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CANADIANS IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: THE WAY OVER

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR erupted on July 18, 1936, in an explosion of anger and violence that reverberated around the world with such intensity that one might say that World War II began on that hot summer day. Few conflicts have provoked such passionate feelings. The Republicans and their friends believed that Fascism was unleashed on a world whose apparent indifference was itself criminal. The Nationalists and their friends believed that Spain had been seized, five years previously, by a syndicate of Communists, socialists, and atheists who brought disgrace on a centuries-old monarchy. "Some governments of the outer world reacted to the catastrophe according to the law of international diplomacy; others with a Machiavellian absorption in the experimental possibilities of new weapons; some were horrified at the tragic waste of human effort and achievement and all were driven by a desire not to burn their fingers uselessly."

The "outer world" became quickly confused and then dismayed by the political configurations which emerged in Spain. Hitler and Mussolini pledged men and arms in support of the rebels. After a brief accession to the policy of non-intervention, Russia began to contribute equipment and advisers to the Republican government, which had lost its army to the rebels, and to organize an international brigade of volunteers.

This intervention on the parts of three totalitarian powers prompted many nations to the conclusion that the civil war amounted to little more than a premature showdown between Fascists and Communists. This interpretation critically damaged the Republican pursuit of aid and comfort. The Non-Intervention Agreement was quickly adopted by France, Great Britain, and some two dozen smaller powers, with the United States and Canada giving tacit approval while remaining non-members.

Canada's official policy through the bitter years of the Spanish Civil War was one of aloofness. The attitude of the King administration may be summed up in the adoption in mid-1937 of the Foreign Enlistments Act, which made it a criminal offence for any Canadian to enlist in the armed forces of a

country at war with a friendly nation. Yet when that act was incorporated over five hundred Canadian volunteers had already reached Spain bound for service with the International Brigades. Eight hundred more would make the long voyage over the next fifteen months. Toward the end of the conflict, a group of Canadian survivors was told that, excepting France, no other country had contributed so great a number of volunteers in proportion to its population: 1,300 out of 12,000,000.

Why should Canada, of all countries, have given so much to a civil strife half a world away? Canada had no particular ties with Spain, no tradition of emotional involvement. But once the war was under way, something like an emotional involvement was fashioned almost immediately. The catalyst was the alienation of the Canadian working class from the Conservative government led by R. B. Bennett. Probably no other Canadian prime minister has been so vilified during his tenure as was Mr. Bennett, who directed the affairs of Canada between 1930 and 1935. The Prime Minister bore the burden of responsibility for failing to discover and nourish the strength of a nation in its struggle against a paralysing economic and social disaster which lasted for ten miserable years: the Great Depression. Bennett's failure was a failure of imagination, and although this may be a very human shortcoming, it is one that national leaders cannot afford.

The working class had little patience with any traditional political party, and the ferocity of its attack on the government which failed to cope with unemployment or relief was appalling. A chain reaction was created by which Bennett's ineffectual depression "policy" directly influenced the recruitment and dispatch of Canadian volunteers to the Spanish Civil War.

The great depression incited the common man to re-discover the resolution and stamina which characterized the pioneer generations. The great depression bred in the common man a spirit of insubordination and intolerance which was directed explicitly at the governments of Canada, municipal, provincial, and federal. The great depression bred in the common man a capacity for violence because hungry, impoverished men, in their humiliation, would bash heads. The great depression provoked such powerful resentment that the coincidence of civil war in Spain, with its issues and loyalties readily apparent, might even have been a welcome relief for people who had tried everything but war.

This same Canadian working class detected in the rise of Fascism in Europe the final, dreadful articulation of an inhuman impulse to abuse human

rights. The more radical sections of this class saw in Germany, Italy, and the Spanish insurgents the fate of many nations, including Canada. These fears, as well as these new-found strengths, were quickly identified by militant left-wing political movements such as the Communist Party of Canada. Working through subordinate organizations such as the Workers Unity League — the Canadian arm of the Red International of Labour Unions — the Communist Party created an opposition that was anything but a shadow. The League itself spawned the Relief Camp Workers Union which in turn provoked the 1935 On-to-Ottawa trek. One in four members of this epic march later went to Spain.

