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The Soviet Union and Stalin himself rallied early to the Republic's cause, devoted huge resources to it, and stayed till the end. This was an unprecedented act of internationalism, of the same kind as that shown by the International Brigades.

It is long past time that champions of the Republic's battle against international fascism stopped this hypocritical sniping at the Republic's major ally, the Soviet Union, and at Joseph Stalin, without whose support the invaluable Soviet aid would never have been given.

Sincerely,  
Grover Furr  
Montclair State University

Gabriel Jackson replies:

Professor Furr's letter treats of one of the most painful and controversial aspects of the Spanish tragedy.

Personally I have long believed, as expressed in writings of Marcelino Pascua, Republican ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1937, that Stalin's rule combined several utterly different strands: great intelligence and success in starting the construction of a socialist society in one country, essential aid (partially paid for and partially donated) to the defense of the Spanish Republic, and extreme paranoia in regard to his "enemies," especially so-called Trotskyites. I say "so-called" because in 1937, when Nin

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## Letters

To the Editor:

Gabriel Jackson's otherwise fine article on Juan Negrín (*The Volunteer*, Dec. 2004) contains one seriously inaccurate statement. Jackson states: "The kidnapping and torture death of Andres Nin, and of numerous less famous Trotskyites, anarchists, and dissident communists, became an international scandal." This is untrue.

There is strong, but not conclusive, evidence to tie the Soviets, through Alexander Orlov, to the death of Nin. But there is no evidence at all that the Soviets were involved in any other assassinations whatsoever. Neither Costello & Tsarev, Skoutelsky, Kowalsky, nor Radosh et al. found any such evidence, and all scoured the primary sources. However, recent studies have revealed that significant fascist spy rings did exist in the Spanish Republic and were smashed with the help of the Soviet NKVD. These actions unquestionably aided the defense of the Republic.

Some may reply: "But the Soviets may have engaged in murders but left no evidence." Historians should base their conclusions upon evidence, not upon opinion unsupported by evidence, which is just another name for prejudice—anti-communist prejudice, in this case.

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# Memory's Roster

## Clarence Forester (1915-2004)

Clarence Forester, a Finnish American who went to Spain with his brother Kenneth to defend the Republic in 1937, died in Minneapolis on December 1, 2004. He was 89.

Born in Alfred, Nebraska, Forester served with the Regiment de Tren (transportation) and at the Albacete Auto Parc unit. He later joined the U.S. Army and saw action with an artillery group from Normandy to Germany.

After World War II, Forester

worked in the machine industry. He also experienced the perils of the anti-communist Red Scare. "This is still the only country that hasn't acknowledged that it was the correct thing to do to fight fascism in Spain," he said just a few years ago.

Forester shared the pleasure of visiting Spain in 1996, when the Spanish government offered citizenship to the veterans of the International Brigades.

He donated his war mementos to the Minnesota Historical Society's Radicalism Project.

He was buried at the Finnish Cemetery in Cokato, Minnesota.

## Letters

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was kidnapped from a Barcelona jail, and later tortured and killed by order of Stalin, neither he nor Trotsky considered him a "Trotskyite." But he was the main theoretician of the anti-Stalinist POUM and he had been, until December 1936, the Justice Minister in the autonomous Popular Front Catalan government.

After his death, and the false claims that he had been a fascist, collaborated with the Nazis, etc., the British Labor Party, the French Socialists, and numerous left labor organizations in Europe sent delegations to Barcelona to ask the Negrín government what had happened to Nin. The persons they met with were forced to admit that they could not show the delegations the privately controlled communist prisons. Simeon Vidarte, moderate socialist and a frequent Spanish delegate to international labor conferences, tells in his memoirs how, after the Nin affair and the similar disappearance of a young journalist, Marc Rein, whose father had been a prominent Menshevik, he quietly advised European friends not to send to Spain persons who might be thought of as enemies of Stalin. Somehow I thought

that the combination of parliamentary and trade union delegations, the ashamed embarrassment of the Republican government, and the intense press controversy (later analyzed by George Orwell in the most widely-read single work concerning the Civil War) deserved the term "international scandal."

Gabriel Jackson  
Barcelona, Spain

Dear Editor:

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has memories or information of any sort about Lisa Gavric (born Elisabeth Bechmann), who was a nurse at Hospital Casa Roja, Murcia. She was a very good friend of my father, Dr. Sidney Vogel, who worked at the same hospital. I have learned the outline of Lisa Gavric's life (Austrian, 1907-1974; Spain, 1936-39; active in France after Spain; in the Ravensbruck concentration camp; in Yugoslavia after the war). But I would very much appreciate more detailed information and especially any personal recollections.

Thank you.  
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## Lazy memory

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videotaping interviews with people who suffered under Franco. They have recovered from mass graves 300 of the estimated 30,000 "disappeared." The Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), in a sharp departure from the conservative Partido Popular it replaced, has decided to take an active role in confronting the symbols and legacy of the Franco regime. The PSOE, led by Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, has created a commission to determine how to compensate the victims of Franco. Zapatero has approved plans to remove from public places all remaining symbols of Franco and his regime. The present

***La Memoria Vaga (Memory is Lazy)*** will be screened April 19 at NYU's King Juan Carlos I Center, 53 Washington Square South.

government has also agreed to consider proposals to turn the Valley of the Fallen into a place "that serves to denounce Francoism rather than praise it."

My senior thesis allowed me to formulate a perspective on the monument, and ALBA's generous award of the George Watt Prize for the thesis helped me to make a documentary film on the Valley. With additional support from Wesleyan University's Davenport Study Grant and the William Lankford Memorial Fund, *La Memoria es Vaga (Memory is Lazy)* is now completed and screening at festivals. In my film, the builders of the monument tell the story that few know—of political prisoners from the losing side forced to build a monument celebrating their defeat—as they break a silence that has hidden the truth for too long. For more information on *La Memoria es Vaga*, contact Katie Halper at khalper@gmail.com.

