier, the CPC was not the only party trying to gain acceptance during the Depression years.

The radicalism of the time had favoured the flourishing of other factions. In 1932, the CCF, which had a rather radical political platform, was created. According to Norman Penner, the CCF was “the inheritor of several radical strands in the political history of English Canada. It represented the legacy of the main elements of the Socialist and Labour Parties that started at the turn of the century.”⁸ Its presence on the Canadian political scene was impinging on CPC success by gaining support from the same segment of the Canadian population. However, the radical tone employed by the CPC appears to have attracted a different clientele. Only a few CCF members joined the International Brigades.

Nevertheless, the CCF made some considerable advancement in the 1930s. Less radical than the CPC, it was more readily accepted by a wider audience. During the 1935 federal elections the CCF secured 8.9% of all Canadian votes and elected 7 Members of the Parliament. On the contrary the CPC secured far less votes and did not elect any candidates. However, according to Walter D. Young, the vigour of the CPC attracted many Canadian workers to the detriment of the CCF.⁹ Although the CCF had stronger support in 1935, as election results show, when the war broke out in Spain, the CPC resolutely took a stronger stand for the defence of the Republic. The CCF never adopted a solid position in favour of the Republic. The CCF, instead, adopted isolationism. This milder position which reflected that of the federal government aided

⁸ Norman Penner, Canadian Communism, p. 216.

the CPC's campaign during the war. According to Dean E. McHenry, the isolationist tendency of both CCF and Liberal leaders facilitated stronger support for the CPC.¹⁰

However, the neutral stand of the CCF did not find a consensus among all CCF members. Some members did not feel the strong pacifist sense that animated J.S. Woodsworth and other CCFers. Many openly supported and took part in the aid campaign for Spain in Canada. For example, T.C. Douglas, a CCF Member of Parliament, greatly contributed to the critique of the official neutral position adopted by the federal government.¹¹

The CPC, because of its strong stand on foreign relations issues and the way it organised the unskilled workers, was successful. It also succeeded in getting the support of many immigrants. There were, for example, many Ukrainian and Finnish organisations that maintained close relations with the CPC. Many Ukrainians were members of the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA)¹² and the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party. Both groups were officially associated with the CPC. Similarly, the popular Finnish Organisation in Ontario was a radical group closely linked to the CPC. Many East Europeans living in Canada during the Depression were responsive to CPC campaigns.

⁹ Walter D. Young, The Anatomy of a Party: The National Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, 1932-1961 (Toronto 1969), p.265.

¹⁰ Dean E. McHenry, The Third Force in Canada: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, 1932-48 (Wesport 1950), pp.288-89.

¹¹ n.a., Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976 (Toronto, 1982), p.127.

¹² The ULFTA was first named Ukrainian Labour Temple Association. Its name was later changed to Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association to include the vast portion of Ukrainian-Canadians who were not part of the labour force.

The polarisation process that occurred during the 1930s seems to have profited more the left than the right. The presence of Rightist groups on the Canadian political scene was scarce.¹³ It seems that the only headway made by movements of the political right was in Québec. According to Norman Penner, the fact that the Québec Catholic church strongly supported Franco and Mussolini during the war explains the presence of Rightist groups in Québec.¹⁴ There was for example a National Social Christian Party in Québec and members of the Adrien Arcand group, Les Chevaliers de Jacques-Cartier, were stirring anti-Leftist animosity.

In spite of the relative failure of the Canadian Right, there existed a few German and Italian cultural organisations that followed their homeland path towards radicalism by adopting Fascist ideas. The Deutsche Bund, the Arbeiter Gemeinschaft, Ortsguppen and Stutzpunkte headed by Dr. Robert Ley, and the National Socialist German Party were respectively active in promoting Nazism in Canada. Similarly, Italian-Canadians of Fascist sentiment also controlled some Rightist organisations: the Fascio, the Italian United Moral Front and the Dopolavoro. However, the accomplishments of these organisations throughout the 1930s were limited.¹⁵

¹³ Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist movements in Canada in the thirties (Montréal 1975), p.113. She also stated on page 142 that: "While Fascism was almost dead in the rest of the country, in Quebec Arcand and his friends were still thriving." See also Martin Robin, Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940 (Toronto 1992), p.232. On page 262, he stated that the "German Days in the West, during the peak years 1936-7, drew 15 000 to 18 000 people, out of a total of 275 000." This further demonstrates the failure of German-Canadians to assimilate Fascist ideas.

¹⁴ Penner says specifically that: "[it] was the attitude of most of the Quebec youth groups to Fascism because of the fact that the Catholic Church and all its organizations supported Franco and Mussolini". Canadian Communism, p.139. Penner's assumption on the Quebec Catholic support for Franco and Mussolini is overstated, since the Vatican itself did not support openly either Franco or Mussolini. See Peter Kent, "The Vatican and the Spanish Civil War" in European History Quarterly, Vol. 16 (1986), pp.441-442, who discusses the attitude of Pope Pius XI towards Franco at the start of the hostilities.

¹⁵ Martin Robin, Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940 (Toronto 1992), p.232.

It would be misleading to think that these groups had a strong following. The CPC never gained more than 16 000 members until 1939.¹⁶ The German Bund, which was the biggest pro-Fascist organisation in Canada outside Québec, never exceeded more than 2000 members country-wide.¹⁷ Taking that the Canadian political spectrum was polarised and that there were no openings for radical rightist groups, what explains the success of radical leftist groups such as the CPC in the 1930s? A mixture of strong ideological ties with Moscow and independent actions, which well suited the Canadian context, is part of the answer. It properly describes the attitude of the CPC in the 1930s. The CPC skilfully used the context of the time to make tangible gains in Canadian politics. The CPC policy of uniting all Leftist groups in Canada even before this became the object of the Comintern, although not successful, facilitated its advancement.

In 1934, the CPC tried to make contact with non-communist circles. According to Ivan Avakumovic, “even before Hitler came to power, the Communists in Canada and elsewhere tried to find allies in non-communist circles.”¹⁸ In October 1934 the first congress of the Canadian LAWF, which was attended by many CPC members, was highly successful. The anti-Fascist design of the League, according to Norman Penner, explains its popularity.¹⁹ The close relation between the CPC and the League assuredly helped the promotion of the party. By diversifying its relations the CPC made gains.

¹⁶ See appendix D for statistical information on the CPC membership from 1921 to 1960.

¹⁷ Martin Robin, Shades of Right, p.246. Taken from The Winnipeg Tribune, 13 January 1939. Similarly, Canada's Nazi Party had a membership somewhere between one hundred and two hundred persons. Martin Robin, Shades of Right: p.238.

¹⁸ Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada: A History (Toronto 1975), p.97. This is also supported in n.a., Canada's Party of Socialism (Toronto, 1982), p.112.

¹⁹ Norman Penner, Canadian Communism, p.134.

Fortunately diversification of the Communist relations was to become, in the summer of 1935, the new objective of the Comintern. During the 6th Congress, in late summer 1928, the Comintern had called on all Communist parties to refrain from entertaining any links with Socialists. According to the policy, the Socialists represented another breed of Fascism: Social-Fascism. Because of clear ideological shifts happening in Europe, especially the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany, the leadership and object of the Comintern were modified. In 1935, George Dimitrov, who had personally encountered Fascism in Germany while being politically active in Berlin, was called upon by Stalin to assume the leadership of the Comintern. His appointment was crucial in changing the attitude of world Communism towards Fascism. Dimitrov's actions and policies armed the Comintern with a stronger anti-Fascist discourse.

In August 1935, at the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, Dimitrov postulated that Fascism, since Hitler had come to power, needed to be strongly contained. The strength of the European Right had passed into another phase in 1933, when Germany had swung to the Right. In 1928, such was not the case and Fascism, in the Italian sense, represented a lesser menace to Russia than its German breed. Therefore, at the congress of the Comintern, the new anti-Fascism policy assumed primacy over exporting the revolution.²⁰ Contrary to the 1928 line, the new policy called on all forces to unite against the growing danger of Fascism. The

²⁰ It has been argued, by many historians, that this shift in Comintern's policy was in fact the result of pressure originating from leading figures of the Parti communiste de France (PCF). See a good overview of this question in Helen Graham and Paul Preston, The Popular Front in Europe (New York 1987) and Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern : A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin (New York 1997).

Comintern had definitively abandoned the Third Period rhetoric to better face the realities of the 1930s.

The Popular Front policy was endorsed by the CPC in August 1935. The CCF was consequently urged by CPC leaders to join the effort in the fight against Fascism. The CPC plan was firmly rejected by CCF members. According to RCMP reports, CCF members rejected the CPC call for union by 88 to 7.²¹ During the war in Spain, Communists further urged the CCF to unite with the CPC in organising the Canadian aid to Spain. This was further rejected.²² On 29 July 1938, another CPC attempt to cooperate with the CCF was also turned down.²³ The attempt of the CPC in uniting with the CCF against Fascism was never successful.²⁴ However, in spite of this defeat, the CPC by isolating itself from the CCF more easily monopolised the fight against Fascism in Canada.

Radical groups of both Right and Left tendencies were therefore present in Canada. The scope of success of both was unequal. The high level of organisational skills of the Left and its internationalist vision, as the next chapter will demonstrate, helped better root the CPC in the political life of Canadians in the 1930s. In spite of severe policy changes in 1935, the CPC was increasingly flourishing. From the year 1934 to 1936, the CPC doubled the size of its ranks. The success of the Canadian

²¹ The meeting was held in Toronto on 3-4-5 August 1936. Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part III, 1936" (St. John's 1996) [Report 819], p.338.

²² "C.C.F. Convention Rejects Communist Aid for Spain Plan", in The Vancouver Sun, 6 July 1937.

²³ G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part V, 1938-39" (St. John's 1998) [Report No. 897, 4 August 1938], p.239.

²⁴ According to David Moore, the CCF rejected the CPC call for union because: "From an ideological standpoint, the justness of the Republican cause had weighed against the unseemly prospect of collaborating with a competitor whose priorities were at odds with the guiding principles of democratic socialism." David Vincent Moore, "Do The Right Thing: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39", M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1991, p.75.

Communists to recruit many volunteers for Spain demonstrates that the new policy of the United Front was effective.²⁵

²⁵ The new policy was not only successful in Canada but throughout the Western World. According to José Manuel Martínez Bande, the propaganda campaign organised by the Comintern was triumphant as the number of recruits who joined the International Brigades indicates. In Bande's words: "la intensa propaganda iniciada nada más estallar nuestra guerra había dado inmediatos frutos, siendo ya muchos los voluntarios que, por mil medios, y procedimientos..." Brigadas Internacionales (Barcelona 1972), p.35.

Chapter 2 - The July 1936 Rising and the Canadian Perception

The perception of the events in Spain is crucial when analysing what motivated many Canadians to join the Republican fight in Spain. Due to the politically polarised atmosphere of the 1930s and the abundant use of propaganda in describing the war, perception was more meaningful than reality. Therefore the aim of this chapter is to examine information that would have influenced the Canadian volunteers. By finding what were the sources of pressure for the Canadians to join the Brigades, one can better determine what was the justification used by the Canadians to volunteer.

Canadians did not know much about Spain before the July 1936 rising.¹ The Canadian Reverend Salem Bland, a supporter of the Republican cause, also believed that Canadians were not well informed on the politics and history of Spain. According to Bland, "There was between Canadians and the people of Spain no ancient friendship. Canadians knew, perhaps, less about them than about any of the major peoples of Europe, and what they did know was mostly of savage hostilities in a far part."² The initial media coverage of the war in Spain was therefore crucial in forming the attitudes of the Canadian towards Spain.

¹ William C. Beeching, Canadian Volunteers: Spain, 1936-1939 (Regina 1989), p.10. Similarly, Nicola Vulpe believes that "Canadian poets [...] had little or no first-hand knowledge of Spain," and that: "until the start of the war on 18 July 1936, few Canadians (poets included) knew or cared much about Spain". Nicola Vulpe, Ed., Sealed in Struggle. Canadian poetry & the Spanish Civil War: An Antology (Tenerife 1995), p.21.

² Cited in A.E. Smith, Canada's Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, n.p., 1937, on p.3, by Ted Allan who wrote the introduction to this pamphlet which was written with the aim of collecting money for the members of the battalion. This brochure contains small memoirs of Canadians who were fighting in Spain. The authors of these memoirs refer mostly to military operations in which the unit took part.

The Spanish-speaking population in Canada was small. Less than 1 500 Canadians claimed the Spanish language as their mother tongue in 1931.³ Although many Canadians were still attached to their old European ties, Spain was not the home country of many of them. Spain had not participated in the First World War and had not been influential on European affairs in the 1920s. In 1931, with the creation of the Second Republic, Spanish events secured more attention. In October 1934, with the uprising in the Asturias and other regions of Spain, foreigners became increasingly aware of Spanish political instability. In a few newspapers, talks of civil war, prior to July 1936, were existent. The British Communist Daily Worker employed the headline "Spanish Civil War" in October 1934 to describe the Asturias events.⁴ The New York based journal Current History ran a few articles on Spanish political instability from August 1935 until the start of the hostilities.⁵ However, it would be misleading to assume that events happening in Spain were well-covered prior to the war.

Canadian magazines of the time rarely covered news from Spain. The Canadian Periodical Index from the years 1920-1937 included only four general articles on Spain.⁶ It is assumed that English literature on Spain would have mainly come from either Britain or the United States.

³ The Canada Year Book : 1936 (Ottawa 1936), p.122. The Canadian census did not even list the Spaniards in the category of "Population by racial origin and sex, for metropolitan area." The number of Spaniards in Canada must have been quite small.

⁴ Tom Buchanan, " 'A Far Away Country of Which We Know Nothing'? Perceptions of Spain and its Civil War in Britain, 1931-1939", in Twentieth Century British History, Vol. 4, No. 1., 1993, p.2.

⁵ W.S. Lengelbach, "Clash of Spanish Parties", in Current History, March 1936, pp.653-55, "Part Battles in Spain", in Current History, January 1936, pp.428-29, "Politics in Spain", in Current History, August 1935, pp.540-41, "Spain's Political Turmoil", in Current History, February 1936, pp.540-41, "Victory of the Spanish Left", in Current History, April 1936, pp.91-93.

⁶ Grace Heggie, et al., Canadian Periodical Index, 1920-1937 : An Author and Subject Index (Ottawa 1988).

Travel books are good indications on what shaped the Canadian perception of the Spaniards prior to the war. Tom Buchanan, who has done substantial research on Spain and the British people, has used such sources to form a better estimate of what the British perception of Spain was. Since Canadian publications on the subject were limited, the British literature may have had some influence on Canadian readership.

The tendency of picturing Spaniards as either exceedingly friendly or violent and unpleasant people predominates in the travel literature. Canadian author Madge Macbeth, supports this assumption. She comments on the Spanish attitude in these words:

the inmost friendliness and courtesy upon occasion, and at the same time, an Ishmaelite attitude towards every other race and nation; and finally, his cruelty to animals, and tenderness towards any human being who may need his assistance and protection.⁷

What seems also to surprise her is the lack of “standardization [...] of Spanish life”.⁸ According to Aubrey Bell, author of a travel book published in Canada in 1924, “If you attempt to bully or appear to despise the Spanish you will find them, in George Meredith’s description, ‘A queer people to midle with’. If you behave courteously as man to man you will come back laden with enchanting memories from a visit to the villages and cities of Spain.”⁹ Other authors found Spain as being “the most democratic of countries”.¹⁰ Because of the backwardness of the Iberian Peninsula, “the

⁷ Madge Macbeth, “Travelled But Unknown Spain” in Canadian Geographical Journal, Vol. 3, August 1931, p.129.

⁸ *Idem*.

⁹ Aubrey F. Bell, Pilgrim in Spain (London 1924), p.xvi.

¹⁰ Catherine Hartley Gasquoine, Things Seen in Spain (London 1921), p.19.

business mentality and the snobbery that has arisen in the rest of Europe, were not found in Spain".¹¹ All this added to the fascination of Spain.

Travel accounts, were therefore an alternate source of information on Spanish history. They represented the first available literature for Canadians interested in Spain. However, as demonstrated, the reader could not find a general consensus on the Spanish people similar to what Buchanan assumed. Madge Macbeth comments on the lack of consensus about Spain in these words:

This title [Travelled But Unknown Spain] may sound like a contradiction, and suppose it is! What difference does one more less make, in a country so webbed with contrast and irreconcilable features that anything said of it, may be true?¹²

In spite of a clear general consensus on Spain, its backwardness was the predominant theme present in all the literature, and the democratic nature of the Spaniards was often counterbalanced by depiction of its violent nature.

Once the troops had rebelled in July 1936, news carried by newspapers in the promotion of both camps soon monopolised the scene of information. Distinct political positions, which reflected the political allegiance of their perpetrators, began to dominate the Spanish Civil War discourse in Canada.

From the onset of the war until the end, three political allegiances were upheld by Spaniards and the international community. Republicans, Nationalist and Neutralist confronted each other. However, although all three positions existed, it would be a mistake to assume that the voices of all were equally heard. The conflict was most often

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.20.

¹² Madge Macbeth, "Travelled But Unknown Spain", p.129.

perceived in a black and white paradigm where one side unrestrainedly opposed the other.

The first view sanctioned the Republican camp. Like the other positions, the views of the pro-Republicans were not uniformly propagated in the media. The level of radicalism used by the many adherents of Republicanism in Spain varied greatly. The world Communist parties under the close supervision of the Comintern were among the radical protagonists. Trotskyist or Anarchist groups also supported the Republic. The Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM), the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI), and the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) were the leading Trotskyist and Anarchist factions who originally supported the Republican fight. However, the revolutionary object of their political platform limited their Republican allegiance. The Comintern-led anti-revolutionary campaign of spring 1937 resolved this oscillation by annihilating the Trotskyist and Anarchist factions.¹³

Support for the Rebel side represented the second view. Germans, Italians and Nationalist Spaniards supported, for obvious reasons, this position. However, they were not the unique protagonists of the hatred directed towards the Republic. Most of the Catholic Church and Fascist organisations abroad also upheld the Spanish nationalist ideal. Although the Vatican sought to take a neutral stand towards the significance of the Franco rising for the good of Catholicism, most Catholics supported the rebels.¹⁴ According to Robert Comeau, the Catholic press in Canada, which was centred

¹³ In the spring of 1937, the Comintern launched an anti-revolutionary campaign throughout Spain to prevent the rise of revolutionary sentiment which prevailed in some regions of Spain in the early weeks of the military rising. The suppression of all opposition to the Communist war effort was harsh.

primarily in French Canada and Québec, also generally sided with Franco.¹⁵ Conservatism, Fascism, Nationalism and Monarchism were all the driving forces of the Nationalist supporters. Like the Republican camp, Rebel supporters' radicalism was spread over a wide range of ideals. Conservatives as well as Spanish Nationalists sought to safeguard the Old Spain from Republican and Communist modernisation. On the other hand, Fascist adherents desired to create a strong Nationalist Spain where all Leftist elements would be suppressed. The Nazi success in Germany was their model. This archetype of society was the most feared by supporters of the Republic.

Non-intervention and Pacifists dominated the third group of civil-war positions. Most Western governments, for strategic reasons, supported the idea of non-intervention. It was believed, especially in Britain under the leadership of Neville Chamberlain, that confrontation with Germany and possibly Italy was almost inevitable. Therefore an appeasement policy was adopted to safeguard peace in Europe. After the French intention of non-intervention had been initiated, it was quickly adopted and upheld by Britain. Subsequently, in late 1936, a Non-Intervention Committee was set up to monitor the unfolding of the Spanish Civil War and promote non-intervention.

¹⁴ For a discussion on the position held by the Vatican throughout the war see Peter C. Kent, "The Vatican and the Spanish Civil War", in *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 16, 1986, pp.441-64.

¹⁵ Robert Comeau, "La tentation Fasciste du Nationalisme Canadien-Français avant la guerre, 1936-1939", in *Bulletin d'histoire politique*, Vol. 3, Nos. 3-4, Automne 1994, pp.164-165. Norman Penner also supports the assumption that the Catholic Church in Québec flagrantly supported the rising. However, Penner's assumptions on the position of the Catholic Church in Québec are sometimes debatable. In *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* on page 139 Penner states that: "...the Catholic Church and *all its organizations supported Franco and Mussolini.*" (Italics added). There is ground for argument in this assertion from Penner.

Britain, France and almost every Western European country championed the actions of the Non-Intervention Committee.¹⁶

Many Socialists and Labour Party members favoured the non-interventionist policy. The CCF and its leader J.S. Woodsworth rigorously conformed to a pacifist platform. However, this pacifist stand was particularly challenged by the events happening in Spain.¹⁷ It would be a fallacy to consider all socialists and unionists as pacifists. Many labour organisations actively participated in the support for the Spanish Civil War and some CCF members volunteered for service in Spain.

While Canadians had been politically influenced by events happening in Europe, they also became influenced by the Spanish Civil War. The Spanish Civil War agitated many Westerners, including Canadians. Effective press campaigns conducted by both camps throughout the conflict explain this upheaval. The study of information circulated in the Canadian press supporting the Republic is therefore meaningful to understand what fostered the radical stand taken by the Canadian volunteers.

Canadians referred to the leading newspapers, radio broadcasts and to communist publications to obtain news from Spain.¹⁸ However, the Canadian press

¹⁶ The whole issue of non-intervention has mobilised many historians and political scientists for the study of its validity and why it failed. The mildness of the League towards foreign intervention in Spain can be attributed to its failure in 1935-36 to monitor the economic sanctions imposed on Italy over the Abyssinian question. See Richard Veatch, "The League of Nations and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39", in *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 20, 1990, p.181-182. For further reading on the subject see W. Kleine-Ahlbrandt, *The Policy of Simmering: A Study of British Policy during the Spanish Civil War* (Geneva 1961); Jill Edwards, *The British Government and the Spanish Civil War* (London 1979); and Douglas Little, *Malevolent Neutrality: The United States, Great Britain and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War* (Ithaca 1985). For a more recent critique of the above mentioned literature see Enrique Moradiellos, "The Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War: Anglo-Spanish Relations in Early 1936", in *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 21, 1991, pp.339-364.

¹⁷ The German march on Poland in September 1939 also greatly challenged the pacifist stand of the CCF.