When the war in Spain began in 1936, therefore, a considerable number of Canadian people recognized it as an immediate threat to the peace of the world as well as a threat to the emergence of the proletariat as a vital political and social force. The Spanish Civil War was, for rebels and republicans, a holy war.

By the end of the first summer of conflict, volunteers from around the world were moving into Spain to join the small contingent of foreigners who had been on the scene on July 18. In September, the Soviet Comintern agreed to recruit and equip an international brigade and so set about that task with the help of the several Communist parties abroad, including the Communist Party of Canada. These activities were distinct and separate from those conducted by the Canadian Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, which drew its members from many political and social groups and which was concerned with publicizing the Republican war effort, with agitating for official recognition of that effort, and with collecting funds for relief and medical assistance.

The search for volunteers began in November, 1936, and did not end until September, 1938, when the Republicans withdrew the International Brigades from combat. Thirteen hundred Canadians went into Spain; half that number died there.

One of the few relics of the Canadian expedition is a collection of six hundred 3 x 5 file cards, each of which bears the name, home town, age, and date of departure of a Canadian volunteer. Most of the cards have passport photographs attached. The collection was maintained by The Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, an organization created in the spring of 1937 and devoted to the care and welfare of the men abroad and to the provision of a liaison between the volunteers and their families in Canada. While the cards represent only half the number recruited, they are also the only "roster"

which survives. These are enough by which to venture some speculations about the character of the entire force.

It is apparent that the Canadians were somewhat older than their American counterparts (3,300 in all). Their median age was about 32, while the Americans were six years younger. The reason for the greater age is that an exceptional number of Canadian volunteers were landed immigrants or naturalized citizens who had come to Canada after World War I. They had come as adults, anxious to find their way in a new world but not willing to succumb to traditions, political or social, in that new world which seemed contrary to their notions of democracy. Many were hardened veterans of protest movements in the early thirties. Nearly five hundred were, as was noted, participants in the On-to-Ottawa Trek. The volunteers to Spain came out of a generation which, by experience and inclination, was disposed to active participation in the struggle for liberty.

One consequence of this greater age was a general maturity which distinguished the Canadians from other volunteers in Spain. They seemed particularly sober, durable soldiers, well-versed in a life of hardship and exposure.

Another category of information available on these small cards is the identification of the individual's homeland, a specification which apparently implies that the man was a fairly recent immigrant. Not every card bears such a designation, of course, but from those that do, twenty-four nations can be drawn, ranging from Austria to Finland to Scotland. The great majority of Anglo-Saxons have no such specific citation, although many of them certainly came to Canada during the 1920s. In Spain, friendly observers noted that the Canadians seemed divided into three major "national" groups: Anglo-Saxons from British Columbia, Ukrainians from the prairies, and Finns from northern Ontario. The Finns, by the way, found their vocation in the machine-gun companies just as—remarked one American veteran—the Irish have gone into politics and the Jews into the garment industry!

One can speculate that the majority of the volunteers came from Ontario and the Western provinces. The largest single group were "Our Boys" from British Columbia, although not all of this number were natives of that region. There were many French-Canadians, more than one would expect, considering the opposition raised by the Roman Catholic Church to the Republican government. (Monsignor Antoniutti identified the French-Canadian point of view when he introduced the Spanish insurgents as that "army of heroes, justly called 'Christ's militia'").²

It may be assumed that these volunteers came from the working class. Scarcely any had attended a university though quite a few were "intellectuals" nonetheless. While many were unemployed at the time of their departure for Spain, a substantial number did leave jobs. That so many were without work at this time no doubt confirmed in the minds of sceptics the notion that only drifters needed to apply.

Beyond these bits and pieces, there is little more on the cards to distinguish the men, except, of course, the photographs. The faces look out, intent, serious, mature, already inscribed with the knowledge that the owners are setting out on a historical voyage, already aware that they will never be the same again.

