“A Lyrical War”:
Songs of the Spanish Civil War



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Come now, all you who are singers,
And sing me the songs of Spain,
Sing it very simply that I might understand.

What is the song of Spain?

–Langston Hughes, “A Song of Spain,” 1937

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Introduction

Ed Balchowsky, an American volunteer in the Spanish Civil War, lost his right arm while fighting for the Republican army. Years later, when Balchowsky recalled his military tenure in Spain for a documentary film, he emphasized the role that music played in the conflict. In a moving scene, one-armed Balchowsky struggles to play both the melody and harmony of *Freiheit* [Freedom] on a piano while belting out the lyrics in German.[1] When the song finishes he pauses for several moments, and then quietly says to himself "*Freiheit*. Freedom. I love that song. It makes me feel good."[2]

This short scene raises a host of questions about the role that songs played during the Spanish Civil War. Why is an American singing a German hymn about freedom as he remembers his time fighting in Spain? Why is music still germane to his narration of a war waged forty-five years earlier? How did music affect his experience as a soldier? The answers to these questions can deepen existing understanding of the Spanish Civil War. A wealth of wartime sources pinpoint music as a unique medium that reflected shared perceptions of the war, galvanized public opinion, and attempted to influence the issue at the heart of the war – the debate over Spanish identity. An exploration of songs – their origins, content, diffusion, and performance – allows us to approach this historical event from a cultural angle, thereby providing us with a more intricate perception of the

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[1] The full song's title is *The Thaelmann Column: Spanish Sky – Freedom* and was written in 1936 by exiled German Paul Dessau. "Die Thaelmann Kolonne," *Canciones Republicanas de la Guerra Civil Española* (c. 2004). http://personales.ya.com/altavoz/canciones/diethaelmannkolonne.htm (accessed 21 March, 2004).

[2] Interview with Ed Balchowsky in *The Good Fight*, directors Noel Buckner, Mary Dore, and Sam Sills, 98 min., Contemporary Films, Ltd., 1984, videocassete.

interaction between competing political parties and their constituencies. Such an understanding provides a new perspective on the significance of the war and its cultural complexities.

Little ink has been spilled in attempting to describe musical culture during the Spanish Civil War. One explanation for such neglect lies in the nature of the music itself. In the tradition of folk music, popular songs are, in the words of one music historian, "a natural and instinctive expression of the people, without benefit of scholastic elaboration. [They are] handed down from generation to generation by oral tradition rather than in written or printed form."[3] As a subject lacking in primary document material, the songs of the Spanish Civil War have been examined by few scholars.

The dearth of scholarly literature is also explained by the topic's irregularity. The study of wartime songs does not fit nicely within any single intellectual category. Instead, it sits at the periphery of several disciplines: propaganda studies, general and cultural histories, music history, and musicology. Each of these, with the exception of the last, has neglected the songs of the Spanish Civil War entirely.

Scholars who study propaganda of the twentieth century largely ignore music. The past century witnessed an explosion of popular songs marshaled for political ends. Governing elites, especially within totalitarian regimes, used music at various times to manipulate and exploit their subjects, often attempting to instill loyalty and manufacture national unity. The ideologically inspired songs of the Spanish conflict are no exception. Yet there is a tendency among propaganda

[3] Gilbert Chase, *The Music of Spain* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1941), 222.

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historians to brush past the Spanish Civil War, treating it as a mere overture to the propaganda battles of the Second World War and the Cold War.[4] Those few propaganda studies that do deal explicitly with the Spanish Civil War focus on film,[5] art,[6] radio,[7] or some combination of the three.[8] Any propaganda-framed treatment of the war's music is absent.[9]

In other historical studies, music receives scant attention. General surveys of the war predictably fail to discuss music as a historical force.[10] Cultural and social histories make occasional references to music, but tend not to treat it with any focus or depth. While scholars have penned innumerable studies on poetry and art inspired by the war,[11] they have ignored music in any sort of political or social context.

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[4] Robert Whealey, "Nazi Propagandist Joseph Goebbels Looks at the Spanish Civil War," *The Historian* 61:2 (Winter 1999): 341-360.

[5] *See* Magí Crusells, *La Guerra Civil Española, Cine y Propaganda* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2000) *and* Román Gubert, *La Guerra de España en la pantalla: de la propaganda a la historia* (Madrid : Filmoteca Española, 1986) among others.

[6] *See* Miguel Angel Gamonal Torres, *Arte y política en la Guerra Civil española : el caso republicano* (Granada: Diputación Provincial de Granada, 1987). There are also innumerable studies on Picasso's Guernica and the 1937 International Exposition in Paris.

[7] *See* Carmelo Garitaonaindía Garnacho, *Radio en España (1923-1939): de altavoz musical a arma de propaganda* (Madrid : Siglo Veintiuno de España, 1988).

[8] *See* Alberto Pena Rodríguez, *Gran Aliado de Franco: Portugal y la Guerra Civil española: prensa, radio, cine y propaganda* (A Coruña : Edicios do Castro, 1998) *and* Herbert R. Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica! : A study of journalism, diplomacy, propaganda, and history* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1977).

[9] Most propaganda studies that deal exclusively with music are oriented towards either the musical nationalism of the nineteenth century or the totalitarian and fascist regimes of the Second World War. *See* Arnold Perris, *Music As Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control* (London: Greenwood Press, 1985), which fails to even mention propaganda during the Spanish Civil War.

[10] *See* Antony Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: P. Bedrick Books, 1983) *or* Gabriel Jackson, *A Concise History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: John Day Co., 1974).

[11] For an overview of this literature, *see* Francisco García-Moreno Barco, "La Poesía en la Guerra Civil Española: Un Ensayo Bibliografico," *Atenea* 13:1-2 (1993): 121-135. A brief perusal through Peter Monteath, *The Spanish Civil War in Literature, Film, and Art: An International Bibliography of Secondary Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994) also showcases this vast literature.

Music histories as well have been surprisingly mute concerning songs of the Spanish Civil War. One brash author unequivocally states, "the civil war had a relatively small effect on Spanish music."[12] Other authors follow suit. *A Short History of Spanish Music* ignores the civil war and popular music in their entirety.[13] Such disregard is not surprising in light of how musical historians frame their studies. Their works are devoted to the study of high culture music – classically-trained musicians who compose expressly for artistic purposes. Musical historians are interested primarily in composers like Manuel de Falla and Roberto Gerhard, who were neither active during nor musically influenced by the war. These studies highlight cycles and generations of high art composers over several decades. The Spanish Civil War, with its relatively short duration and dearth of high art music, does not fit neatly into this rubric of study. Therefore historians of twentieth-century Spanish music view the civil war as only a "disruption" that resulted in the closing of musical institutions, thus cutting demand for new compositions.[14] The traditional approach to Spanish music history – examining high-culture art forms in a political vacuum and discounting popular music – ignores the civil war's importance.[15]

Musicology is a relatively new attempt to bridge this gap among culture, politics, and music. Recent decades have witnessed "a great flowering of

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[12] Tomás Marco, *Spanish Music in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). All translations from Spanish to English are done by the author unless otherwise noted.

[13] Ann Livermore, *A Short History of Spanish Music* (New York: Vienna House, 1972).

[14] Chase, 316

[15] This blatant disregard for politics is evident in the way music historians gloss over the correlation between composers and the end of the Franquismo in the 1970s. No author comments on the relationship although there is evidence that Franco's death and the loosening of culture brought forth more expressions of autonomy in the form of folk compositions. *See* Marco, 201 *and* Livermore, 205.

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musicological studies."[16] Yet in the Spanish case, these studies concentrate heavily on earlier musical periods; *romanceros* and *zarzuelas* of the seventeenth century and Judeo-Spanish songs from the fifteenth century represent two ongoing areas of heavy research. The few twentieth-century musicological studies that exist are almost entirely devoted to popular music and its exploitation under Franco's rule.[17] Although these articles mention the Spanish Civil War, few make any commentary on its musical importance.

The dearth of literature across all of these historical and musical disciplines is partly attributable to Franco's government. The censorship in Spain that immediately followed the civil war rendered certain historical subjects taboo. From the 1940s until the 1970s, a small group of "establishment historians" monopolized historical writing, offering traditional histories that coincided with Franco's objectives – both political and cultural.[18] Republican songs from the civil war were not included in these histories. In fact, they were banned outright because their lyrics explicitly opposed the regime.[19] Many of these songs, however, did survive abroad, where they were recorded by veterans and successful folk artists alike during subsequent years.[20]

While the songs of the civil war met with some commercial success during the 1960s, it was not until the post-Franquismo 1980s that scholars haltingly began to study them. Only two studies treat the songs with any depth. The first

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[16] Marco, 230.

[17] For a good example, s*ee* Carmen Ortiz, "The Uses of Folklore by the Franco Regime," *The Journal of American Folklore* 112:446 (Autumn, 1999): 479-496.

[18] Joaquin Romero-Maura, "Spain: The Civil War and after," *Journal of Contemporary History* 2:1 (Jan., 1967): 157.

[19] Luis Díaz Viana, *Canciones Populares de La Guerra Civil* (Madrid: Taurus, 1985), 21.

[20] A more comprehensive discussion of the legacy of Spanish Civil War music both domestically and abroad is included in the epilogue.

analyzes the songs in order to offer "a new, more humanized perspective" on the civil war.[21] It accomplishes this by categorizing different tunes from both Nationalist and Republican songbooks and detailing their origins and meanings. The second work focuses on the literary significance of Spanish Civil War songs, dedicating a substantial portion of the work to the exploration of two themes: religion and death as found in song lyrics.[22] These two studies succeed in convincing us that politically motivated songs were widespread in Spain during the war, but both neglect to look at the historical significance of the songs. Neither work sheds any light on the processes by which the songs were composed, promoted, or received by the public.

The songs of the Spanish Civil War did not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they constituted a thriving musical culture that mirrored the political happenings in Spain – something that is overlooked by existing scholarship on the subject. That is where this project serves of value. It moves beyond these two studies – the analysis is more detailed and historically minded than those that precede it. It studies the point where songs intersected with society.

This paper does not proceed chronologically, but instead traces the development of songs from their historical origins to their ultimate moment of expression: singing. The first chapter provides a context by offering a political and cultural overview of the Spanish Civil War, a history of Spain's rich musical

[21] Díaz Viana, 26. In his introduction, Díaz Viana lists the obstacles he faced in trying to collect revolutionary songs from the civil war period. In addition to censorship issues, he faced difficulty tracking down primary sources, many of which were presumably suppressed or destroyed in the war's aftermath. Díaz Viana, 21.

[22] Jose L. Murillo, *España: Mito y Realidad en el Cancionero de la Guerra Española* (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1993).

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traditions, and a brief summary of revolutionary song culture before 1936. When considered together, these factors explain the emergence of a multifaceted wartime song culture in Spain when war broke out.

Chapter Two categorizes the songs of the Spanish Civil War by origin, distinguishing between songs that were written before the war and those composed expressly for the war. Songs of regional autonomy, ideological fervor, historical allusion, and many other subjects constitute different genres that help us understand the important aspects of the war through songs. Additionally, songs written during the war must be further differentiated by their source. Some were written by citizens and soldiers while others were produced by government-sponsored cultural agencies.

The propaganda songs of the civil war, of course, had to be composed by someone. The third chapter examines the process and infrastructure that led to the composition of propaganda songs as well as the rationale for doing so. Republican and Nationalist forces allocated sizable sums of money towards the production of triumphant music in order to win over the sympathies of the Spanish public and assert their competing cultural visions.

Chapter Four looks closely at the lyrical content of the songs in order to draw conclusions about what issues were considered important by the two armies and their corresponding sympathizers. A survey of song lyrics shows that Republican and Nationalist propaganda song content at once proved both remarkably similar and remarkably different. Both sides concentrated on the same cultural themes, but with nuance in terms of language and interpretative

imagery. Soldier songs, too, proved mostly similar regardless of who composed them, but differed from propaganda songs in several important ways.

Finally, the fifth chapter analyzes the contexts in which these songs were sung. Propaganda songs were brought to the people via songbooks, traveling performers, loudspeakers, and the radio. The Spanish people sung all types of songs in all types of situations. An analysis of the contexts in which these songs were performed reveals how song culture both reflected and affected the war. In the beginning, songs reinforced the optimistic attitudes held by many that envisioned their side's victory. By war's end, however, propaganda songs, at least on the Republican side, had become disdained and new, more cynical songs replaced them.

This paper seeks to demonstrate that the songs of the civil war served as a cultural idiom for Spanish soldiers and citizens to express ideologies both new and antiquated.[23] Some of these ideologies came directly from the people themselves. Other ideologies were supplied by the Republicans and Nationalists through government-sponsored musical propaganda, thereby inextricably linking music and politics during the Spanish Civil War. Both sides used songs and other cultural forms to help shape the Spanish people and secure political legitimacy. As we will see, these propaganda songs made a significant impact on Spain's wartime landscape by defining people's perceptions of the war in certain cultural terms.

[23] A similar work done in a different place and period is Laura Mason's study of music during the French Revolution. *See* Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

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Chapter One

"A lyrical war, a romantic war":
Song Heritage and the Civil War

"Whenever, in the history of the world, freedom has arisen against unfree, just against unjust, the spirit of the people's uprising has been most clearly and splendidly reflected in its songs, which grew upon the soil of righteous indignation. They were written by the poets who sided with the people; and where there were no such poets the people wrote them themselves." [1]

In 1937, a biweekly propaganda radio program, "Little Humor and Much Justice in Our War," broadcasted humorous songs and satires from Nationalist-controlled radio stations throughout Southern Spain. Much of the airtime content was devoted to traditional operettas rewritten with pro-Nationalist sentiment and anti-Republican slander. José Zorilla's famous *Don Juan Tenorio*, originally published in 1844, was transformed into a modern day "radiophonic musical comedy" where Don Juan sang about his disenchantment with Marxism. Another portion of the show was devoted to "antimarxist songs adapted to fashionable *zarzuelas* and couplets." Nearly every song was a parody of Republican leaders or ideals, always put to one of "the most well-known traditional songs."[2]

The widespread use of popular and satirical song forms in previous wars is well documented. Therefore it is not surprising that radio programmers in Spain – a country with a rich and diverse musical background – would employ traditional Spanish folk songs to reach out more effectively to their audience. A look at Spain's established musical forms aids our understanding of how the country's musical culture evolved into an influential political idiom during the 1930s. In a

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[1] Erich Weinert, July, 1938, reprinted in liner notes of Ernst Busch, *Six Songs for Democracy*, Music Room 101, 1941, 10-inch analog disc.

[2] Radio program content is reproduced in K. Melo and Mozar de Beni-sicar, *Poca Gracia y Mucha Justicia: el Humorismo Popular en Nuestra Guerra* (Zaragoza: El Noticiero, 1937).

country where songs have always been inextricably attached to the people, music logically became an important weapon in the cultural battles that defined the civil war. This chapter unpacks that logic by looking at three principal background elements: the political and social contexts of the civil war, the longstanding musical tradition within Spain, and the nature of wartime song culture before and during the Spanish Civil War.

Nineteenth-century Spain was marked by a chaotic political atmosphere. Out of thirty-seven attempted coups between 1814 and 1874, twelve were successful.[3] Spain's atrophying global empire reached its nadir in 1898 during the Spanish-American war. The early twentieth century proved no different for Spain as short-lived governments wielded little control over an increasingly restless populace. Moreover, the country faced a host of social ills: political corruption and inefficiency, economic shortages among rural laborers, a meddling Roman Catholic Church, a lopsided command structure, class tensions jeopardizing the struggling middle class, widespread illiteracy, and rising regionalism that threatened to dismantle the fragile Spanish state.[4]

The Second Republic formed in 1931 amid much fanfare. Largely comprised of intellectuals and the bourgeoisie, the new government promoted the middle-class principles of Spain's nineteenth-century liberal era. Chief among their objectives were agrarian and social reforms, which threatened the interests of Spain's more traditional powers – landowners and the Catholic Church. However, the Republican government suffered from internecine struggles and

[3] Antony Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: P. Bedrick Books, 1983), 15.
[4] Sandie Holguín, *Creating Spaniards: Culture and Identity in Republican Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 5.

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political instability during its five-year reign. The brutal suppression of a miner's strike in Asturias in 1934 brought Republican reforms to a halt as Leftist parties and trade unions became alienated from the government.[5] The Republic's failure to alleviate Spain's social deficiencies resulted in increased civil disobedience and a radicalized atmosphere.