¹⁸ William C. Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers, Spain 1936-39*, p.10.

coverage of the events in Spain was highly influenced by the propaganda campaigns of both fighting camps in Spain. Consequently, neutrality was almost exclusively put aside in the Canadian press. The nature of the war in Spain preconditioned massive use of propaganda. The civil war that originated with the July rising was the direct result of ideological tensions which had been heightened since the creation of the Second Republic. Both camps had aspired to a strong and modern Spain with either a traditionalist or a republican outlook. Ideological debates were not of initial paramount concern for the rebels and the republicans. It only became consequential as the European polarisation process of the 1930s significantly influenced the Spanish events. This influence can be found in the massive German, Italian and Soviet involvement in Spain. As a result, in the first days of the rising, both camps became portrayed as either Fascist or Communist.

Soon the positions taken by the Canadians towards the events in Spain became a by-product of the press campaigns of both camps.¹⁹ According to Art Cawley, "The Spanish Civil War as fought out for the hearts and minds of English-Canadians was essentially a battle of the press[...]. In this battle of words, the weapons of choice were illusion, fantasy and myth."²⁰

The level of radicalism used in Spain to describe the events was matched in the Canadian press. Harsh tone and propaganda was employed in both English and French

¹⁹ Although propaganda was used most of the time, the word "information" better describes all the news circulated in the media since they were not all of a propagandist nature.

²⁰ Art Cawley, "The Canadian Catholic English Language Press and the Spanish Civil War", in Study Sessions: Canadian Catholic Historical Association, 1982, p.47.

speaking press. This tendency was at times criticised.²¹ The Associated Press (whose articles were also published in the Canadian press) admitted in November 1936 that “their reports were colored.”²²

Press censorship was minimal at the start of the conflict. A deluge of news of all nature, such as atrocities, was reported in the newspapers. This situation was altered when both camps realised the weight propaganda campaigns had on mobilising support. The two opposing factions began to monitor the activities of foreign reporters on Spanish soil. After the fall of Largo Caballero, the Republican camp conclusively improved its monitoring of foreign journalists.²³ Likewise, the Rebel camp intensified its surveillance of foreign reporters and jailed many foreign journalists and travellers for being suspicious.²⁴ At this point, both camps skilfully took advantage of the media and the use of propaganda.

²¹ For example, The Daily Clarion commented, during the war, on the use of propaganda. It accused the American press magnate William Hearst for falsely reporting on the Spanish events. The Daily Clarion, 14 August 1936, p.3.

²² “The Associated Press, largest news gathering agency in America, has admitted that it alters its manner of handling news from Spain because of the threats of fascist insurrectionary generals!”, The Daily Clarion, 20 November 1936, p.3.

²³ Once the CPE had succeeded in removing Socialist elements from the government, in the spring of 1937, they began to monopolise information services. NKVD (People’s Commissariat for the Interior) agents were scattered throughout Spain to monitor foreign reporters, and dissident elements of POUM affiliation. Anarchists were also hit by the repression campaign of the Comintern in Spain. Andrés Nin, the well-known leader of the POUM was taken by NKVD to a prison near Madrid and was tortured. For a brief account of NKVD agents in Spain see Gabriel Jackson, The Spanish Republic and The Civil War, 1931-1939 (Princeton 1965), pp.403-404 and Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War (London 1961), pp.362-363. Mary Peck thinks that: “censorship added to the bewilderment of the reader and favoured the Rebels, who restricted reporters greatly, while, the loyalists welcomed everyone...” Red Moon Over Spain: Canadian Media reaction to the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939 (Ottawa 1988), p.9. Her assumption on the openness of the Republican government, especially after May 1937 is erroneous. The Communist led government was strictly following the August 1935 Comintern party line and excluded all undesirable revolutionary elements in Spain, including journalists. Her affirmation can be held true only from July 1936 until May 1937.

²⁴ Arthur Koestler, who was then travelling in Spain was kept *incomunicado* for nearly four months in a nationalist prison in Malaga. Koestler had written on General Gonzalès Queipo de Llano who was, at the time of his imprisonment, in command of Seville. See his account on the subject, Arthur Koestler, Un

For the above reason and due to the nature of civil wars, propaganda was widely used. According to Jerry Knudson: “intense and prolonged propaganda was an integral part of the Civil War.”²⁵ Since ideas were the driving force of every soldier, every effort was made to alter their ideas in order to nourish desertion from the enemy’s camp. Therefore massive propaganda campaigns were conducted on the battlefields and in the cities. Propaganda was also taken abroad to mobilise possible allies. Incidentally Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union responded to the call of both sides.

However, it could be argued that the use of propaganda by the Republican side was more successful than that of the Rebels since support for the Loyalists was greater world-wide. The number of International Brigadiers properly reflects on the success of the Republican propaganda campaign. The Rebel side also secured help from abroad. However, involvement on the Rebel side came almost exclusively from foreign governments, not from individual acts, as in the case of the International Brigadiers.²⁶ Franco’s agents directly requested assistance from Germany and Italy. The issues that were to be fought in the war were beforehand clearly understood by the German and Italian Governments who mobilised their troops. Therefore, although support for the Rebels was also massive, propaganda had little to play in its origin.

Testament espagnol (Paris 1939). According to Émile Temime, at the start of the hostilities, information coming from the Rebel side was favoured and filled most of the European press, for the Republican camp took some time in setting-up an adequate propaganda campaign. The Republican delay is attributable to the deterioration of its power in the early weeks of the conflict. Émile Temime, “Le mythe et la réalité”, in Carlos Serrano, Ed., Madrid, 1936-1939 : Un peuple en résistance ou l’épopée ambiguë (Paris 1994), p.22.

²⁵ Jerry W. Knudson, “The Ultimate Weapon: Propaganda and the Spanish Civil War”, in Journalism History, Vol. 15, No. 4, Winter 1988, p.102.

²⁶ There existed a few Irishmen who enlisted their service into Franco’s forces. There were also a few cases of Australians. See Judith Keene, “An Antipodean Bridegroom of Death: An Australian Volunteer

Canadians as well as other Westerners were receptive to the ideas propagated by both enemies. Yet, the promotion of Spanish Republicanism, as in the rest of the world, was more effective in Canada as shown by the large number of Canadians who volunteered. Such an achievement was the product of an adroit world-wide Republican propaganda. Spain was not the unique agent of propaganda. It also came massively from non-Spanish Communist circles. Moscow, Berlin and Rome recognised (in their own ideological judgement) the issues played out during the war and understood that their involvement in Spain was required to pursue their own policy goals. Therefore, many German and Italian soldiers, sailors and airmen were sent to fight on Franco's side. Likewise, the Soviet Union sent a small number of military cadres acting as technical advisors. Moscow also took the obligation of organising the International Brigades to defend the Spanish Republic.²⁷ Under the effective use of propaganda, 35 000 men world-wide volunteered to go fight with the International Brigades.²⁸

In order to understand why the propaganda campaign of the CPC was effective in Canada, it is necessary to look at the background of those who were influenced by it. Contextual factors affected the pro-Republicans and volunteers of Canadian origin. Cultural, religious, political and linguistic background influenced the level of

in Franco's Forces", in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 70, No. 4, 1985, pp.251-270.

²⁷ The forerunners of the International Brigades fought in the Madrid outskirts and in the University City in September 1936. The International Brigades were only officially created 22 October 1936. Jacques Delperrié de Bayac, *Les Brigades Internationales* (Paris 1968), p.78.

²⁸ The number 35 000 is an estimate that was accepted by Hugh Thomas in early 1960s when he wrote *The Spanish Civil War*. This figure has been challenged by other historians without however altering the initial position held by Thomas and supported by most historians. M.W. Jackson discusses the estimates and concludes that the number 35 000, although it is not supported by all historians, is a fair estimate of the cumulative number of Brigadiers who served in Spain from October 1936 until September 1938.

acceptance of the propaganda. It has been assumed that a sharp split existed between the loyalties of the French and English speaking Canadians towards both camps.²⁹ Thus, these loyalties were reflected in both French and English press. Mary Peck, who has analysed part of the Canadian press during the Spanish Civil War, believes that Republican and Nationalist support in Canada was predetermined linguistically. Her conclusions were based on the study of 14 newspapers and magazines. Peck assumes that there existed a split on where the sympathy of English-Canadians lay. By contrast, French-Canadians were united in their hatred for Spanish Republicanism. On the 14 newspapers and magazines listed, all French ones were listed under the pro-Franco category.³⁰

According to Peck, Canadian opposition to the events in Spain was in part due to the choice of news carried voluntarily by the newspapers. At the time, French-language papers carried more news of Canadian interest (presumably news of events happening in Québec) and emphasised news coming from American based newspapers and agencies. The use of foreign news by French press editors was closely monitored to reflect the dominance of the Catholic Church in Québec. On the contrary, the English-language press printed more news coming from Britain.³¹ According to Peck, this in turn benefited the Republican side since most of British journalists and editors were sympathisers of the Republic. By contrast, K.W. Watkins denies the presence of a

“The Army of Strangers: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War” in The Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp.105-106.

²⁹ Arnold J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1937: The International Repercussions of the War in Spain (1936-37) (London 1938). Vol. II, pp. 212 and 215. Cited in Art Cawley, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Mary Peck, Red Moon Over Spain, p.10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.11.

united pro-Republican British voice. He disputes the assumed homogeneity of this voice. According to Watkins, although the intellectuals were clearly pro-Republicans,³² it was believed in Britain, that the Nationalists would win the war rapidly prior to September 1936.³³ A component of both idealism and pragmatism was therefore acting on the Republican and Nationalist allegiance of the British people.

Art Cawley who analysed the position reflected in the Catholic English-language press also seems to partially support Peck's assumptions. Cawley does not believe that the whole of English Canada was united in its support for the Republic. Nevertheless, English-Canadian public opinion overwhelmingly favoured the Republic.³⁴ The sympathy of English-Canadians was generally based on the legitimacy of democratically elected governments. Although all Republican supporters in Canada gave credence to this argument, it still appears to have been overshadowed by other arguments throughout the war.³⁵

³² British and foreign intellectuals and artists were generally pro-Republican. This can be found in the well-known survey Authors Take Sides in which 22 were for the Government, 3 were neutral and 2 for the Rebels. Popular Pro-Republican novels such as Homage to Catalonia (London 1978) from George Orwell and Spanish Testament (Paris 1937) from Arthur Koestler or the poetry of Pablo Neruda reflects the above-mentioned trend. According to Valentine Cunningham, Republican poems were also highly popular during the war. Valentine Cunningham, Ed., Spanish Front Writers on the Civil War (New York 1986), p.xxii. See also Cunningham for a reproduction of Authors Take Sides and John Miller, Voices Against Tyranny (New York 1986) for other well known authors who wrote on the Spanish Civil War. The survey "Authors Take Sides" was written in Paris and London in June 1937 by the Left Review symposium and was signed, among many authors, by Pablo Neruda, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Samuel Beckett. A second similar survey under the title "Writers Take Sides" was published, a year later, by Donald Ogden and the League of American Writers in New York. John Steinbeck and William Faulkner were among the writers who answered the survey.

³³ W. K. Watkins, Britain Divided: The Effect of the Spanish Civil War on British Public Opinion (Westport 1976), p.65.

³⁴ Art Cawley, "The Canadian Catholic English Press and the Spanish Civil War", p.33.

³⁵ Mary Peck gave few example of such support. She cites an editorial of the Winnipeg Free Press which remarked that "The Spanish government holds office by lawful authority, the others are like a gang of pirates." Mary Peck, "Red Moon Over Spain", p.33. A letter to the Editor of the Vancouver Sun also talks in the same way. According to D.W. Perley, the Valencia-Madrid Government was "elected in by

Religious based opinions also split the support of Canadians. Ideological differences between Communists, Socialists and Fascists were all denigrated by the Catholic clergy who viewed all three ideologies as “forms of state absolutism that were incompatible with the traditions of liberty and democracy existing in Canada.”³⁶ The clergy also saw the war in Spain as “a war between Christian civilisation and Red barbarism.”³⁷ According to Cawley, the religious composite opinion can be explained by the fact that Canadians were becoming more afraid of Fascism than Communism.³⁸

Marc Charpentier, who analysed the position held by ten French and English Montreal newspapers during the Civil War, estimated that the Communist / Fascist dichotomy was also present. Pro-Franco editors and journalists perceived the struggle in Spain as a “just struggle against Communism and for civilised life.”³⁹ Charpentier also concluded that the Franco support in Montreal had a religious, political and economic base. The difference of language was not so much a factor for the mobilisation against the Republic. Two important Montreal English newspapers, Montreal Standard and Montreal Star, sympathised with the Rebels mainly for economic reasons. The Republican Government, which was perceived as communist-led by the staff and readers of the two newspapers, was going against the idea of

the honest vote of the majority of the people.” Vancouver Sun, What Is Your Opinion?, 5 July 1937, p.4. This argument seems to have been widely circulated in the press.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.30.

³⁷ Excerpt from the Catholic Register, September 2, 1937. Cited in *Ibid.*, p.33.

³⁸ Art Cawley, “The Canadian Catholic English Press and the Spanish Civil War”, p.33. See also Margaret Prang, “Some Opinions of Political Radicalism in Canada between Two World Wars”, M.A. Thesis, The University of Toronto, 1953, pp.109-110.

³⁹ Marc Charpentier, “Columns on the march : Montreal Newspapers interpret the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939”, M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1992, p.36.

Liberalism. The economic judgement of these papers served as the basis of their support for the rebels.

The researches of Peck, Cawley and Charpentier, although insightful, do not describe the positions sanctioned by the CPC in its organ, The Daily Clarion. An analysis of the position of this paper throughout the war is significant since it had a great impact on the Canadians who volunteered. Their passage to Spain was organised by the CPC which also owned The Daily Clarion. For this reason, the positions defended in The Daily Clarion and the rhetoric used in the paper to describe the war in Spain will be examined to understand what shaped the mind of the Canadians who volunteered. It defined the Rebels as Fascists and portrayed the Republican cause as that of the defence of Democracy and Liberty.

On 4 July 1936 The Daily Clarion first reported on Spanish events. It reported that a Canadian contingent of athletes was leaving for Barcelona to attend the People's Olympiads.⁴⁰ On 10 July, the Clarion ran another article on the Canadian athletes.⁴¹

⁴⁰ "Off to Barcelona", The Daily Clarion, 4 July 1936, p.8. The "People's Olympics", which were organised by the Comintern through the Red Sport International (RSI), in respect with the policy of People's Front of 1935, encouraged the cooperation between workers of the world. The Peoples' Olympics were also competing against the Socialist Workers' Sports International (SWSI). In July 1936, the RSI organised a People's Olympics in Barcelona in defiance of the Olympic Games, which were held at the same time in Berlin. The Berlin events were boycotted by the USSR and many other Leftist athletes who answered the call to participate in a uniquely People's Olympiad. Little is known on the reason why the town of Barcelona was chosen to hold the event. It would be fair to assume that the election of the Popular Front in February, which was endorsed by the PCE, might justify the Spanish choice over other destinations. See Bruce Kidd, "Radical Immigrants and the Workers' Sports Federation of Canada, 1924-37, pp.201-220" in George Eisen and David K Wiggins, eds., Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture (Westport and London 1994). David B. Kann, who wrote on the history of the Olympic Games, briefly mentions the Peoples' Olympics. A Political History of the Olympic Games (Boulder 1981), p.56.

⁴¹ "Spain Team Is Enroute: Six Athletes Leave for People's Olympiad in Barcelona", The Daily Clarion, 10 July 1936, p.1. The contingent was composed of Eva Dawes, Harry Sniderman, Sammy Luftspring, Baby Yack, Bill Christie, Tom Ritchie. No evidence exist on whether the Canadians fought in Spain after the start of the hostilities or not. Therefore, no assumption can be drawn on the role they might have

Ten days later, another article commented on the situation of the athletes. With the title “Local Athletes in Midst of fighting”, the author explained that the Olympiads would continue for a week in spite of the fighting in Spain and concluded that: “no interference with visiting athletes was reported.”⁴² Although warning signs existed that an army coup was preparing, the Clarion never commented on it.

On 20 July, the paper denounced the “Fascist coup”. The wording “Fascist” to describe the rebels rising was significant. It followed the CPC acceptance of the Communist line of the time and the PCE's position that described the army generals as Fascist conspirators. Fascism was, however, not the sole cause of the rising. The author was critical of the weak stand of the government.⁴³ The day after, the same criticism of the government was reproduced in the paper and the headline commented on the actions of the workers who were defending “Democracy”.⁴⁴ The word “Democracy” used in this headline is also extremely significant; it produced the dichotomy between Democracy and Fascism. This dichotomy was used throughout the war to describe the Spanish events and influenced the perception of the Canadian readers. It was significant in building the images and concepts that were used by the Canadians who volunteered, in describing and justifying their engagement in Spain.

taken in the *Centurias* in which many participants of the Olympiads became fighters for the Republican government.

⁴² “Local Athletes in Midst of fighting”, The Daily Clarion, 20 July 1936, p.1.

⁴³ “Government Indecision cause of Coup”, The Daily Clarion, 20 July 1936, p.2: “the government of Spain is governed by the same functionaries and officials who ruled in the days of the monarchy. On the horizon of the Republic arises the spectre of a Fascist coup d'état. Social unrest, fostered by the elements of the Right prepares the ground and creates a suitable atmosphere.” The Popular Front government was in fact more bourgeois in nature than the Communists might have liked. This can explain their criticism of it when the Rebels rose against it.

⁴⁴ “Spanish Workers Defend Democracy”, The Daily Clarion, 21 July 1936, p.4.

Similarly, the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (FMPB) used the same dichotomy in a pamphlet that was produced by the Communist leader A.E. Smith after having travelled in Spain.⁴⁵ Smith assumes that the Canadian volunteers had gone to Spain so that “Fascism shall be destroyed”.⁴⁶ The anti-Fascist object of their commitment was highlighted throughout the pamphlet. On page 8, The History of the Canadians in Spain Thus Far – Written by the Boys Themselves it is stated that John Lenthier, a Bostonian fighting in the unit shouted, after an air bombardment: ““Why do you bomb the homes of innocent people?” It was our first taste of war, of fascist war. It had a bitter taste.”⁴⁷ All the contributors to the pamphlet condemned Fascism. The protection of Spanish Democracy was also an important if not the major theme of the pamphlet. On page 25, the picture of an epitaph is reproduced with the inscription: “They Died in Spain that Democracy Shall Not Perish”.⁴⁸ On page 3, Ted Allan, who

⁴⁵ In his autobiography All My Life on pages 194-95, Smith says he went to Spain in 1936. He is mistaken. He said that he went to Spain and had agreed “to act as an emissary of the “Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion” which was yet created. Later after having been delayed in Paris, he claims that he then “first set foot on Spanish soil at Port Bou on August 3”. It is impossible that from 17 July 1937 to August 3 1936, A.E. Smith had decided to go and reach Spain. For this reason, he was surely confusing his first and second trip. It is true that he might have been on the initial trip of Buck in 1936, but it was later than August 3 as he claims. Smith arrived in Paris on 9 June 1937. He was then detained at the Paris Prefecture of Police until 22 June 1937. He then first set foot in Spain at Port Bou on 3 August 1937 and returned to Canada on 12 September 1937 with Larry Ryan who was fighting in Spain. G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: “The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937 [Report No. 870, 16 September 1937], p.373. The Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was created in May 1937. It had the object of supporting, mostly financially, the Canadians who were fighting in Spain. The Friends were popular and at some points there were 60 branches across Canada. The Canadian support for the FMPB funds drives came in part from ethnic organisations, unions and CPC and YCL members. However, Lobigs demonstrate that large support also came from individuals from all political shades. Martin Lobigs, “Canadian Response to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939”, M.A.Thesis, The University of New Brunswick, 1992, p.142.

⁴⁶ This expression was used on the title of the pamphlet. A.E. Smith, Canada’s Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, n.p., 1937.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁴⁸ The picture of the epitaph is reproduced in Annexe B.

was a correspondent in Spain for The Daily Clarion and the New York Federated Press, cited the Reverend Salem Bland who had said that:

On the whole, therefore, I cannot but feel that the noblest thing in Canadian history is that, as I am informed, some five hundred Canadians have gone to Spain to help the Spanish patriots in their desperate struggle for liberty and democracy.⁴⁹

Fighting Fascism for the promotion of Democracy, as in the Daily Clarion, was also the image produced by this pamphlet.

Poems by Canadian authors also reinforced the idea that the Loyalists in Spain were defending Democracy. Michael O'Mara's poem "This Way" literally points to Liberty and Democracy as being the causes in fighting for the Republic.

THIS WAY⁵⁰

Tear down the red and gold of Old Castille,
Symbol of a tyrant's will
(Red for the blood of children slain;
Gold for traitors who barter Spain).

The Dreamer has left his dreaming
For a trench on a mountain side;
The singer who sang of freedom –
Singing, for freedom has died.

Tear down the red and gold that flaunts
Its treachery on high and taunts
The wind with memories of comrades slain
Defending liberty in Spain.

The peasant, the miner, the poet –
Upclenched are their fist and high,
If in blood lies the road to freedom –
For tomorrow they fight and die.

⁴⁹ Reverend Salem Bland, A.E. Smith, Canada's Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.3.

⁵⁰ The exact date and place the poem was published is unknown. Nicola Vulpe, Ed., Sealed in Struggle: Canadian poetry & the Spanish Civil War: An Anthology (Tenerife 1995), p.97.

Tear down the shameful red and gold
Upheld by foreign arms, Unfold
The banners of brighter day.
This way lies democracy. This Way!

O'Mara's poem indicates that the fight in Spain was necessary to preserve strong universal ideals that were politically detached from any ideologies.

The Spanish workers were therefore not defending the right of the proletariat or those of the Left but were safeguarding "Democracy", "Liberty" and "Freedom". The decision of the Canadians who volunteered for Spain was forged in such expressions that were used by Communists and other pro-Republicans during the war. The word "Fascism", with its pejorative connotation, was widely used to describe the political affiliation of the insurgents. Hence, for the entire war, the wording used to describe what the Republic was fighting for – democracy – against the insurgents who were Fascist was crystallised from the start of the hostilities.