The motives for volunteering for Spain were there. The decision to go required little soul-searching, so conditioned were most of these men to retaliate against whatever they considered oppression and tyranny. Even so, there was little opportunity for impulsive action. Although a man might be eager to depart, he usually had to wait several weeks while his credentials were certified and while his passport was prepared. W. G. Krivitsky, a defected Soviet agent, proposed that the actual screening of each volunteer should be conducted by OGPU personnel.³ While this could have been done on the Continent, it is unlikely that such a network could have been arranged all over Canada. Men were screened in countless cities, towns, and villages, and a considerable staff of agents would have been necessary to handle the numbers who applied. There was some screening, but it was done by local party members or sympathizers. The Communist Party of Canada supervised this programme, and the criteria employed were simple enough: did a man possess democratic, liberal tendencies? Was a man a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police? There were individuals such as S. H. Abramson of Montreal, who had no political affiliation and no history of involvement in any left wing endeavour. Abramson had some difficulty obtaining directions to the appropriate people as a consequence, but thereafter he had no trouble persuading them of his sincerity.⁴

Since most of the volunteers from the west coast came out of relief camps, and thus were known to one another, security thereabouts was fairly easy to maintain. But at least one RCMP officer apparently "slipped in" somewhere along the way and made it to Spain, where he was killed in action. No one doubted that the authorities knew what was going on. So used were the veterans of the Vancouver strike and the Trek to the presence of undercover

men, that while they would surely turn out any discovered informer, they were accustomed to them and assumed that they would always be around.

One volunteer, Ron Liversedge, noted the irony inherent in the desire of the Communists to obtain legitimate passports for the recruits: "that one, in offering to risk one's life in a noble cause, had to be careful not to run afoul of the law in doing so".⁵ The acquisition of a passport involved the signature of a responsible citizen who could vouch for the applicant. Many of the British Columbia candidates sought out Dr. L. Tedford, a CCF leader and, eventually, Mayor of Vancouver. The destination of the trip for which the passport was requested was always the Paris Exposition. Liversedge recalls thinking that "somebody in the Passport Department must be wondering at the sudden interest in the Paris Exposition on the part of all these single men in Vancouver, and how it was that Dr. Telford knew them all".⁶ Once the passport was obtained—and from the beginning, almost, the document was stamped "Not valid for Spain"—the volunteer waited for his travel orders.

Toronto was the principal station enroute from Canada. The traffic through that point was carefully regulated so that large numbers of rather conspicuous voyageurs might not congregate. Men came into Toronto by freight if they could not afford to pay their own passage or had not been given funds at the point of origin. Sometimes they left Vancouver or Regina or Sudbury utterly anonymous with perhaps only a local union officer on hand to see them off. Once in a while, they departed with great fanfare. When Liversedge received word that he must leave Vancouver immediately, he was standing in Stanley Park watching the May Day Rally. As he turned to leave for the train, Tom McEwan, a long-time Vancouver Communist official, called out over the public address system that a volunteer was at that moment on his way to Spain. So Liversedge went away with the sound in his ears of ten thousand voices raised in a personal salute.⁷

It was not unusual to find two hundred people crowded about the gates at Toronto Union Station, their fists raised in the Popular Front salute as twenty or thirty volunteers filed past. But such ceremonies, accidental or planned, were few and far between.

The volunteers often spent a week in Toronto waiting for their turn to entrain for New York. The office established to process these men was located on the corner of Queens Avenue and Spadina Road in the Seamen's Union Hall. Two men, in particular, organized and directed the affairs of this cadre: Paul Phillips and Peter Hunter. When the war broke out, Hunter

had been in Moscow pursuing Marxist studies in a university. He remained in that capital until February, 1937, while various other students from Spain and the contingent returned to their homes and then went off to war. Of the fourteen young Canadians then in universities, about half went directly to the front. Hunter was ordered back to Canada, where he served for a time as secretary of the Young Communist League for southern Ontario and then moved to the Seamen's Hall.