In 1936, however, the Left regrouped under an umbrella coalition known as the Popular Front, which roundly defeated traditionalist candidates in national elections.[6] Spain's streets grew more treacherous with each passing day as labor groups itched for social revolution while Catholic and Nationalist parties demanded the repeal of certain agrarian and social reforms. The country had become a powder keg to which General Francisco Franco would provide the spark.

With the threat of new inflammatory reforms on the horizon, Franco and two other generals began an uprising from Morocco in July of 1936. Franco's Nationalist goals were simple: roll back the Republic's liberal reforms; rid Spain of communism; and restore the Catholic, corporatist, and monarchical tradition of the country – thereby returning it to the status of an elite European power.[7] At his side were the fascist regimes of Italy and Germany, which had their own interest in Franco's triumph. After failing to achieve the swift victory he had hoped for, Franco bunkered down for a war of attrition against the Republican forces.

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[5] Jerry W. Knudson, "The Ultimate Weapon: Propaganda and the Spanish Civil War," *Journalism History* 15:4 (Winter 1988): 102-103.

[6] Beevor, 18.

[7] Holguín, 169.

Meanwhile, the Republican government frantically tried to rally international support in order to fend off the fascist uprising, but their pleas fell upon deaf ears. Britain, France, and the United States showed only token support and refused to commit any troops. Only the Soviet Union came to Spain's aid, offering money, supplies, and soldiers. The Republic also received support from the so-called International Brigades, a sizable contingent of independent volunteers that descended upon Spain to fight a war that their respective countries would not support. These soldiers hailed from the United States, Canada, Mexico, and a wide assortment of European nations. Along with the International Brigades came an array of radical ideologies, the most significant of which was communism. The rising tide of the communists would mesh uneasily with the socialists and liberal Republicans.

Under the stress of war, the coalition of leftist parties could not hold. Radical socialists viewed Franco's uprising as an opportune time to initiate a people's revolution, further impeding Republican attempts to stamp out the rebellion. The moderate reforms of the Republic were replaced with revolutionary ideologies as the anarchists, socialists, and communists struggled for power. Ideological strife constantly marked the "United Front," making a concerted push against Franco's Army near impossible.

As can be gleaned from the widespread ideological divisions, Spain's civil war signified a cultural battle as much as a political one. The issues at stake – social, educational, and agrarian – affected all Spanish citizens and the ways in which they defined their country. With the gradual dilapidation of the Golden

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Empire that it had assembled in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Spain had long faced a national identity crisis. A lack of cultural hegemony resulted in a fractured Spain defined by tenuous nationalist impulses.[8]

By 1936, the Nationalists and Republicans were, in fact, the most recent reincarnations of competing Spanish traditions that had clashed for centuries. On one hand, the Nationalists represented the heritage of Ferdinand and Isabella; much as the *reyes católicos* united Spain and defeated the Moors, Franco and his followers hoped to forge a Castilian identity that was authoritarian, centralized, and powerful. The Catholic Church functioned as a popular rallying symbol for these larger aims of a renewed imperial dynasty on par with Spain's sixteenth-century hegemony.[9]

On the other hand, Republicans were the progeny of a Spain influenced by the liberal reforms of the French Revolution. Their historical memory of Spain celebrated not the Spanish empire of the sixteenth century, but rather the 1812 Constitution of Cadíz, which restricted monarchial power and greatly reduced the sway of the Church and nobility. The Republicans would come to embrace a broad (and sometimes contradictory) social vision that incorporated elements of contemporary liberal thought. They fought to bring politics to the people, improve literacy, and increase general cultural appreciation. The failure of either of these cultural identities to take hold contributed substantially to the political turmoil that persisted throughout the nineteenth century.

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[8] Holguín, 6.
[9] Beevor, 11.

In order to mend Spain's cultural divide, the Second Republic placed great emphasis on social and educational reforms in the early 1930s. Their purpose was two-fold: to establish Spain as a modern, progressive, and unified nation; and to consolidate power, even if at the expense of regional autonomy. In 1931, the new government created the *Misiones Pedagógicas* (Pedagogical Missions) as a means for asserting their new cultural vision. In many Spanish towns, the department hosted meetings that included patriotic speeches, songs, and movies. Each of these gatherings began with the Republican national anthem, *Himno de Riego*, a historical allusion to the nineteenth-century liberal era. Once the war began, though, the more overtly political *Internationale* was heard just as often.[10] Events like these sought to foster national unity on a grassroots level. As one historian puts it, "the Republican-Socialist coalition clearly understood the need to invent traditions, as well as to revivify old ones."[11] The difficulty lay in agreeing on a set of non-contradictory traditions.

The Republican side was not alone in attempting to impose a cultural identity. The *Falange Española* (Spanish Phalanx), an extreme nationalist political party founded in 1933, recognized the importance of reaching out to different social groups. Their *Frente de Juventudes* (Young People's Front) functioned as a paramilitary youth group designed to inculcate Spain's new generation with nationalist ideals. The *Sección Femenina* (Women's Section)

[10] Holguín, 181
[11] Holguín, 7.

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appealed to women, advancing the values of domesticity, maternity, and selflessness in their daily life.[12]

These competing Nationalist and Republican forces did battle in Spain's schools for the duration of the Second Republic's existence. Traditionalists fought hard against coeducation, the secularization of schools, and other cultural reforms. Nationalist sympathizers worried that Republicans were "sovietizing," "de-Catholicizing," and "de-Hispanifying" the curriculum, even alleging that Republican educators in Madrid compelled their students to sing the Communist *Internationale*.[13] Conversely, Republicans accused Nationalists of endangering civilization as the fascists and their associates closed down schools and burned libraries.[14] Both sides insisted on using schools as a forum for cultural indoctrination because they recognized that the link between culture and education was essential for their victory. One Republican newspaper pamphlet from 1937 elucidates that link:

> the illiterate student… must always take into account that with arms we will attain the destruction of the old world, but that with Culture, a new world will be built; the militiaman should never abandon his rifle, but neither should he abandon his book, which will be tomorrow's rifle.[15]

With this rationale, Republican politicians instituted broad literacy campaigns and educational initiatives, even as Spain's political situation spiraled out of control. The onset of the war only intensified and radicalized these cultural battles.

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[12] Holguín, 180.
[13] Holguín, 178.
[14] Holguín, 177.
[15] *Charlas Populares: lo que significa la guerra* (Barcelona: Ediciones Españolas, 1937-1938).

In addition to framing it as a cultural battle, contemporary onlookers portrayed the Spanish Civil War as a romantic and intellectual war. One English traveler described Barcelona's streets at the beginning of the war as "a sort of carnival atmosphere, *en pleine révolution*."[16] A newspaper writer penned an article titled "The Joy of Fighting," calling "the present war… a lyrical war, a romantic war, overflowing with individual initiatives and the divinations of our classic warriors."[17] If the Spanish conflict was indeed a lyrical war filled with romanticism and historical allusions, then songs sung and written during the war must have provided much of the context. The flowering of this music was not an atypical occurrence, but rather natural for a country with rich and proud musical customs.

Spain's strong musical tradition arises from its intricate and varied history. The confluence of different cultures over several millennia has contributed to a complex and distinct folk music heritage. It was from this same historical lineage that many songs from the Spanish Civil War, both traditional and revolutionary, would grow. Traditional Spanish folk music – the collective expression of the Spanish people – would be appropriated to meet new historical developments. The new songs represented a powerful synthesis of old folk traditions and new politicized ideologies.

As is made clear by the extensive musicological research done there, Spain still maintains healthy musical and folk traditions that have persisted over

[16] Philip Toynbee, *Friends Apart: a Memoir of Esmond Romilly and Jasper Ridley in the Thirties* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1954), 89.

[17] Eduardo Zamcois, "The Joy of Fighting," *La Libertad*, 28 July 1936, p.1.

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the centuries.[18] In part, this musical wealth is the result of Spain's location and geography. Situated on the Iberian Peninsula and bordered by mountain ranges along its eastern border, Spain's collective culture evolved more slowly than did those of most European counterparts. This stunted development had the effect of preserving native folk traditions in its various regions.[19]

Topological features and little mobility within the Iberian Peninsula also resulted in the development of many different musical traditions inside Spain. Each region developed unique musical innovations which, in turn, reinforced strong notions of autonomy based on shared cultural traditions. Andalusia is known for its Judaic and Moorish-influenced *cante hondos* and *cante flamencos*, Castile showcases its *ruedas*, Murcia boasts its *murcianas*, and Extremadura features its *fandangos*. These autonomous regions (and many others) each claim several musical forms to their name, all of which contain distinct musical features.[20] Literally hundreds of different Spanish folksong variations evolved over time. The diverse crop of music is emblematic of the diverse identities found within Spain.

Other Spanish song forms exhibit shared cultural values among all Spanish peoples. The *romancero* and the *zarzuela* are two unique Iberian art forms that effectively illustrate the importance of the popular song as a means of expression in everyday Spanish life. *Romanceros* first appeared in the fourteenth

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[18] Musicological studies of folk music in Spain outnumber similar studies of other European nations. *See* Gilbert Chase, *The Music of Spain* (New York: Dover Publications, 1959) 222.

[19] Chase, 222.

[20] For an overview of many of these different styles, see Chase's chapter on Iberian folk music.

century and quickly became the most fashionable song form on the Iberian Peninsula.[21] Originally intent on telling entertaining and dramatic stories of any kind, *romanceros* gradually came to center on love trysts and romantic imagery. They were so well-established within Spanish culture by the late fourteenth century that many professional musicians dedicated themselves exclusively to singing *romanceros* to the aristocratic classes.[22] These lyrical love stories were precursors to the modern popular song. Although the *romancero* fell by the wayside during the nineteenth century, the Spanish Civil War would fuel its twentieth-century resurgence.

Zarzuelas bear the hallmark of spoken dialogue juxtaposed with music, often in a theatrical setting. The *zarzuela* remained popular for several centuries because of its ability to "adapt to the demands of new musical practices."[23] The first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a popular renaissance in *zarzuelas*, which helps explain why "Little Humor and Much Justice" used them in their radio program. The music was intimately attached to the Spanish people. "The *zarzuela* is [Spain's] lyrical soul, our popular soul" wrote one composer.[24] The *zarzuela*, along with the *romancero*, signified a means of personal expression that resonated with Spaniards in the 1930s, even though the song forms hailed

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[21] Louise K. Stein, "Romancero," in Stanley Sadie, et al, eds., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Second Edition (New York: Grove, 2001): 571.

[22] Stein, "Romancero," 571.

[23] Louise K. Stein, "*Zarzuela*," in Stanley Sadie, et al, eds., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Second Edition (New York: Grove, 2001): 756. An example is the transformation of the *zarzuela* from a song of the elites into a song used by the general public in the early eighteenth century. A change in royalty during this time (the accession of the Bourbons) resulted in shifting cultural tastes, yet the *zarzuela* persisted.

[24] Carlos Palacio, *Acordes en el Alma* (Alicante: Instituto Juan Gil-Albert , 1984), 147.

from centuries earlier. Their immense popularity testifies to the importance of music as an idiom for the Spanish people.

The Spanish Civil War would witness a transformation of these ancient song forms into new means of popular, and chiefly political, expression. As one 1936 Spanish theatre bulletin asserts, "Putting on a *zarzuela* is the symbol of Spanish heroism, the codeword of *No Pasarán*, until death."[25] A collection of ballads published at the beginning of the war echoes the same sentiment: "People and poet have identified themselves in the current *romancero*, thereby effecting the most profound relationship imaginable.[26] The omnipresence of popular Spanish song forms and their natural coupling with daily life simply facilitated the transition of traditional songs into popular ones. During the war, the song became tied to politics.

Spain's civil war was not the first time that songs had been turned to political ends. The plastic nature of popular songs has long made them the perfect vehicles for political commentary and protest. The song exists somewhere between the realms of print culture and oral communication; therefore songs possess a rare degree of malleability. Any person with a passing interest in language can become a songwriter, outfitting old tunes with new rhymes.[27] Paired with a printing press, songs can be distributed cheaply and easily, further enabling their rapid dissemination.

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[25] "Editorial del Consejo," *Boletín de Orientación Teatral* 1 (February, 1938), 2.

[26] M.J. Benardete and Rolfe Humphries, *…And Spain Sings: 50 Loyalist Ballads* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1937), xiii.

[27] Laura Mason, *Singing in the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell Press, 1996), 2.

Words coupled with music can also provide a strong emotional stimulus that is not always achieved by simple spoken language. Different cultures throughout history, from the ancient Egyptians to the Hebrews to the Greeks, all perceived music as a divine force capable of influencing humans.[28] Russian revolutionary leader Lenin wrote that music and folk culture embodied "the whole essence of age-old struggles, desires, and expectations of the broad folk masses."[29] Nowhere was this truer than in Spain.

Because of these inherent musical properties, songs have been a substantial cultural byproduct of many wars and conflicts throughout modern history. In the French Revolution, songs "helped to circulate information…raised the spirits of soldiers marching to the front, and served as a noisy and powerful means of expressing revolutionary enthusiasm."[30] Songs from the Mexican-American war functioned as "public newsreels" that described battles won and lost to the public.[31] The American Civil War differed in its song culture because sentimental melodies were in vogue at the time. Still, patriotic tunes like the Battle Hymn of the Republic and Dixie figured prominently in the conflict, and in a practice that would be later repeated in Spain, southern infantrymen applied new lyrics to the *Marseillaise*.

The songs of the Spanish Civil War significantly added to this rich tradition of wartime music. Spain's music during the war shared several

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[28] Gerald Seaman, "Music and the Russian Revolution," *History of European Ideas* 11 (1989): 197.

[29] Seaman, 199.

[30] Laura Mason, "Popular Songs and Political Singing in the French Revolution," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 52:2 (1991): 172.

[31] C.L. Higham, "Songs of the Mexican War: An Interpretation of Sources," *Journal of the West* 28:3 (1989): 18.

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similarities with the examples cited above, but the songs also marked a departure from the song culture of previous wars. Above all, propaganda and new technologies differentiated Spain's civil war from conflicts that preceded it.

Spain's urban intellectuals and artists, most of whom supported the Republic, contributed to the war's romantic song culture through propaganda. They lent their voices and artistic talents to propaganda campaigns that were feverishly pitched to the public. The conflict was simplistically sold to Republican sympathizers as good versus bad and democracy versus fascism. Nationalists, for their part, framed the war as tradition versus radicalism.[32] Aural and visual propaganda served as new mediums with which to try and solve an old dilemma of cultural disagreement.[33]

In general, Republicans displayed more propaganda savvy than the Nationalists because they controlled urban areas, boasted an already existing information infrastructure, and had a multitude of willing intellectuals and artists at their disposal.[34] However, one area where the Nationalists did outpace the Republicans was the implementation of propaganda radio. Although the Republicans had inherited nearly all of the country's radio equipment at the outset of the war, the Nationalists, with Germany's and Italy's support, began to use the radio more effectively and with wider coverage.[35] It is telling that a German propaganda attaché sent to Salamanca in 1936 set up a radio transmitter

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[32] Holguín, 177.
[33] Knudson, 102-103.
[34] Holguín, 177.
[35] Alan Davies, "The First Radio War: Broadcasting in the Spanish Civil War," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 19:4 (1999): 477 and Knudson, 103.

immediately upon arrival.[36] Amateur radio stations throughout the Iberian Peninsula "gave local news, information, and presented propaganda… interspersed with music from gramophone records borrowed from local supporters."[37]

In a country with a fifty-six percent illiteracy rate, radio surpassed newspapers as the primary source of news for Spaniards.[38] Furthermore, because the radio was a novel technology at the time, sophisticated propaganda offensives on the airwaves proved dramatically successful.[39] One newspaper article notes that "radio as a means of propaganda is extremely useful and thus all political organizations use it."[40]

Against this backdrop of a conflict defined by political and cultural tumult, romanticism, propaganda, and new technologies, Republicans and Nationalists used songs as weapons in this cultural clash; songs provided a voice to this lyrical war. Employing propaganda over the airwaves and in the streets, Republicans and Nationalists alike hoped to achieve the same objective – a unified Castilian

[36] Robert H. Whealey, "Nazi Propagandist Joseph Goebbels looks at the Spanish Civil War," *The Historian*, 61:2 (Winter, 1999): 346-347. Whealey goes on to show that Joseph Goebbels "was deeply preoccupied almost to the point of obsession with the Spanish Civil War." It was in Spain that Germany first tested many new propaganda techniques that Goebbels would gradually mold into a near science for the impending World War. Hitler also saw the potential of propaganda when he predicted in 1932 that "artillery preparation before an attack, as during the World War, will be replaced in the future by the psychological dislocation of the enemy through revolutionary propaganda." *See* Davies, 479-480.