At this stage, the CPC's involvement with the war was limited. From the start until the end, the CPC called for money donations to be sent to the workers of Spain. It organised tours by Spanish delegates, held public meetings and conducted money and clothing drives which were all publicised in the Clarion. In November 1936 when Dr. Norman Bethune arrived in Spain and created a Canadian blood transfusion unit, the paper started to promote his actions and asked for donations to support his activities. The Clarion also, in a few instances, requested the government to send arms and other

materials that were desperately needed by the Republic.⁵¹ The paper was also vociferously criticising German and Italian intervention. On 2 December 1936, the front page headline stated: “Confirm Reports. Germans, Italians landed in Spain.” The Non-Intervention Committee actions were also denounced throughout the war. Although clearly pro-Republican, the actions of the Clarion were still restricted to organising money and support for the Spanish workers and Bethune’s operations.

The Daily Clarion also reported, especially after January 1937, on the actions of the International Brigades. Although the Brigades were created in October, the Clarion first reported on their activities only on 21 November when it stated that “hundreds (which was in fact thousands at this time) of anti-fascist volunteers are pouring over the Catalonia frontier from France to join in the defense of Madrid.”⁵² This was the first comment on the presence of foreigners in Republican Spain. Interestingly enough, the words “International Brigades” were first used in the Clarion only in December 1936 by Ralph Bates an American novelist reporting on the actions of the Brigades in the defence of Madrid.⁵³ The CPC seems to have been late in openly reporting on the Brigades.

The Clarion also promoted the Republican cause with an apolitical language. On 9 January 1937, the Clarion reported that “the International Brigade is composed of volunteers from every land who have come to Spain to enter the struggle against the fascist swarm, to preserve liberty.” This statement promoted the idea that Spanish

⁵¹ For example: “Spain Appeals to Humanity”, The Daily Clarion, 10 December 1936, p.1. “[The Clarion] presses upon Premier King to immediately give aid to the Spanish government to grant them the materials they need, to send cargos of necessities that Spain needs! Spain will pay for this.”

⁵² “Volunteers Rush to Aid Madrid”, The Daily Clarion, 21 November 1936, p.1.

Republicans as well as foreign volunteers were fighting for universal ideals, which seemed to transcend politics. On 21 January, John Strachey wrote that the “International Columns [...] have been called the first true army since the Crusades.”⁵⁴ Democracy, liberty and Crusades were all part of the wording of the CPC to promote the Republican camp. This wording had an important role in socialising the Canadians who joined the International Brigades.

On 22 January 1937, the Clarion first mentioned the presence of a Canadian fighting in Spain. Bert Levy, who was a leading member of the Windsor section of the CPC was reported to be fighting in the International Brigades. Soon, other Canadians fighting in Spain were reported in the paper. On 29 January 1937, a picture of five Canadians in the International Brigades was reproduced in the Clarion. From that period onward, the Clarion reported steadily on the Canadians fighting in Spain.

As stated above, the information circulated in the Canadian press during the Spanish Civil War reflected the polarisation of politics that occurred in the early 1930s. The conflict was depicted in black and white terms in both mainstream and the leftist press. Objectivity was cast aside for the promotion of either the Rebel or Republican forces. Newspaper reports from volunteers and journalists also contributed to the radicalisation of the discourse.⁵⁵ In spite of this radical tone, The Daily Clarion was never used by the CPC to promote the recruitment campaign. The secrecy of the campaign might explain the silence that was kept by the journal throughout the war on the subject.

⁵³ “International Brigades turned the tide for Madrid”, The Daily Clarion, 30 December 1936, p.3.

⁵⁴ John Strachey, “International Column”, The Daily Clarion, 21 January 1937, p.4.

Even if the official Canadian government position was that of non-intervention, radical ideas were publicised in the print media throughout the war. Canadian political polarisation had reached such a point that events happening in Europe could only encourage the radicalisation of the Canadian political discourse and promote the use of propaganda in the press.⁵⁶

The effects of propaganda in the press were wide. It not only mobilised support from those who knew little about Spain and politics, but it also affected intellectual objectivity. James D. Wilkinson claims that European intellectuals, who usually tended to look for the truth, had, in the midst of the war in Spain, abandoned this object. This was especially true with intellectuals of left tendencies, who did not want their “illusions to be shattered” by knowing the objective truth. David Cairns and Shaun Richards argued that the intellectuals in the 1930s were “politically in a void”.⁵⁷ They therefore took sides that lent them stability and wide recognition: the republican cause. Their position, although intellectually weak, incidentally promoted the campaigns of propaganda that raged throughout the war.

⁵⁵ James D. Wilkinson, “Truth and Delusion”, p.5.

⁵⁶ The Mackenzie King government understood the need not to bring international issues to the forefront in order to prevent domestic division. The Conscription crisis of 1917 influenced King’s cabinet to take a somewhat isolationist stand. The adoption of the Non-Intervention Committee resolution by King’s government followed this trend. At the time, the term “Fire-Proof House” syndrome was used to describe the isolationist tendency of the Canadian Government. The expression was created after the Canadian government had not wanted to fully adhere to the military convention of the League of Nations and had still wanted to be a full member. See H. Blair Neatby, The Politics of Chaos: Canada in the Thirties (Toronto 1972), p.168. According to Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith, isolationism also had a strong hold on French Canadians. “If there was no emulation in French Canada of General O’Duffy’s Blueshirts, who went from Eire to fight in Spain for Franco, it was due not to want of sympathy for the cause but to the even stronger hold of isolationism.” Readings in Canadian History: Post-Confederation (Toronto 1994), p.400. The strong isolationist sentiment of the French-Canadians is also reflected in F.H. Soward *et al.*, Canada in World Affairs: The Pre-War Years (London 1941), p.12.

⁵⁷ ‘Socialism And the Intellectuals’ Fabian Tract 304, in Fabian Tracts nos., 295-320 (Liechtenstein 1971), p.415, reproduced in David Cairns and Shaun Richards, “No Good Brave Cause?”, p.198.

According to K.W. Watkins, the weak ideological stand of the intellectuals was consequential. It accentuated the falsity of journalism during the war.⁵⁸ The only convictions of the intellectuals at the time was that the truth held only a small place in journalism, but journalists retained all of what was remaining.⁵⁹ As a result, intellectuals adopted strong positions without deep soul searching.

Contrary to Britain, Canadian intellectuals of labour and left convictions did not take a strong public stand in endorsing the Republican war effort and objectives. The Canadian intellectuals did not resolutely endorse the Republican war effort. Aside from some support for the actions of Dr. Bethune in Spain, Canadian intellectuals kept a low profile throughout the war in Spain.⁶⁰ When a firm stand was taken against any side it was generally apolitical and removed from the propaganda campaigns.

Four months after the bombing of Basque town of Guernica on 26 April 1937, 27 Canadian public men signed a declaration denouncing “the immense crime” committed at Guernica.⁶¹ Their declaration was made on humanitarian grounds. They

⁵⁸ K.W. Watkins well explains the place of propaganda in the 1930s by saying : “ [it] could best be defined as the paramount example of the application of the doctrine that ‘the end justifies the means’”. Britain Divided, p.57.

⁵⁹ High subjectivity was also the result of lack of officials in Spain during the war. Since almost all ambassadors had left Spain in the early months of the war, misinformation campaigns could therefore be easily carried-on. The Largo Caballero government was moved to Valencia in November 1936, after the failed Madrid offensive of September 1936, because Caballero felt it was inconceivable to command an army in the war zone. At this time only a few ambassadors moved their offices to Valencia, most of them had already left the country.

⁶⁰ 19 University of Toronto professors are reported to have endorsed Dr. Bethune’s actions in Spain. The Daily Clarion, 12 February 1937, p.1. Even then, the activities of the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy (CASD) which endorsed the activities of Bethune in Spain was composed of only a few intellectuals. On the board of CASD of Montréal only 11 members were intellectuals. Most of them were doctors. They must have supported the Committee for medical reasons. Among the “professors” listed was Eugene Forsey from McGill University.

⁶¹ The Appeal endorsed by them declared that: “For these reasons (bombing of Guernica) we call upon all men of good will to protest this immense crime in the name of all that is sacred to human morality and human decency – and in the name of Almighty God.” The Daily Clarion, 6 September 1937, p.12. The

were not promoting any political commitments with the declaration. For this reason, although it might be perceived that the Popular Front policy of the CPC was successful in uniting eminent non-Communist Canadians to voice their disagreement with the Rebels, their resentment was apolitical in nature. The vocabulary used to describe the events of Guernica is exempt from the radicalised rhetoric used in the media.

Blair Neatby also believes that Canadian intellectuals during the 1930s were not active politically. Unlike the United States where the Roosevelt New Deal policy was partly the product of the intellectuals, in Canada no such political “brains trust” existed.⁶² Some effort by Canadian intellectuals still existed. The League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), which mirrored the British Fabian Society, was created by a group of Canadian intellectuals in 1931. The League’s success in influencing Canadian politics was, however, meagre.⁶³ In addition to not being successful on the public at large, the effort of the League members seemed also to have been criticised by fellow

names are the following: Dr. A. Grant Fleming, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, McGill University; Right Rev. Peter Bryce, D.D., Moderator of the United Church of Canada; Rev. H.L. Denton, B.D., Charlottetown Baptist Church; M.J. Coldwell, M.P., Chairman of the National CCF; Elmer E. Roper, Editor of the *People's Weekly*, Edmonton; P.M. Draper, President of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada; W.C. Good, President of Co-Operative Union of Canada; Sir Robert Falconer, President of the League of Nations Society in Canada; Carlton W. Stanley, President Dalhousie University; Roscoe S. Rodd, President Ontario Temperance Federation; Rev. Dr. D.Bruce MacDonald, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the University of Toronto; Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, Holy Blossom Synagogue, Toronto; Rev. Dr. J.W. MacNamara, Secretary Presbyterian Church of Canada; David Lewis, National Secretary CCF; Rev. Dr. F. Scott MacKenzie, Principal the Presbyterian College, Montreal; Rev. Daniel J. Fraser, Principal Emeritus, Presbyterian College, Montreal; Rev. Dr. R.H. A. Haslam, Principal Emmanuel College, Saskatoon; Professor George M. Wrong, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto; Rev. C.E. Silcox, General Secretary Social Service Council in Canada; J.S. Taylor, M.P., Vancouver; Henry E. Spencer, ex-M.P., United Farmers, Alberta; H.P. Whidden, Chancellor McMaster University; Gordon Siscoe, General Secretary United Church of Canada; Rev. Dr. E.W. Wallace, Chancellor Victoria University; E.J. Garland, National Organizer, CCF; Professor Alfred T. DeLury, Toronto University; Joseph McCulley, Headmaster, Pickering College.

⁶² F.D. Roosevelt initiated the New Deal Policy in the early 1930s to try to ameliorate the American economy. R.B. Bennett later would adopt a similar, though less successful politico-economic plan.

⁶³ This assessment is taken from Michiel Horn, *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942* (Toronto 1980), p.16.

Canadian intellectuals.⁶⁴ The failure of the LSR contributes to the idea that Canadian intellectuals did not have a strong say in politics in the 1930s. When the Spanish Civil War came, the Canadian intellectuals did not have an audience to talk to and influence. Other intellectuals who did have an audience, were, according to Graham Spry, the Ontario chairman of the CCF executive committee, supporting the isolationist wing of the CCF which was supported by “quite a number of academics”.⁶⁵

The role of the Canadian intellectuals in influencing the Canadians towards the Spanish Civil War was minimal. Never did they take a strong stand towards defending democracy in Spain. Spanish events were scarcely followed in the Canadian Forum, which was a widely known Canadian publication. An analysis of the Canadian Forum content on the Spanish Civil War seems to mirror the general Canadian intellectuals perception of the war.⁶⁶ No strong political positions were adopted for the promotion of Spanish Republicanism in Canada. One has to wait until September for the journal to discuss events happening in Spain.⁶⁷ In this issue, the author overviews with a neutral tone the contradictions of neutrality in Spain. The following month, the editors discuss the diplomatic stalemates which face Spanish events.⁶⁸ Later, in November, the Canadian Forum discussed financial matters while taking a somewhat ironic tone over Canadian business done with Spanish Morocco. The editors of the journal which entitled the article “Canada and Spain” discuss the fact that Canadian exports to

⁶⁴ H. Blair Neatby, The Politics of Chaos, p.16.

⁶⁵ Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.100.

⁶⁶ A list of all articles, which touch fully and in part on the Spanish Civil War, is included at the end of the thesis in annex A. It supports the following assumption that the Canadian Forum did not actively promote the Republican side.

⁶⁷ n.a. The Canadian Forum, “Spain”, Vol XVI, No.1&8, September, p.4.

Spanish Morocco had risen to \$296 752 from January to September 1936, when during the same period the previous year figures were only \$1 924. The authors conclude, with what could be interpreted as a sarcastic tone that “after all, we got our money”.⁶⁹

In the same issue, on pages 18-19, Roy Davis, a Young Communist League member, appeals for arms and money to be sent to the Spanish Government – a democratic legally elected government – by the Canadian Government.⁷⁰ However, Davis' position does not represent the position of the editors of the journal who later, in January 1937, still adopted a somewhat neutral stance towards the events in Spain. In the article, the editors stated that “both sides now have their foreign legions, and the loyalists have apparently been able to secure some supplies and munitions from abroad.”⁷¹ The tone employed in the article characterised the impartial position taken by the journal on the Spanish events.

Still, in the same issue, an image of two falcons named “Germany” and “Italy” which are standing in a branch are closely watching the small white dove – League – from intervening (or non-intervening) in Spain.⁷² At this point, in early 1937, the Canadian Forum became critical of the non-intervention policy, but did not openly favour either the Rebel or the loyalist side. It was also critical of the Republican camp for not being united. It published, for example, a poem by the Canadian poet L.A. Mackay, who was openly attacking the weaknesses of the Republican camp in Spain

⁶⁸ n.a. The Canadian Forum, “The Spanish Cauldron”, Vol XVI, No.189, October, , pp.4-5.

⁶⁹ n.a. The Canadian Forum, Vol. XVI, No. 190, November 1936, p.3.

⁷⁰ Roy Davis, *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

⁷¹ n.a. The Canadian Forum, Vol. XVI, No. 192, January 1937, p.3.

⁷² This drawing is reproduced in annex C.

instead of poems that praised it or attacked the Franco side.⁷³ It also published an interview with Henry Scott Beattie, a Canadian veteran, who was making controversial allegations about the weaknesses of the Republican camp. He was also very critical of the Spanish Government which had curbed the Revolution in the spring 1937.⁷⁴

The only tangible support the journal gave to the Loyalist side was its promotion of the fund-raising campaign organised by the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy (CASD) to support the activities of Dr. Bethune who was clearly endorsing the Loyalist cause.⁷⁵ This support was however apolitical in nature. The Canadian Forum helped Bethune's effort on the ground that "his special technique [of blood transfusion] may mark a great advance in medical science." The humanitarian effort of Bethune was not even mentioned. The advance of medical science seems to be the primary reason why the Canadian Forum had endorsed Bethune's actions. This stand was clearly apolitical.

This somewhat neutral editorial position was further promoted in early 1938, by denouncing the Non-Intervention Committee for its failure to contain the Spanish conflict in Spanish hands.⁷⁶ Finally, one has to wait for the issue of March 1939, when the Republic had just been defeated to see a headline containing the word "Fascism" to describe the enemy.⁷⁷ Throughout the war in Spain, the editors of the Canadian Forum

⁷³ In December 1937, Mackay's poem "Murder Most Foul" is published. See Nicola Vulpe for her critique of Mackay's work. Nicola Vulpe, Sealed in Struggle, pp.37-38.

⁷⁴ "Spain: Another View", The Canadian Forum, Vol. XVII, No.207, April 1938, pp.454-455.

⁷⁵ The CASD was existed from the 28 August 1936 until 31 March 1939, when the war was officially ended in Spain. It had the 20 branches nation wide. The aim of the Committee was to support the Republican government. It organised support in Canada for the activities of Dr. Norman Bethune for example. It enjoyed support from Communists to liberals, for its stand was mostly humanitarian.

⁷⁶ The Canadian Forum, Vol. XVII, No. 205, February 1938, p.373.

⁷⁷ The Canadian Forum, Vol. XVII, No. 218, March 1939, p.361.

appeared uninvolved. Intellectuals, who it may be assumed formed the greater audience of the journal, did not intervene openly to promote the Spanish Republic war effort.

The non-interference of Canadian intellectuals as it appears in the Canadian Forum, might be explained by the intransigence on the part of the editors to alter the content of their journal. In this case, the position of the Canadian intellectuals on the war in Spain could hardly be assessed when analysing the content of the Canadian Forum. In spite of the real position of the intellectuals on the war, all that appeared through the press was their non-involvement. The image they projected, that of political withdrawal adequately summarises their role in the war.

The taking of a radical stand was highly influenced by the information circulated by the media. If one was not a fervent Catholic or member of the CPC prior to the war, one's views of the rising in Spain were influenced by the press, which in turn was influenced by the proponents of the two opposing camps in Spain during the war. The Republicans tended to denigrate the supporters of the rising as Fascists. The rebels, for their part, tended to picture the Republicans as Communists.

It is clear that the political polarisation process occurred in Spain, since it was the cause of the rising. However, was there a similar radicalisation taking place in Canada at the time? If so, the most radical supporters of the Republican camp in Canada, the volunteers, would have been influenced by the same rhetoric used in Spain to join the fight against the rebels.

Chapter 3 - The Spanish Civil War became a political issue in Canada

When the Spanish Civil War broke out, the international supporters of both the Spanish Right and Left were rapidly mobilised. Many articles that glorified and condemned the uprising appeared in the Canadian press. On the political scene, a similar radicalised discourse between the Canadian Left and Right occurred, and harsh propaganda campaigns were launched. However the effectiveness of the CPC propaganda campaign for Spanish Republicanism surpassed that of the Right. The CPC recruited a great number of Canadians for the International Brigades and was also able to monopolise almost exclusively the Canadian Spanish aid movement. The success of the CPC in recruiting volunteers can be explained in three parts. First, it succeeded in monopolising the Spanish aid organisations in Canada. Secondly, the competing leftist groups, especially the CCF, adopted weak positions that also favoured the CPC. Finally, the irresolute stand taken by intellectuals during the war gave a stronger say to the CPC. These three intertwined positions need further explanation.

In September 1936, the creation of a Committee for Spanish Hospital and Medical Aid¹ was announced in the CCF organ The New Commonwealth. The object of the Committee was to collect funds for Dr. Norman Bethune.² Bethune's appeal for funds was well answered and after tumultuous diplomatic and logistical adventures, he

¹ The name was later changed to The Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy (CASD).

² Although Dr. Bethune was a CPC member and Communists were members of the Committee, he did not go to Spain under the direct tutelage of the CPC. William C. Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, Eds., Yours in the Struggle: the Reminiscences of Tim Buck (Toronto 1977), p.161.

succeeded in creating the Servicio Canadiense de Transfusion de Sangre in mid-December.³

On 20 May 1937, the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (FMPB) was created with the goal of financially and morally supporting the Canadians who were fighting in Spain. The members of both the CASD and the FMPB were mostly CCF and CPC members. However, the CPC soon monopolised both movements. The voice of the CASD, which had been set up by the CCF, soon became Communist.⁴ According to Roderick Stewart the CPC succeeded in gaining a potent influence over the Committee because of the strong personalities of the two Communists who were vice-presidents, A.A. McLeod and Tim Buck.⁵ He also adds that since the members of the CPC were always there to do the routine work, “celui-ci [the CPC] jouit d'une influence

³ Later the *Servicio* was renamed *Instituto Hispano-Canadiense de Transfusion de Sangre* in the months of January or February 1937.

⁴ Michiel Horn also supports the fact that the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy came to be controlled by the Communists. Michiel Horn, *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942*, (Toronto 1980), p.136. According to Graham Spry from the CCF and vice-president of the Committee: “the idea of a CCF hospital in Spain, an idea which Dr. Norman Bethune brought into reality, was partly a CCF tactic to match the Communists' recruitment of CCF lads for the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion of combatants.” This statement made by Spry in the article “The CCF Party in its formative years”, which was published in 1969 in Victor Hoar, *The Great Depression: Essays and Memoirs from Canada and the United-States* (Toronto 1969), is not credible. The Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy was created in September 1936 while the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was officially mustered on 1 July 1937. The creation of the two groups is the result of two different impulses that are distinct from each other. For explanations on the history of the creation of the Battalion, see Chapter 1 of Martin Lobigs, “Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939”, M.A.Thesis, the University of New Brunswick, 1992.

⁵ The Honorary President was Rev. Dr. Salem G. Bland; the President was Rev. Benjamin H. Spence; the Vice-Presidents were Graham Spry (CCF), Dr. Rose Henderson, Tim Buck (General Secretary of CPC), A.A. McLeod (CPC). The secretary was E.E. Wolton; the financial secretary was Norman Freed, the treasurer was Bruce Robinson. The Executive Committee was composed of the following members: Stewart Smith, D. Nesbitt, J.M. Connor, Annie Buller (CPC), Fred Collins, E.M. Aplin, Harold Potter, Elizabeth Morton, David Goldstick, S.B. Watson (LSR). The Executive Committee was also composed of the Committee's provincial presidents: D.W. Morrison (Maritimes); J. Cupello (Québec) (vice-president of the Montreal Trades and Labour Council); E.J. McMurray (Manitoba); George Williams (Saskatchewan), Harold Gerry (Alberta) and A.M. Stephen (British Columbia) (CCF but close to CPC).

disproportionnée par rapport au nombre de ses membres engagés dans cette affaire.”⁶

Similarly, the FMPB was also soon monopolised by the CPC.⁷ Although the Communists did not set up these two groups, they soon became led by the CPC.

Many reasons explain the domination of the two groups by the CPC. Contrary to what happened in Canada, British and Australian Communists did not succeed in monopolising Spanish aid organisations. In Australia, prior to the war, the Labour Party had distanced itself from the Communist urge to create a popular front and had launched an anti-war committee to compete with the Communist movement Against War and Fascism.⁸ In Britain, there were also competing committees, which coordinated the British aid to Spain. According to Jim Fyrth, many committees were established throughout Britain to help Spain. Although a National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief was created in January 1937, most of the existing committees kept their distinctiveness from this Communist-led body.⁹

In Canada, however, many factors helped the Communists in assuming the leadership of the aid movement. Canadian intellectuals, as stated above, were not strongly voicing their pro-Republican views. The CCF’s political platform and most of

⁶ Roderick Stewart, *Bethune* (Montréal 1973), pp.120-121.