The office provided a number of crucial services. A cover story was devised for each man, although these were bound to be superficial. A second-hand suitcase was bought at the Salvation Army so that the traveller might look like a tourist off for Paris. If a man had no decent clothes, he was given a second-hand suit, also found at the Salvation Army. Rooms were secured, and a dollar a day for expenses was allotted. Evidently Hunter and Phillips continued to screen the volunteers, searching for RCMP officers and Trotskyites: as Hunter puts it, "we didn't know which we hated the most".⁸

To expedite the transatlantic passage, the Communist party created a travel agency through which boat tickets were reserved. When Liversedge arrived in Toronto in early May, 1937, the agency was embroiled in an argument with steamship companies which were becoming reluctant to sell blocks of space to such groups arranging to go abroad. This dilemma, however, was apparently resolved, for no real obstacle of this sort ever threatened the traffic out of Canada. Toronto was the hub of such activity, but it should be emphasized that volunteers sailed from Montreal on Canadian Pacific steamers. On the other hand, many of these men from Quebec were apparently sent on from Toronto, perhaps to avoid taxing the New York station.

After the departure from Toronto, the volunteers went underground. While many had already lived under assumed names and moved in the shadowy ways of hunted men, nothing in their careers in the relief camps or in the Communist Party had prepared them for the experience to come. For all, the cloak-and-dagger operations devised for their passage into Spain were regarded as a great joke though they understood the necessity. Liversedge left Canada in charge of a group of fifteen men, carrying enough money to feed and house the travellers when they reached New York. Sewn in the lining of his jacket was a small silk flag by which he would identify himself to contacts. The group could expect to sail on the *S.S. President Roosevelt* in about five days.

The trip south was without incident. But when Liversedge sought out the American contact in New York, he encountered his first "character". This

fellow seemed absolutely unimpressed by silk flags or Paul Phillips or sixteen Canadians. For a moment, Liversedge thought they would be left to walk the streets. Finally the American gave over another address. "I had expected my contact to display some caution, but it seemed as though this man was playing a role. Many Americans, I have found, seem to have a flair for self-dramatization. They take on the role of some cinema star, there will be James Cagneys, Gary Coopers, etc., and this one I met, I think, was an Edward G. Robinson".

Subsequently, the Canadians were received with warmth and directed to the YMCA's Sloan House for their lodging. The men discovered that the Americans had established a training camp in the country where a former U.S. Army sergeant gave two-week courses in military drill. Liversedge declined an invitation to enroll in the school, attesting that "we've had quite a lot of experience the last few years, including some battles with the cops."⁹

The routine in New York, as it was in Toronto, Montreal, Paris, was "waiting for money, waiting to be made into groups, waiting for transportation to be arranged." But once embarked, and a surprising number went to Europe on the *S.S. President Roosevelt* — a bit of irony which many of them must have discerned — the volunteers settled down to their favourite pastime, the identification of other volunteers on board. While the men were instructed to act like tourists and not to congregate, inevitably everyone on ship recognized them for what they were. And no wonder. The men were all dressed alike in nondescript clothes, and all carried worn pieces of luggage. They might as well have been in uniform. One Canadian even saved a snapshot taken on the crossing: twenty-five or thirty volunteers grouped together on the promenade deck, and in their midst, an elderly couple, obviously not bound for the international brigades, with a lifesaver bearing the ship's name prominently displayed. Some underground!

Occasionally, a voyage might be marred by the failure of a man to keep the peace. One fellow stole an expensive piece of luggage from an authentic tourist and had to be caught and shaken down by his companions, who dreaded any notoriety. This same culprit dodged off the ship at Le Havre before official debarkation notice was posted and returned drunk hours later. Certain that this man had volunteered only to get passage to Europe, the other men kept him under close surveillance until they reached Paris.