[37] Davies, 477.

[38] Knudson, 103.

[39] Davies, 500.

[40] "La Radio," *Alianza*, 29 September 1936, quoted in Knudson, 104. Republicans also used the radio to rally international aid from all countries, especially Britain and France. Radio shows were broadcast from Madrid in a host of different languages in order to appeal for support. *See* Knudson, 105.

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culture.[41] The songs of the Spanish Civil War provide a rare glimpse of the ways in which music helped shape wartime culture, both consciously and inadvertently. A closer examination of the songs and their uses will shed even more light on the war's cultural ramifications for Spanish society.

[41] The Republican coalition, of course, was not unanimous in its goal of molding a unified Castilian culture. A constant tension within the Second Republic from its inception in 1931 until war's end was how to satisfy regional nationalists who demanded recognition of their cultural differences (the most contentious issue being that of language). Those cultural programs that were supported by the Republican government were an attempt to unify the country under one banner, and generally that entailed the primacy of a Castilian-based culture. This can be most clearly seen in the Republic's literacy campaigns (which claimed Castilian as the country's only official language) and in their library subsidy programs (which aimed to create libraries of Spain's classic writers who represented the "nation's spirit"). The Republic ultimately failed in its attempt to walk the thin line between regionalism and nationalism, resulting in divisive infighting that persisted throughout the war. *See* Holguín, 160-167, 196-199.

Chapter Two

From the Top and Bottom:
Origins of Songs

In 1938, a gathering of Republican troops was treated to an evening of entertainment filled with classical music, popular songs, puppet shows, and enthusiastic speeches that foretold victory. At the end of the program, the rambunctious soldiers were asked to quiet down for the final hymns. A loudspeaker then played the revolutionary *Internationale* and the reform-minded *Himno de Riego* in sequence.[1] The pairing of these somewhat contradictory tunes is telling; different parties within the Republican coalition often advocated beliefs that conflicted with one another. By examining the origins of songs on both the Republican and Nationalist sides, we can understand more about each faction's particular aims. The popularity of certain types of songs and neglect of others provides insight into the important issues of the war. Those issues as sung by Republicans and Nationalists during the war included debates over historical legitimacy, national identity, language, regionalism, and political factionalism.

Aside from the obvious distinction between Nationalist and Republican songs, the music can be better classified by origin. The first grouping of songs consists of those composed before the Spanish Civil War: songs appropriated from earlier historical events, songs of regional autonomy, songs brought by the International Brigades, and songs defining political party ideals. Songs composed during and for the Spanish Civil War make up the second lot of songs. These

[1] Sandie Holguín, *Creating Spaniards: Culture and Identity in Republican Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 174.

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songs include both those that were improvised by soldiers and those that were composed by propaganda apparatuses.

The most popular types of songs were those deriving from earlier conflicts, likely owing to their firm establishment in the canon of Spanish songs. Republicans embraced both the *Himno de Riego* and *Trágala*, songs that protested absolutism during the liberal era of 1820s Spain.[2] Republican soldiers also borrowed *La Marseillaise*, composed at the height of the French Revolution, as a battle song for liberty. Nationalists adopted songs sung by the Spanish army during Carlos III's imperialist reign (1759-1788) as well as music from the Carlist Wars of the nineteenth century.[3] The ideological resonance of old songs helped inspire many Spanish citizens to a greater cause. Republicans and Nationalists used these older songs in order to secure legitimacy in the cultural struggle over who carried the mantle of Spain's true historical identity. However, these song lyrics sometimes proved ideologically inconsistent with the side that sang them. One such ironic misappropriation of historical figures and events can be seen in the *Himno de Riego*.

The *Himno* was composed during the liberal uprising against King Fernando VII in 1820.[4] Since then, the revolutionary song has had a storied history. When liberals were in control, they declared it the national marching hymn; when the conservatives were ascendant, they considered it a treasonous

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[2] Luis Díaz Viana, *Canciones Populares de La Guerra Civil* (Madrid: Taurus, 1985), 29.

[3] *Toques de Guerra del Ejército Español*, Burgos, 1939, located in the Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), Fundos Incorporados, Caja 33. The songs include *La Generala, La Asamblea, La Marcha de Granaderos*, and others.

[4] According to legend, Rafael de Riego, organizer of the uprising, delivered an inspirational speech to his troops that became the song's lyrics. Soon afterwards, a veteran of his regiment put these words to music. Díaz Viana, 30.

ballad – the performance of which could result in the death penalty.[5] In 1931, the Spanish Republic declared it their national anthem even though the song's attributes more closely approximated a Nationalist hymn.[6] This is most clearly seen in the way it employs the historical antecedent of El Cid. Remembered for liberating Spain from the Moors, El Cid waged several wars of re-conquest in the name of religion – something that more closely mirrors Franco's stated intention of removing the irreligious socialists and restoring Spain's Catholic-based heritage.[7] The lyrical content as well could easily be mistaken for a Nationalist song: "Soldiers: our homeland / Calls us to fight; / We swear allegiance to her / To overcome, or to die."[8] The song more closely approximates the conservative propaganda of the Nationalists, which often drew parallels with early Spanish tradition and culture in constructing its idyllic representation of Spain. Even so, as a prominent hymn with a prior connection to revolutionary liberal movements, the *Himno de Riego* endured as a popular Republican song.

The incongruity between certain historical songs and the cause they were associated with often resulted in new lyrics altogether. Discerning Republican and Nationalist supporters outfitted old songs with more suitable lyrics. Using

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[5] Díaz Viana, 30. The *Himno* was proclaimed the national anthem in 1822 by a liberal government that took power in 1820. Subsequently, during the Carlist Wars of the 1830s, more conservative regimes came to power and declared the hymn illegal. *See* "Himno de Riego," *Canciones Republicanas de la Guerra Civil* (c. 2004), http://personales.ya.com/altavoz/canciones/himnoderiego.htm, (accessed 21 March 2004).

[6] Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks, *Madrid 1937* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 496. Interestingly, there were complaints from some quarters that the *Himno de Riego* was not fit to be the new Republic's national anthem. As a result, Antonio Machado and Oscar Esplá were recruited to compose a hymn in 1931 to be the new national anthem. However, following its debut the public was not impressed, deeming the hymn "hardly inspiring" because it lacked martial spirit. Soon after, the *Himno de Riego* was named the official national anthem of the Second Republic. *See* "Himno de Riego," http://personales.ya.com/altavoz/canciones/himnoderiego.htm, (accessed 21 March 2004).

[7] Richard Fletcher, *The Quest for El Cid* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 4.

[8] *Colección de Canciones de Lucha* (Madrid: Ediciones Pacific, 1980 [1939]), 9.

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again the *Himno de Riego* as an example, different variations of its verses appeared in 1936 with more direct references to the conflict at hand. Often these lyrics exalted the Republic at the expense of the Spanish church. One such alteration read: "If the priests and the monks only knew / the beating they are about to receive."[9] Improvised lyrics with anticlerical sentiment served as a common source of amusement among Republican soldiers and collaborators throughout the war. In the same manner, other adapted historical songs took on new importance during the Spanish Civil War. These fluid songs tapped a historical vision of Spain that each side sought to cultivate to their own advantage.

Another type of hymn found exclusively on the Republican side – that of regional autonomy – underlines a central issue of the war. For many Spaniards, songs proclaiming regional identity were important in asserting their vision of Spain as a collection of autonomous regions. The arrangement of songs in the *Colección de Canciones de Lucha* [Collection of Battle Songs] and the *Cancionero de las Brigadas Internacionales* [International Brigade Songbook] bears this out. Both books' first chapters are devoted to various "national hymns" – the *Himno de Riego* (Republican national anthem), *Els Segadors* (Cataluña), *Gernikako Arbola* (País Vasco), and *Himno de Galicia* (Galicia).[10] The singing of lyrics in regional-specific languages like Catalan, Basque, or Galician signified the ultimate expression of one's autonomy. Although these songs were not

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[9] Díaz Viana., 32. *See also* "Himno de Riego," http://personales.ya.com/altavoz/canciones/himnoderiego.htm, (accessed 21 March 2004) for two lyrical variations.

[10] *Colección de Canciones de Lucha*, 9-16 *and* Ernst Busch, ed., *Canciones de las Brigadas Internacionales* (Barcelona: Nuestra Cultura, 1978 [1938]), 3-9.

composed for the war, they represented the war's *raison d'être* for Republican regionalists – the preservation of Spain's autonomous regions.

The arrival of foreign soldiers further muddled Spain's fertile linguistic culture. Singing the *Marsellaise* in French or the *Comintern* in Russian imbued Republican soldiers and townspeople with a sense that they were participating in a struggle over larger universal ideals. Other songs adopted from a diverse set of countries and wars could be found in numerous European languages. Italian and German soldiers fighting alongside Nationalist troops popularized fascist songs in Spain.[11] The Republican-backed International Brigades brought an even wider array of songs. In addition to common Spanish songs, the 1938 *International Brigade Songbook* includes American negro spirituals, songs sung by prisoners in German concentration camps, and other protest music. The volume also translates the *Internationale* into an astonishing ten languages: French, Catalan, Castilian, Italian, German, Danish, Swedish, Polish, Czech, Hebrew, Chinese, and Japanese.[12]

Language and identity in the Republican camp became a source of strife as the war progressed. Cultural programs instituted during the Second Republic offended Catalan and Basque nationalists who objected to an overtly "Castilianized" conception of Spain.[13] Anarchists abhorred nationalism of any kind. And the inclusion of International Brigades bent on international idealism conflicted with some of Republican Spain's nationalist objectives. Therefore, the

[11] Díaz Viana, 146-147. He highlights the songs *Giovinezza* and *Facceta Nera* as being particularly well-known.

[12] *Canciones de las Brigadas Internacionales*, 120-125.

[13] Holguín, 5-6.

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Republic was plagued by a welter of competing visions over identity from its inception.

A wide array of political parties and organizations further confused the political terrain in Republican Spain, and each group used songs as a means of getting their message across. By far the most popular was the *Internationale*, anthem for all socialists around the world.[14] Every party of the Left's United Front had its own distinguishing battle cry: *La Comintern* (Communists), *U.H.P.* (Union of Proletarian Brothers), *Viva La FAI* (Iberian Federation of Anarchists), and so on.[15] Each of these songs delineated its political party from others by emphasizing important political messages with which the party associated.

None of the songs described above was a product of the Spanish Civil War; soldiers and artists alike, however, produced many more tunes during the conflict. Songs of this type can be placed under two broad headings: those that were created "from the bottom," that is to say produced by the soldiers themselves, and those "from the top," or songs used as propaganda tools. These two categories of songs differed in one key respect – propaganda songs primarily intended to influence public opinion while songs from the bottom better reflected the nature of the war, and its effect on people. Most government-sponsored music, even if written with genuine passion and fervor, was geared for mass consumption. Alternatively, the songs from the bottom arose from the people themselves. These categories overlapped at times. Some propaganda songs provided an accurate reflection of two battling cultural entities. Likewise, some

[14] Nelson and Hendricks, 497.

[15] Several more songs help make up this category. See *Colección de Canciones de Lucha* for transcriptions of these songs.

soldier songs tried to consciously influence their supporters and enemies alike. By and large, though, the two sets of songs have a dissimilar character based on their origins. This distinction in song origin is crucial in understanding the various roles that music played during the civil war.

The songs written or improvised by soldiers are perhaps the most interesting of all music generated during the civil war. Their ephemeral nature makes them difficult to study, but personal memoirs and infantry journals have salvaged many of the songs from history's waste bin. The soldiers who composed usually wrote lyrics without an accompanying musical score. More commonly, their lyrics could be sung to the melodies of already existing hymns and popular tunes. Printed songs of this nature normally included such an instruction: "Sung to the tune of *Camisas Negras*."[16] Therefore the difficulties of producing a song were substantially lowered; musical knowledge was not requisite for song composition. Music was secondary to lyrics.[17]

The best documented soldier songs are those attached to a numbered brigade. Nearly every division and brigade had its own hymn, each bellowing that brigade's valor and bravery in battle, to be played by their brigade band.[18] These songs were often penned by infantrymen or commanders of military

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[16] *Recopilación de Himnos Patrióticos*, 10, located in the Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), Fundos Incorporados, Caja 33.

[17] Ventín-Pereira, 219.

[18] Some of these hymns along with their composers can be found in *Colección de Canciones de Lucha* and *Canciones Republicanas de la Guerra Civil* (c. 2004), http://www.altavozdelfrente.tk (accessed 21 March 2004). Occasionally brigades commissioned well-known composers to write their hymns. *See* Carlos Palacio, *Acordes en el Alma* (Alicante: Instituto Juan Gil-Albert, 1984), 166. Los Archivos de la Guerra Civil in Salamanca house a collection of letters from Republican soldiers applying for a spot in the brigade band. One aspiring saxophonist writes to the director, "I would feel honored to occupy a spot in your Band." Letter from Ramón Orellano, 21 Brigada Mixta, E.M, Caja 12.

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companies, and new lyrical variations were added after particularly noteworthy combat.[19] The more successfully a unit performed in decisive battles, the more widely their hymns were known and sung. The Lincoln Brigade produced several popular songs after participating in a particularly valiant stand at Jarama.[20]

The most common, yet least documented, songs that soldiers sang were those improvised on the spot. One popular trench activity was the invention of satirical lyrics to accompany the opposing side's songs. Republican soldiers provided insulting lyrical variations on the Nationalist hymn *Oriamendi* that questioned their enemies' loyalty. Franco's forces partook of similar banter. After taking Madrid, Nationalist soldiers responded to the defiant Madrilenian hymn *No Pasarán* [They shall not pass] with their own *Hemos Pasado* [We have passed].[21] Songs like these could be heard during marches, or during downtime in the trenches, often serving as sources of pleasure, amusement, and comfort.

By their very nature, the government-sponsored songs from the top have left a much clearer historical trail to follow. These propaganda songs are what truly distinguish music of the Spanish Civil War from music in other wars. Although they were created under government supervision, songs of this sort must not be trivialized or deemed less authentic than their "bottom-up" counterparts. Quite the opposite is revealed in the writings of one government composer: "I began to write music that I wanted to be combative, overflowing with

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[19] *Colección de Canciones de Lucha*, 92. A footnote states that these were played by the brigade's musical bands while the unit marched and sang. This allegedly endowed them with "arduous patriotic fervor in combat or in the calm of rest."

[20] Interview with Ed Balchowsky in *The Good Fight*, directors Noel Buckner, Mary Dore, and Sam Sills, 98 min., Contemporary Films, Ltd., 1984, videocassete. *See also* Harry Fisher, *Comrades: Tales of a Brigadista in the Spanish Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), x.

[21] Díaz Viana, 25.

revolutionary passion, like a virile call in defense of the threatened country…each page of music I wrote in this time had the gusto of a heroism that I had not previously experienced."[22] These songs were often composed and sung with the same vigor and passion as other music from the war and had the added luxury of wide distribution. Accordingly, they became the most popular songs in Spain during the late 1930s. The chapter on song production will closely examine how these songs were composed and disseminated.

The breadth and varied origins of songs from the Spanish Civil War reflect the many issues that defined the conflict. Both sides re-appropriated historical songs to foster a set of political beliefs rooted in the past, even though the lyrics did not always ring true. Songs of regional autonomy appealed to those citizens who characterized Spain as a loosely connected group of autonomous regions. Contrastingly, the International Brigades brought their own set of songs which often emphasized the broader, international scope of the conflict. Another type of song, the politically-affiliated hymn, highlighted the disparate political beliefs in Spain, especially within the Republican coalition.

Finally, soldier tunes and propaganda songs written during the conflict round out the war's numerous song types. Soldiers sang hymns while marching and improvised lyrics in their free time. Their songs often served as a reflection of the war while propaganda songs generally attempted to persuade the Spanish public. By examining the production of propaganda songs – the subject of the next chapter – we can better understand how these songs with clear objectives were composed.

[22] Palacio, 135.