⁷ Martin Lobigs supports this assumption, in “Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939”, p.125.

⁸ Diane Menghetti, “North Queensland Anti-Fascism and the Spanish Civil War,” in *Labour History* (Australia) Vol. 42, 1982, p.65.

⁹ There exists a polemic between the assumptions brought forward by Jim Fyrth on the existence of an Aid to Spain Movement as a whole and Tom Buchanan’s thesis. Buchanan states that: “the ‘Aid Spain’ movement did not exist, at least, not in any concrete form, and certainly not in any that is helpful to historians analysing this period.” Tom Buchanan, “Britain’s Popular Front? Aid Spain and the British Labour Movement”, in *History Workshop Journal*, No. 31, Spring 1991, pp. 63 and 70 and “The Role of the British Labour Movement in the Origins and Work of the Basque Children’s Committee, 1937-9,” in *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 18, April 1988. Jim Fyrth, on the contrary affirms that there existed an Aid Spain movement in Britain. See also Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge 1991), p.139. For an understanding of Jim Fyrth’s position, see Jim Fyrth, *The*

its leaders were isolationist and pacifist. J.S Woodsworth did not protest the Canadian embargo on arms which prevented the Madrid government to purchase arms in Canada, out of fear of war.¹⁰ Although many CCF members supported the Canadian volunteers, the official voice of the CCF denounced them.¹¹ Similarly, the CCF did not oppose the Foreign Enlistment Act. Such a stand on the part of the CCF prevented many, consciously or not, from becoming dedicated Republican defenders. Therefore, anyone who favoured the Republic had no choice but to support the CPC-led campaign.¹² This lack of alternate choices further enhanced the influence of the CPC. David Moore who wrote on the history of the CCF during the Spanish Civil War also assumes that the work of the CPC was crucial in mobilising the Canadian support for the Spanish Republic. He comments that: “through their work in such organisations as the CASD and the CLWF, Communists were instrumental in raising the plight of the Spanish Republic to the level of public consciousness and debate.”¹³ Inasmuch as Canadians

Signal Was Spain: The Aid Spain Movement in Britain, 1936-39 (London 1986) and “The Aid Spain Movement in Britain 1936-39” in History Workshop Journal, No. 35, Spring 1993, pp.153-164.

¹⁰ Grace MacInnis, J.S. Woodsworth: A Man To Remember (Toronto 1953), p.243.

¹¹ Martin Lobigs presents many instances where CCF members supported the volunteers. He also demonstrated that the CCF changed its policy and began to support the volunteers when they were being repatriated after September 1938. Martin Lobigs, “Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939”, pp.142-144 and 158. For a discussion on the position adopted by the CCF in the context of the Spanish Civil War see pp.48-52; Doris French Shackleton, Tommy Douglas (Toronto 1975), pp.104-105; Friedrich Steininger, “George Williams: Agrarian Socialist”, M.A. Thesis, University of Regina, 1976, pp.356-357 and David Vincent Moore, “Do The Right Thing: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39”, M.A. Thesis, Queen’s University, 1991.

¹² Lobigs also states that “the Mac-Paps could count on support – active and passive – that reached beyond the Communist Party. Yet, the examples do not prove that it reached into the general public. Active support outside the CP appears to have been limited to leftists in labour unions, the CCF, the Social Credit Party in Alberta, and the United Church.” It is clear that support, for the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was limited and gravitated around the CPC. The same can be said about the Canadian support for the Spanish Republic. Martin Lobigs, “Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939”, p.153.

¹³ David Vincent Moore, “Do the Right Thing”, p.6.

saw the CPC's strong contribution to the Republican effort, fervent supporters were more easily induced to join the Brigades.

Since those who were already supporting the effort led by the CPC in helping the Spanish Republic were more readily accepting the idea to join the Brigades, it is indispensable to understand what pushed them first to endorse the CPC's campaign to support Spanish Republicanism. Correspondingly, the reasons that pushed the Canadian volunteers to join the CPC would partly reveal what motivated them to enlist for Spain.

In the early months of the conflict The Daily Clarion denounced the coup which was openly backed by Hitler and Mussolini. At this point, the CPC refrained from commenting on any involvement of foreign troops on the side of both the Republic and the Rebels.¹⁴ The position adopted by the CPC was transformed later when the Comintern openly campaigned for the recruitment of volunteers for the newly formed International Brigades. Thus, the Clarion became a strong critic of foreign involvement in Spain.

At this point, the use of foreign troops by the rebels was vehemently criticised by the CPC. This criticism would be an integral part of the propaganda campaign of the CPC for the rest of the war.¹⁵ In a manifesto published before the end of August 1936,

¹⁴ There were already *Centurias* fighting in Spain. These units had been created ad hoc by political emigrés from Europe of mostly German, Italian and Austrian origins. It is also believed, although not proven by any documents, that athletes of the Workers' Olympiads, which took place in Barcelona in July-August 1936 might have joined the Centurias. According to Verle Johnston: "Some of them (Workers Olympiads' athletes) may have participated in the street fighting which crushed the rebellion in that city (Madrid) on July 19, and thereafter, singly and in groups, joined the various militias which set off for the front in Aragon." Verle B. Johnston, Legion of Babel (London 1967), p.28.

¹⁵ However, although the Clarion criticised the presence of German and Italian troops in Spain, never was The Daily Clarion used to promote the recruitment of volunteers in Canada. There is one exception. On 26 December 1936, a Communist Party of Germany (KPD) communiqué is reproduced in The Daily

the Central Committee of the CPC declared that “Every possible aid is being given by the fascist powers to the mutineers, in form of money, guns, airplanes, ammunitions and the concentration of warships in Spanish waters.”¹⁶

In spite of the fact that German and Italian aid to Franco was to come in September, it is interesting to note that in the the CPC’s manifesto the presence of Italian and German soldiers in Spain is not denounced. The manifesto’s failure to mention what was to be vociferously condemned later – the use of foreign troops by Franco – reflects the policies of Moscow which was not calling for recruits yet. Although it was known throughout the world that Berlin and Rome were aiding the Rebels, the CPC renounced commenting against the presence of Germans and Italians on Spanish soil.

The August 1936 manifesto’s interest lies also in the fact that no mention of sending volunteers was ever made. Later in the manifesto the authors called for the organisation of “...a mighty united front movement of solidarity with the Spanish people!” and that we must do “...everything we can to assist the growing movement among the forces of labour for assistance to the Spanish people. We must not fail them!”¹⁷ No call was made for sending volunteers to help the Republican war effort, even though some workers who were attending the Worker Olympiad in Barcelona may have already entered the fighting in Spain.

Clarion in which the KPD openly called for volunteers. The communiqué read as follow: “Strengthen the ranks of the glorious International Column. Place yourselves at the service of the Republican Freedom army in Spain.” The Daily Clarion, 26 December 1936, p.6.

¹⁶Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part III, 1936 (St. John’s 1996) [Report No. 821], p.359.

¹⁷ Report 821, p.360.

The late CPC criticism of foreign involvement was later accompanied by calls for arms and ammunitions to be sent to the Spanish workers. The call for wartime supplies was also to be part of the CPC campaign throughout the war. A letter from the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) was reproduced in The Daily Clarion on 8 September 1936. The letter that was initially published in the PCE press Mundo Obrero called for "Arms for the Spanish anti-fascist militia".¹⁸ Similar calls were to be reproduced in many instances throughout the war. In November 1936, Tim Buck, having just returned from Spain, addressed a crowd at the Mutual Street Arena in Toronto. During the address, he also called for arms for the Republic: "Give the Spanish workers arms and tanks, or else take them away from fascists, and the Spanish workers will drive the Moors and foreign Legionnaires into the Mediterranean."¹⁹ Although the Brigades had been organised in late October and early November 1936, the CPC was still calling on wartime supplies to be sent to the Spanish Republic. The CPC seems to have reacted with hesitation to both the Spanish events and the call of the Comintern to organise help to the Spanish Republic in the early weeks of the conflict.

The RCMP remarked on the late response of the CPC. An August 1936 RCMP report comments on the hesitancy of the CPC towards the Spanish conflict. It stated that: "In Canada little has been done so far to comply with the appeal of the world Communist against War and Fascism beyond a concentrated effort on the part of the Communist press to crystallize a sentiment favorable to the present government in

¹⁸ Report 829, p.444.

¹⁹ Report 833, p.497.

Spain.”²⁰ Similarly, the CPC reacted lately to organise a campaign of recruitment for the International Brigades in Canada.

The date that the CPC started recruiting for Spain is uncertain. It is unlikely that it commenced in either September or November, but December might be probable. Although The Daily Clarion reported on international volunteers fighting in Spain as early as November 1936, the Clarion first reports on the presence of Canadians in Spain on 22 January 1937.²¹ It also appears that as late as 30 December 1936, if there was a recruitment campaign organised, it was not well known to at least the Republican supporters.²²

RCMP reports also indicate that a CPC campaign of recruitment was launched in late December or early January 1937. In the RCMP report of 6 January 1937, it is written that “[reliable reports indicate] that no applicants for military service in Spain in the service of the Loyalist’s cause have been accepted so far.” The last section of the sentence indicates that the recruitment campaign had already started, prior to the 6 January.²³ Two weeks later, it was reported that recruitment had started in Winnipeg and Montréal.²⁴ Therefore, one would assume that the CPC recruitment campaign for the International Brigades was organised in the early days of January 1937 or the last days of December 1936.²⁵

²⁰ Report 819, p.331.

²¹ “Windsor Citizen Fights in Spain”, The Daily Clarion, 22 January 1937, p.1.

²² A.E. Smith, “How Can We Volunteer for Spain”, The Daily Clarion, 30 December 1936, p.1.

²³ G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: “The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937” [Report No. 838, 6 January 1937], p.28.

²⁴ Report No. 840, 20 January 1937, p.43.

²⁵ The month of December is even less likely, because no mention is made about the recruitment campaign in Canada. The general accuracy of RCMP reports lead us to believe that the recruitment campaign most likely started in the month of January 1937.

Once organised, the recruitment campaign in Canada was considerably decentralised due to the vastness of Canada. There were recruitment offices in Montréal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Logistical co-ordination was assumed by the CPC and volunteers were closely monitored throughout the recruiting process. Many recruiting agents who were members of the CPC performed the initial steps for recruitment. Procedures were sometimes strenuous and lengthy as volunteers came from all over Canada.

In accordance with the policies issued by the Comintern, the CPC was initially looking for volunteers who had military experience. In The Daily Clarion, an initial report on Canadians fighting in Spain depicts them as all having prior military experience.²⁶ Bert Levy, the first reported Canadian serving in Spain was also a former soldier who had served in the Imperial Army in Palestine and Egypt during the First World War.²⁷ However, as potential recruits ran out, the CPC soon accepted any Communist cardholders without any military experience. Volunteers who were Communist sympathisers became the prime targets of recruiters and because of the success of the CPC in the Popular Front era, it was relatively easy to find volunteers.

Medical and political screening was also conducted. All potential recruits were given a free medical examination in order to eliminate those in bad health. Sympathetic physicians performed the examinations. They were also asked to fill out questionnaires

²⁶ "More Sons of Canada Defend Democracy", The Daily Clarion, 9 February 1937, p.1. The group was composed of Joseph R. Leclerc (member of the Royal 22ième Régiment during WWI), George Cook, Thomas Michie, Joseph Campbell (also with the R22R), Michael Russell, Joseph Glenn and Thomas Russell. According to the findings of Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, Thomas Michie was reported missing after the battle of Jarama, Joseph Campbell and Michael Russell were also killed in the same battle. Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.76.

²⁷ "Windsor Citizen Fights in Spain", The Daily Clarion, 22 January 1937, p.1.

and were interviewed by recruiters. To filter the radical elements out of the recruits' ranks, part of the recruiting procedure required the names of three or four references to attest for the correctness of the views of the volunteers.²⁸ According to Norman Penner, the CPC efficiently screened political recruits to ensure their reliability.²⁹ It is assumed that the reliability of the volunteers was essential in minimising the chances of developing high revolutionary ideals in Spain. The Comintern commanded a strict anti-revolutionary recruiting policy.³⁰ It is assumed that revolutionaries were deterred, in the recruiting process, from joining the Brigades.³¹

The poorest volunteers – presumably most of them – were given luggage and clothing as well as pocket money to avoid being bothered by the police if ever questioned. The whole operation was conducted in secrecy since volunteering was

²⁸ Radical elements were specifically revolutionaries. Randy Gibbs Ervin, "The Men of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: A case study of the involvement of the International Communist Movement in the Spanish Civil war", M.A.Thesis, Carleton University, 1972, p.50.

²⁹ Norman Penner, Canadian Communism : The Stalin Years and Beyond, (Toronto 1988), p.137.

³⁰ RCMP reports confirms do not confirm nor infirm the presence of revolutionaries amongst the Canadian recruits. When discussing who the volunteers were, the reports states that care was taken to recruit only "proven anti-fascists of a reliable type". Report 893, 7 June 1938, or "people in charge of this work [the recruitment campaign] in Canada to exercise the greatest care so that only reliable anti-fascists and persons who will not cause any difficulties be recruited." Report 881, 19 January 1938. David Cattell also claims that "revolutionary elements were eliminated and only men of democratic, liberal views were accepted. Communism in the Spanish Civil War (Los Angeles 1955), p.83.

³¹ See the next chapter for an overall picture of why Canadians joined the brigades. It is hard to point to those that were revolutionaries. For this reason, by analysing what motivated them to go to Spain, the true political convictions of the Canadian volunteers are better revealed. When analysing RCMP reports, it is not clear whether Canadian revolutionaries wanting to enlist in the Brigades were turned down. The authors of the RCMP reports do not seem to have been able to distinguish between revolutionaries and Communists. Poor Marxist theoretical knowledge of the authors might account for the lack of mentioning the non-revolutionary sentiment of the recruitment campaign in Canada in the RCMP reports. Revolutionaries are also poorly defined in the 1930s. The idea that a strategy as the one used in Russia in October 1917 could be used in other countries, including Canada, was abandoned for a more pragmatic or rightist, as Trotsky criticised it, strategy. The initial phase of the revolution would be to gain more political strength for the workers. The second stage would be to actually use the revolution to gain all power. The two-stage revolution was the strategy favoured by the Comintern, especially after 1935. In this thesis, when using the word revolutionary, it is used in the pre-1935 meaning. Finally, the fact that anti-Fascism had so monopolised the CPC discourse, there was little room left to distinguish revolutionary agendas from anti-Fascist ones.

illegal.³² Volunteers were also asked to elaborate a fictional travel plan to counter any scrupulous or sceptical border agents. A visit to the International Exhibition in Paris that was held in 1937 was often used as a justification for their European trip. The last procedures before leaving for Spain were arranged in Montréal and Toronto at which place volunteers boarded trains and ships for Spain via France. On the departing day, many volunteers kept the secrecy of their operations. On the other hand, crowds that openly supported their decision and knew the sole object of their voyage saluted others.³³

We believe that the slow speed with which the CPC answered the call of the Comintern in organising the recruitment campaign in Canada reflects the nature of Canadian politics in the 1930s. Due to the physical insulation of Canada from the rest of Europe, events happening in Spain were not high on the agenda of political activists of the time. The fact that the Depression was raging in Canada also minimised the impact of the July rising on the Canadian population. Canadians as well as CPC leaders were more concerned with finding possible solutions to the economic crisis than with Spanish events. This position was only challenged by the CPC's strong pro-Republican position that was adopted following the Comintern's policies.

In the fall of 1936, with the Comintern decision to endorse and organise the creation of an international force where Canadians would take part, events in Spain began to directly affect potential candidates who saw, among many things and through

³² The Canadian government had modified the Imperial Foreign Enlistment Act in February 1937 to fit the new modern military advancements. Its adoption, on 31 July 1937, was specifically designed to prevent further recruiting in Canada. For an analysis of the role of the act, see Erik Thor Frohn-Nielson, "Canada's Foreign Enlistment Act: Mackenzie King's expedient response to the Spanish Civil War", M.A. Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 1982.

the Communist propaganda, both a way out of the Depression years and a chance to fight Fascism.

The Comintern's and the USSR's motive in creating an international force to fight in Spain needs to be understood in order to better explain what motivated the Canadians who answered the call. If the Comintern had moved from fighting sectarian Socialism in the Third Period to uniting with all democratic institutions, it must have been motivated by strong objectives. Was the Soviet goal in Spain to promote its concept of anti-Fascist front or was its decision to support the creation of the International Brigades motivated by other more pragmatic purposes? Was there any revolutionary element in its policy towards Spain?

Moscow was not interested in fostering a Communist Revolution in the Iberian Peninsula. Soviet leaders were circumscribed by pragmatic concerns which were beyond the ideological dispositions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Because of the USSR's strategic position, the Comintern was forcefully used to protect and promote the USSR's collective security agenda. In order to do so, it needed to abandon its revolutionary goals. Accordingly, Trotskyists and other revolutionaries were soon removed from power and silenced. Under this light, it is dubious to accept the view that revolutionary Canadians would have been recruited by the Comintern in order to foster a revolution in Spain. The anti-Fascist object of the International Brigades and the strategic position of the USSR in the inter-war period better account for what motivated many Canadians to join the Communist-led war effort in Spain.

³³ Barry Broadfoot, Ten Lost Years, 1929-1939 (Don Mills 1973), p.11.

Paradoxically, Fascism acted as the catalyst, which began to unite the political will of both the West and the East in containing Fascism. The rapprochement of the two camps was further cemented when, in the summer of 1935, the Comintern's paramount goal was altered and it adopted a strong anti-Fascist position. In 1935, the Soviet Union also signed a broad military alliance with France in order to assist each other in the fight against German expansion.

Still the Soviet Union position was precarious. When the Spanish Rebels rose in July 1936, it was put into a delicate position. The Soviet Union, who had pushed for collective security since the years 1933-34, was urged by both France and Britain not to intervene in Spain in order to contain the conflict within the Spanish borders. At the same time, the Republican government and the CPE requested its aid. The Popular Front government, which had won the February 1936 elections, had some ideological reasons to beg for the Soviet Union's help.³⁴ In order to maintain its well-disposed relations with the West, Moscow officially adopted the non-intervention policy.

In practice, the Soviet Union committed a small portion of its army and the Comintern to the war effort of the Republican government in Spain.³⁵ Because Franco

³⁴ Caution must be exercised when the expression "Popular Front" is used to describe the Spanish "Frente popular" electoral pact. There is still a polemic over the issue of who initiated the pact. Was the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) its instigator? Many Spanish and non-Spanish historians wrongly believe that the Spanish Popular Front was the creation of the PCE. See Víctor Alba, The Communist Party in Spain (London 1983); Martin S. Alexander and Helen Graham, eds., The French and Spanish Popular Fronts (New York 1989); and Helen Graham and Paul Preston, The Popular Front in Europe (New York 1987).

³⁵ The argument is made by Soviet politicians that the Comintern was not a foreign policy tool used by Moscow. Litvinov in 1929, who was to become the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs a year later, denounced allegations made by the Mexican ambassador to Moscow that the Comintern was a tool for Soviet foreign policies. Litvinov declared that: "The activity of that organization [the Comintern] has nothing to do with the Soviet government, nor can it in any circumstances serve as the object of diplomatic correspondence with the National Commissariat for Foreign Affairs." *Rejection of the protest: Note from Litvinov to the Mexican Ambassador, Silva Herzog, 26th October 1929.* Reproduced in

openly received aid from Germany, Italy and Portugal, the USSR had to react in this manner. The Comintern organised the International Brigades as a Soviet tool in Spain. What motivated Soviet Russia to create an international force when its engagement was against the Non-Intervention Committee mandate? The USSR could have easily provided ample men to fight in Spain.

One could presume that the USSR would have fought in Spain, after a French call, to prevent Fascism from taking power in Spain and threatening France on the German and Spanish borders. France, then, would have also intervened in Spain. Still, both Russia and France did not intervene for more pragmatic reasons.

Britain was not militarily ready to intervene in any major conflict in the mid-1930s. British rearmament was still underway and it would have been dangerous to intervene in Spain when there was an imminent danger of escalation. Secondly, due to economic investment in Spain, the argument existed that it was not advisable, initially, to take sides since British investment was divided on both sides of the conflict. Thirdly, British politicians still believed that Fascist Italy could be brought into the British-French coalition. British success at the London Conference of 1915 was still used as an argument.³⁶ The British non-antagonist stand towards Italy favoured such possible rapprochement. Fourthly, intervening in Spain would have been against the idea of appeasement, which was Britain's policy in the inter-war period. France, although closer ideologically to Spain – it also, since May 1936, had a Popular Front government

Stephen Clissold, Ed., Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1918-1968: A Documentary Survey, New York, Oxford University Press, 1970, p.92. According to Adam B. Ulam, and most other historians, such is not the case, the "Comintern was [...] an obedient tool of Moscow". Adam B. Ulam, Expansion & Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-67 (New York 1968), p.161.

– was stuck between having to support either Spain or its principal ally, Britain. It decided to side with the latter. From this follows the rationale that Russia did not intervene in Spain to protect French borders from Fascism.³⁷

The Soviet Union could not directly intervene in Spain on the Republican side. A Republican victory might have led to social revolution and frightened away France and Britain from any possible alliance with Moscow. According to José Romero Salvadó, the Soviet Union's goal was to encourage the survival of the Republic. In accordance with its ideology, it had to give the impression to the Allies that Fascism was still the dominant threat without encouraging revolutionary sentiments.³⁸

In the spirit of Popular Frontism, the USSR was also stressing the fact that the Spanish Republican government was almost exclusively composed of bourgeois politicians not revolutionaries.³⁹ This stratagem was used to demonstrate both to France and Britain that the USSR could be a potential ally against Fascism.⁴⁰ For this reason, during the May fighting in Barcelona and later, Trotskyist elements in the Republican

³⁶ At the London Conference of 1915, British politicians and diplomats had succeeded in securing Italy's participation with the Allies.

³⁷ For a discussion on the subject see D. Little, Malevolent Neutrality: The United-States, Great Britain and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War (Ithaca, N.Y. 1985) and D. Puzo, Spain and the Great Powers (New York 1962).