Paris was the final station on the way to Spain. Volunteers came there from all over the world, and it was there that the flavour of the international effort on behalf of Spain was first in evidence. The headquarters for all the

volunteer traffic was in a huge Trade Union hall on Rue Mathurin Moreau, not far from the Metro. In the first months of travel, the Canadians were directed to the American representative, though eventually they installed their own man. Meal tickets redeemable at a co-operative restaurant were handed out, and the men were given the usual instructions about checking in daily and staying out of trouble. Otherwise, they were free to see the sights, and if they so desired, to go to the Paris Exposition!

If most of these men were filled with confidence and great expectations, a few were beginning to get edgy about the awesome influence of the Communists on the organization of the volunteers. One such man, a Canadian who will be called Bell, became disenchanted with the whole effort to preserve Spanish democracy. Bell's description of Paris is nowhere filled with excitement or happy anticipation. On the contrary, he asserts that by no means were all the volunteers able to move freely about the city. Only those who were "politically reliable" were permitted this luxury. The rest were confined to their rooms and instructed to attend orientation lectures twice a day. Furthermore, Bell arrived in Paris at the same time as the Debs Column of American-socialist volunteers (six men), and he maintains that the other volunteers were kept away from the socialists in order to avoid contamination.¹⁰

Just as the character of the international brigades changed as the war itself changed, so, no doubt, did the temperaments of those charged with conducting volunteers across Europe. Bell probably encountered restrictions, since the Paris station at the time of his arrival was under the general direction of particularly militant Communists. Bell came across at the end of February, 1937, when the movement of volunteers was in its infancy and when the Battle of Jarama was under way with nearby Madrid in dire trouble. There were many "politically unreliable" men in the brigades, but this designation did not necessarily damage reputations or imply special caution. It certainly did not mean that a man was to be denied access to the front or, for that matter, that he might not become an officer. After a while, it seems not to have mattered greatly what political stripe one bore so long as he wasn't a Fascist or a Trotskyist. The perennial tension between Socialists and Communists was not to be resolved by the Spanish conflict, but it was distinctly eased by the doctrine of a united front, by the need for men and by the overwhelming majority which the Communists held.

Whether or not one saw Paris, his vacation there was soon terminated, and he was sent along his way to the border. That stage of the trip was the

most unnerving and also the most comical, for now the cloak and dagger were flourished with a vengeance.

Thirty years after Spain, many of the survivors undoubtedly are still plagued with dreams and nightmares of that ordeal. For one Canadian, Maurice Constant, the recurring dream represents his frantic search through Kafkaesque subway stations across Paris for his small suitcase which he left behind in a luggage-rental box when he went off to Spain.

The trip from Paris into Spain had to be conducted with considerable regard for secrecy. The nearer the men came to the Spanish border, the more likely they were to come under the surveillance of Franco sympathizers. There was also the threat of arrest by French police who sought to prevent any embarrassment to the French government, which had been, from the first summer of war, in pursuit of non-intervention. The volunteers were still conspicuous, and while everyone who saw them along the way knew who they were, it was important that they not be exposed unnecessarily.

The briefing the volunteers received upon their departure was more solemn and serious than any that had occurred at earlier stations. There was, first and most importantly, the identification of contacts. "When you reach Orleans you will leave the train. On the platform will be a girl, sitting on a bench close to the newsstand. She will be dressed in a black skirt, a red leather short jacket, a red beret, and she will have a poodle dog on a leash and will be reading a magazine." Understandably the men were greatly amused by these instructions, but they had no choice but to be diligent in their pursuit. One group was introduced to a contact who would precede them to Marseilles. The men were "told to take our time, look this man over very carefully, from the front, side and back view, to get him fixed in our minds so that we would know him in a crowd."¹¹ Before these recruits might see their contact again, they could have been in and out of trains, in and out of cabs, down to the waterfront and back to the Hotel Camard "where we would register and give the proprietor a certain word."