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Chapter Three

"Artistic and Literary Zeal":
Song Production

"And we returned [home] with immense pride, knowing that our songs of war defended Madrid. And that night, more than any other, the radio antennas and mobile radios crossed the streets of hope without rest, filling the air with the Himno de Riego, A las Barricadas, Joven Guardia, Compañías de Acero…"[23]

In 1937, the Republican National Music Committee held a public song writing competition to "stimulate musical production related with the war."[24] A government publishing house then drew up pamphlets of the six best songs and widely sold them across the country under the title of *Six Songs for Democracy*. The initial call for music written in "the popular tradition" garnered over one-hundred entries. Surprisingly, the winners of the contest were prominent, classically-trained musicians who composed these popular songs for public consumption.[25]

In her examination of music during the Spanish Civil War, historian Carol Hess points out that "the barriers that commonly separate different musical styles were blurred, with 'popular' and 'art' music often assuming equal status and attracting the same audience."[26] Yet a closer look at Spain's musical environment in the late 1930s suggests something different. Popular music did not merely coexist with high art music, it co-opted it – the institutional infrastructure, the musicians, even the composers – channeling it towards the production of

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[23] Carlos Palacio, *Acordes en el Alma* (Alicante: Instito Juan Gil-Albert, 1984), 152.
[24] Palacio, 159.
[25] The winners included Francisco Merenciano Bosch, Carlos Palacio, Leopold Cardona, Rafael Casasempere, Carols Ordóñez, and Evaristo F. Blanco. See *Seis Canciones de Guerra* (Barcelona: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1937).
[26] Carol A. Hess, "Silvestre Revueltas in Republican Spain: Music as Political Utterance," *Latin American Music Review* 18:2 (Fall/Winter 1997): 281.

propaganda.[27] The government-sponsored songwriting contest that attracted artists normally associated with "high art" is only one example of this trend.

On the Nationalist side, propaganda was absolutely essential to cementing the legitimization of their armed insurrection. The Falangist Party's "Press and Propaganda" committee, established in the early 1930s, was the Nationalists' original model for ideological diffusion. In 1936, this agency was restructured and renamed to meet the demands of the armed conflict. Operating under its new wartime title, the "Commission of Culture and Instruction" stressed censorship as its chief end.[28]

Soon after, the Nationalists integrated music into their arsenal of propaganda. An official 1937 decree declared *Marcha Granadera* as the new national hymn, and named *Falange Española*, *Oriamendi*, and *Legión* as songs "to be listened to standing upright as homage to the glorious fallen Spaniards of this Crusade."[29] Furthermore, the order required that, upon hearing any of these national hymns and songs, the Spanish people give the fascist salute.[30] The Nationalists' formula for mixing propaganda and music would later be imitated by World War II's Axis powers.[31]

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[27] Hess admits that the works of famed classical musician Silvestre Revuelta's "were programmed aside poetry readings and speeches, often for audiences of soldiers" during the civil war. *See* Hess, 278.

[28] Román Gubern, *La Censura: Función Política y ordenamiento jurídico bajo el franquismo* (Barcelona: Península, 1981), 22.

[29] "El Decreto de 27 de febrero de 1937 del Gobierno del Estado, Artículo 2°," reproduced in José Augusto Ventín Pereira, *La Guerra de la Radio (1936-1939)* (Barcelona: Mitre, 1986), 218.

[30] "El Decreto de 24 de abril de 1937," reproduced in Ventín Pereira, 219.

[31] Robert H. Whealey, "Nazi Propagandist Joseph Goebbels Looks at the Spanish Civil War," *The Historian* 61 (Winter, 1999), 341-342.

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The Republic proved even more adept at developing culture as a weapon because of its longstanding commitment to artistic and educational initiatives. With the advent of extensive pedagogical and literary campaigns in the early 1930s, Republican leaders quickly recognized art exhibitions, dramatic presentations, poetry readings, and concerts as a shrewd means of communication with the masses.[32] Politicians deemed education as an essential ingredient for the success of the socialist-leaning Republic; culture and organization allowed people to articulate their class consciousness and thereby recognize the oppressive social and agrarian policies promoted by the Nationalists. Republican sympathizers insisted that culture, in addition to being used as a militant educational tool, must be applied to "rescue" Spain from the Nationalists' "destruction of civilization."[33] Therefore Republican leaders provided artists and intellectuals with an infrastructure by which they could sustain the Republic's cultural lifeblood.

In September 1936, the Republican government established an umbrella group called the "National Institute of Culture," which housed "all of the cultural, scientific, artistic, educational, and research activities of our country."[34] The *Milicias de la Cultura* [Cultural Militias] were one such group that worked directly with soldiers in an attempt to improve literacy, distribute magazines, play records, and read propagandistic literature. Another outfit, the *Brigadas Volantes* [Flying Brigades], sought to achieve the same goals with citizens on the home front. Finally, the *Alianza de Intelectuales para la Defensa de la Cultura*

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[32] Hess, 281.

[33] "La guerra de los facsimos contra la cultura," *Las Noticias*, 9 October 1937, 3.

[34] "September 15 Decree," Ministro de Instrucción Pública, reproduced in Hipólito Escolar Sobrino, *La Cultura durante la Guerra Civil* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1987), 173.

[Alliance of Intellectuals for the Defense of Culture] courted famous Spanish and international artists of all kinds in order to channel their talents towards the Republican cause. In this manner, distinguished composers and musicologists volunteered their creative talents to the Republican government.

A closer look at one of these governmental organizations dedicated to music composition helps us to understand the reasons for and process by which these songs were created. *Altavoz del Frente* [The Loudspeaker of the Front], a branch of the War Ministry, wrote nearly all of the Republic's radio propaganda programs. According to one newspaper, *Altavoz* "justly denounces the brutal fascists, expresses our convictions, our unbreakable purpose of defending Spain's independence."[35] To do so, *Altavoz* was given a large budget with which to employ its very own composers, orchestra, and chorus for the recording of war song records.[36]

For groups like *Altavoz*, music was not an end itself, but a means towards substantive cultural change. *Altavoz* and other cultural organizations did not aim simply to produce radio programs and records – they wanted to initiate a cultural renaissance. Their stated purpose was to "bring to the rearguard the heroic impulse of the front, and to carry to the front the serene and inflamed voice – *the very conviction of victory* – from the rearguard."[37] Influenced heavily by reports of the Soviet Union's recent reforms, *Altavoz* and the Cultural Militias built

[35] "Altavoz del Frente," *El Sol*, 6/2/37.

[36] *See* "Resumen de gastos efectuados por el Ejército de Andalucía con cargo a las consignaciones para propaganda," Ministerio Defensa Nacional, Servicio de Propaganda, located in the Archivos General de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), E.M., Caja 12 *and* Palacio, 135.

[37] "La retaguardia y el frente, en línea de victorias," *Altavoz del Frente*, date and volume unknown, 3, located in the Archivos General de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), hemeroteca. Italics in original.

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hundreds of makeshift schools along trenches in addition "to reproducing selections of artworks from our painters and writers, copying editions of our romances and other classical and modern poetry, and making records of Spanish folk songs that we will collect and catalog."[38] The desired result was an enlightened public that would embrace the Republican cause. In this ideological battle, music represented an important weapon in the Republic's vast arsenal of propaganda.

Carlos Palacio, *Altavoz*'s most prolific composer, intricately details the effort and preparation that went into the production of musical propaganda in his memoirs.[39] He describes his initial work with the agency:

> Innumerable popular couplets by the Madrilenian poet Luis de Tapia, born in the clamor of first combat, saw public light in a little book collection. I had been entrusted with the mission of putting music to all the couplets that so well encapsulated the present situation and, therefore, I had to use the collaboration and necessary help from the composers that were in the capital. And one fine day I met with them all. [40]

During this and subsequent meetings, Palacio collaborated closely with Madrid's most popular and prestigious composers, poets, and musicologists. In his appeal for their help, Palacio told them, "'we, the composers, can be useful in this battle writing songs that raise the morale and fighting spirit of our people, and, at the same time, stimulate other poets and musicians to do the same.' Conscious of

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[38] "Nuestro Propósito," *Armas y Letras* 1:1 (August, 1937): 1, located in the Archivos General de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), hemeroteca.

[39] Palacio, passim.

[40] The list of artists includes composers Salvador Bacarisse, Rodolfo Halffter, Julián Bautista, José Castro Escudero, José Moreno Gans, Rafael Espinosa, Enrique Casal Chapí and musicologists Adolfo Salazar and Eduardo Martínez Torner. Palacio also collaborated with the popular German composers Ernst Busch and Han Eisler, both of whom had studied under Arnold Schönberg. These composers wrote a substantial portion of the songs sung by the International Brigades, and Busch was even responsible for the publication of the *Cancionero de las Brigadas Internacionales* in 1938. *See* Palacio, 139.

their civic duty, all the composers present accepted."[41] The musicians worked together at a feverish pace, writing songs to freshly-penned poetry and sending them off to the *Altavoz* choir and orchestra for recording. Immediately afterwards, the songs were broadcasted over radio antennas all day and night.[42]

While composers wrote popular music to accompany couplets being produced by Republican-employed poets, musicologists were instructed to dig up older Spanish songs that might resonate well with the public.[43] One composer recalls being told to spread the triumphant song from a popular new Communist film, *Los Marinos de Cronstadt*. Working alongside two other musicologists, "with pencils in hand and scraps of paper we attempted to, on the fly, transcribe the melody."[44] After adding a harmony, the composer sent the music to the recording studio, and the song subsequently became one of the most popular of the war.

To expand the efficacy of their propaganda efforts, the Republicans went to great lengths to increase their audience. Innumerable political parties, guilds, and associations of every imaginable type began printing their own newsletters that included propagandistic songs and poetry.[45] Palacio himself was charged with setting up *Altavoz* radio affiliates throughout Republican Spain in cities like Murcía, Cartagena, and Ciudad Real. During these trips he recruited local

[41] Palacio, 134-135.
[42] Palacio, 152.
[43] Sandie Holguín, *Creating Spaniards: Culture and Identity in Republican Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 173 and Palacio, 134-135.
[44] Palacio, 141.
[45] The Archivos Generales de la Guerra Civil in Salamanca house thousands of these publications that catered to groups as diverse as shoemaker guilds and amateur radio enthusiasts. Many publications had more cultural-based content such as the "Bulletin for the Association of Musical Professors from Tarragona" and the "Magazine of Socialist Artists."

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musicians, painters, and actors and taught them ways in which they could emulate Madrid's culture-based resistance.[46]

The musicians took great pride in their work, for as Palacio phrased it, "music had never had a function more closely tied with the *altos destinos* of the people."[47] Indeed, a responsive public showered Palacio and others with letters of praise. One commander wrote inspiringly from the trenches, "In this front near Madrid you have 1500 soldiers from Alcoy who fight fascism. We all hear your songs and we hope to be worthy of that which is so admirably sung in them. We will conquer. The enemy shall not pass. Madrid will always be of the people!"[48] Significantly, the commander's words imply that it was the soldiers who endeavored to mimic the lyrics, not the other way around.
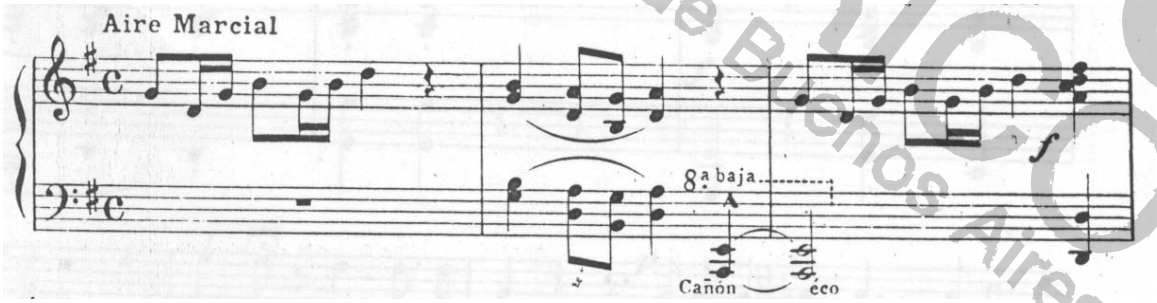
The Nationalists *Altavoz* equivalent, the National Radio of Spain, produced similar material. One record they sold titled *Toques de Guerra* [Beats of War] mixed traditional eighteenth- and nineteenth-century songs with more recently popularized compositions. The recordings "anxiously united the voices of those who have sung in the fields of battle for… the builder of New Spain, our glorious leader General Franco."[49] This record and others like it strove to associate the Nationalist Army with the imperial and noble Spanish militaristic tradition that had remained dormant for decades. By bureaucratizing musical production, both the Nationalists and Republicans were able to push their cultural agendas.

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[46] Palacio, 159.
[47] Palacio, 142.
[48] Palacio, 152.
[49] Ventín-Pereira, 219-220.

But the objective was not bureaucratic-sounding music, but rather popular music; one composer writes, "Not only did I have to compose songs, I furthermore had to popularize them."[50] Accordingly, for government-backed composers, musical innovation was not the order of the day. Classically-trained musicians kept Schoenberg's new twelve-tone atonal series at arms length, instead opting for music in the militaristic tradition – inspiring, triumphant, and strong – in order to radiate confidence. One composer noted that traditional military tunes "have a historical value, a symbolic and evocative character that cannot be scorned."[51] Scores of this type often carried a brisk *martial* or *maestoso* tempo marking. Instrumentation always called for trumpets, trombones, clarinets, flutes, and drums – the chief ingredients of military marching band music. The composers wrote catchy melodies that could be easily committed to memory.

Evidence of this can be discerned from the first few measures of almost any propaganda song. The following example from the *Himno Nacional Español* (scored for piano) contains several of these basic characteristics:
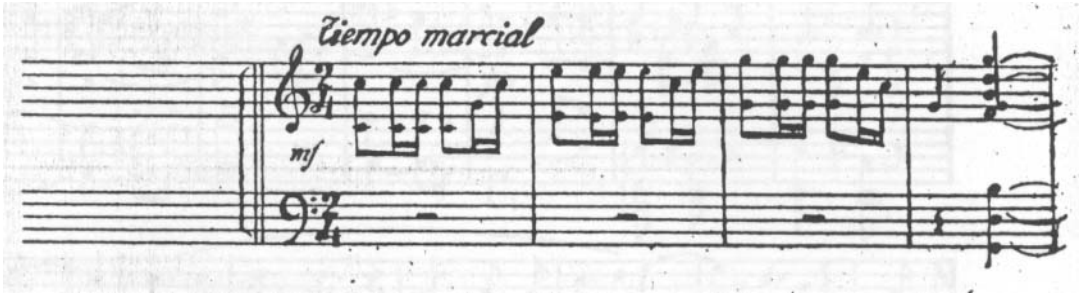


In the first measure there is a solitary opening theme. It is a broken ascending triad in G major – a simple, but catchy melodic device, which might explain its

[50] Palacio, 135.
[51] Ventín-Pereira, 221.
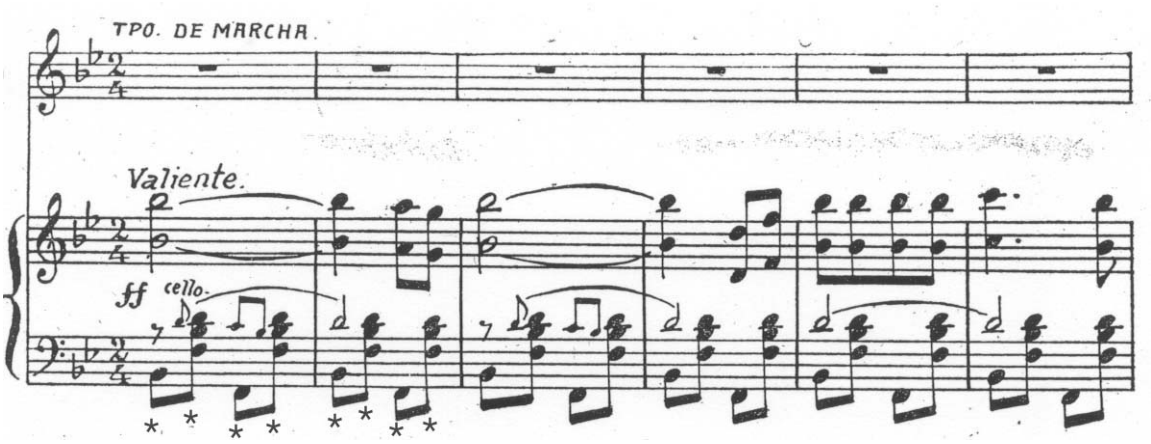
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widespread use in musical composition (NBC's jingle being one famous example, the solemn *Taps* being another). Furthermore, the bass clef (the staff of five lines at the bottom) includes a set of low notes that serve as an upbeat for the repeated open triad with the words "Cañon" [Cannon] and "éco" [echo] written below. These words, along with the "martial air" tempo marking, are the composer's directions for the musician to try and evoke a certain feeling of war with the music being played.