³⁸ Francisco J. Romero Slavadó, "Spanish Civil War: The International Dimension", in Modern History Review, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1995, p.23.

³⁹ Manuel Azaña, the leading figure of the Popular Front coalition, supported this statement and commented that: "The Popular Front does not represent social revolution, nor is the work of enthronization of Communism in Spain; it has a simple goal: the reinstatement of the Republic." Author's translation cited in Joaquín Arrarás, La Historia de la Segunda República Española (Madrid 1965), p.413.

⁴⁰ Gabriel Jackson, The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931-1939 (Princeton 1965), p.258.

zone were eliminated in order to prevent them from using the conflict as a breeding ground for a revolution.⁴¹

Another explanation accounts for the creation of the Brigades. Hugh Thomas claims that Stalin, who was irresolute at first,⁴² was also motivated to send the “large number of Communists émigrés in Soviet Russia who were best out of the way at a time when the great purge was beginning.”⁴³ The creation of an international force was answering Stalin’s concern with the Communists émigrés.

The Spanish government approved the creation of the International Brigades. It appears that, although numerous Spanish workers, grouped into union-controlled militias supported the Republican side, Madrid still lacked regular soldiers. For example, in order to stimulate the recruitment of soldiers in the Republican Army, President Azaña increased the wage granted to the soldiers.⁴⁴ Each soldier received 10 *pesetas* a day, which was five times more than what the average Spanish soldiers

⁴¹ Social revolution did happen in the early weeks of the conflict in Madrid and especially in Barcelona. It, however, was soon crushed when the Republican war effort became organised. The coming to power of Largo Caballero definitively suspended all hope of furthering the revolution mood present at first in Spain. Historians have also alluded to the fact that the war in Spain was lucrative for Russia since it succeeded in holding the Spanish gold reserve, which was still in the hands of the Republicans. The Soviet aid was also bought with this gold contrarily to German and Italian aid that can be better described as aid. Russia also had other concerns at the time of the July Coup in Spain. Stalin had personally initiated the trials of many old Bolshevik leaders and pro-Trotskyists a few months prior to the rising. The extent of the purge was so great that it would have been dangerous for the Russian Army to be used extensively in Spain.

⁴² According to Jonathan Haslam, there was a “pitched battle in the Politburo” over the question of sending arms to Spain. Jonathan Haslam, The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe: 1933-1939 (New York 1984), pp.115-116.

⁴³ Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War (London 1961), p.297.

⁴⁴ A Republican army was created in September when, among the early heroic feats of the militias, they had halted the enemy at the outskirts of Madrid. Soon their vigour had vanished and they became increasingly criticised. In order to increase the effectiveness of the Republican war effort, a Regular army was organised with the remains of the old army and the militias. For a good prognosis of the revolutionary mood of both Madrid and Barcelona, see Juliá Santos, “Le peuple en armes”, in Carlos Serrano, Ed., Madrid, 1936-1939 : Un peuple en résistance ou l'épopée ambiguë (Paris 1994) and George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (London 1978).

received.⁴⁵ Although this explanation cannot entirely account for the creation of the International Brigades, it sheds some light on what could have encouraged the Soviets to intervene when Soviet leaders had abruptly abandoned their revolutionary discourse in 1935. The Soviet Union's willingness to contribute to European collective security also challenges any argument that justifies Soviet intervention in Spain.

The Canadian contingent was the second largest *per capita* in relation to its population after France. France, for obvious reasons of political and physical proximity, provided more volunteers than any other country. Canada's accomplishment is, however, harder to comprehend. No historians have provided clear explanations to account for the high Canadian representation in the International Brigades. In this case, such an interpretation is twofold.

Canada's physical distance from Spain and the modest Spanish population in Canada are factors further contributing to the bewilderment of historians. Still, some tentative explanation can be found in the specificity of Canadian political life in the 1930s. As stated earlier, the CPC succeeded in organising Canadian masses in the midst of the Depression because of its activist stand. It organised the Relief Camp Workers' Union and the On-To-Ottawa trek in 1935, when other mainstream or leftist political parties, such as the CCF, seemed to be less effective in providing leadership. When the Spanish Civil War erupted, the CPC had a growing following. The success of the CPC in mobilising masses in the mid-1930s was further enhanced during the war by

⁴⁵ Micheal Seidman, "The Unorwellian Barcelona", in European History Quarterly, Vol. 20, 1990, p.167. Noel Brailsford, a British journalist, stated in an article printed in The Daily Clarion that the members of the British Brigade received sixpence a day. He made this comment after the Daily Mail had stated that "the mercenaries are paid one pound a day by confiscated property." "Sixpence a day: the story of the British Brigade", The Daily Clarion, 28 January 1937, p.6.

the strong position it adopted against Fascism. Fascism was to be halted not by mainstream politics but by the CPC, which called for the creation of a united front to check the advance of Fascism.

Many groups were organised throughout Canada to help the Spanish Republic. Soon, the leadership and organisation of the Canadian Spanish aid came under the umbrella of the CPC. Once this was accomplished, one could hardly help Spain without having to deal with CPC members or sympathisers. This state of affairs further promoted the CPC's propaganda campaign, which had an ever-widening audience. This same audience was further radicalised by the CPC's propaganda and increased the pool of potential recruits for the International Brigades. The further the CPC extended its web over Spanish aid, the more it sensitised the masses already sympathetic to the pro-Republican ideal.

The CPC was taking a strong stand on foreign policy matters. Contrary to the CCF, Liberals and Conservatives, the CPC's stand on domestic issues and foreign policies helped create the link between the issues that were fought in Canada and abroad. Fascism, although not at the doorstep of Canada, was displayed by the CPC as a great menace to Canadians.

Although the above-mentioned explanation accounts for the fact that many Canadians joined the Brigades, the discrepancy that exists between the number of Canadian recruits and other western country recruits is not rigorously explained. Why did Britain and the United States furnish fewer recruits, *per capita* than Canada?

The Canadian response to the Spanish Civil War can help explain why so many Canadians joined the Brigades. First, when one adopted a pro-Republican stand, one

could hardly refrain from being influenced by the CPC's ideas since it had monopolised the Canadian Spanish help. The Communist Party of Great Britain did not monopolise the Spanish Aid. In addition, the British Labour Party was not united in its stand towards the war in Spain. The hesitancy of its members did not aid the union of all Spanish aid groups under the possible Communist lead. Moreover, the vacillation of the Labour Party leaders was partly the result of the official Government stand on non-intervention and their post-war pacifist stand. The non-interventionist stand for both reasons was strong in Britain, especially at the start of the hostilities.⁴⁶

The wide range of positions towards the war in Britain, from firm pacifism to pro-Republicanism lessened the effect of polarisation that was achieved in Canada. Consequently, the Communist recruitment campaign in Britain had to compete against other options. Such options were scarcer in Canada. Furthermore, in addition to the official British political stands adopted by the various parties, British intellectuals were actively displaying their sympathy with the Republican camp. This was not duplicated in Canada. Few intellectuals were members of the CASD or the FMPB. According to Martin Lobigs, the only support they gave to the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was during their repatriation home after the fall of 1938.⁴⁷ With the exception of some support for Bethune, on humanitarian grounds, the Canadian intellectuals failed to nurture a widespread pro-Republican voice. On the contrary, many British prominent

⁴⁶ It was believed in Britain that the Nationalists would quickly win the war against the Republic as late as September 1936. In September, Franco made an advance on Madrid and was brilliantly halted in the University City by what was to become the International Brigades. From this point on, British public opinion was altered and became more evenly split between the pro-Republicans and pro-Nationalists. K.W. Watkins, Britain Divided: The Effect of the Spanish Civil War on British Public Opinion (Westport 1976), p.65.

⁴⁷ Martin Lobigs, "Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939", p.158.

politicians and intellectuals openly supported the Republic. The absence of a strong public position against the Rebels and the fact that the CPC had no real competition when it organised the Spanish aid movement, constituted part of the reason why so many Canadians adopted a radical stand and joined CPC led organisations and subsequently the International Brigades.

It was demonstrated that the CPC monopolised most of the aid to the Spanish Republic in Canada. Although the recruitment campaign in Canada was organised late, the CPC, because of its strong voice in the aid movement, was able to recruit numerous Canadians into the ranks of the International Brigades. The weak public stand taken by Canadian intellectuals and other Leftist groups, especially the popular CCF, also accounts for the success of the recruitment campaign in Canada. The reason for the USSR to organise the Brigades can be traced to its foreign policy goals that were against any revolutionary plans at the time. For this reason, it is believed, although hard to prove, that revolutionaries were deterred from joining the International Brigades. The "reliable type" to which the RCMP reports make reference might indicate that proven anti-fascists who were not revolutionaries were reliable. The next chapter illustrates who the Canadian volunteers were. Indications on the high presence of radicalised Canadians, mostly of foreign origins, will also be presented.

Chapter 4 - Who were the volunteers?

There is a need to comprehend who the volunteers were in order to facilitate the search for what motivated them to go to Spain. In this chapter, the make-up of the Canadian contingent will be examined with respect to Communist adherence, point of origin, immigrant participation and age of the participants. The nature of the Canadian contingent and its relationship to the 1930s will be analysed. In taking such an approach, the roots of the motives used by the many Canadians who joined the Brigades will be better exposed.

Some comments on the composition of the Canadian contingent and the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion are first going to be made. It will be demonstrated that the ranks of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion were never preponderantly Canadians. Secondly, a broad demographic analysis of the Canadian volunteers will be conducted. It will be demonstrated that Vancouver, Winnipeg and Port Arthur citizens as well as East European and Scandinavian immigrants to Canada were numerous amongst the Canadian volunteers. Thirdly, the age of the Canadian volunteers will be assessed. It will be shown that Canadian volunteers were older than what might normally be expected among volunteers for military service. This analysis is based on primary documents that were amassed during and shortly after the war by the Comintern and the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. For this reason, the data has an important historical value.

For organisational purposes, the Brigades were divided into language groups. Accordingly, as volunteers arrived at the Brigade headquarter in Albacete, they were

segregated into language groups. In the first months of the war, Canadians were put into British and American units.¹ The American Abraham Lincoln Battalion counted in its ranks a great number of Canadians during the early months of the war. Canadians, however, did not serve exclusively in British, American and later the Canadian-named Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. There were Canadians in special units, artillery units, intelligence and medical services, transport, aviation, cavalry and communications.² Canadians did not all serve in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Reciprocally, the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion were not all Canadians.

The fact that Canadians were also serving in other fighting groups was publicised in The Daily Clarion on some occasions. It reported on 14 June 1937 that there were many Canadians in other units. Beside a picture, one could read that “the group shown on the left is part of the Dimitroff Battalion in Spain which is made up largely of Canadian boys.”³ Most of these Canadians were neither attached to the American units nor the future Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.

In the early months of 1937, the increased influx of Canadians arriving in Spain promoted the idea of creating a Canadian unit. According to Howard and Reynolds, in

¹ The English-speaking Brigadiers were grouped into the XVth International Brigades. It also appears as if the French-Canadians and the Québécois also followed their Canadian counter-parts in the ranks of British units.

² William Beeching, Canadian Volunteers Spain, 1936-1939 (Regina 1989), p.140 and Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion : the Canadian contingent in the Spanish Civil War (Ottawa 1986 (1969)), p.157.

³ “Canadians in action in Spain's Front lines”, The Daily Clarion, 14 June 1937, p.1. Steve Dasovic, a Canadian-Croatian from Vancouver was in the picture. He was killed at the battle of Jarama. Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p. 242.

July 1937 the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was created.⁴ A year later, the Brigades were reorganised and were finally fully integrated into the Spanish regular army. At this point, Spaniards gradually replaced the Americans who, so far, had numerically dominated the battalion. The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was never populated preponderantly by Canadians. The idea that the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was a Canadian unit populated in majority by Canadian volunteers is therefore inaccurate. Although it is reported in mid-September that there were 870 Canadians fighting in Spain, a roster list of the Battalion dated on 13 October 1937 still confirms the numeric hegemony of Americans.⁵

TABLE 1 - NATIONAL ORIGIN OF 397 MEMBERS OF THE MACKENZIE-PAPINEAU BATTALION ON 13TH OF OCTOBER 1937 ROLL-CALL⁶

NATIONALITY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
American	258	65.0
Canadian	106	26.7
Finnish	8	2.1
Puerto Rican	5	1.3
Scottish	5	1.3
British	4	Less than 1.0
Polish	2	Less than 1.0
Greek	1	Less than 1.0
Welsh	1	Less than 1.0
Irish	1	Less than 1.0
French	1	Less than 1.0

⁴ However, according to The Daily Clarion the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion would have been created earlier. On 2 June 1937, on page 1, the paper reported on members of the "Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion" in Spain.

⁵ G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937" [Report No. 870, 16 September 1937], p.373.

⁶ Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fond, MG10 K2, Fond 545, File List 3, File 508. This roster list has never been published since the fonds was acquired by the National Archives of Canada in late summer 1994. It contains lists of personnel and statistical information on members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Among these lists, there is a full list of the strength of the unit as of 13 October 1937. This list was used to compile this table.

Albanian	1	Less than 1.0
Danish	1	Less than 1.0
Hungarian	1	Less than 1.0
Russian	1	Less than 1.0
Chinese	1	Less than 1.0
Total:	397	100.0

Table 1 shows that the Canadians were a minority among the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.

Because the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was an English-speaking unit, its members must all have spoken English. Two Poles were part of the unit in October 1937. Although two Polish units existed, the Dombrowsky and Mickiewicz Battalions, they preferred to join the English-speaking Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. It could be expected that they lived in an English-speaking country prior to the war, either Canada or the United-States. If the Poles had come from the British Isles they would have either joined the Polish unit or the British one, not the Canadian.⁷

The roster was also taken a month after the start of the Aragón offensive in which the Brigadiers suffered high casualties. Casualty rates among the Brigadiers throughout the war were extremely high.⁸ After the offensive other Canadians replaced unit casualties. The number of Canadians among the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau may therefore have been increasing in October 1937.

⁷ British units were created before American ones.

⁸ According to Andreu Castells: "only 3 per cent of Brigadiers came through completely unscathed." Andreu Castells, *Las Brigadas Internacionales de la Guerra de España* (Barcelona 1974), pp.381-83. Cited in M.W. Jackson, "The Army of Strangers: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War", in *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 32, No. 1, p.113. In a report from the "Inspector of the International Brigades", Luigi Gallo, on July 7, 1938, the XVth Brigade had 3219 men. This number was decreased to 878 on August 10. This report only confirms the high level of casualties that

Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds stated that the ratio of American to Canadian members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was 3 to 1 in the early days of the unit. They assumed that this ratio was reduced as new Canadian recruits came to Spain,⁹ implying that Canadians became more important later. It is fair to suppose that the ratio of Americans to Canadians was reduced after the Aragón offensive. However, as figures indicate, Canadians were still not preponderant in the unit.

In June 1938, the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was composed of three companies. Like battalions, the companies were organised by points of origin of the volunteers. In the Battalion there was a section composed uniquely of Ukrainian-Canadians and a section of machine-gunners was constituted of Finns from Port Arthur.¹⁰ British Columbia lumberjacks dominated another section of the third company.¹¹ The next table shows the points of origins of 465 Canadian volunteers.

TABLE 2 -POINTS OF ORIGIN OF 465 CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS¹²

CITY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Vancouver	124	26.7
Toronto	114	24.5
Winnipeg	53	11.4
Montreal	51	11.0
Port Arthur	51	11.0
Windsor	15	3.2
Hamilton	14	3.0
Edmonton	13	2.8

was sustained by the English speaking Brigadiers. Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fond, MG10 K2, Fond 545, File List 3, File 508.

⁹ Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.113.

¹⁰ The city of Port Arthur and Fort Williams amalgamated in 1975 to form the city of Thunder Bay.

¹¹ William C. Beeching, Canadian Volunteers, Spain 1936-39, p.57.

¹² Table taken from Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.35.

Calgary	11	2.4
Regina	10	2.2
Sudbury	9	1.9
Total :	465	100.1

This chart includes about one-third of all the Canadians who volunteered. It indicates, among many things, the over-representation of Vancouverians. The town of Port Arthur is also over-represented. It had a population much smaller than that of Calgary and still supplied more volunteers. Montréal, the biggest city in Canada at the time, supplied the same number of volunteers.

The table also points to the over-representation of Western Canada. Vancouver produced more volunteers than Toronto. There were 53 volunteers from Winnipeg, which had a population of 218 785 in 1935,¹³ a ratio of volunteers /inhabitant much larger than the Toronto or Montréal one. A careful analysis must be conducted in explaining these particularities, to avoid the danger of extrapolating negligently.

In this table there are no indications on how the data was collected. They could have been taken from one chronological cluster. In this case, the over-representation of Port Arthur could be explained. If, a strong campaign took place during a short period of time in Port Arthur, it is probable that many would have been incited to join in one single group. Social pressure on other potential volunteers would also have been enhanced by such group action. Therefore recruitment could have taken place all at the same time in Port Arthur. We propose another explanation. At the time, it appears that Port Arthur's unions were well organised. The Port Worker Union had a strong

¹³ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Canada Year Book : 1936 (Ottawa 1936), p.125.

membership. The highest concentration of Finns in Canada who had clear Leftist inclinations was also found in Port Arthur.¹⁴ The Finnish Hall (Finlandia Hall), the heart of the Finnish community in Port Arthur, was closely associated with the Finnish Organisation and the CPC.¹⁵ There was also a fairly large population of Serbs, Croats and other Yugoslavs. There was, for example, a Croatian Hall in the city. All these particularities of Port Arthur can serve to explain why many joined the Brigades.¹⁶

The city of Vancouver supplied more than a quarter of the volunteers. This over-representation can be explained by the fact that Vancouver represented a gathering place for unemployed Canadians throughout the 1930s. The clement weather helps to explain the popularity of Vancouver amongst the unemployed. In turn, as stated above, the unemployed, both those who sojourned in work camps and the others, were prime targets for the Communist propaganda.¹⁷ The wide politically inclined audience present in Vancouver naturally strongly answered the Communist call for recruits during the Spanish Civil War.

¹⁴ Satu Repo claims that the Finns in Port Arthur, as in the rest of Canada were politicised to the Left because of the following two reasons. First, the work experience of the Finns, mostly in the resource sector explains their leftist tendency. Second, the hostility of the Canadian society towards newcomers also encouraged them to take a more leftist stand than the rest of Canadians. Satu Repo, "Rosvall and Voutilainen: Two Union Men Who Never Died", in *Labour/Le travailleur*, Vols. 8/9, Autumn/Spring 1981-82, pp.101-102

¹⁵ The Finnish Organisation was first socialist then became associated with the CPC. Author's visit to the city of Thunder Bay (Port Arthur) in June 1999.

¹⁶ Martin Lobigs proposes the explanation that Port Arthur – Fort William was a starting point for those seeking work in the Prairies. When considering the bad shape of the prairie farming during the droughts of the mid-1930s, it is unlikely that Port Arthur was a point of transition for those seeking work in the Prairies, where work prospects were limited.

¹⁷ Martin Lobigs cited an RCMP report where it is stated that "seventy-five per cent of these volunteers (country wide) have been on relief prior to their leaving for Europe." Lobigs, is citing RCMP Records. File "Recruiting for Spanish Army (10 October 1936 – 29 August 1979) (RCMP Reports, Montreal, 4 April 1938)." in Martin Lobigs, "Canadian Response to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939", p.69.

Finally, there is a clear preponderance of recruits from the West where the CPC and the CCF had made considerable gains during the 1930s and in the 1935 federal elections. Support for both the CPC and CCF corresponded with support for Spanish Republicanism, which was demonstrated by strong volunteering for the Brigades. Table 2 supports the assumption that there was in Western Canada, in the Winnipeg region for example, a relatively strong Communist and leftist voice which manifested itself in both the elections of 1935 and in its support for the Spanish Republic.¹⁸ On the contrary, Eastern Canada did not supply many volunteers as Table 2 points out.¹⁹

The Canadian contingent was also composed of Canadians of different ethnicity. The General Inventory of the Index Card Library of the XVth Brigade, to which most of the Canadians were attached, supports this finding. The database contains 825 entries listed as "from Canada". The large sample of this database makes it valuable. Among the 825 entries, 258 of the Canadians listed their places of origin as different than Canada. All must have been immigrants. These data were compiled in the following table:

¹⁸ In the riding of Winnipeg North, during the 1935 general elections, the CPC collected 25.4% of the votes and was beaten by the CCF. The CPC were also strong in the three other Winnipeg ridings. Chief Electoral Officer, Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, Eighteenth General Election, 1935 (Ottawa 1936). James Litterick, a CPC candidate, was also elected to the Manitoba legislature on July 1936.

¹⁹ Martin Lobigs supports this finding and assumes that no more than five enlisted from Nova Scotia. He later comments judiciously that a number of Maritimers have enlisted in other parts of Canada. For this reason, the total number of recruits coming from Eastern Canada might be higher than the five proposed by Lobigs. Martin Lobigs, "Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939", p.68. However, in spite of this last comment, the fact remains that the Maritimes did not supply many volunteers.

TABLE 3 - NATIONAL ORIGIN OF 258 CANADIANS WHO WERE FROM OUTSIDE CANADA²⁰

NATIONALITY	NUMBER
Poland	71
Finland	40
Hungary	30
Czechoslovakia	16
Other Slavic origins ²¹	15
Ukraine	14
Yugoslavia	11
Britain	11
Scotland	7
France	6
Austria	4
Russia	4
Sweden	4
Spain	3
Ireland	3
Norway	3
Switzerland	3
Rumania	3
Germany	3
Denmark	2
Mexico	1
Lithuania	1
Australia	1
Bulgaria	1
Macedonia	1
Total	258

²⁰ Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG10 K2, Fond 545, File List 6, File 539, "General Inventory of the Index Card Library of the XVth Brigade, of Canadian Nationality". This new, previously unutilised source is highly insightful. It represents a wide sample of the Canadian volunteers of other nationality (the word "nationalidad" or the English word nationality was used in the original documents). When compiling this table, only countries different than Canada were compiled as of other nationality. Therefore, of the 825 entries, only 258 birthplaces were outside Canada. Interestingly, no Americans were listed in the documents. In spite of the fact that there were unit Brigadiers who might have considered themselves Americans.

