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Josie McLellan. *Anti-Fascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades 1945-1989.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004. xi + 228 pp. $215.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-927626-4.

Michael Uhl. *Mythos Spanien: Das Erbe der Internationalen Brigaden in der DDR.* Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz, 2004. 556 S. EUR 29.80 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-8012-5031-7.

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Sammelrez: Internationale Brigaden in der DDR

Consider the odds of the publication of two academic tomes, one in English, the other German, on a nearly-identical topic. What are the odds that both would be outstanding? The subject of both concerns the use and misuse of the 3,000 German International Brigaders who fought in the Spanish Civil War of 1936 Krammer, Arnold, Germans Against Hitler: The Thaelmann Brigade, in: Journal of Contemporary History 4 (1969), pp. 65-84. , and the manipulation of national memory. After the creation of the GDR in 1949, the communist government found itself without historical roots beyond the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe and turned the heroism of the Spanish Civil War fighters into the myth that became a central focus of the German Democratic Republic. While every nation creates its defining myths, for the GDR it was critical. Its boundaries were artificial, its citizens required models of socialist behavior, and its cultural history was vague, particularly important since history, in the Marxist sense, was supposed to move inexorably in the direction of socialism, and ultimately communism. The SED needed an intricate web of myths to define itself and to set the standards of party discipline, loyalty, and sacrifice required of followers and future recruits. By claiming to be heir to the soul of the Brigade, East Germany invented a moral foundation while casting its nearby West German nemesis as heir to Hitler's reactionary Condor Legion.

By 1950, the Party had purified the anti-fascist movement of resistance workers, concentration camp survivors, and anti-Nazi spies, leaving only active fighters and committed Party members. What remained was to bring the story of the anti-fascist fighters, a common euphemism for the International Brigades, into ideological alignment. History became ideology as the Cult of Spain grew to adoration for the Brigaders and the heroic model of socialism they had come to represent. Spanish veterans rose to every level in the East German government. Herbert Grünstein became the Deputy Minister of the Interior; Karl Mewis was appointed the District Secretary of the SED; Ewald Munschke became a Major General and Chief of Administration in the National Volksarmee; and Alfred Neumann, Kurt Hager and Paul Verner were all members of the Secretariat of the Central Committee and reached the pinnacle of power: the Politbüro. The leaders of the three most important military posts in East Germany - General of the Army Heinz Hoffmann, head of the NVA; Erich Mielke, head of the Ministry for Security and its armed units; and Colonel-General Friedrich Dickel, head of the Ministry of the Interior and its armed units - had all fought in the International Brigades in Spain. Moreover, International Brigades veterans headed the four largest official government newspapers. Max Kahane was a founder and editor of the powerful news service "Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst" and the chief commentator of "Neues Deutschland." Georg Stibi was the chief editor of the "Berliner Zeitung," after which he became the chief editor of the "Leipziger Volkszeitung," and finally the editor-in-chief of "Neues Deutschland." Frieda Kantorowicz, wife of author and Brigade veteran Alfred Kantorowicz, and herself a staff administrator of the Brigades in Spain, had a high administrative position with ADN. Erich Henschke was the editor-in-chief of the "Berliner Zeitung." Kurt Julius Goldstein was the editor-in-chief of the major radio station "Deutschlandsender" (since 1971: "Stimme der DDR"). Factories, bridges, and many town squares bore the names of Spanish Civil War heroes. More than 40 troop units, military bases, and large and small ships were named after the *Spanienkämpfer*. Idem, The Cult of the Spanish Civil War in East Germany, in: Journal

of Contemporary History 39 (2004), pp. 531-560. Eventually, East Germany itself officially acknowledged that "the German-speaking units of the International Brigades represented the nucleus of the armed forces of the future GDR." Lapp, Peter Joachim, Traditionspflege in der DDR, Berlin (West) 1988, pp. 74-75.

Michael Uhl's excellent dissertation engulfs the reader. Our world becomes the DDR and the Brigaders. Through archives ranging from Russia to Spain, and interviews with participants, Uhl traces the biographies of the Brigaders; first in the Spanish war, taking care to distinguish between the genuine fighters and the political functionaries who appeared in Spain, followed by the meat of his book. Whether they were lured back to the DDR or were true believers, the Brigaders faced an uncertain existence as they navigated the tortuous political hairpin curves of life under Stalinism and the continual and often critical need for political realignment. The final portion of the book analyses the legacy of the International Brigaders in the DDR. In short, the Spanish war formed the intellectual underpinnings of the DDR and the former fighters, universally male and politically cleansed, were the living examples of the antifascism upon which the state was formed. However, they eventually became cardboard figures which mirrored the ossification of the State itself. Uhl's book on the legacy of the International Brigaders in the DDR is passionate, accurate, and convincing. The appendices at the end of the volume are quite helpful: a list of the veterans who reached the Politburo, another list of the NVA units and ships named for *Spanienkämpfer*, a six-page survey of the archives consulted, and an impressive bibliography that goes on for 26 pages.

Josie McLellan's equally outstanding dissertation focuses on the development of mythologizing the International Brigaders in the DDR with laser-intensity. McLellan's book is quite incisive, elegantly-written, and thoroughly researched, although the price of $99.00 is exorbitant. Her sources are every bit as extensive as Uhl's. McLellan follows the same route as Uhl, that is, the participation of the fighters in Spain and their odyssey to East Germany, and the remaining two-thirds of the book concerned with their political adjustment-persecution. McLellan's book concentrates on the state's efforts to massage the facts into a shallow but ubiquitous myth of socialist discipline. Interrogation, censorship, and pressure by other veterans resulted in autobiographies and histories more designed to serve the interests of the SED, as models for the public and the FDJ, service in the Cold War, and the worship of antifascism, however anti-Semitic, than illuminate the true events of the Spanish war.

McLellan analyses not only the building of the myth of Spain, but also its undoing. The first cracks in the government's unyielding ideological interpretation of the Spanish conflict appeared spontaneously around 1979 from the pens of novelists. One book in particular was significant because it confronted the myth of Spain directly. Entitled "Collin", the novel was written in 1979 by Stefan Heym, one of East Germany's most famous dissidents. Heym's literary target was censorship and, through his novel, the government's use of the Spanish Civil War. Heym told an interviewer that his new book was written to stop "beating around the bush" ("Rundlauf um den heißen Brei") about the way history had been treated by the GDR. "The pilgrimage to the Truth reaches back to the Spanish Civil War," noted "Der Spiegel." Erstickender Ring, in: Der Spiegel, 12 February 1979, pp. 181-182. Along the way, McLellan discusses the role of dissidents in the DDR, disagreements among the veterans themselves, and the SED's ideological gymnastics about the nation's foundation of antifascism. By the collapse of the State in 1989 the myth about Spain was tattered and shopworn as were the aging veterans who were trotted out at most official occasions. But during its forty years of existence, the myth was an ideological backbone, a link with the only pre-war conflict which saw communists raise guns to fascists, a means of separating itself from its West German rival while obfuscating its own Nazi past, and a mirror of Western imperialism and the Vietnam War. It was as durable as the State it served. Josie McLellan and Michael Uhl have written the final analysis of the DDR's myth of Spain.

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