The following Republican hymn uses the same type of broken ascending triad, this time in octaves. The resulting rhythmic sound is unsurprisingly similar to the inspiring opening brass theme from the movie "Rocky:"
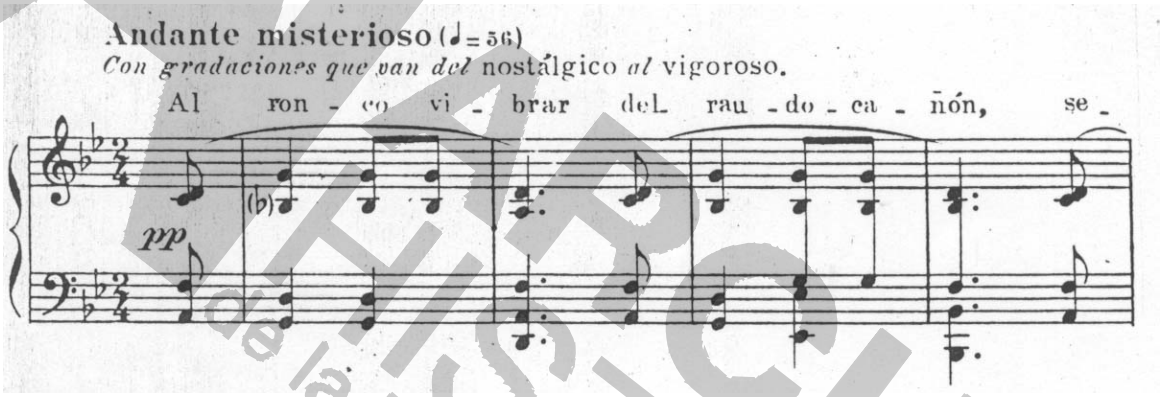


Most hymns aim for a triumphant feel by using the basic elements of a march. The Nationalist *Beso de Muerte* [Kiss of Death] strives for a "valiant" tone:
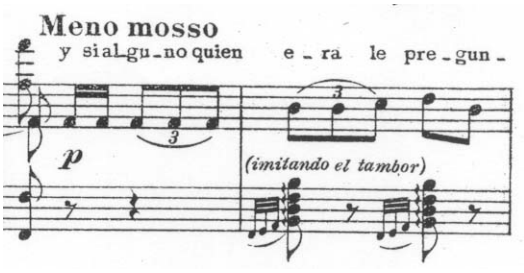


To achieve this, the bass accompaniment (denoted by asterisks) is written with a strong, repetitive bass line which provides drive to the march. The two-four time signature and *fortissimo* [very loud] dynamic mark are other signature elements of a march.

Not all propaganda songs were loud marches though. In the Republican *Canto Nocturno en las Trincheras* [Nighttime Song in the Trenches], the dynamic marking is *pianissimo* [very soft] and the tempo marking "andante misterioso":



However, the song also directs the musician to play "with gradations that go from nostalgic to vigorous." The song induces emotion by moving from a solemn beginning to a rousing, victorious conclusion. In the following Nationalist musical example, *El Novio de la Muerte* [The Boyfriend of Death], we can see a similar device. The song starts out "Triumphantly," yet decrescendos midway through the piece as shown by the *Meno mosso* [less rapid] and *piano* [soft] markings:



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Also, note the grace notes (small, quickly played notes) and the rolled chords in the bass clef which are supposed to "imitate the drum." If played properly, the notes will mimic the soft roll of a snare or bass drum, something that effectively creates an atmosphere filled with quiet tension before building to a stirring finish.

A cursory look at musical examples helps to unpack two larger historical points. First, even though they were composed by high art musicians, these songs are hardly innovative – marches are relatively simple songs that have existed for centuries. The government-employed composers were clearly not writing songs for their own artistic expression, but with the sole criterion of influence in mind. Glorious and proud marches that could convey propagandistic messages therefore dominated the musical literature.

The examples above also demonstrate extraordinarily similar musical composition regardless of political affiliation. Again, Republican and Nationalist composers wanted to produce cheerful and inspiring melodies that were accessible to the public. Unsurprisingly, the same type of militaristic march music satisfied this need for both sides. Such musical composition further strengthens the notion that propaganda songs were written with public arousal as their ultimate goal.

And persuade they did, as detailed in numerous first-hand accounts. While writing a song for the soldiers of the Nationalist Legion, composer José Augusto Ventín Pereira recalls having to share his ongoing work with several of the regiment's captains. He notes that upon hearing the lyrics along with the music, the captains were overcome with sincere emotion. One of the commanders

tried to help Ventín Pereira understand why: "The Legion is so intimately a part of us… therefore because the lyrics and music faithfully reflect our military credo and spanishness, we can almost hear and see our legionnaires entering battle with this song…that is why we are emotional."[52] The music had achieved its goal.

But at its very heart, propaganda music – Nationalist and Republican – was an exercise in manipulation. One example can be found in the Republican *Colección de Canciones de Lucha* published in 1939. The book opens with a rousing introduction:

> [Contained within] are songs of Madrid's defense, combat marches, songs of children in arms. The soldiers sing them while fearlessly resisting the bombs of foreign air fleets, while they attack with heroism to re-conquer Spain. Therefore…[using] compositions of the most prestigious Spanish musicians, we consider it worthy to put in this songbook those tunes that, improvised in the midst of combat fire, came about spontaneously without artistic or literary zeal.[53]

Although mellifluous, the language is patently false. The collection does not list an original publisher, but the compiler and four illustrators of the volume men were artists associated with the Republican Army's propaganda arm.[54] Moreover, the lyricists of many songs were well-known poets who wrote for the Republic. Carlos Palacio, the volume's cataloger, composed the majority of the tunes by himself. These compositions most certainly did benefit from the aid of "artistic and literary zeal."

By claiming that music "came about spontaneously" during battle, both the Republicans and Nationalists were clearly embellishing the circumstances

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[52] Ventín Pereira, 226.

[53] *Colección de Canciones de Lucha* (Madrid: Ediciones Pacific, 1980 [1939]), 5.

[54] *See* Palacio, passim and "Antonio Ballestres. Escultura y dibujos," *Valencia Institute of Modern Art* (c. 2004), http://www.ivam.es/asp/ficha.asp?idpag=2000&tipo=exposicion&id=143&idioma (accessed 3/21/04).

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under which the songs were produced. In this sense, these songs did not represent an authentic popular voice. The government-sponsored songs were not a grassroots reaction to the war's events, but rather a top-down attempt to influence their course. By trying to conceal the songs' manufactured quality, propagandists felt that they were more effectively able to elicit patriotic fervor.

It is precisely propaganda music's ability to elicit emotion that made songs important to Republican and Nationalist military campaigns. Therefore, propaganda organizations on both sides invested sizable sums of money and time in the production of wartime music. Poets and musicians who felt strongly about the war poured their talents into producing art for the side they supported. Cultural institutions on the Republican side, and to a lesser extent with the Nationalists, facilitated the creation of songs and other cultural exhortations. The inspiring music written by composers was then pitched to the public as songs improvised in "the midst of combat fire." Underlying this logic was the belief that if the songs themselves *seemed* more popular and instinctual, then citizens would be more likely to embrace the messages contained within them.

Chapter Four

The Messages Contained Within:
Song Content and Themes

"No better picture of what is at stake in this Civil War can be obtained than can be garnered from a reading of the ballads we include here…new Spain, Church, Army, landlords, the new types of heroes, the mass movements, the desperate resistances of the various groups – all these and more are expressed with the boldness and clarity characterizing good, living poetry."[1]

Propaganda is only as good as its content. That is the lesson composer Carlos Palacio learned during his tenure as chair of one of the Republic's music divisions. He poses an important question in his memoirs: "What laws govern the popularity of a song? I don't know. But it evidently is not enough to spread a song in order to popularize it."[2] Mass-production of songs on paper or over the airwaves alone did not ensure their popularity.

Although he claims otherwise, Palacio provides an answer to his question about the seemingly erratic manner in which songs gained notoriety. He recalls a time early in the war when fellow musician and colleague Salvador Bacarisse composed *Song of the Mariner* for public consumption. Unlike many other successful Republican-scripted songs, Bacarisse's failed to gain traction with the public. Palacio does not chalk Bacarisse's failure up to poor musical composition, for it was on par with similar, popular songs. He offers another explanation instead: "By my judgment, Bacarisse's song was not sung because it dealt with a subject, the sea, which had nothing to do with the heroic combat in and around Madrid."[3] Quite simply, the lyrical content was not topical.

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[1] M.J. Benardete and Rolfe Humphries, …*And Spain Sings: 50 Loyalist Ballads* (New York, Vanguard Press, 1937, xiii.

[2] Carlos Palacio, *Acordes en el Alma* (Alicante: Instituto Juan Gil-Albert, 1984), 137-138.

[3] Palacio, 138.

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Lyrics and the act of singing them represent a unique form of human communication. One music scholar notes that "the popular song says what man would dare not speak, because the spoken word confines emotion too much."[4] These words ring especially true for songs of the Spanish Civil War because of strong cultural reactions to the country's self-inflicted fratricide. Popular tunes during this period served not only as a manifestation *of*, but also a significant contribution *to*, cultural emotion. An analysis of the war's themes as found in song lyrics is useful in determining the values for which people fought. The inclusion or absence of certain themes is indicative of the issues that people used to frame the war.

As in the Chapter Two, a distinction must be drawn between the government-produced songs and the songs that arose from the people themselves. Because propaganda songs were implicitly charged with capturing public opinion, their lyrical content brims with popular historical imagery and unbridled optimism. On the other hand, the transient songs of soldiers and civilians cover a wider spectrum of thematic material. As a general rule, music from the top consciously attempted to influence the war whereas songs from the bottom usually reflected the war. The variation in lyrical content lends credence to this bifurcation.

In such an ideologically charged war, it goes without saying that the content of Nationalist propaganda songs differed from Republican propaganda songs. Each side's unique cultural and historical vision of Spain were made manifest in their song lyrics. Even among the rival parties that made up the

[4] Eduardo López Chavarri, *Música Popular Española* (Barcelona: Labor, 1927), 9.

Republican coalition, there are noticeable distinctions in lyrical content due to differing political philosophies.

Perhaps the most striking feature of all propaganda songs when compared with one another, however, is their fundamental likeness. Because all of the propaganda songs of the war shared a similar purpose, their lyrics too shared a commonality, regardless of political affiliation. The songs, be they Falangist or Anarchist, strove to inculcate ideals promoted by their corresponding political party. Therefore it is unsurprising that lyrical themes from competing groups are more similar than one might suppose. It is only in the details that differences are perceptible.

Present in most propaganda song lyrics is the soldier *par excellence*. He is proud of his military service, ardently loyal to his cause, consistently valiant during combat, and if he dies, he does so honorably. One Republican song is narrated by young and energetic soldiers who outline their reasons for fighting: "We are the young guard / noble is our cause of liberating / man from his slavery; / maybe the road there will have to be strewn / with the blood of our youth."[5] The Nationalist soldiers were not portrayed much differently: "My comrades who went to fight / with happy and firm attitude / they died in the name of the Spanish way of life."[6] The image of the chivalrous soldier willing to make the ultimate sacrifice played especially well to citizens in the rearguard, which explains its

[5] "La Joven Guardia," Canciones de Guerra de las Brigadas Internacionales, 1937. Archivos Generales de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), Folleto – F-2224. All of the Spanish songs lyrics in this chapter are translated by the author.

[6] Villanueva and A. Cabanas, *Canción del flecha* (Barcelona: Casa Editorial de Boileau, 1936-1939).

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ubiquity in songs. Nationalist songs in particular emphasize the martyrdom of soldiers in "this new Crusade of sincere faith."[7]

While the two previous examples do exhibit similarities by way of sacrificial soldier language, they also differ in their overall messages. Clearly, the Republican verse treats the war as a bloody struggle for liberation in a revolutionary sense. The Nationalist objective, conversely, is the preservation of tradition and the "Spanish way of life" – in essence, a repudiation of Republican reforms. It is not surprising, then, to learn that the Republicans garnered much of their support from urban workers and liberal intellectuals while the Nationalists were supported by wealthy landowners and rural farmers.

Soldier allegiance to the flag is another oft-repeated theme in both Republican and Nationalist propaganda songs. The flag carried symbolic currency as a rallying image much as it does today. Serving the flag was tantamount to devoting one's full self to the fighting cause it represented. In the Nationalist *Ode to the Spanish Flag*, the flag is "sacred" because it covers "the tombs in the ground where my ancestors rest."[8] A Republican hymn uses flag imagery in a slightly different way: "unfold… the flag that carries blood and sweat; this red flag of the humble, pride of the working people."[9] Each group's flag embodied the ideals for which they fought. In the Nationalists case, the flag symbolizes an attachment to the past and respect for those who helped build

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[7] Gregorio Mover and Moisés Baylos Albéniz, *Himno Nacional Español* (San Sebastián: Casa Erviti, 1936-1939)

[8] Silesio Delgado and Moisés Baylos Albéniz, *Himno a la Bandera Española* (San Sebastián: Casa Erviti, 1936-1939).

[9] Félix V. Ramos and Carlos Palacio, "Venguemos a Los Caidos," *Seis Canciones de Guerra*, (Barcelona: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1937).

Spain. The Republican verse, on the other hand, is laden with communist imagery of blood and sweat – praise for those who are currently working to rebuild the country.

Above all else, government-sponsored songs foretold triumph. Historical destiny guaranteed their future victory. Both sides used this powerful lyrical device in order to portray their faction as the true progenitors of Spain's rich legacy. The *Hymn of the National Movement* attempts to co-opt history, asserting that "We are children of Spain, and we carry twenty centuries of history behind us."[10] Similarly, *The Leader* thanks Franco for endowing the country with an "immortal and glorious destiny."[11] Republican hymns as well insist that supporters fight in order to "honor the history of Spain."[12] By rooting their causes in historical destiny, both sides attempted to legitimize their rule and show people that they represented the true identity of Spain.

However, the two sides differed in the grounding ideas of that identity. Without fail, the Nationalists invoked religious rhetoric. Their victory in war was painted as their just reward for unwavering faith in Church and God. Franco, acting as God's direct agent, is destined to "resurrect" Spain and reclaim its true heritage. The *Hymn of the Popular Action Youth* impels children to fight because "it is the command of Spain and God."[13] Other Nationalist songs provide more of the same: "Our crosses of sincere faith in peace and in war… [are] God, country,

[10] Camilo Gálvez and José M. Pemán, *Himno para Movimiento Nacional* (Cadíz: Salvador Repeto, 1936-1939).

[11] Jesús M. Arozamena and F. Cotarelo, *El Caudillo* (San Sebastián: Casa Erviti, 1936-1939).

[12] Carlos Ordoñez, "Himno," *Seis Canciones de Guerra* (Barcelona: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1937).

[13] No author given, *Himno de la J.A.P.* (San Sebastián: Casa Erviti, 1936-1939).

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and king."[14] The employment of Imperial- and Church-related themes appealed to the more traditional strata of Spanish society.

Even though most of the Republic's constituents were religious as well (Spain was and still is overwhelmingly Catholic), the songs from the Left did not often invoke God. In fact, one of the rare religious references in a Republican song is derogatory in nature: "Forward, proletarians, we forge the union, marxists and freedom-fighters…only the Judas' of betrayal are contrary to us."[15] That is not to say that religion is absent from all songs; the themes of faith and religion are interspersed in some lesser known Republican tunes.[16] However, the popular socialist and communist songs avoided religion entirely.

Instead of religious imagery, Republican song lyrics often made appeals to fundamental liberal principles such as freedom and equality. Soldiers were seen not merely as the protectors of the Republic, but the "vanguard of ideals."[17] Yet those ideals varied greatly from song to song owing to the United Front's welter of political beliefs. Marxist language of "servile masses" and "chains of hatred, fear, and greed" fills the *Internationale*, while the Anarchists promise to fight "all types of government…with petroleum and dynamite."[18] Another song called for

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[14] Gregorio Mover and Moisés Baylos Albéniz, *Himno Nacional Español* (San Sebastián: Casa Erviti, 1936-1939)

[15] Carlos Ordoñez, "Himno," *Seis Canciones de Guerra* (Barcelona: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1937).

[16] After searching through hundreds of Republican song lyrics sung during the war, only two were found that mention God by name: Gernikako Arbola (hymn of País Vasco) and "Fuerte de San Cristobal."

[17] Félix V. Ramos and Rafael Cassempere, "Canto a la flota republicana," *Seis Canciones de Guerra* (Barcelona: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1937).