²¹ The locution "Other Slavic origins" was used since many of the places stated by the volunteers were not countries at the time. For example few listed Croatia or Bosnia. In order to lighten the table the present designation was used.

There existed a strong proportion of volunteers who were from Eastern Europe.

This is better exemplified by re-dividing the above table by regions of origin:

TABLE 4 - ETHNIC ORIGIN OF 258 CANADIANS WHO WERE FROM OUTSIDE CANADA BY REGIONS²²

REGION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Eastern Europe	167	64.7
Scandinavia	47	18.2
Western Europe	42	16.3
Other	2	0.8
Total:	258	100.0

This table visibly puts in evidence the fact that the Canadian immigrants who volunteered for service in Spain were mostly from Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. Eastern Europeans and Scandinavians also lived mostly in the Prairie Provinces. Table 1 shows that a greater number of Canadian volunteers came from Western Canada, especially Winnipeg. The City of Winnipeg provided the third biggest group to the Canadian contingent surveyed by Howard and Reynolds. The two tables show an over-representation of Canadian volunteers of other ethnicity who lived mostly in the prairie provinces.

The presence of East Europeans and Scandinavians in the Canadian ranks is not surprising. The considerable presence of Eastern Europeans and Scandinavians can be explained by the proximity of their homelands to the Soviet Union. Immigrant Canadians, who were from neighbouring regions of the USSR, were also the most politicised of the Canadians. The Ukrainian-Canadians were, for example, leaning

more to the left than most of the Canadians in the 1930s.²³ John Kolasky and Nelson Wiseman, who both have studied the Ukrainian-Canadian political life, also support this assumption.²⁴ It has also been estimated that Canadian-Ukrainians, Poles and Jews formed 80 to 90 per cent of CPC memberships.²⁵ Although this estimate appears excessive, it still reflects the high proportion of Eastern European and Jews in the CPC's ranks. The same proportion must also have been reflected in the ranks of the CPC organised contingent to the International Brigades.

Canadian volunteers were also, with regards to the type of operation they were involved, fairly old. Howard and Reynolds who appraised the age of the Canadian volunteers stated that Canadian volunteers were older than their brigades' counterparts.²⁶ One would tend to think that the volunteers were mostly in their twenties, so they would be single and without children. However, they were on average older than 30 years old. The age of 366 volunteers is reproduced in the following table:

²² Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG10 K2, Fond 545, File List 6, File 539, "General Inventory of the Index Card Library of the XVth Brigade, of Canadian Nationality."

²³ For a analysis on the subject see Craig Heron, Labour Movement : A Short History (Toronto 1996), pp.60-61.

²⁴ John Kolasky, The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada (Toronto 1979), p.13. Nelson Wiseman stated for example that: "The Communist vote – whatever the ethnicity of the candidate – increased directly in proportion to the number of Ukrainians in each poll, a pattern unbroken between the thirties and the fifties." Taken from "The Politics of Manitoba's Ukrainians Between the Wars", in Lubomyr Luciuk and Stella Hryniuk, Eds., Canada's Ukrainians, Negotiating an Identity (Toronto 1982), p.349.

²⁵ Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada: A History (Toronto 1975), p.35. Tim Buck assumes that: "At the beginning of the 1930s the CPC membership totalled about 2500 to 3000. Of these between 900 and 1000 were Ukrainians." Tim Buck, Thirty years, 1922-1952 : the story of the communist movement in Canada (Toronto 1952), p.17.

²⁶ Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.31.

TABLE 5 - AGE OF 366 CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS WHEN JOINING THE BRIGADES²⁷

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Younger than 20 years old	8	2.2
From 20 to 29 years old	131	35.8
From 30 to 39 years old	193	52.7
40 years old and older	34	9.3
Total:	366	100.0

Comparatively, the age of 334 members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in 1937 is as follows:

TABLE 6 - AGE OF 334 MEMBERS OF THE MACKENZIE-PAPINEAU BATTALION IN 1937²⁸

AGE IN 1937	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Younger than 20 years old	15	4.5
From 20 to 29 years old	174	52.1
From 30 to 39 years old	106	31.7
40 years old and older	39	11.7
Total:	334	100.0

The difference between the data collected in Tables 5 and 6 can be explained by the fact that Americans were in majority in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, especially in its first months of existence. For this reason, the average age of the last group would be lower than the one found in Table 5. The assumption that the Canadians were older than other Brigadiers seems to be legitimate, for when amalgamating the average age of Americans into the Table 6 samples, the average age drops.

²⁷ Taken from Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.31.

²⁸ Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG10 K2, Fond 545, File List 3, File 509 to 512.

The relatively old age of the volunteers in respect to the type of activities they were taking part in gives support to the assumption that there was truly a rise of radicalism in 1930s Canada. Volunteering into fighting forces would be commonly associated with younger generations. However, the economic crisis that hit Canada particularly affected the workers. They had lived through the booming twenties and were still expecting ample economic growth. Therefore, it would be fair to assume that volunteering for Spain was highly affected by the communal generation experience of the Great Depression.

This chapter overviewed the characteristics of the Canadian volunteers. It was demonstrated that in the ranks of the Canadian contingent there were many immigrant Canadians. Within this group, it is clear that there was a preponderance of Eastern Europeans and Scandinavians. Canadians coming from Vancouver and Winnipeg were also numerous. Port Arthur, which was relatively small in size, also supplied many volunteers of mostly Finnish origin. The leftist tendency of the Finns explains their strong representation among the Canadian volunteers. Having explored the general characteristics of the Canadian volunteers, the next chapter will examine the factors that motivated them to fight in the Spanish Civil War.

Chapter 5 - What Motivated the Canadians to Go Fight in Spain?

Trying to explain why Canadians volunteered to defend Spanish Republicanism is an enticing but onerous quest. Many factors of different nature and significance influenced their decisions. The Canadian political, economic and social context and the personal situation of the volunteers of the time were all influential factors. Why they volunteered and what their aim was in Spain are both legitimate questions. The aim of the volunteers was most importantly built around their perception of the conflict. This perception in turn was in most instances constructed by the CPC. The historical context and the factors of personal nature provide an answer as to why they volunteered.

In order to fully grasp what motivated them in their actions, one must take two different but interrelated approaches. First the historical context of the 1930s has to be analysed to point to general socialisation processes that might have influenced the volunteers. Secondly, the influence of factors of a personal nature on the decision of the Canadians is also important. Immigrant Canadians were definitely socialised differently during the 1930s than Canadian-born. Their different political baggage interfered with their perception of the events in Spain. Their susceptibility to CPC's campaigns or of the rightist organisations was similarly influenced.

The present chapter dissociates the two types of influences, factors of personal nature and historical context factors. It will be first demonstrated that the historical context of the time the Depression years, had a lasting effect on the Canadian volunteers. The Depression years radicalised the Canadian political discourse during the Civil War. This in turn favoured the CPC propaganda campaign, which was forged on two important elements: the need to defeat Fascism in the name of Democracy. Most

importantly, in Fascism, the Communists had found a generally accepted enemy on which to form its unity. After the rise of Hitler in January 1933 the Comintern had realised the gains possible in attacking Fascism. Although Canada's Fascism was not a genuine threat, this policy proved to be effective in Canada. Fascism in Europe, which was more and more present during the Depression and the perception that the rebels were Fascist provided a definite enemy for the Communist to defeat. Likewise, the July rising in Spain definitively gave the Communists a cause to defend that of the Democracy. With Fascism as the enemy and Democracy as the friend, the Communist propaganda campaign had found a "just cause". Thus, in order to fight Fascism and defend Democracy many turned Communists and joined the International Brigades.

Factors of a personal nature were also influential. Communists of pre-Depression years joined the Communist organised Brigades with different motivations. Their understanding of the issues at risk in Spain was different than that of the group who were politically socialised during the Depression. These Communists and other ideologically committed persons had an antipathy towards Fascism, independently of the 1930s era. Similarly, when the rebels rose in Spain, they did not rely on the CPC depiction of the rebels to take a stand against them and for the Republic. Fighting in Spain was a personal commitment that was not influenced by the CPC propaganda of the Depression years. Likewise, the influence of the CPC campaigns on the exiles living in Canada was minimal. The personal acquaintance of some exiles with either Fascist or Communist regimes was a determining factor in their volunteering.

Personal relationships with volunteers fighting in Spain were also a source of motivation for some of the Canadians. They gave them a more intimate perception of

the events in Spain. Religion or racial prejudice may also have influenced others. The presence in Franco's army of Moorish fighters of Muslim faith might have played a role in convincing in part some to join the Brigades. Finally other reasons such as financial interest or the quest for adventures was also used by a few of the Canadian volunteers.

The last portion of this chapter will also dissociate the three types of motives that characterise the ideological commitment of the volunteers. The first type of motive is based on the Depression; strong ideological commitment represents the second type; and the last is motivations of other pragmatic nature.

The circumstances erected by the Depression were crucial in influencing many to join the Brigades. The Depression had nourished the rise of radicalism in Canada. The action of the Canadians who volunteered to go fight in Spain was a by-product of the Depression. Although the semantic used by the Canadian volunteers in describing the events in Spain and justifying their volunteering correlates to the European discourse of the time, they were not directly affected by the ideological debates of the left and right than during the Depression. The Canadians who joined the International Brigades were sharply and in most cases unconsciously influenced by the Depression.

Similarly, poor economic conditions also contributed to increase the size of Franco's army. Maria Rosa de Madariaga, who examined the intervention of Moorish troops in the Spanish Civil War, believes that poor harvest in the Rif during the war contributed to the recruitment of Moorish troops into the rebel forces.¹ Soldier' salary was a good substitute for the decrease of income in Morocco. This similarity between

¹ Maria Rosa de Madariaga, "The Intervention of Moroccan Troops in the Spanish Civil War: A Reconstruction", in *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 22, 1992, p.79.

the effect of the Depression on Canadian volunteers and the poor harvest in Morocco is however generalising. It does not imply, as it is going to be discussed later, that the salary offered to Spanish regular soldiers was an important motivating factor for Canadians. The life conditions of the Rif, the actual presence of Moorish units in the Spanish army prior to the war and the increase in recruitment versus illegal recruitment into a foreign army are all factors which clearly dissociate the Canadian and Moroccan intervention.

The ideological overtone of the discourse of the Canadian volunteers is misleading. It wrongly indicates a strong ideological commitment to radical ideas, especially anti-Fascism. Only a small number of the Canadian volunteers were ideologically committed enough to defend Spanish Republicanism by joining the International Brigades.

Canadian volunteers were strongly influenced by the campaigns of the CPC. Many reasons explain this influence. The CPC had the monopoly in organising the recruitment for the International Brigades in Canada. It also controlled most of the Republican support in Canada. The Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy were both dominated by Communists. There was little room for Republican supporters not to relate to the CPC. Most of the Canadian volunteers formed their judgement on Spain and its political history through the CPC press and campaigns. Except in Québec, where events concerning the Catholic Church in Spain were publicised, most Canadians knew only little about life in Spain prior to the July rising.

The Canadian contingent was therefore dominated by Communist cardholders. There were also numerous Canadian Communist party members in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. The majority of the Battalion were members of the CPC and the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA). This finding is supported by a report of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades. In August 1937, in an effort to amass data for an historical work on the Brigades, the Commission requested that the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion answer a questionnaire.² Their place of birth, their political affiliations, the year they joined their political affiliations and what motivated them to join the Brigades were amongst the questions asked. Among the 398 Canadian brigadiers who answered the questionnaire 250 (62.8%) of them were Communists. There were also 53 members of the Young Communist League (YCL).

² It appears that the International Brigades authority set-up an Historical Commission. Details on its creation, its members and activities are limited. It is assumed, for example, that Frank Ryan, who edited the Book of the XVth International Brigade was on the Commission. Of the questionnaires themselves, nothing is known beside the fact that they were filled out by 729 members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in the month of August 1937. What was the proportion of Canadians or Americans in the unit at the time is unknown. In the fond, the questionnaires were grouped into four different Reels, Surnames A to E, F to L, M to R and S to Z. A more profound analysis of these questionnaires could still be conducted in order to highlight other characteristics of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion members.

TABLE 7 – YEAR CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS
JOINED THE CPC AND THE YCL³

YEAR OF	YCL	CPC
1917	0 ⁴	1
1919	0	1
1922	0	2
1923	0	1
1925	0	3
1927	0	0
1928	0	6
1929	3	5
1930	3	8
1931	4	31
1932	3	16
1933	4	36
1934	12	35
1935	6	31
1936	10	53
1937	8	21
1938	0	1
Total :	53	250

Both figures reflect the primacy of Canadian Communists over non-Communists in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.

Some historians and veterans of the Spanish Civil War believe that International brigadiers were in majority Communists. Earl Browder, the leader of the CPUSA, claimed that 60% of all Brigadiers were Communists. He also believed that Communists must have dominated the Canadian contingent due to the aggressiveness of

³ The questionnaires were hand-filled. For this reason, it was a laborious task to compile this table which should be used as an indication only of the strength of Communism among the volunteers. Also, when using these statistics one must be careful. Many entries indicated that they were both members of the CPC and YCL. Therefore adding 250 and 53 would be misleading. This table gives only the absolute number of members of both the CPC and the YCL. "Detailed questionnaires of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades," Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG 10 K2, Fond 545, File listing 3, File 509 to 512.

⁴ The number 0 indicates either that there were no volunteers who joined the YCL or the CPC in that year or that there was no case reported in the sample used.

the recruitment Campaign conducted by the CPC throughout the 1930s.⁵ Len Levenson, also a veteran of the Mackenzie-Papineau, stated that 63.0% of the American members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion were either members of the CPUSA or the YCL.⁶ It is clear that there was a high proportion of Communist cardholders in the International Brigades.

The connection made between the high proportion of Communist members and what motivated so many to join the Republican fight in Spain is still precarious. Since the recruitment in Canada was dominated by the CPC, it is understandable that many of those who volunteered for the Brigades would also have joined the CPC. However, was their will to stop the perceived rebel Fascists greater than their will to propagate the idea of Communism? Was the advancement of Communism in Spain a motivating factor used by the CPC to recruit volunteers? Communism wrongly defines the political inclination of the volunteers. Anti-Fascism and the exigency of defending Spanish Democracy were what primarily motivated many to go fight in Spain. Anti-Fascist or the Popular Front political label would better describe their political inclination. The primary reason why many joined the party was because it had clearly and strongly taken an anti-fascist stand in the summer of 1935. If the platform of the CPC had not taken an anti-Fascist direction in the mid-1930s, most of them would have refrained from joining the party. Anti-Fascism, not Communism, was therefore the driving force of most of those who joined the party at this time.

⁵ Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion : the Canadian contingent in the Spanish Civil War (Ottawa 1986 (1969)), pp.35-36.

⁶ William C. Beeching, Canadian Volunteers Spain, 1936-1939 (Regina 1989), p.10.

The Comintern in organising the International Brigadiers did not have the goal of starting a revolution in Spain. Considering that 28.8% of all Canadian volunteers who were members of the CPC joined in the year 1936, which represents the highest recruitment ratio for a year, it could be argued that the war helped attract people to the party.⁷ The political agenda of the CPC at the time never promoted the idea of using the Spanish Civil War as a breeding ground for the revolution. In fact, the spring fighting of 1937 in Barcelona forcefully indicates the opposite. The will to stop the Rebels was what attracted many Canadian Communists to volunteer. Their joining of the CPC was most importantly reflective of their will to confront Fascism not to start a Revolution.

Furthermore, assuming that the Canadian volunteers were Communists does not imply that they were strong ideological disciples, especially in the revolutionary sense. Due to the volatility of the Communist doctrine of the 1930s, a wide range of political activists could proclaim themselves Communists. Following the Comintern's line, the CPC had advocated closer relations with other anti-Fascist groups. For this reason, on numerous occasions, the CCF was approached. In spite of the poor success of the Popular Front tactic at the leadership level, it still promoted a wider acceptance of the CPC among the wide range of Canadians of centre-left orientation. It encouraged many to join the ranks of the CPC and those of its affiliated organisations.

Hazen Sise, who accompanied Dr. Bethune in Spain, also supports the assumption that the level of acceptance of Communism in the Brigades was not as firm as what the figures might indicate. After a few months in Spain, he came to the conclusion that the anti-Fascist will of the Brigadiers was the primary motivation for

⁷ For details on the source of this percentage see table 7.

joining the Brigades. In a letter to his Aunt Elsie, Sise states that it is mistaken to believe that Communism was a strong driving force amongst the brigadiers:

It has frequently been alleged that the International Brigades are about 99% Communist. Of Course this is just as silly as most of the other stories you hear. That there are a large number of Communists among them I have no doubt. [...] But I doubt if their proportion is ever above 40% even in the "reddest" units.⁸

In another letter, Sise restates that the fact of holding a CPC membership card did not make one a revolutionary Communist. Sise also cited for example the case of Norman Bethune. Bethune, according to Sise, although a member of the CPC was never truly a Communist in the Marxist-Leninist or the Stalinist way. He was, however, strongly anti-Fascist. The CPC leader Tim Buck also stated in 1952 that the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion "were not all members of the Communist Party or the Young Communist League".⁹ Pat Sullivan, a veteran, also claims that many Canadians were touched and impressed by the action taken by the Communists in the 1930s. However, the CPC had more sympathisers than members.¹⁰

The unit was not solely Communist. It was Communist-led and organised, and the Communists held the majority of the high ranking positions. Officers of the

⁸ Brackets used in the original. Extract from a letter of Sise to his aunt Elsie, 31 July 1937. Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Collection, MG30 E 173, Volume 4.

⁹ Tim Buck, Thirty Years 1922-1952: The Story of the Communist Movement In Canada (Toronto 1952), p.124. Buck also acknowledged the role of the Communists in organising the International Brigades. "The International Brigade was made up of people who were not necessarily Party members, but almost anybody who came from abroad. As a matter of fact the International Brigade came to include people who never had been near the Party. But because of its origin, and the role the communist parties of different countries played in forming it, I think it's necessary to acknowledge that by and large the driving force and the organization was by the Communists in it." William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, eds., Yours in the Struggle : Reminiscences of Tim Buck (Toronto 1977), p.266.

¹⁰ *Legion*, June 1986.

Brigades were all Communist members. The Brigadiers were not all Communists but anti-Fascist and accepted the Communist leadership of the Brigades.

The line between “true” Communist and “anti-Fascist” Communist is thin. For most of the volunteers the ideological difference between Communism and anti-Fascism was blurred and equivocal. The CPC campaigns had constructed most of their knowledge of Fascism. Also, typical Communist theoretical debates were not of primary concern for most of the volunteers. For both reasons, Canadian volunteers accepted the Communist label of the need to fight Fascism.

Hywel Francis in his study of the Welsh volunteers concludes that: “whether a Welsh volunteer had a clearly defined political motive for joining the International Brigades or not, the strongest determining factor in the response to the situation in Spain was the economic condition of Welsh society in the 1930s.”¹¹ The “economic condition of the Canadian society on the 1930s” had a similar effect on the Canadian volunteers.

Ron Liversedge, a Canadian veteran, describes the political and economic situation of the 1930s in Canada that encouraged many to join the ranks of the Brigades:

I think that the terrible life of the Canadian unemployed during the depression of the thirties, the box cars, the flop houses, the demonstrations for relief, seeing the police clubbing men, women and even children unconscious on the city street for asking for food, the twenty-cent-a-day slave camps, the On-to-Ottawa-Trek, all this had conditioned the men who volunteered to go to Spain to make the decision without much soul searching¹²

¹¹ Hywel Francis, “The Background and Motives of Welsh Volunteers in the International Brigades, 1936-1938”, p.103.

¹² William C. Beeching, Canadian Volunteers, p.8.

The idea that the Depression produced an impetus for joining the Communist Party and the Brigades is supported by two American volunteers. According to Joe and Leo Gordon, no one went to Spain because he had joined the CP; rather both actions had the same impulse.¹³ They both believe that what motivated many was the political and economic atmosphere of the 1930s.

The hatred of Fascism shown by the Communists was a crucial factor in recruiting the volunteers. We assume that anti-Fascism – CPC constructed – was the major and in many cases the only reason one supported the Communists. Reciprocally, Fascism, which was defined by the CPC and the Comintern was also used to describe a wide range of rightist organisations.¹⁴ Therefore, most of the Canadians, in their support of the Communists, went to Spain to confront what they perceived as Spanish Fascism. The answers gathered by the Historical Commission of the International Brigades (HCIB) questionnaire corroborate this assumption. Anti-Fascism was the major reason given by the Canadians when questioned on what were their motivating factors in joining the Brigades. The statement “to destroy Fascism” or other similar strong anti-Fascist statements were found in approximately half of all the Canadian volunteers who answered the questions in the HCIB questionnaire.¹⁵ B. Alksnis from

¹³ Daniel Czitrom, “Volunteers for Liberty: Letters from Joe and Leo Gordon”, in Massachusetts Reviews, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1984, pp.348.

¹⁴ George Dimitrov clearly defined Fascism as the enemy to fight in his pamphlet War Against Fascism. Although Fascism itself was never clearly defined, it was used mostly to categories one’s enemy. Franco, for the Comintern and the PCE was one of them.

¹⁵ An approximation is used since a few of the questionnaires could hardly be deciphered because of the poor ink used on the original which was not showing enough of the original hand writing on the microfilm. Bad handwriting was also an obstacle in trying to conclude with specific percentage. The nature of the answer, which favoured long answers, also does not accommodate the use of rigid statistical analysis. “Detailed questionnaires of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades.” Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG 10 K2, Fond 545, File listing 3, File 509 to 512.

Lethbridge, Alberta answered that he went to Spain “To defend international democracy from international fascism.” Peter Demianchuk from Fernie, British Columbia responded with: “To assist the Spanish workers in defeating fascism.” Martii Hernan Piilo, from Silver Mountain, Ontario, answered with “Fight for democracy and defeat fascism”. Ronald Liversedge, from Vancouver who later wrote on the On-to-Ottawa Trek, justified his volunteering by answering that “I considered that it was a chance to fight fascism in a more tangible form.” The anti-Fascist sentiment was clearly dominant amongst the Canadian volunteers.