As always, the security varied in intensity and accomplishment. Many men recall walking or driving through villages in the south of France where the citizens rushed out to greet them with fists upraised in the popular front salute. Once they had reached Perpignan, however, the joking ceased as the men prepared to scale the Pyrenees. The timing then became essential because the crossing had to be negotiated in the dark if French border patrols were to be eluded. From Perpignan, the men were taken to the foothills where they

were hidden in ditches, culverts, or farm houses until dusk. One group rode to this point in a brilliant red bus, an irony not lost on them.

There were several paths across the mountains. Each set of guides—and these were thought to be professional smugglers—had his own particular route. For one party, the march took fifteen hours, for another six, but for all, crossing the Pyrenees was a nightmare. They began by stripping off the few articles they still carried with them from Paris. Only cigarettes were hoarded. The men moved in single file, sometimes forced by the darkness and the treacherous terrain to hold hands. No one was allowed to smoke because the fumes might linger for hours and alert guards to groups coming later.

Men tumbled off one trail and into freezing mountain streams. Sprained ankles were frequent, and if a man was too injured to continue, he had to be abandoned until the guides could pick him up on their return. Most of the men were given arpagatoes, canvas-soled sandals which they would wear throughout their time in Spain. Occasionally, men collapsed from exhaustion and were carried over by their friends. So they went through the night, stumbling, shaken figures who were little more than children, so reduced were they by the thin atmosphere, the cold, the deep snow in the hollows, the slimy rocks, the interminable climbing.

But the sight of Spain from the summit remains one of the cherished memories of the ordeal: "I shall never forget that moment as I gazed for the first time on Spain. I shall always remember also the last sight when I was leaving. A wealth of experience, of love and hate, are between that first glimpse and the last. Fascism and war seemed a long way off. Everything was so peaceful."¹²

By daylight, the travellers were down in the foothills where they were welcomed by Republican outposts who fed them and then secured trucks for a ride to Figueras, the first station inside Spain. Figueras is dominated by an enormous castle-fortress and remained throughout the war the first landmark visited by the volunteers. The weary men were billeted in the castle, sometimes in the dank, humid dungeons below. For some, military instruction was introduced at Figueras but for the majority, the stay in the town was a short one, for they were quickly moved to Barcelona and from that city by train south to Albacete, the headquarters of the International Brigades.

In the end, the majority of the 40,000 international volunteers got into Spain by scaling the Pyrenees. But several hundred missed that trek because they were taken by ship from France to Barcelona. This passage carried its particular risk: attack by Fascist bombers or submarines. On May 29, 1937,

the *Ciudad de Barcelona*, bound from Marseilles with two hundred and forty internationals, was torpedoed off Malgrat, Spain, by an Italian submarine. Some twenty Canadians were aboard the ship, and their account of the disaster is related here.

Many of the passengers boarded the ship four or five days before it embarked and were hidden in the deepest compartments until the ship reached the open sea. During this interval, they were fed bread, fish, and wine twice a day and regularly shoved into darkened spaces when the local police searched the premises. Finally, on the evening of May 28, the *Ciudad de Barcelona* put to sea, its cargo of flour already sabotaged with black fluid and its passengers exhausted from the confinement. But now the men could be brought on deck and assigned to quarters, as often as not in the first-class area.

After a supper of octopus stew, a concert, and a wrestling match by two Australians and one New Zealander, the men turned in for their first night of sound sleep in days while through the night the ship moved along the coast towards its death. In the morning, the *Ciudad de Barcelona* encountered Republican patrol planes which circled about at mast-level receiving the clenched-fist salutes of the delighted passengers. By early afternoon the news of arrival in Barcelona by 5 p.m. had been passed about, and the men were settled down to one last nap, one last bull-session, one last meditation.

The torpedo struck at 2 p.m., blowing such a hole in the side of the ship that it began to go down by the stern within seconds. The few who scrambled on deck found that they could step over the rail and into the sea without a fall. One lifeboat forward was hacked loose and plunged with fifty men into the water and straight to the bottom. Within minutes, those survivors who had not found a boat were in the water swimming frantically away from the capsizing freighter. One pathetic passenger, a Canadian named Karl Francis, was seen to scramble forward hand over hand along the rail to the very peak of the bow where he embraced the little jack mast. Men screamed to him to jump but the shocked man held on "and then the ship quietly sank and that was the last of Karl". Five minutes after the torpedo struck, the living and the dead were alone in the water with the oil-streaked debris.