[18] "Internationale," *Colección de Canciones de Lucha* (Madrid: Ediciones Pacific, 1980 [1939]), 22 *and* Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza, *Historias Orales de la Guerra Civil* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2000), 270.

women to organize themselves and participate in the Revolution.[19] On the whole, a wider spectrum of images and rhetorical devices are present in Republican songs because their government comprised an assortment of different liberal and revolutionary parties. The political divisions within the Republic manifested themselves in songs.

The variation in Republican song lyrics is helpful in understanding why the Republican government had trouble maintaining stability and eventually succumbed to Franco's offensive. The Popular Front was united in only one respect – their mutual dislike of the Nationalist cause. In other matters, the diverse makeup of revolutionary and liberal parties resulted in a political free-for-all. Different groups within the alliance hijacked the war's image in order to advance their political agendas.[20] It is not surprising, then, that the Communists framed the war as an inevitable worker's revolution, while anticlerical liberal groups portrayed it as a fight against the Church. The unmistakable conflicts over nationalism and regionalism also contributed to the Republic's wobbly alliance. A famous couplet from the war laments the ethnic strife: "Galán gave his blood for a great Spain / and now your statute tries to separate us / Catalonians, why this craziness?"[21]

If the fractured Republican coalition contributed to their defeat, it did not help that the Nationalists were united by a singular objective: "One Spain, strong

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[19] "A las Mujeres," *Colección de Canciones de Lucha*, 38.

[20] George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* describes this chronic problem first-hand.

[21] Bullón de Mendoza, 271. The reference here is to José Galán who was a Catalonian leader who presided over the Republic for a brief time before being killed. The statute refers to an attempt by Catalonians to declare their land as a sovereign nation. *See* Sandie Holguín, *Creating Spaniards: Culture and Identity in Republican Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002),162-64.

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and imperial."[22] The rhetoric displayed in nearly every Nationalist tune mentions this goal in one way or another. One song lists "country, justice, and bread" as the main ingredients; another cries for "One country under a king with a cross."[23] Whatever the slogan, the songs of the Nationalists reflected the strength of their army – they worked as a unit devoted towards the same end. The same can not be said about the Republicans or their songs.

Almost all of the songs that make up the category of propaganda songs are replete with excessively dramatic lyrics and rhetorical flourishes. Often, the lyrics do not give an accurate depiction of the soldiers or of trench life. They celebrate glory and honor, but are silent on more problematic aspects of the war such as death, killing, and disease. These songs undoubtedly proved popular in the rearguard as evidenced by the high demand for sheet music. A more difficult issue, however, is whether or not the songs resonated with the infantrymen and raised their morale as intended.

One answer to that question can be seen in the songs composed by soldiers. There is a significant amount of overlap in lyrical content when comparing propaganda songs to soldier songs. Often the same themes of flag worship, victory, and religious language can be found in songs written by soldiers.[24] Such a link suggests that the soldiers were influenced by the chivalric

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[22] Jesús M. Arozamena and F. Cotarelo, *El Caudillo* (San Sebastián: Casa Erviti, 1936-1939).

[23] Villanueva and A. Cabanas, *Canción del flecha* (Barcelona: Casa Editorial de Boileau, 1936-1939) *and* Jesús M. Arozamena and J. Guridi, *Canción de Guerra* (San Sebastián: Casa Erviti, 1936-1939).

[24] Innumerable soldier-composed variations on popular songs like the Carlist *Marcha de Oriamendi* and the Falangist *Cara al Sol* further strengthen the likelihood that propaganda songs influenced soldier songs. *See* Bullón de Mendoza, 239-241 and 264-265.

depiction of war and soldiers in propaganda songs – so much so that they composed similar songs.

One instance of this overlap can be seen in the themes of victory and historical legacy. The soldiers celebrate victory, but in a more specific manner. Common among these songs are references to recently won battles. "Triumphant in Barcelona / and victorious in Mahón / I love my dear country / I venerate our leader / and for these two loves / I give my life."[25] In contrast to propaganda songs, which only told of eventual victory, soldier songs used recent triumphs on the battle field as both a celebration and affirmation of their fighting spirit.

Like propaganda songs, soldier songs cemented their claims of representing the "true Spain" by employing historical antecedents. Again, the Republicans harkened back to Spain's liberal era of the early 1820s as their rallying symbol. One song alludes to a historical figure who challenged King Ferdinand VII's absolutist regime: "If Torrijos died on the gallows / he didn't die for the sake of betrayal / but rather with his soul in hand / defending the Constitution. / Constitution and death / will be our motto / if some traitor tramples on it / he will suffer death."[26] Other Republican songs were strictly antimonarchical in content. The crass lyrics of one song joke that, "The Republic was shitting and didn't have toilet paper / so they took Alfonso XIII and cleaned up with him."[27] Nationalist soldiers, for their part, embraced the monarchist tradition, especially the Carlist lineage: "If they ask you *Stop! Who goes there?* /

[25] Bullón de Mendoza, 235. Nearly all of the soldier songs quoted in this essay come from this source, which has collected hundreds of song examples from veterans of the war.

[26] Bullón de Mendoza, 272. *See also* Victoria Rosado Castillo, *Málaga: Personajes en su Historia* (Málaga: Arguval, 1986).

[27] Bullón de Mendoza, 272.

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respond in a loud voice / *the volunteers of King Don Carlos*. / Long live the Country and its Tradition! / Noble carlist in my soul."[28]

These songs that share similarities with propaganda songs only represent a sliver of the soldier song repertoire. What truly distinguishes soldier songs from government-produced songs is their willingness to treat taboo subjects. These songs provide a more authentic portrayal of soldiers' thoughts and daily lives. They include songs with more pessimistic descriptions of battle; songs that mock their enemies; and songs of pleasure, loneliness, and gloom. In essence, they are human songs that depict day-to-day livelihood. Here, too, the Republican and Nationalist songs are nearly indistinguishable, even sharing some of the same melodies and lyrics.

The death of friends on the front lines is one theme unique to soldier songs. Instead of heroic optimism, these tributes are solemn and somber. One forlorn Republican soldier sings, "José Antonio no longer exists, / he left from Spain…His body no longer resists / the cruel and hard battle."[29] Nationalist songs of the same nature were ensconced with more religious symbolism but remained fundamentally similar: "Honor and glory to the fallen of Spain, / our redemption rests in you / the blood that spilled from the fallen / marks the road of resurrection."[30] These songs of a more personal nature cast a different reflection of the war than we have seen thus far. But as seen in the propaganda songs, even though the topics of the two examples are the same, the nature of the writing is

[28] Bullón de Mendoza, 238.
[29] Bullón de Mendoza, 258.
[30] Bullón de Mendoza, 237.

not. In the Republican anthem, the soldier simply ceases to exist, whereas the Nationalist verse contains clear religious implication for their dead soldiers.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of soldier songs is the humor and banter found within their lyrics. Because of humor's ability to relieve psychological stress, songs of this type abounded in both trenches.[31] Older, more experienced soldiers mocked the newer, and increasingly young, soldiers that were arriving at the front: "the draftees of the forty-eighth cry / and with good reason / because they leave for war / without their nursing bottle."[32] Similarly, soldiers in the trenches ridiculed those who worked cushy jobs in the rearguard due to nepotism, referring to them as "café-sipping chickens."[33]

Humor manifested itself in other ways as well, not least in complaints. Trench life in general proved appalling, as suggested by this tongue-in-cheek Nationalist song: "if you want to eat real cheap and modest / go to the Santander front / it won't cost you a cent / the first course they give you are exploding grenades / and a second of shrapnel."[34] The chronic shortage of food also resulted in internal criticism: "Franco, Franco, you offered us white bread / Now we have made you our leader / and you have given us little and it is yellow."[35] Humor, which acted as a guise for more serious gripes over age difference, class

[31] Peter Carroll, "Psychology & Ideology in the Spanish Civil War," *The Antioch Review* 52 (Spring, 1994): passim.
[32] Bullón de Mendoza, 235.
[33] Bullón de Mendoza, 251.
[34] Bullón de Mendoza, 244.
[35] Bullón de Mendoza, 233.

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antagonisms, and sparse provisions, was "essential to our survival" in the words of one soldier.[36]

There are very few instances of dissent and criticism directed towards one's own leaders as seen in the previous example, but dozens of songs document insults hurled at the other side. Nationalists insulted the Republicans as traitorous "whores" of the Communists. These songs also proved more foul-mouthed than most, as evidenced by this Nationalist polemic: "I shit on the Himno de Riego / I shit on [prime minister] Quiroga / and on [president] Azaña I shit as well."[37] The Republicans were no kinder to their enemies when they claimed, "I don't know if you are Spaniards, Italians, or Germans, but I do know that you were born from the womb of a bitch."[38]

Finally, soldiers exposed their more sensitive sides in ballads, usually in the form of romances that recalled their loved ones back home. Mixing love and war was popular because it gave soldiers another reason to fight. One song boasts that "If you want to marry / with the girls from here / you have to go to fight / on the Madrid front… if and when I return from the war, with my girlfriend I will marry."[39] Soldiers needed an outlet to express their longing and yearning for loved ones; singing ballads served that purpose well.

Aside from minor discrepancies and varied language, most soldier songs resembled each other regardless of Nationalist or Republican affiliation; soldiers on both sides lived and fought under remarkably similar situations, and the songs

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[36] Printed in the liner notes of Carl Geiser, *Al Tocar Diana: Songs from a Franco Prison*, Folkways Records FH5435, 1982, 12-inch analog disc.

[37] Bullón de Mendoza, 246.

[38] Bullón de Mendoza, 267.

[39] Bullón de Mendoza, 252.

reflected that likeness. Yet differences in political beliefs did result in some noteworthy distinctions among soldier songs. These subtle distinctions warrant mention because they demonstrate key differences between soldier songs and propaganda songs.

As can be expected, religious lyrical imagery is found in soldier songs from both sides. One Republican song combines several noted themes, using religion as its foil:

> The Carlists killed a pretty young girl
> Because she was wearing the flag of liberty on her porch.
> Liberty has died and was buried.
> They didn't bury her deep, and she has arisen from the dead.[40]

A Nationalist soldier song triumphantly bellows in the name of the "crusade." "The flag is my cross /Jesus my captain / with all of my heart / I want to serve and to love."[41]

Many Republican and Nationalist soldiers alike placed their fate in God's hands. However, Republican soldiers still took an antagonistic stance towards the Church, which overtly backed the Nationalists. Republican soldiers' pejorative attacks on institutional religion (i.e. the Catholic Church) are seen mostly in Communist songs: "If the priests and monks knew / the beating that they were going to get / they would rise in unison singing / *liberty, liberty, liberty*."[42] A more extreme communist song rejects religion in its entirety, claiming that "The clergy are mistaken / and we trample upon their cross / because the proletariat /

[40] Bullón de Mendoza, 273-4.
[41] Bullón de Mendoza, 243.
[42] Hand-written annotations in "Songs of the Basque Children," Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), Fundos Incorporados, Caja Isla, 9-10.

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don't believe in God nor Jesus."[43] Unlike propaganda songs which aimed to appeal to a wide constituency, soldier songs were often more pointed in their lyrical attacks.

Soldier songs also tried to appeal to their enemy in an attempt to decrease opposition morale. Recognizing full well that the Republicans used political ideology as a rallying cry, a crop of ingenious Nationalist songs tried to exploit this to their advantage. "Wake up already bourgeois and socialists / it is the Falange that brings the revolution / pursued by Leftists."[44] Likewise, Republican songs claimed that while the Church supported the Nationalists, true religious figures supported the Republic. "The Virgin of Pilar [Spain's patron saint] says / she doesn't want to be Fascist / she wants to be patroness / of the Socialist troops."[45] In questioning the central tenets of their enemies' cause, Republican and Nationalist soldiers used songs to undermine their opponents' morale. In contrast, propaganda song lyrics nearly always were constructive, optimistic, and aimed towards their constituents.

The lyrical depiction of foreigners in some Nationalist tunes further distinguishes soldier songs from propaganda ones. Although both Republicans and Nationalists tried to frame the conflict as a domestic cultural struggle, the struggle was heavily influenced by foreigners. Perhaps in backlash to foreign meddling, several Nationalist soldier song lyrics discriminated against their Italian counterparts. The disdain for Italians is most clearly seen in these lyrics: "Little

[43] Bullón de Mendoza, 274.
[44] Bullón de Mendoza, 243.
[45] Bullón de Mendoza, 273.

Spanish woman, don't fall in love / with an Italian because they are traitors."[46] Other lyrics questioned Italian bravery and the motivation behind their will to fight.[47] Nationalist propaganda songs, however, did not include the same lyrical derision directed towards Italian soldiers. Even while pursuing an overwhelmingly nationalist campaign, Franco understood the strategic importance of his fascist allies. Therefore, Nationalist propaganda songs shied away from attacks against foreigners.

A survey of songs delineates between two types of language. The two sets of song lyrics played an important role in both expressing Spaniards' anxieties and influencing their notions about the war. First, the song of the soldiers provided a nuanced depiction of the war's issues and its relevance to their daily life. These songs were not consciously crafted with any exploitation in mind, but rather existed as progeny of the war itself, often portraying its more human side. The propaganda songs, on the other hand, exuded a different message that focused on the noble ideological causes and the glory of battle. These propaganda songs targeted everyone and were produced for commercial revenue and influence over public opinion. Although there were some thematic variations between Republican and Nationalist songs of this sort, they shared the same elements of soldier praise, flag worship, and victory foretold. Combined together, the propagandistic lyrics aimed to secure unity behind their cause. These propaganda lyrics were composed and distributed by Republican and Nationalist agencies

[46] Bullón de Mendoza, 249-250.

[47] *See* Bullón de Mendoza, 249-250. Some Republican propaganda and soldier songs mention Fascist interference, but do not ever attack their own international supporters. The difference probably lies in the Republic's favorable impression of internationalism whereas Franco claimed to be fiercely nationalist even while accepting international help.

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within Spain. The next chapter examines how these agencies brought their ideologically-charged music to the people and how the people responded.

Chapter Five

"We sang to revive our bodies":
Song Performance

"The power that a song can exercise over man is infinite… I could tell you many cases from my personal experience. In desperate situations, when the word has exhausted all of its power, the song is a force, a charge of energy that raises fallen morale. And in its brevity and intensity, it can be more explicit than a long speech."[1]

Records and songbooks released during the Spanish Civil War share a remarkable characteristic – their affinity for contributing to a romantic vision of the war. These relics, most of which were produced and released by Republican sympathizers, normally include comments on music's significant role during the war. In one such songbook published in 1939, the author notes that "these are poems sung below exploding artillery shells and whistling bullets…this booklet comes from the infantrymen, songs forged in the tempest of battle."[2] The liner notes of an international recording of songs contain similar bombast: "The Brigade of the Twenty Nations when they met the Spanish Fascists would roar out to them in twenty languages, the Riego march song or the playful 'Mamita Mia'."[3] If one were to take these grandiloquent accounts at face value, one might conclude that battles were fought with choruses and tenor lines in lieu of mortars and bullets.

Those who have collected Spanish Civil War songs since the war's end seem oddly intent on perpetuating an overly idealistic depiction of the war. The

[1] Unnamed North American soldier quoted in Carlos Palacio, *Acordes en el Alma* (Alicante: Instito Juan Gil-Albert, 1984), 143.

[2] Langston Hughes, *Romancero de los Voluntarios de la Libertad* (Madrid: Ediciones del Comisariado de las Brigadas Internacionales, 1937).

[3] Egon Erwin Kisch, 1939, reprinted in the liner notes of *Songs of the Spanish Civil War*, Folkways Records FH-5436-7, 1961-62, 12-inch analog disc.

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introduction to Joan Llarch's 1978 catalog of songs reads like propaganda: "According to legend the swan sings before dying; only man sings before killing. The song, primal and tribal scream… joins together the synthesis of thought impelled by action."[4] In this work and others, soldier bravery and action on the battlefield are directly attributed to the singing of songs. Such unequivocal assertions are unlikely – soldiers rarely sang while fighting the enemy or "facing the firing squad."[5]

It is not easy to discern at what times or in what fashion songs are sung during war. A book on songs of the French Revolution takes note of this phenomenon; studies have thoroughly analyzed the lyrics, "yet few have considered the moment when a song achieved its full expressive potential: the moment of performance."[6] This statement holds equally true for songs of the Spanish Civil War. The limited scholarly research in the field is silent on the subject of performance save the occasional romanticized anecdote. Yet when and how a song was sung matters; "singing," one soldier plainly wrote, "was an important part of our life in Spain."[7] Examining the thematic content and production of songs only addresses part of their history; understanding the context in which these songs were communicated is significant as well.