Approximately half of the Canadian volunteers also made the connection between fighting Fascism and fighting for Democracy.¹⁶ Edwin Ackman, when asked what had motivated him to go to Spain, answered that he wanted to “Fight for Democracy”. Joseph Henry Bélanger from Winnipeg wrote “To save world democracy”. Steve Hasiuk from Montréal declared that he wanted “To assist the Spanish workers in fight for democracy”. A.J. Sipponen from Port Arthur answered to “Fight for the democracy of the people of the world”. Howard G. Moore from Toronto responded with “To Aid Spanish Democracy”. The link between fighting for Democracy in Spain and fighting against Fascism is clearly made. The Canadian volunteers believed that this goal was their fighting cause. Although Democracy was losing ground in the inter-war period, it was still perceived as a just cause to defend.

In the new wartime CPC campaign of 1936, the need to defend Spanish Democracy with unity had become the Trojan horse of the party. The need for unity

was justified by the fact that the Spanish Right and International Fascism threatened the legally elected Republican Government (which had small but actual support from Spanish Communists).¹⁷ The defence of the Spanish Republic became an essential target for the CPC, which conducted an even more aggressive campaign for unity. The Spanish Civil War represented a tangible occasion where the policy of unity was used to defend democratic rights.

The Communist success in radicalising the volunteers' discourse and perception can be found in the wording used by the volunteers. Although they were going to fight the rebels, they were illustrating their motives with strong ideologically tinted words. Having all answered with "going to fight for the Republic" or "going to fight Franco" would have better described their endeavour. However, as the Communist propaganda depicted the rebels as Fascists, the volunteers also described the conflict in antithetical terms. Although the Spanish conflict, like all civil wars, could in fact merely be described in black and white terms, the Communists used firm language in describing the Spanish events. The polarisation process, which occurred in Europe in the inter-war period, was consequential to Spanish destiny. This same process successfully dragged many Canadians into using radical wording when describing events that were far less radical than the tone employed to describe them.¹⁸

¹⁶ "Detailed questionnaires of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades." Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG 10 K2, Fond 545, File listing 3, File 509 to 512.

¹⁷ The expression "International Fascism" was abundantly used yet not clearly defined by the Communists.

¹⁸ It was not the objective of this thesis to demonstrate that the Rebels were not Fascists or that the Republican camp was not Communist. Such a conclusion could be the aim of a whole other thesis in itself.

The connection made between the rebel forces and Fascism can also be explained, as stated earlier, in more pragmatic terms. By virtue of the alliance of Franco's forces with Fascist states, they were themselves depicted as Fascist. Although there is ground for argument on the true ideological commitment of Franco and his forces for Fascism, the connotation was made at the time and accepted by most opponents of the rebels. Classifying Franco as Fascist was part of the propaganda tools used by the CPC. The Fascist designation did not come from Franco himself but rather from his opposing camp. In fact, Franco, for the first months of the war, never proclaimed himself openly a Fascist. The Falange Española party of José Antonio Primo de Rivera – the son of the former dictator General Miguel Primo de Rivera – was officially associated with the Nationalist *Junta* only later in the war, when Franco needed a political agenda.¹⁹

The strong ideological overtone of the Spanish conflict was highly influenced by the European context of the time. On the one side, Germans, Italians and the rebels called for halting the advancement of Communism in Spain. On the other side, the Republicans were urging Spaniards and non-Spaniards to join them in their fight against Fascism, the same Fascism that might be at the doors of Paris or London if not stopped in Madrid. Dolorès Ibárruri, who was a member of the CPE and the Cortés, called on the British and French people using the following justification: “Stop the bombs on Madrid and Barcelona or they may fall on London and Paris”.²⁰ Canadians might also have responded to this call even if Fascism was less likely to reach Ottawa than

¹⁹ It is also known that both Hitler and Mussolini urged Franco to adopt a clear political agenda by openly associating his movement to Fascism.

European capitals.²¹ The CPC used this image to promote its anti-Fascist stand. In October 1936, The Daily Clarion showed a picture of a “Fascist Gangster” from Montréal who was shaking hands with an officer from “Spanish Fascism”.²² The Clarion promoted the idea that Fascism was a direct threat to Canada. On 11 September 1937 it reported that “Hitler's agents Invade Canada” and called “On Guard Canadians! The spider's web covers the world!”²³ Again later in March 1938 it warned Canadians against Mussolini's agents working in Canada.²⁴ As stated earlier, in spite of the fact that Canadian Fascist organisations were not a cause of great danger, the CPC utilised this threat in its propaganda campaigns. Charles Campbell, a labourer from Hamilton, Ontario when asked what had motivated him to join the Brigades answered that he was motivated by : “A desire to accept [sic] in defeating fascism in Spain before it developed in Canada.”²⁵ This case illustrates that Canadian volunteers were responsive to the idea that Fascism might develop in Canada.

Finally, some volunteers may have responded with their desire to fight Fascism because of the suitability of the answer. One British volunteer admitted that he “used the slogans of anti-fascism to fend off awkward questions about his motivation in

²⁰ Micheal Alpert, A New International History of the Spanish Civil War (New York 1994), p.31.

²¹ The Canadian poet Margaret Day also promoted the idea that Spanish events were a direct threat to Canada. In “Ode to Spring, 1937” she finishes with the lines:

While horror whistles down in Spain

Who can announce Canadian spring?

For a full copy of the poem see appendix E. Taken from Nicola Vulpe, ed., Sealed in Struggle: Canadian Poetry & the Spanish Civil War: An Anthology (Tenerife 1995), p.104.

²² The Daily Clarion, 27 October 1936, p.4.

²³ The Daily Clarion, 11 September 1937, p.2.

²⁴ “Mussolini's fascist network operates throughout Canada”, The Daily Clarion, 3 March 1938, p.1.

²⁵ “Detailed questionnaires of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades.” Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG 10 K2, Fond 545, File listing 3, File 509 to 512.

volunteering.”²⁶ Weak ideological understanding by some volunteers might account for using this justification. Due to the volatility of the Communist doctrine in the mid-1930s, it would be understandable that anti-Fascism was used to describe the motives of the Canadian volunteers as it appeared to be an assured and strong commitment of the Communists.²⁷

What motivated the volunteers to go fight in Spain can also be explained in less political terms. In the propaganda of the time, images were often used to describe the fight against Fascism. Words such as “crusade” or “good brave cause” were used to produce images of the conflict in Spain. The images used in the First World War were again utilised to describe the Spanish Civil War. The Madrid fighting was soon referred as the “Spanish Verdun”.²⁸ George Orwell, who fought in a *Poumist*²⁹ unit during the early months of the war, described the conflict as a “good brave cause”.³⁰ In his acclaimed novel on his Spanish experience during the war, he stated that:

If you had asked me why I had joined the militia, I should have answered: to fight against Fascism, and if you had asked me what I was fighting for, I should have answered: common decency.³¹

Common decency supports the created image of crusaders going to fight for the good of the Spanish people. Robert Rosenstone who wrote on the history of the Lincoln Battalion, entitled his work Crusade of the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish

²⁶ Peter Elstob, Spanish Prisoner (London 1939), p.23. Cited in M.W. Jackson, “The Army of Strangers: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War”, in The Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 107-108.

²⁷ Even so, this would be proven wrong with the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact between Moscow and Berlin a few years later.

²⁸ Émile Temime, “Le mythe et la réalité”, in Carlos Serrano, ed., Madrid, 1936-1939 : Un peuple en résistance ou l'épopée ambiguë, p.23.

²⁹ Member of the Trotskyist or anti-Stalinist party of Spain (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista).

³⁰ David Cairns and Richard Shaun, “No Good Brave Causes? The Alienated Intellectual and the End of Empire”, p.195.

Civil War.³² This title reflects the image that was portrayed to the volunteers in the Communist propaganda. Peter Carroll, an American historian, entitled his book The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade[sic]: Americans in the Spanish Civil War.³³ Bill Alexander, a British veteran entitled his book: British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain 1936-1939.³⁴ These images were also portrayed in The Daily Clarion. In January 1937 it could be read in The Daily Clarion that “the International Brigade is composed of volunteers from every land who have come to Spain to enter the struggle against the fascist swarms, to preserve Liberty.”³⁵ It was stated later in the same journal that the International Brigades “have been called the first true army since the Crusades.”³⁶ Words such as Liberty, Odyssey and Crusade must have been used by the volunteers to justify their participation in the Spanish conflict. Because of the weight of the semantics used to describe the Spanish conflict in ideal terms, some potential volunteers must have been impelled to join the Brigades.

Idealism is also responsible for having incited many French Anarchists to go fight in Spain. According to David Berry: “Ils sont partis combattre emporté par la fougue de leur tempérament et de leur idéal...”³⁷ The Spanish Civil War provided a good opportunity for anarchists as well as anti-Fascist Communists to promote their ideals. More than being an incentive for the CPC to recruit volunteers, the Spanish

³¹ George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (London 1978), p.47.

³² Robert A. Rosenstone, Crusade of the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War (Boston 1980).

³³ Peter N. Carroll, The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War (Stanford 1994).

³⁴ Bill Alexander, British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain 1936-1939 (London 1982).

³⁵ The Daily Clarion, 9 January 1937.

³⁶ The Daily Clarion, 21 January 1937.

³⁷ David Berry, “French Anarchists in Spain, 1936-1939”, in French History, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1989, p.433.

Civil War might have fostered some Canadians to join the Brigades in order to advance their own ideals. However, due to the discipline and the strong ideological commitment of the leaders of the CPC, it is unlikely that one would have been allowed to go against the ideals already promoted in the party campaigns.

As demonstrated, the Depression lowered the living standard of many Canadians. However, the Depression did more than to lower the living standard, it left many Canadians in search of a better world. According to George Orwell, the Spanish Civil War answered “the need for something to believe in”.³⁸ Although Orwell did not directly blame the Depression, he strongly believed that a void existed in the 1930s. The weak political positions of governments and intellectuals in finding solutions to the Depression led many to believe in something else, which represented hope. The fight against Spanish Fascism embodied such hope.

The Depression surely had a crucial role in altering the Canadian volunteers' mindset. It oriented their perception of the events happening in Spain using the wording of the Depression. They were especially those who were politically socialised during the 1930s. Their own political thinking was congruent with this period. Although the Canadian volunteers appeared to be an ideologically homogeneous group, some were distinct from the group. The factors which motivated them to go to Spain were not produced by the Depression years. Pre-1930 Canadian Communists were among this group. The primary motivating factors of this second group were of personal nature, not contextual to the 1930s.

³⁸ David Cairns and Richard Shaun, “No Good Brave Causes? The Alienated Intellectual and the End of Empire”, in *Literature and History*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1988, p.195.

Long-time CPC members of strong Communist faith may have been personally encouraged to join the Brigades to defend the new Communist fighting cause. Communists, intellectuals and strongly politicised people were among the ranks of this group. Anti-Fascism might have been the major reason why they went to Spain, but they did not need any connection between their perception of Fascism in Spain and the economic well-being of Canada for them to volunteer. Among this group, some must have been influenced by the humanitarian action of Dr. Norman Bethune. Strong humanitarian sentiments would have incited part of this group to volunteer.

The CPC's party discipline might also have impelled a few of the leading CPC members to join the Brigades. According to Randy Ervin, the party line did push certain members to go fight in Spain.³⁹ In doing this research, no indication that any members of the CPC were urged to volunteer were found.⁴⁰ In Britain, there is only one known case. McLaurin, who was a member of the British Communist Party, was asked by the leadership of the party to volunteer because of his knowledge of machine-gun drill.⁴¹ However, because of the scarcity of similar cases, it is fair to assume that no member or just a few were asked to join the Brigades. On the contrary, the CPC might have discouraged a few of its members, because of the numerical scarcity of leading members. The CPA is known to have refused applicants who were considered to be

³⁹ Randy Gibbs Ervin, "The Men of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: A case study of the involvement of the International Communist Movement in the Spanish Civil war", p.42.

⁴⁰ The author of Canada's Party of Socialism, p. 127, suggests the opposite. This author instead suggests that "the party lost a large section of its cadre in Spain". The author's assumption is not well substantiated and is dubious.

⁴¹ Bill Alexander, British Volunteers for Liberty, Spain 1936-39, p.34.

more useful by staying in Australia than by going to Spain.⁴² The Communist Party of Great Britain was also faced with the problem of having to retain its members at home to organise the recruitment campaign. Due to its slender resources it could not afford to send the bulk of its members to Spain.⁴³ No Canadian Communists, or just a few, were therefore urged to volunteer for Spain.

Another group was also distinctly motivated to go to Spain. Canadians of other origins were moved by different or additional motives to join the Brigades. The Canadian contingent was composed of many naturalised Canadians. The past experiences of this group were much different than those of the Canadian-born. It must have shaped their perception of the conflict in Spain differently, as their vision of the world was different.

Hugo Lehtowirtha [spelling uncertain] a Finnish miner from South Porcupine, Ontario answered that he volunteered for the Brigades because he wanted: "to avenge the murder of [his] sister and others (Revolution in Finland)."⁴⁴ Another Canadian volunteer of Finnish origin used his own experience with the Russo-Finnish war of 1918 to justify his enrolment. In 1918, he had supported the Communist take over. In 1936 now a Canadian, he was again ready to support Communist actions.⁴⁵

Ukrainians who moved to Canada may also have been more inclined to Communist ideas. The Ukrainians who had lived through the short-lived independence

⁴² Diane Menghetti got this information from an Australian volunteer, Jim Henderson, with whom she had a conversation in July 1979. Diane Menghetti, "North Queensland Anti-Fascism and the Spanish Civil War", in *Labour History*, Vol. 42, 1982, p.66.

⁴³ Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers fo Liberty. Spain 1936-39*, p.141.

⁴⁴ "Detailed questionnaires of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades." Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG 10 K2, Fond 545, File listing 3, File 509 to 512.

of the Ukraine, which was granted by the Bolsheviks in 1918, had a different perception than the Canadians. They had first experienced Communism. According to Konstantin Olynyk, a Canadian volunteer of Ukrainian origin, he was “largely influenced by his personal experiences as a member of the Ukrainian minority in Bukovina under Romanian administration.”⁴⁶ The politics of the Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia might have fostered Ukrainian-Canadians to take a positive stand towards Communism, thus later joining the Brigades.

There existed a strong Ukrainian response to the CPC campaigns. In an RCMP report, dating back to 16 September 1936, it is stated that there existed a split between Ukrainian leaders following the United Front policy of the Communists and the Nationalist Leaders. The leaders of the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood attacked the Communist elements in the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association for “their efforts to achieve a United Front among Ukrainians in Canada and in the Old Country.”⁴⁷ Lary Prokop, who has written on the history of the Ukrainian-Canadians, supports the idea that many Ukrainians joined the brigades. He commented that “over one third of the members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in Spain were members of the ULFTA.”⁴⁸ The Ukrainian-Canadians were surely responding to the call of the CPC. Similarly the Poles or the Finns might have become sympathetic to Communist

⁴⁵ Randy Gibbs Ervin, “The Men of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion”, p.26.

⁴⁶ Konstantin Olynyk is cited in Myron Momryk, ““For Your Freedom and For Ours’ Konstantin (Mike) Olynyk, A Ukrainian Volunteer From Canada in the International Brigades” in Canadian Ethnic Studies, Vol. XX, No. 2, 1988, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part III, 1936, [Report No. 832, 16 September 1936], p.391.

⁴⁸ Lary Prokop, “National Dilemma”, in Canadian Tribune, 8 October 1990. Cited in Martin Lobigs, “Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939”, p.105.

ideas. Their motivations to join the Brigades were different than that of other Canadians.

According to M.W. Jackson, “the most obvious motivation among the Brigadiers was that of the exiles.”⁴⁹ He believes that the people who had been exiled from Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland and elsewhere saw the Spanish Civil War as their chance to fight Fascism. Pre-eminent Socialists, Communists and others who had lived Fascism were more inclined to join the Brigades. The Italian Socialist Randolfo Pacciardi’s comment, “the road to Rome is through Madrid”, sums up very well the thought of some the exiles.⁵⁰

The anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany mobilised a few Brigadiers. Bill Alexander assumes that the London Fascist group of Oswald Mosley affected British opinion.^o Accordingly, the raids exercised by Mosley’s group on the London Jews initiated many British to the danger of Fascism.⁵¹ Some British or Canadian Jews might have responded by joining the Brigades.⁵² There exists no clear estimate on the number of Canadian Jews who volunteered. Although some Jews, when answering the HCIB

⁴⁹ M.W. Jackson, “The Army of Strangers: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War”, in The Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. 32, No. 1, p.109.

⁵⁰ Randolfo Pacciardi, Il Battaglione Garibaldi (Lugano 1938), p.2. Cited in M.W. Jackson, “The Army of Strangers: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War”, *op. cit.*, p.109.

⁵¹ Bill Alexander, British Volunteers fo Liberty, Spain 1936-39, p.30.

⁵² Numerous Jews were members of the International Brigades. John Gerassi, a Jewish veteran of the American Abraham Lincoln Battalion stated that “no less than 46% [of the North American volunteers] were Jewish”. John Gerassi, “Jewish Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade”, in Shmate, Vol. 1, No. 5, 1983, p.6. See also his oral history book: The Premature Antifascists (New York 1986). Alberto Fernandez and Josef Toch who have written on the history of the in the Brigades also made some assumptions on the number of Jews fighting in Spain. Fernandez supposed that there was more than 8000 Jews in the Brigades and Josef Toch assumed that there were slightly less than 8000. Alberto Fernandez, “Judios en la guerra de España”, in Tiempo de Historia (Madrid), No. 10, 1975, p. 5ff. and Josef Toch, “Juden im Spanischen Krieg 1936-1939”, in Zeitgeschichte (Vienna), Heft 7, April 1973, pp. 157-170. Both are cited in Arno Lustiger, “German and Austrian Jews in the International Brigade”, in Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXXV, 1990, p.298.

questionnaire, have listed their origins as Jews, it is assumed that not all did. Therefore the few names found in the HCIB questionnaire could be misleading.

Canadian volunteers also had other pragmatic reasons for joining. At the time of the initial call of the Comintern, a few volunteers were already experienced fighters. Accordingly, when asked why he had volunteered, Albert Evano Lloyd from Regina stated that: "I was told that men with military experience was needed for short time until raw recruits were trained to go to the front. So I came with this understanding here."⁵³ Other Canadian volunteers also had military experiences. However, although there exists the case of Lloyd, it would be erroneous to assume that past military experience was a strong incentive to join the Brigades. It is true that at first the CPC was looking for volunteers with military experience.⁵⁴ However, military experience only favoured those who were willing to fight in Spain. It was not a strong cause of motivation.

Personal relationship with volunteers was also a factor that motivated a few Canadians to join the Brigades. On the Detailed questionnaires of the HCIB, Mike Lungul, a Ukrainian from Toronto stated that he joined the CPC because he had a friend in the party. Having friends in the Brigades might also have fostered similar behaviour

⁵³ "Detailed questionnaires of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades." Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG 10 K2, Fond 545, File listing 3, File 509 to 512.

⁵⁴ Numerous RCMP reports confirm this statement. See G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937", [Report No. 870, 16 September 1937], p.373; G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part V, 1938-39" (St. John's 1998), [Report No. 893, 7 June 1938], p.185; Report No. 897, 4 August 1938, in *Ibid.*, p.238.

by others. Another Canadian volunteer stated that he decided to go to Spain because his brother and a friend of his had already volunteered and were fighting in Spain.⁵⁵

The volunteers also wrote letters home and to friends. Sometimes, such letters were published in newspapers such as in The Daily Clarion. Although greatly censored by agents of the Soviet secret police (NKVD) working for the Comintern, letters sent by the Canadian Brigadiers were part of the few available sources on the situation in Spain.⁵⁶ Like most of the information carried in the press and the radio, these letters were not highly objective. Due to the censorship and considering what motivated the Canadians to volunteer, it is believed that the news reported in the volunteers' letters must have been highly biased and congruent with the CPC propaganda of the time. The letters of Canadian volunteers may, in turn, have favoured the CPC propaganda campaign and incited some to join the Brigades.

This process of word-of-mouth publicity was also intensified with the numerous public meetings held in Canada in defence of the Republic. For example, in October 1936 a small delegation of Spanish Republicans came to Canada to promote the pro-Republican.⁵⁷ The Norman Bethune tour of Canada from June to August 1937 must

⁵⁵ "Detailed questionnaires of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades." Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG 10 K2, Fond 545, File listing 3, File 509 to 512.

⁵⁶ The NKVD acted as an intelligence section for the Brigades and for the USSR to get detail account of the activities of the Communists in Spain. It is responsible for many crimes and torture. Bob Smilie, pre-eminent leader of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) of Britain is assumed to have died in a NKVD prison. For a critical analysis of the activities of the NKVD see Tom Buchanan, "The Death of Bob Smilie, the Spanish Civil War, and the Eclipse of the Independent Labour Party", in Historical Journal, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1997, pp.435-461, and George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia, p.206.

⁵⁷ This delegation which was composed of by Isabella Palencia, member of the Cortes, delegate to the League of Nations and Ambassador to Sweden, Marcelo Domingo, former minister of education and Reverend Father Luis Sarasola a catholic priest and scholar came to foster support for the Republic.

also have contributed to intensifying the recruitment in Canada.⁵⁸ According to RCMP reports, most of Bethune's addresses and other meetings held by the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and by the Aid to Spain Committee were all very successful. An RCMP report also states that: "Dr. Norman Bethune has concluded his tour of Western Canada. It has been a great success; over 30 000 people heard him speak and saw the film "The Heart of Spain," [the film] has helped considerably to swell the proceeds of numerous meetings which he addressed throughout Western Canada."⁵⁹ Other meetings were also successful. On the 27 February 1938, "2500 people attended a meeting under the auspices of the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in Massey Hall, Toronto."⁶⁰ On 11 April 1937 1600 attended a Canadian Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy meeting held in Edmonton. The day after, 800 persons attended a similar meeting held in Saskatoon, and on 18 April Dr. Anna Strong, on behalf of the same Committee, addressed "a capacity audience" in the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg.⁶¹ Bethune's tour and other public meetings must have encouraged public awareness towards the events unfolding in Spain. Increased recruitment might have followed.