Now a Republican seaplane flew by and dropped depth charges in the immediate area, blowing up great gouts of water and rupturing several swimmers. Then the plane, distinctive because of its single pusher propellor, landed nearby, and coasted over. One noteworthy hero of this disaster was a Canadian named Ivor ("Tiny") Anderson, who was later to become a favourite member of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and who now swam about the

area, dragging men to the plane and boosting them up on its wings. Finally, laden with fourteen battered survivors, the plane taxied the mile to shore. The remainder of the men from the ship were picked up by fishing boats, and "that is how some of us came to Spain."¹³

The military history of the Canadian volunteers lies beyond the scope of this article. The majority of the men served with the XVth "English-Speaking" Brigade, which was composed of the British Battalion, the American Abraham Lincoln and George Washington Battalions, and the Canadian Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (the "Mac-Paps"). Many more fought with the XIIIth ("Dombrowsky") International Brigade, which contained large Slavic and Polish contingents. Canadians fought in all the major campaigns of the war after the initial battle for Madrid: Jarama, Brunete, Quinto, Belchite, Fuentes de Ebro, Teruel, The Retreats, The Ebro. There were Canadian artillerymen, Canadian medics, Canadian guerillas. The highest ranking Canadian was Edward C. Smith, for six months the commander of the Mac-Paps. Maurice Constant became the leader of the XVth Brigade reconnaissance platoon. Nilo Makela was a highly respected company commander in the Canadian battalion.

When the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion withdrew from the mountains alongside the Ebro River in September, 1938, only thirty-five men remained on their feet.

Thirty years later, these volunteers are just about the most anonymous citizens in Canada. The government has never recognized their efforts and probably never will. Many of the survivors can tell of "security" troubles after their return: confiscation by police of documents, souvenirs, and letters, denial of enlistment into the Canadian forces during World War II. Yet, thirty years after, their lives are very ordinary, and they say that they like it this way.

NOTES

The information for this study derives from interviews with some 75 survivors of the Canadian force. The Program Archives Department of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Toronto, has kindly given me permission to examine their tape library of materials dealing with this episode.

1. Vincent Brome, *The International Brigades* (London, 1965), p. 13.
2. *Le Devoir*, July 14, 1938. Monsignor Antoniutti had just been appointed Papal Delegate to Canada and Newfoundland.
3. W. G. Krivitsky, *In Stalin's Service* (London, 1939), p. 94.

4. Interview with S. H. Abramson, New York City, March, 1966.
5. Ronald Liversedge, *A Memoir of the Spanish Civil War* (Unpublished ms., 1965). A copy of this memoir is in the University of British Columbia library. See also pp. 6-7, 12, 18, 20-24.
6. Interview with Peter Hunter, Toronto, May, 1965.
7. "Bell" has written a short memoir of his adventures in Spain which is deposited in the Toronto Public Library.
8. The author of this description is H. J. Higgins. It is included in the one chapter that was completed of a history of the Canadian volunteers by Edward C. Smith, commander of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, shortly before his death.

THE PLUMAGE OF STRONG FEELINGS

Charles Edward Eaton

He swam like a great golden predatory bird,
 Back and forth, searching through the blue
 As if he would make a vital prey of you
 If in the violent water you had stirred.

It was of great moment and a serious matter
 To see the iridescence he churned up;
 His stroke had that impassioned sweep
 Which signifies a firebird in the water.

He is too proud for ordinary stealth —
 You, of course, are nowhere near the pool:
 Reducing all magnificence to minuscule,
 You want a toy of that great sensualist
 of health.

But in his thrust and torsion you beware
 The pet you wish to tease
 With lighted matches as you please:
 He might look up at you and flare.