A systematic look at the first-hand writings of soldiers from the Spanish Civil War again shows a distinction in types of song-singing. Some singing was

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[4] Joan Llarch, *Cantos y poemas de la Guerra Civil de España* (Barcelona: Daniel's Libros Editor, 1987), 11.

[5] Carl Geiser, *Al Tocar Diana: Songs from a Franco Prison*, Folkways Records FH5435, 1982, 12-inch analog disc, 6. I have come across no documented examples of songs being sung in this manner.

[6] Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 3.

[7] Geisler, *Al Tocar Diana*, 5.

compulsory and related to propaganda efforts while other singing was voluntary and initiated by soldiers. These two classifications overlapped at times, but they also came into conflict, especially as the war lingered on. Disenchantment with the war's length, particularly for Republicans as defeat appeared imminent, resulted in a backlash against propaganda songs. A study of the context in which songs were sung reflects this change over time.

Propaganda songs reached their full potential as ideological messengers upon performance, but they first had to be introduced to the public. During the Spanish Civil War, Republicans and Nationalists blanketed Spain with their fresh propaganda using a variety of tools: the printing press, traveling performance troupes, loudspeakers, and the radio. New technological innovations enabled these songs to be spread with remarkable speed and economy.

The publication of songbooks during Spain's civil war was a technique inherited from previous wars. However, the widespread availability of printing presses for mass production during the 1930s made print versions of songs more ubiquitous than ever. Printing press innovations inevitably accompanied the explosive growth of print culture all across the North Atlantic world in the late-nineteenth century. The introduction of the web-fed rotary press, electrical machinery, wood-based white paper, typesetting machines, and halftone engraving dramatically improved print quality, content, and circulation.[8] New technological developments in the twentieth century – primarily those that increased the speed, economy, and mass printing – further revolutionized the

[8] *See* Colin Clair, *A History of European Printing* (London: Academic Press, 1976), chapters 29, 30, 33 *and* Ted Curtis Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900* (London: Praeger, 2003), 123.

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medium. The invention of the offset press along with the perfection of the teletypesetter in 1929 significantly increased printing capabilities to several thousand characters per hour.[9]

Utilizing these printing advancements, Spanish publishers readily printed songs on loose-leaf pamphlets and sold them in urban areas. In turn, soldiers and citizens alike began to sing these songs. As George Orwell recollects in his *Homage to Catalonia*, "revolutionary ballads of the naïvest kind, all about proletarian brotherhood…, were being sold on the streets for a few centimes each. I have often seen an illiterate militiaman buy one of these ballads, laboriously spell out the words, and then, when he had got the hang of it, begin singing it to an appropriate tune."[10] In this manner, songs that attempted to win the sympathies of citizens were propagated throughout Spain.

In schools, printed songbooks were a classroom staple during the war. Children were forced to sing partisan hymns depending on who occupied their area. Oral interviews taken decades after the war abound with stories of compulsory song singing. Many Nationalist-educated students still had the Falangist hymn *Cara al Sol* 'embedded' in their memory. "After several *Ave Maria*'s," recalls one interviewee, "we sang the Nationalist hymn with our hands raised."[11] Likewise, children in Republican-controlled areas sang Marxist hymns, sometimes with unintended consequences as experienced by this unfortunate

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[9] For an explanation of these printing press innovations, *see* "Printing," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (c. 2004), http://search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=117314 (accessed 21 March, 2003).

[10] George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952), 6.

[11] Interviews with Emilia Goméz and Pedro Jarillo, 14 March 1992, located in Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), Seminario de Fuentes Orales.

child: "I didn't understand [the *Internationale*'s] significance, but I liked the song. One day that I was at my grandfather's home it occurred to me to sing it and at hearing me sing this song, my Catholic grandfather slapped me."[12]

Propaganda songs were also performed and introduced to the people through a series of public performances known as *actos*. As many theatres and opera houses closed during the war, impromptu artistic performances called *actos* appeared in their stead. These *actos* consisted of a fluid mix of music, poetry, speeches, literature, and dance – all of which contained underlying political messages. Theatre companies performed famous epic poems and classical *zarzuelas* with new political meaning for the edification of their audiences. The resurgence of these older works as "symbols of Spanish heroics" exemplifies the opposing sides' desire to ground their legitimacy in the past.[13]

A program from an *acto* provides evidence of the diverse art forms included in such performances. It begins with a movie, "*Defensa del Campo*"; continues with an "intellectual war chat," a reading of new *romanceros*, and the staging of a Rafael Alberti play; and concludes with music.[14] A first-hand account of another *acto* described the event as an assortment of revolutionary poems, Communist-oriented speeches, and "gripping martial tunes with antifascist words."[15]

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[12] Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza, *Historias Orales de la Guerra Civil* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2000), 107.

[13] "Editorial del Consejo," *Boletín de Orientación Teatral* 1 (February, 1938), 2.

[14] "Altavoz del Frente, Programa, Domingo 25 Abril 1937," reproduced in Rafael Abella, *La Vida Cotidiana Durante La Guerra Civil* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1985), 291.

[15] John Tisa, *Recalling the Good Fight* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey, 1985), 126-127.

A few weeks after Franco's uprising, the Republican government approached consummate Spanish cellist Pablo Casals asking that he organize the staging of *actos* in Catalonia. Years later, he recalled:

> I was asked to become president of the Council of Music, a division of the Cultural Council of Catalonia… the purpose of our work was to plan and organize all manner of cultural endeavors in Catalonia. The idea I had fought to achieve through my own orchestra and through the Workingmen's Concert Association – the idea of bringing music to the common people – was now put into practice in all places of culture from one end of the country to the other.[16]

Through *actos*, the Republic hoped to inculcate the masses with a specific brand of art and culture that reinforced their ideals. In manufacturing this form of democratized art, they aimed to secure political allegiance, loyalty, and pride from a broad swath of the Spanish population.

Actos were not a phenomenon experienced solely by civilians on the home front. Soldiers often attended performances while not fighting on the front lines. The pages of *Unidad* [Unity], a monthly publication for the forty-eighth Brigade, are littered with advertisements for public *actos* in nearby towns.[17] Additionally, traveling performers routinely hosted shows at soldiers' barracks and hospitals.[18] These troupe performances, geared towards civilians and soldiers alike, were exceedingly popular forms of entertainment.

As documented in infantry journals, traveling cultural groups and *actos* that incorporated singing into their trench performances had the effect of strengthening brigade unity. Poets like Rafael Alberti and Manuel Altolaguirre

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[16] Pablo Casals, *Joys and Sorrows; Reflections* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 212.

[17] *Unidad*, May, 1937, passim.

[18] Casals, 227.

organized poetry readings and ballad sing-alongs for soldiers.[19] Continuing its campaign to bring culture to the people, the Republic hoped that poetry readings and *actos* would strengthen the resolve of its fighters and sympathizers.

Revolutionary war songs were abundant at any cultural gathering or performance. Movies and plays in the Republican territory were invariably prefaced with a political speech, or followed by a recording of the *Himno de Riego*. Nationalists favored *El Caudillo, Oriamendi,* and the rousing *Legión*. In some cases, the performing artists themselves would end a play by singing war songs in tandem with the audience.[20]

Another propagandistic means of transmitting music's persuasive qualities was the loudspeaker. As Republican towns teemed with eager militiamen and citizens gearing for war, special military units blared musical propaganda on city streets. In his description of the heightened excitement in Barcelona, Orwell remembers, "down the Ramblas, the wide central artery of the town where crowds of people streamed constantly to and fro, the loud-speakers were bellowing revolutionary songs all day and far into the night."[21] Such techniques proved effective. A soldier's 1937 letter reads, "Outside in the square the propaganda loud-speaker is playing the ever-thrilling *Internationale* and the townspeople and the troops are all singing. You know I can't get over the thrill of hearing the

[19] M.J. Benardete and Rolfe Humphries, *…And Spain Sings: 50 Loyalist Ballads* (New York, Vanguard Press, 1937, ix-x. This particular group of poets was financed by the Intellectual Antifascist Alliance for the Defense of Culture.

[20] Holguín, 186 *and* Hess, 282.

[21] Orwell, 5.

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Internationale and the *Youthful Guardsman* sung by everyone everywhere I go."[22] Loudspeakers also trumpeted songs throughout cities during military parades and marches.

Thanks to the loudspeaker, propaganda music was not limited to urban areas. One Republican cultural militia outfitted a truck with a gargantuan loudspeaker on its roof that literally brought music to the trenches. Recordings of Republican hymns were mixed with messages broadcasted to the enemy as this member of a propaganda team describes in a letter:

> Towards nite [sic] we leave here & go to a point where we can reach the fascists with our speakers. We leave the truck in a sheltered spot and there we divide the work. Sam stays with the amplifier & handles the controls & phonograph – I lay our line up into the 1st line trenches and take the speaker up & rest it over the parapet facing the fascists. Then we begin – first the *Himno de Riego* (Spanish National Anthem) – and when it ends you hear our boys cheering "*Viva*" all up and down the front…Then comes a plea to pass over to us.. and then the '*Internacionale*.' The first nite 20 deserters came over in the great confusion we caused in the fascist camp.[23]



Fig. 1 (Salamanca Archives)


Fig. 2 (Salamanca Archives)

Figures 1 and 2 show soldiers congregating around an *Altavoz* truck and assembling a loudspeaker, respectively.

[22] Letter from Fredrick Lutz, 6/16/37, reproduced in Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks, *Madrid 1937: Letters of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade From the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 105-106.

[23] Nelson and Hendricks, 220. The cultural militia *Altavoz del Frente* eventually built a fleet of trucks that were placed on the front lines. A more in-depth description of the truck and its tasks can be read in Jef Last, De *Spaanse Tragedie* (Amsterdam: Contact, 1962), 120.

As suggested by this quote, propaganda that encouraged enemy desertion was a fairly successful tactic early in the war. Promises of more food and better conditions lured soldiers from one side to the other, as did appeals to their conscience over who represented Spain's true identity. In fronts with concentrated propaganda offensives, there was a corresponding rise in desertions. An internal Republican document confirms this: "all the prisoners, all that have passed to our side, all that we have captured, all, absolutely all, have [propaganda] sheets of ours inside their bags."[24] Therefore, propaganda units increased supplies in any way they could, including appeals to the public for donations.

The underlying aural concept of the loudspeaker was even more effective when used by the newest technological medium of dissemination – the radio. Radio quickly became the war's most pervasive form of propaganda, far outpacing the capacity and reach of print material and *actos*. The nascent technology arrived in Spain in 1923; its poor sound quality, however, initially failed to attract listeners. New advancements in the late 1920s considerably improved broadcasts, and the early 1930s saw a boom in radio set sales.[25] The Spanish monthly *Música* [Music] crowned radio as "a radiophonic art" and a "new mode of expression" as the technology had finally "arrived to the [level of] faithful reproduction of any musical work."[26] Coupled with the relatively new phonograph, radiophonic transmissions of operettas, news, and musical theatre

[24] Dispatch written by Francisco Antón, Centro del Ejército Republicano, Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), P.S. Madrid 554.

[25] Alan Davies, "Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television," *The First Radio War: Broadcasting in the Spanish Civil War* 19:4 (1999): 474.

[26] Arnaud, "La Radio, Elemento Creador de un Nuevo Modo de Expresión," *Música* 3 (March, 1938): 44-45.

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attracted a substantial audience. The radio shaped a new market which, if harnessed correctly, was capable of consolidating a sense of Spanish identity. Republicans and Nationalists scrambled to tap this new market.



Fig. 3 (Salamanca Archives)


Fig. 4 ("Balas de Papel")



Fig. 5 ("Balas de Papel")

Figure 3 depicts a Republican flyer appealing to citizens: It reads, "So that the true Spain arrives to our brothers oppressed by the invasion, we need radio transmitters, speakers, megaphones, and rockets. We need to edit thousands of flyers and pamphlets. All of the commissars should collaborate in this grand undertaking that our voice arrives to the fascist zone. Contribute your subscription donation for propaganda against the enemy."

Figure 4 shows several Republican infantrymen in the trenches huddled around a record player.

In Figure 5, Nationalist General Queipo de Llano gives a radio address.

By 1936 eight regional transmitters and sixty smaller stations provided coverage to most of Spain's population.[27] Republicans used this to their advantage – on the morning of Franco's uprising, one of the Republic's first

[27] Davies, 473.

actions was to allay public fears with continuous radio broadcasts denying a coordinated military coup.[28] In the following months the Republican Army established radio transmission battalions. Their tasks chiefly involved writing day-to-day radio transmissions which were a mix of musical selections (popular and classical), news, and propaganda programs. The battalions customized news dispatches by formulating distinct propaganda messages and playing to specific issues and concerns in certain regions of the country. One such dispatch uncovered in Salamanca's Civil War Archives expressly instructs radio broadcasters: "1. It is suitable to highlight the discouragement reflected in Franco's recent speech, evidence of the division within his rearguard and the lack of confidence in his political system. 2. The Nationalist Army is the toy of French interests on the French border, they are always directed by German orders, and are toys of Italian interests in the Mediterranean and the Balearic Islands."[29] Radio broadcasters put positive spin on every news report related to the war.

Naturally, the radio was also used to transmit songs. Pablo Casals recalls an afternoon benefit concert where he was to be broadcast across all of Spain: "They announced on the radio and in the newspapers that I was to play and during the concert all work was to stop in the territory of the Republic!"[30] Madrid's radio station hosted another "programme made up of chatty interviews, propaganda, and 'culture'" specifically for foreign consumption. One of the broadcasters amusedly remembers, "As a climax we had planned to play a few

[28] Davies, 474.

[29] "Emisiones del día 4 de Marzo de 1939, Batallón de transmisiones del E.C, Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), E.M. (Segunda), Caja 60.

[30] Casals, 226-227.

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bars of the '*Internationale,*' but we mixed up the labels and put on '*The Skater's Waltz*' instead."[31] Programming glitches aside, the potential for radio loomed large in the minds of Republican commissars and their Nationalist counterparts.

Early in the war, the singing of propaganda songs was one way that soldiers articulated their fighting cause. They did this both voluntarily and as compelled by the military, achieving tremendous success. "Propaganda," complained one Republican officer, "has been since the beginning the best weapon deployed by the enemy, better than their best German and Italian planes…it has been responsible in large part for [the fall of] Málaga."[32] This statement begs the question of what it was exactly about propaganda that proved so decisive.

In a psychological study of soldier mettle during the Spanish Civil War, a scholar found that untrained Republican troops proved surprisingly effective fighters.[33] His study asserts that this was a result of their having conscious political objectives: "If a man knows what he is fighting for and has an intense personal need to win, his zeal in battle will tend to triumph over his fear."[34]

Music, particularly singing songs, was a means of identifying and reinforcing ideals early in the conflict. The *Internationale* was perhaps the most universal song that succeeded in igniting ideological fervor. In the documentary film *The Good Fight*, one American volunteer recalls the moment he crossed into

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[31] Laurie Lee, *A Moment of War: A Memoir of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New Press, 1991), 128-131.

[32] Julio Álvarez del Vago, 2/13/37, Comisario General de Guerra, located in the Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), E.M. (Segunda), Caja 60.

[33] Peter Carroll, "Psychology & Ideology in the Spanish Civil War," *The Antioch Review* 52 (Spring, 1994): 219-230.

[34] Carroll, 221.

Spain after hiking over the Pyrenees: "There was this Welsh guy with a couple of Englishmen in the group and he said it's time to sing – and we sang the *Internationale*."[35] Other veteran accounts narrate similar moments of unity, perhaps embellishing their memories over time: "I remember a tune that one could not hear without the heart beating and blood catching fire, without the fire rekindling like a heart beneath ashes. And one knew at last why the sky is blue."[36] Songs that cherished specific ideals helped define the war's meaning in the minds of many people.

Singing in the form of soldier entertainment also functioned as a way to boost the morale of international volunteers who were often mixed into brigades with other foreigners. The International Brigades were joined by "Paul Robeson, the American Negro singer, and [German composer] Ernst Busch, his white brother, [who] sang at the front or in army-hospitals on a quickly improvised stage, and the chorus was sung by all voices in many languages."[37] For international soldiers fighting side-by-side, music served as a common interest that bonded them together: "around the *private* kinship of two countrymen, a kinship between all men develops: together they all sing the same tune."[38] The simple act of singing served as a shared idiom among international soldiers who could hardly communicate otherwise.