⁵⁸ The exact dates of Bethune's tour are uncertain. However, we know that he came back on 17 June 1937 to Canada. G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937", [Report No. 861, 23 June 1937], p.265. The Globe and Mail of 5 June 1937, p.7 also confirm this. His departure date is uncertain. It is known that he toured the country from East to West. He addressed a meeting in Vancouver on Monday 1 August 1937. The Vancouver Sun, Monday, 5 June 1937, p.3. Martin Lobigs assumes that Bethune toured Western Canada between July and September 1937. Martin Lobigs, "Canadian Responses to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1936 to 1939", p.155.

⁵⁹ G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937" [Report No. 869, 8 September 1937], p.363.

⁶⁰ G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part V, 1938-39", [Report No. 886, 15 March 1938], p.94.

⁶¹ G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Eds., RCMP Security Bulletins: "The Depression Years, Part IV, 1937", [Report No. 853, 28 April 1937], p.185.

There also exists the argument that racial or religious prejudices influenced the decision of some Canadians who volunteered. In July 1936, when Franco rose, he commanded the troops of Morocco. The allegiance of the Moorish troops to him was achieved from the onset of the conflict. The use of Moorish troops was highly controversial. The rebels claimed that they had risen for the good of Spain and to contain the imminent spread of foreign ideas on Spanish soil. Communism was their direct target. According to Tom Buchanan, the use of Moorish troops in Spain had a "profound impact in Britain".⁶² Canada was similarly touched by the use of Muslims by Franco to protect Spanish Catholicism in Spain. The Canadian poet L.A. Mackay, published a poem which directly attacked the use of Moorish troops into Franco's army.

BATTLE HYMN OF THE SPANISH REBELLION

The Church's one foundation
Is now the Moslem sword,

In meek collaboration
With flame, and axe, and cord;

While overhead are floating,
Deep-winged with holy-love,

The battle planes of Wotan,
The bombing planes of Jove.

The poem, which was published in October 1936 in The Canadian Forum, in addition to being critical of German "planes of Wotan" and Italian "planes of Jove" intervention,

⁶² Tom Buchanan, "A Far Away Country of which We Know Nothing?" Perceptions of Spain and its Civil War in Britain, 1931-1939 "A Far Away Country of which We Know Nothing?" Perceptions of Spain and its Civil War in Britain, 1931-1939", in Twentieth Century British History, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1993, p.14.

was also, in the first verse, critical of the use of Moslems by the rebels.⁶³ The Daily Clarion also often commented on the presence of Moors in Franco's army. Although it would be hard to picture someone volunteering for the Republic solely to go fight Moors, it still did not favour Franco.

The use of foreign, Italian, German and Portuguese aid⁶⁴ was another factor which influenced Republican support.⁶⁵ Since Italians, Germans and Portuguese were used in the war, it was perceived as more acceptable for the volunteers to join the International Brigades. Throughout the war, The Daily Clarion reported on the increased presence of foreign troops in Spain.⁶⁶ Faced with a high concentration of foreign soldiers in Spain, Canadians might have accepted the idea that their presence was only counterbalancing that of the Germans and Italians. The extent of this rationale can be found in September 1938, when President Négrin removed the International Brigade to prompt similar behaviour by the Germans and Italians.

⁶³ L.A. Mackay, "Battle Hymn of the Spanish Rebellion", The Canadian Forum, October 1936, Vol XVI, No.189, p.25

⁶⁴ According to Garbriel Jackson, "from the first day of the Civil War, Portugal was a thinly disguised base of supply for the Insurgents. The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931-1939, p.257.

⁶⁵ The importance of the use of Moorish troops by the Rebels during the civil war is still today understudied. It has been estimated that 62 271 Moors served in Spain during the war. See Colonel José María Gárate Córdoba, La guerra de las dos Españas (Barcelona 1976), p.221. Cited in María Rosa de Madariaga, "The Intervention of Moroccan Troops in the Spanish Civil War: A Reconstruction", in European History Quarterly, Vol. 22, 1992, p.80. Córdoba's estimate seems to be much lower than the estimate of Garbriel Jackson. Initially, in 1965, he had estimated that there was 100 000 Moorish soldiers in Franco's army. Gabriel Jackson, The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931-1939, p.334. Later, after referring to the study of Charles R. Halstead, he estimated later that in fact there had been more than 100 000 Moors in the rebel army. Gabriel Jackson, "Interpreting the Spanish Civil War, in Annales de Historia Contemporánea (Spain), Vol. 7, 1988-1989, p.16. Some historians also assume that if Moors had not been used in Franco's forces, the Republic might have survived. The latter case could have appended if the Republican government had granted some freedom by answering the call of Nationalist Moroccans.

⁶⁶ On 8 August 1936 a Clarion headline reads: "Germany and Italy threaten intervention in Spain." On 2 December 1936, one can read in the Clarion that: "Confirm reports: Germans, Italians landed in Spain." For that date one, reports of Germans and Italians fighting in Spain were made on an almost daily basis.

The inaction of unemployed Canadians might have encouraged some to search for adventures. Fighting in Spain, although a dangerous venture, was an available option offered to them. The need for adventure had a small role in motivating some Canadians to fight in Spain. "Fed-upness. Change of scenery" was used as a justification for volunteering by Andrew William Though from Vancouver.⁶⁷ Others may also have been similarly incited to go to Spain. However, when asked on their volunteering, they may have answered with the more convenient motive to go fight Fascism in Spain. It was surely not desirable to confess their urge for adventure to the recruiting agents.

There existed therefore numerous factors that contributed to motivate the Canadians who volunteered for the International Brigades. With these factors exposed, there is a need to better categorise the types of motives. Such classification is insightful for it summarises well the main factors that have contributed to persuade the Canadians to volunteer. Historians in the past have classified the volunteers into distinct categories to reflect what motivated them to join the International Brigades. However, shortcomings exist in their categorisation. It summarises only more general findings that do not reflect the true nature of these motivations.

Howard and Reynolds have grouped the Canadian volunteers into three distinct groups. The first group was composed of adventurers, the second of "holiday-boozers",

⁶⁷ "Detailed questionnaires of the Historical Commission of the International Brigades." Canada, Ottawa, National Archives of Canada, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Fonds, MG 10 K2, Fond 545, File listing 3, File 509 to 512.

and the last of idealists.⁶⁸ This type of classification represents a superficial analysis of the reasons why the Canadians volunteered.

Randy Ervin's M.A. thesis also lacks the deep analysis needed to clearly explain why many Canadians decided to join the International Brigades. Ervin stated that the volunteers could be gathered into three groups. The first group was the anti-Fascists, the second group was composed of Canadians who were principally motivated by the Depression, and adventurers occupied the last group.⁶⁹ Ervin likewise failed to put into context the volunteers' experience and the fact that they became politicised in the 1930s. For example, the first anti-Fascist group is not directly connected with the CPC propaganda of the time.

As demonstrated, the urge to defeat Fascism and defend Democracy were the major reasons used by the volunteers to justify their action in Spain. The link between the poor Canadian conditions and the need to fight Fascism in the name of Democracy is not clearly demonstrated in the works discussed. The Depression climate and active CPC campaigns explain the missing link between pragmatic concerns of the volunteers and the idealism of the 1930s.

The Canadian volunteers can best be grouped into three categories that reflect what motivated them to go fight for the Spanish Republic. The first group is composed of volunteers who were first mobilised against Fascism by the propaganda campaign of the CPC. The Depression was instrumental in exposing them to radical ideas. They would never have joined the Brigades if the Canadian economy were prosperous. If

⁶⁸ Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, pp.20-21.

⁶⁹ Randy Gibbs Ervin, "The Men of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion", p.42.

they joined the CPC, they became members only after late 1929 when mainstream politics failed to respond to the calls of the unemployed. According to Ervin, a few of the volunteers confessed that they wanted to escape the harsh economic realities of Canada.⁷⁰ This group was not composed exclusively of Communists. There were mainstream liberals, social democrats and socialists. The anti-Fascism stand adopted and used by the CPC to justify the recruitment of volunteers was enough to accept any politically affiliated recruit as long as he was a determined anti-Fascist. The CPC constructed anti-Fascism and Democratic ideals, not Communism, as determining factors in motivating these Canadians to volunteer.

The second group was composed of Canadians whose idealism was not associated with the Depression. The propaganda campaign organised by the CPC to recruit sympathisers did not affect them. Communists, intellectuals and strongly politicised people were among the ranks of this group. If Anti-Fascism was the major reason why they went to Spain, it was not CPC constructed. Their knowledge of the events happening in Spain and in Europe in the inter-war period was also not CPC constructed. Humanitarian sentiments might also have influenced the decision of this group to volunteer.

Finally the last group was composed of volunteers whose motivation in joining the International Brigades was not rooted in the politics of the time but was the product of factors of a personal nature. The high level of pragmatism in their reasoning was beyond that of the two former groups. Financial incentives for joining the International

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.41.

Brigade might have been a reason for them to join.⁷¹ Those who joined the Brigades as a result of a personal relationship to someone who was fighting in Spain were also part of this third group. This last group was, however, insignificant. The burden of having to go through the screening mechanism of the CPC during the recruitment process and the role played by the political commissars during the war would have made the life of this type of volunteer difficult. Furthermore, the radicalisation process that occurred during the inter-war period could have hardly left indifferent these men who were, throughout their stay in Spain, bombarded by propaganda from both sides.

The call of the CPC would never have been answered in the way it was had it not been for the Depression of the 1930s. The social, political and economic crisis resulting from the crash of 1929 produced circumstances needed to foster both the rise of radicalism and the recruitment of many volunteers for the International Brigades. Both the research of Howard and Reynolds and that of Ervin failed to recognise contextually the anti-Fascist willingness of the Canadian volunteers. Curiously, Howard and Reynolds in their work stated that the Depression favoured the rise of Fascism. Because Fascism was growing, Canadians were more and more willing to utilise violence to confront Fascism.⁷² However, they failed to recognise the root of the anti-Fascist sentiment of the Canadian volunteers.

⁷¹ International Brigadiers were given the full Spanish regular soldiers' pay. However, due to the economic backwardness of Spain at the time, it is doubtful that any volunteered exclusively for the pay.

⁷² Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, p.27.

Conclusion

With the coming of the Spanish Civil War, the taking of a radical stand by Canadians was highly influenced by the information circulated by the media. If one was not a fervent Catholic or member of the CPC prior to the war, one's views of the rising in Spain were influenced by the press, which in turn was influenced by the proponents of the two opposing camps in Spain during the war. The Republicans tended to denigrate the supporters of the rising as Fascists. The Rebels, for their part, tended to picture the Republicans as Communists.

Without the Depression of the 1930s the call of the CPC would not have been answered the way it was. The social, political and economic crisis resulting from the crash of 1929 produced the arable ground needed to foster both the rise of radicalism and the recruitment of many volunteers for the International Brigades. Volunteering for Spain was highly affected by the common generational experience of the Great Depression.

The 1930s were a prime era for the promotion of radical ideas. The high level of organisational skills of the left and its internationalist vision helped better root the CPC in the political life of Canadians in the 1930s. In spite of severe policy changes in 1935, the CPC was increasingly flourishing. From the year 1934 to 1936, the CPC doubled the size of its ranks. Additional groups, like the CCF, also gained wide support because of the Depression. However, a number of factors limited the gains they made and helped CPC campaigns, especially during the Spanish Civil War. The isolationist platform of the CCF limited its support to the Loyalist cause. The lack of strong public support by the Canadian intellectuals also favoured this trend. An analysis of the

content of the Canadian Forum, an intellectual journal of the moderate left, demonstrated that a neutral tone was employed in describing the war in Spain. For these reasons and because of its dynamic role, the CPC succeeded in monopolising the Canadian help to Spain. Therefore, many, in their support for the Republic, were drawn closer to the CPC. The large contingent of Canadian volunteers that was sent to Spain mirrored this success.

The strong anti-Fascist and democratic message of the CPC were also vital in its success. Correspondingly, the driving forces of the Canadian volunteers were a desire to confront Fascism and to defend Democracy. Communism, in the revolutionary sense, was not a strong incentive to volunteer. The object of the Comintern in organising the International Brigades was not the promotion of revolutionary communism, but the defeat of the Rebel, perceived Fascist, forces. The 1930 European diplomatic scene had incited Moscow to take a stronger stand against Fascism. This position, justified by the gains made in January 1933 by the Nazis in Germany, altered the goal of the Comintern. It became clearly a tool of USSR's foreign policy. It was used to promote the policy of collective security in Europe and the idea that Moscow had replaced its revolutionary ideals for anti-Fascism and the promotion of Democratic ideas. With the coming of the Spanish Civil War, and within an agile propaganda campaign, the idea that defeating Fascism in the name of Democracy could be achieved by joining the International Brigades was circulated.

As a consequence, more than 1400 Canadians joined the Brigades. Many Ukrainian, Finnish and Polish Canadians volunteered. Their leftist predisposition during the 1930s facilitated their acceptance of CPC's campaigns. Their Eastern-

European homeland experience as well as their leftist predisposition shaped their perceptions of the Spanish war and motivated them to join the Brigades.

Other factors favoured the recruitment of volunteers. The presence of known persons already fighting in Spain moved others to join the Brigades. Fascist racial policies, especially the anti-Semitic ones, were also motivating factors for some Canadians to volunteer. Some Jews of Canadian origin used this justification to volunteer for the Brigades. Others went to Spain in search of adventure.

Another portion of the Canadian contingent was composed of Communists of the pre-1935 period. By becoming Communists and joining the Brigades, they had made a strong ideological commitment. Finally, the largest group of volunteers was composed of Canadians whose will to join the Brigades was inscribed in the Depression climate. This group of volunteers, because of the Depression, more readily accepted radical ideas. Considering that the CPC were successful in mobilising the workers during the Depression, they accepted its ideals. Ultimately, they responded to the implicit CPC call for volunteers and joined the Brigades.

This present thesis aimed at contributing to the advancement of the historiography of the International Brigades by uncovering what motivated many of its members to join the fight in Spain. This research has sought to rectify the deficiencies of earlier work, and to shed some light on the CPC's strategy of constructing anti-Fascist sentiment among the Canadian volunteers.

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Date	Author	Title of article	Subject	Volume and pages
Sep 36	n.a.	Spain	General neutral overview of the situation in Spain	Vol XVI, No.188, p.4
Oct 36	n.a.	The Spanish Cauldron	The author discusses the stalemate in Spain	Vol XVI, No.189, pp.4-5
Oct 36	L.A.M. (L.A. Mackay)	Battle Hymn of the Spanish Rebellion	Poem	Vol XVI, No.189, p.25
Nov 36	n.a.	Mr. King at Geneva	Brief reference to Spanish Civil War	Vol XVI, No.190, p.3
Nov 36	n.a.	Canada and Spain	The author criticizes neutrality in the war	Vol XVI, No.190, pp.3-4
Nov 36	Davis, Roy	Spanish Scene	"This article is an account by a member of the Young communist League (YCL) of his experience in Spain the last few weeks"	Vol XVI, No.190, pp.18-19
Jan 37	n.a.	Spain	Attack on neutrality and foreign involvement by the author	Vol XVI, No.192, p.4
Jan 37	RUFUS	"Another Month" (monthly rubric of news headings)	Brief reference to Spanish Civil War	Vol XVI, No.192, p.15
Jan 37	Neslo	Cartoon	Cartoon of two scavenger birds designated as Germany and Italy who are closely watching a small with bird designated Spain. On the background Spain in battle is represented.	Vol XVI, No. 192, p.19

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Feb 37	n.a.	Aid to Spain	The author discusses the actions of Dr. Norman Bethune in Spain. The article also calls for support to be sent to the Canadian Aid Spain Committee	Vol XVI, No.193, p.5
Feb 37	Skilling, Gordon	The Popular Front	The author is against the possible creation of a Popular Front in Canada	Vol XVI, No.193, pp.11-12
Feb 37	RUFUS	"Another Month"	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVI, No.193, p.24
Feb 37	Bull, Esther	Spain	Book review of Spanish Front by Carlos Prieto	Vol XVI, No.193, p.32
Mar 37	n.a.	Spain	The author criticizes General Franco's political and military ambitions	Vol XVI, No.194, pp.4-5
Mar 37	Underhill, Frank H.	The Debate on Foreign Policy	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVI, No.194, pp.8-10
Apr 37	Gelber, Marvin B	Clench the Fist and Smash the Party	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVI, No.195, pp.14-15
May 37	Birney, Earle	Proletarian Literature: Theory and Practice	Brief reference to Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.196, pp.58-60
May 37	Macintosh, Gwenyth	"They Shall Not Pass"	Book review of: Behind the Spanish Barricades by John Langdon Davis and No Pasaran: A Story of the Battle of Madrid by Upton Sinclair	Vol XVII, No.196, pp.67-68
Jul 37	Bethune, Norman	Red Moon	Poem	Vol XVII, No.198, p.118

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Jul 37	RUFUS II	"Another Month"	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.198, p.126
Aug 37	Smalacombe, John	Three Snails of a Disgusted Colonial	Poem	Vol XVII, No.199, p.159
Sep 37	n.a.	Non-Intervention; Mr. King's Gesture	Critic of the Canadian government commitment to the non-intervention policy in Spain	Vol XVII, No.200, p.188
Sep 37	RUFUS II	"Another Month"	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.200, p.196
Oct 37	RUFUS II	"Another Month"	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.201, p.234
Nov 37	n.a.	What Will Canada do?	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.202, p.259
Nov 37	RUFUS II	"Another Month"	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.202, p.283
Dec 37	n.a.	1837-1937	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.203, pp.296-97
Dec 37	RUFUS II	"Another Month"	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.203, p.306
Dec 37	n.a.	Letters from Spain	"The writer is a well-known Montreal journalist and leader of Youth organizations. These letters, addressed to his brother, a Montreal physician, are necessarily condensed and abbreviated."	Vol XVII, No.203, pp.310-311
Dec 37	Mackay, L.A.	Murder Most Foul	Poem	Vol XVII, No.203, p.314

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Jan 38	RUFUS II	"Another Month"		Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.204, p.340
Jan 38	Luque, Antonio Garcia	Yo Estar Un Rojo. Translation of Yakow Newmann	Poem	Poem	Vol XVII, No.204, p.346
Jan 38	Newmann, Yakow	A Spanish Revolutionary Poem	Poem	Poem	Vol XVII, No.204, p.348
Feb 38	n.a.	Spain	The author discuss the victory of government's troops at Teruel	The author discuss the victory of government's troops at Teruel	Vol XVII, No.205, p.373
Feb 38	RUFUS II	"Another Month"		Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.205, p.378
Apr 38	n.a.	What Next		Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.207, p.435
Apr 38	Grube, G.M.A.	The Chamberlain Way to War		Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.207, p.439-40
Apr 38	Beattie, Henry Scott	Spain: Another View	Correspondence of a veteran. The author of the letter is against the anti-revolutionary attitude of the Communists in Spain	Correspondence of a veteran. The author of the letter is against the anti-revolutionary attitude of the Communists in Spain	Vol XVII, No.207, pp.454-455
May 38	n.a.	Chamberlain's Bad Bargain		Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.208, p.38
May 38	RUFUS II	"Another Month"		Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.208, p.44
May 38	Robbins, William	Fable - 1938		Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.208, pp.47-49

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May 38	Ryan, Larry K.	Correspondence	Correspondence of another veteran against Henry Scott Beattie's assumptions and claims in the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.208, pp.54-55
Jun 38	Mackay, L.A.	1938 Dialogue of the Dead: An Essay in Nevillian Realism	Poem	Vol XVII, No.209, p.71
Jun 38	RUFUS II	"Another Month"	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.209, p.74
Jun 38	Klein, A.M.	Of Castles In Spain	Poem	Vol XVII, No.209, p.79
Aug 38	Reid, Lionel	Salutes	Poem	Vol XVII, No.211, p.135
Sep 38	RUFUS II	"Another Month"	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.212, p.183
Oct 38	P.A.G.	What England Thought	Brief reference to the Spanish Civil War	Vol XVII, No.213, pp.199-202
Jan 39	n.a.	Not Tunis But Spain	The author talks about Italian colonial plans	Vol XVII, No.216, p.293
Jan 39	Mackay, L.A.	Malraux in Spain	Book review of Man's Hope by André Malraux	Vol XVII, No.216, pp.314-15
Feb 39	n.a.	Chamberlain and Mussolini in Spain	Mussolini promise to withdraw Italian troops at the end of the war in Spain	Vol XVII, No.217, pp.328-29
Mar 39	n.a.	Fascism Marches On	The author comments on Mussolini plans to withdraw his troops at the end of the war and on the fall of Barcelona	Vol XVII, No.218, p.361
Apr 39	Birney, Earle	The New Byronism	Book review of Poems for Spain edited by Stephen Spender	Vol XVII, No.219, p.31

APPENDIX B – “THEY DIED IN SPAIN THAT DEMOCRACY SHALL NOT PERISH”



Source: A.E. Smith, Canada's Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, n.p., 1937, p.25.

APPENDIX C – “GERMANY AND ITALY CLOSELY MONITOR SPANISH EVENTS”



Source: Neslo, Canadian Forum, January 1937, Vol. XVI, No.192, p.19.

APPENDIX D - CPC MEMBERSHIPS FROM YEARS 1921 TO 1960¹

YEAR	STRENGTH
1921	650
1925	4500
1927	3000
1929 ²	2876
1931	1385
1934	5500
1935	9000
1936	10000
1937	15000
1939	16000
March 1939 ³	18000

¹ Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, Le droit de se taire: Histoire des communistes au Québec, de la Première Guerre mondiale à la Révolution tranquille (Outremont 1989), p.496.

² The CPC was declaring at the time to the Comintern that it had a strength of 4000 members. Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada: A History (Toronto 1975), p.66.

³ Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada, p.115.

APPENDIX E - MARGARET DAY

Ode To Spring, 1937

Jackal, cormorant and kite,
You ranging in embraced division
Prevent effectively my flight.
No Peace just now – bombs rain from heaven.

O Thou with dewy locks,
Your tiger burning bright,
Seeing desolation from the sky
You'd cry no word tonight.
You, who – admit! Fled from in vain
God's forehead on the windowpane.

The Hills still tell each other
But the listening valleys fear.
They crouch by shivering mountain side
And tremble as they hear.

While horror whistles down in Spain
Who can announce Canadian Spring?