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[35] Interview with Milt Wolff in *The Good Fight*, directors Noel Buckner, Mary Dore, and Sam Sills, 98 min., Contemporary Films, Ltd., 1984, videocassette.

[36] Louis Aragon, reprinted in the liner notes of Frédéric Rossif, *Chants de la Guerre d' Espagne*, Le Chant du Monde, LDX-S4278, 1960-1969, 12-inch analog disc.

[37] Egon Erwin Kisch, 1939, reprinted in the liner notes of *Songs of the Spanish Civil War*, Folkways Records FH-5436-7, 1961-62, 12-inch analog disc.

[38] Ibid. Italics in original.

In prisoner accounts, we see singing as a source of pride and solidarity among the captured. Sometimes, this sense of solidarity extended even to their enemies. Although singing in prison was generally illegal, a group of Republican soldiers in San Pedro prison was granted an exception on Christmas Eve, 1938. The following recollection of the concert prepared for their guardsmen truly exhibits the transcendent nature of the song:

> Our jailers were surprised and amazed by the variety and quality [of songs]… The astonishing quality of the voices, the perfect coordination and timing of the groups of voices, the unwavering clarity of the tenor solo, made us forget our hunger, the rags we wore, the cold from the windows with bars but no glass, our fleas, lice, and scurvy, our condition as prisoners. And the men in the choir? It was as if each, rebelling against the dehumanization of life in the concentration camp, was pouring out his soul in a conscious act of beauty and harmony with his fellow man, *for* his fellow man. When the song ended, the entire audience rose to its feet, clapping vigorously and shouting 'Olé! Olé!' The distinction between prisoner and jailer was lost in the wild applause.[39]

In this example, singing temporarily swept away the political differences that set the prisoners and jailers apart. The powerful effect of singing here demonstrated the human side of the war. Such fraternization in the form of singing was frowned upon by military officials, who deemed it dangerous to morale.[40]

Soldiers did not always need to be prompted to sing. They sang tunes to encourage each other and even to show good will towards their enemies. "We sang while we marched in our training camp. We sang as we marched toward the battlefront. When hungry and exhausted from fighting all day and marching all night, we sang to revive our bodies to drive ourselves still further. When overwhelming forces drove us back, when all appeared hopeless, we sang as we

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[39] Geiser, *Al Tocar Diana*, 7.

[40] *Jefe Servicios de Propaganda*, Barcelona, 4 de Abril de 1938, located in the Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), Ejercito Militar, Segunda, caja 60.

rallied to do the impossible."[41] Groups of soldiers gathered every morning for prayer followed by singing tributes to their fallen comrades.[42] For some, singing was an everyday reaffirmation of their survival.

Singing also played a part in the more spontaneous back-and-forth banter between trenches. In some cases the act of singing in and of itself was a subtle ideological device. During one session of hurling insults across no-man's land, the Nationalists began singing *Cara al Sol* and invited the Republicans to join them. One Republican soldier obliged, simply because he wanted to show the Nationalists that the Republic permitted freedom of speech. When he shouted at them to sing the *Internationale*, he received no reply.[43]

Yet as the war wore on and people grew weary of fighting, singing lacked the same revolutionary fervor as witnessed during the beginning of the war. For the Republicans at least, propaganda had run its course. Propaganda, even if not expressly manipulative, still provided an overly optimistic and one-sided perception of war. Once the idyllic vision promoted by propaganda no longer coincided with a person's day-to-day experience, the songs ceased to resonate among their audience. Soldiers continued to sing, but the context in which songs were sung was more a reflection of the war's increasing burden. By 1938, the thrill of hearing about inevitable revolution in the *Internationale* had surely waned for Republican recruits. It would be difficult for a Republican soldier to believe that the ideals of freedom and liberty ensured their victory as the

[41] Geiser. *Al Tocar Diana*, 6.
[42] Max Parker, reprinted in the liner notes of Geiser, *Al Tocar Diana*, 31.
[43] Bullón de Mendoza, 31.

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Nationalists continually beat them back. The ensuing pessimism was manifest in the new ways that songs were sung.

One example of singing change can be seen in the types of songs requested by soldiers during their free time. A brigadier in early 1938 tells of an "impromptu concert at night in the barracks… Pole plays violin – sentimental songs preferred – 'Last Rose of Summer,' 'Rose of Picardy,' etc… not revolutionary, as on march."[44] Songs of reminiscence likely served as a source of comfort and solace while enduring the endless stresses that accompanied trench life.

Song lyrics also evidenced a decrease in morale and an increase in complaints. A 1938 Abraham Lincoln Brigade song appears to repudiate the bravery extolled by propaganda songs that had so energized them two years prior. The lyrics remark, "I want to go home / Machine guns they rattle / And cannons they roar / I don't wanna go to the front anymore."[45] After experiencing the misery of trench warfare, soldiers no longer accepted the chivalric and noble depictions of war offered by propaganda songs. Another American volunteer song indignantly mocked the stereotypically sluggish Spanish pace: "Quartermaster, quartermaster, listen I implore, when will that de-lousing plant stop at our barracks door? Mañana, mañana that old familiar cry / Mañana, mañana, we'll hear it 'til we die."[46] Songs like these – irreverent, disparaging,

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[44] Alvah Bessie, *Spanish Civil War Notebooks* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 3, 13.

[45] Harry Fisher, *Comrades: Tales of a Brigadista in the Spanish Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 137.

[46] Interview with Ed Balchowsky, *The Good Fight*. An earlier version of the song with different lyrics can be found in Geiser, Al Tocar Diana, 56.

and pessimistic – became the most common form of song heard in the trenches as the war progressed. They stood in stark contrast to the revolutionary song atmosphere that pervaded Spain in 1936.

In *The Good Fight*, veteran Abe Osheroff recalls the stretch of time he spent in a Republican field hospital. Often, political dignitaries came to rally wounded soldiers. Osheroff describes one such event:

> Some of [the political dignitaries] had the annoying habit of using cultural forms to exhort us to greater sacrifice and heroism. Most of the guys, if they healed, were going back to the front, and they didn't need anybody to give 'em that kind of shit. I remember one – Abraham Lincoln stands up straight, with his gun, holds up a hand, '*No Pasarán*.' Ridiculous bullshit. And the response of the guys who were sitting around with the casts and arms in splints was angry. I mean, pissed off.[47]

To pay back the favor, the soldiers responded to the dignitaries in song. Osheroff sings the lyrics of one such tune – "We're a bunch of bastards, bastards are we. We'd rather fuck than fight for liberty." Upon hearing this and other songs, the dignitaries became worried and threatened to send home any soldiers with low morale. In Osheroff's words, "they wouldn't accept the human side of us guys, we had to be fucking heroes all the time."

Osheroff's tale is instructive because it underlines the disconnect between propaganda and its intended audience. By the end of the war, Osheroff and his comrades had rejected the disingenuous cultural exhortations made by the higher-ups that came to visit them. The 'ridiculous' propaganda was disdained because it was inauthentic. Osheroff and the other Lincoln volunteers – men who exemplified the "hard, yet romantic" stereotype of the 1930s – hardly needed to

[47] Interview with Abe Osheroff, *The Good Fight*.

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be told why they were fighting.[48] They had already shown their valor by volunteering in a foreign war against fascism in the name of universal ideals. The act of singing their own inauthentic lyrical expression shows that the soldiers were openly mocking the political dignitaries and their propaganda.

As evidenced by this episode, the use of propaganda music eventually backfired. Accordingly, Republican propaganda units disbanded and cultural groups shut down as morale disintegrated with the approaching end of the war. Quite simply, the Republic's strategy of using culture as a primary weapon to defeat the insurgents did not work. The Nationalists, on the other hand, increased their production of propaganda as they seized city after city.[49] Propaganda, it seems, only succeeded when it magnified truths about success. When defeat was imminent, propaganda ceased to be effective.

Singing had not disappeared entirely by war's end; it had simply changed. Months before the fall of Madrid, a Nationalist commander gave a speech where song singing provided his litmus test for victory: "I have the honor to communicate tonight that the enemy in the front lines… has intoned the chorus of the hymn of the Spanish Falange, ending it with shouts of *Arriba España!* and *Viva Franco*!" [50] The Republican soldiers had surrendered, acknowledging defeat in the best way they knew – through the act of singing.

Song studies of the Spanish Civil War are quick to emphasize the morale-boosting side of propaganda songs but overlook the transformation of songs over

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[48] Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: the Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 167.

[49] Bullón de Mendoza, 301-303.

[50] Bullón de Mendoza, 310.

time. A look at a wide range of soldier memoirs and journals provides a more nuanced picture of singing during the war. Looking at the ways in which songs were sung – be they compelled or spontaneous – provides a reflection of the soldier's and citizen's changing attitudes over the war's duration. The song singing at the beginning of the war echoed the nervous energy and enthusiasm for early victory. By way of songbooks, pamphlets, *actos*, loudspeakers, and radio programs, propaganda songs keenly expressed and added to this optimistic atmosphere in the trenches and in the rearguard. Yet the reality of prolonged warfare diluted soldier and citizen passion over time, especially among Republican sympathizers as their grip loosened in key urban areas. The Republic's cultural initiatives did not result in the inevitable victory that was expected. Therefore, Republican songs and the ideals they represented were repudiated by those who had earlier embraced them wholeheartedly.

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Epilogue

"Spain is Dead / We have killed her":
Song Legacy

The 2003 Davis Cup tennis finals in Australia pitted Spain's Juan Carlos Ferrero and Carlos Moya against some of Australia's most talented players. The tournament, however, made international headlines not for any tennis-related action, but instead because of a strange diplomatic mishap that took place before the first serve. After trumpeter James Morrison played the introductory national anthems, he strode off the court commenting to his agent, "Well, that went well, it came off nicely – good sound, no feedback. Good Job." Unfortunately though, Morrison had intoned the wrong song entirely; he played the *Himno de Riego* in lieu of Spain's national anthem.[1]

Immediately following the snafu, disgusted Spanish officials in attendance stormed out of the arena, threatened to halt tournament play, and refused to return until the proper anthem was played. After the match, Spain's sports minister made his feelings known: "I express our absolute indignation at the offense that we, the Spanish delegation, have been made subject to. It was an offense to the Spanish delegation and to the Spanish nation. We are demanding a formal apology through the Spanish embassy and an explanation from the Australian government."[2]

Why did a seemingly harmless mistake help spark an international imbroglio? Beyond the discourtesy of playing the wrong anthem entirely, the

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[1] David Fickling, "Out of tune Spanish anger at wrong anthem," The Guardian, 29 November 2003 (accessed through LexisNexis).

[2] M. Serras, "Sonó el himno de la República," El País [Spain] 29 November 2003 (accessed electronically through LexisNexis).

selection of the *Himno de Riego* added insult to the Spanish delegation's injury. The historical legacy of this song and others is still strong enough to elicit anger. Even decades after the war's conclusion, the songs carry with them a painful reminder of Spain's modern history. In playing the Second Republic's national anthem, trumpeter Morrison unwittingly recalled a dark period of self-inflicted turmoil and division, followed by decades of a repressive dictatorship.[3] Music, it seems, can be an evocative vehicle of historical memory. Because of this inherent characteristic, the songs of the Civil War did not simply die away with the war's end in 1939. The legacy of the songs extends throughout the twentieth century, and remains with us even today.

Rancorous division punctuated the first years of Franco's dictatorship as he presided over a country whose infrastructure had been devastated by the war. More importantly, Franco's enemies had now become his subjects, and reconciliation between the two would be difficult. As a result, revered politicians, intellectuals, and artists of the Second Republic faced a set of unattractive options: death, exile, jail, or repression. In cultural terms, this represented several steps backwards. According to one music historian, "the extraordinary height of Spanish musical culture in the 20s and 30s was annihilated at its roots."[4] A popular couplet heard immediately following the war captures the same sentiment: "Spain is dead / we have killed her, you and I."[5]

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[3] Spain's current national anthem, *La Marcha Real*, hails from the eighteenth century and became the national anthem in 1770. Only during the Second Republic's reign has this song not been the national anthem. *See* "Marcha Real," *Wikipedia: the Free Encyclopedia* (c.2004). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcha_Real (accessed 4 April, 2004).

[4] Juan José Carreras, "Hijos de Pedrell," *Il Sagiatorre Musicale* 8:1 (2001): 160-161.

[5] Jose L. Murillo, *España: Mito y Realidad en el Cancionero de la Guerra Española* (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1993), 377.

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However, the silencing of artists in Franco's Spain did not represent the end of Spanish culture itself. Instead, Franco's government continued manufacturing cultural mores, as it had adeptly done during the war. From the ashes of the Spanish Republic's failed cultural programs, Franco set about molding a new Spanish image. Cultural regeneration and a unified Spanish identity in the early 1940s were vital to solidifying Franco's grip on power.

Situated at the heart of Franco's cultural objectives was the concept of *Hispanidad*, or 'Spanishness.' A Nationalist decree three weeks after the war stated that "the resurgence of an authentic Spain has to be consolidated by the affirmation of a consciousness of its historic personality…the ideals of our National Movement have been entrusted by the historical destiny of *la Hispanidad*."[6] Of course, this historical destiny incorporated the primary elements of Nationalist thought – exaltation of traditional values, Catholic heritage, imperial monarchy – into a Castilian-based nationalism. At the same time, Franco virulently rejected external influences, especially the liberal intellectual movements taking place in neighboring Britain and France.

As seen during the war, the defining characteristics of Spanish identity were clearly elaborated in music. Throughout the 1940s and 50s Franco's government manipulated certain songs while censoring others for political purposes. Franco promoted musical nationalism and the study of Spanish folklore to reinforce a new cultural commonality. Whereas the Republic's folklore studies were conducted regionally, Franco restructured the department as a national

[6] "Decreto de 26 de abril, 1939," reproduced in Gemma Pérez Zalduondo, "El Nacionalismo como Eje de la Política Musical del Primer Gobierno Regular de Franco," *Revista de Musicología* 18:1-2 (1995): 265.

project that emphasized shared Hispanic identity and downplayed regionalism.[7] The dissemination of ideologically profitable folklore aimed to forge Spanish unity around specific social constructs.

In order to succeed at this task, Franco took a cue from the Second Republic; his government heavily subsidized painters, musicians, and poets who supported the Nationalist cause. One song composed in 1940 exhibits this pro-Franco sentiment: "But the same old Spain / of Isabella and Guzmán / is under the ground… / If only someone were to dig it up! / Francisco Franco has dug / with his sultan's hands. / It was the middle of July, / 'round reaping time. / A whole century erupted from the land: / Oh God, what a spring he found!"[8] Such songs were a continuation of the traditional ideals promoted during the war.

The tools of dissemination developed during the war persisted as well. The popularity of wartime *actos* heavily influenced the direction of theatre productions and popular songwriting following the war's end. The *canción española* and musical cinema emerged, mixing music with topical lyrics and themes that Franco's censors saw fit.[9] Additionally, children's songbooks filled with Nationalist hymns from the war targeted Spain's new generation, and the influence of the radio only increased over time. [10]

But Franco's cultural hegemony relied largely on the policy of censorship; dissent was not tolerated and overt mention or study of Left-leaning songs was a

[7] Carmen Ortiz, "The Uses of Folklore by the Franco Regime," *The Journal of American Folklore* 112:446 (Autumn 1999): 481.

[8] Ortiz, 483-484.

[9] Blanca Munoz, "The Problem of our time: Culture or Industrial Culture? The Spanish Case" printed in Alison J. Ewbank and Fouli T. Papageorgiou, *Whose Master's Voice?* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 179.

[10] *Recopilación de Himnos Patrióticos*, 10, located in the Archivos de la Guerra Civil (Salamanca), Fundos Incorporados, Caja 33.

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crime. A selective group of Nationalist anthems and hymns from the civil war were 'popularized' in order to support a faux-nationalism.[11] However, attempts to mold a Castilian identity were not embraced by a consenting public; the "popularity" of Franco's selected songs was largely compelled by his stringent policies.[12] Therefore, a domestic counterculture movement always survived sub-rosa in spite of social and political controls.[13]

Rarely were Franco's decrees overtly ignored, but a few examples testify to a vibrant and rebellious subculture. Even though the secular, anticlerical festival of *carnaval* was banned within Spain during Franco's tenure, a few towns openly flouted the prohibition. The festival soon came to symbolize "a classic ritual of rebellion" with men in the streets "singing gossipy or satirical songs."[14] These *coplas*, many of which were adapted from songs that were sung during the Spanish Civil War, represented a form of personal protest against the lack of political debate under Franco's rule.[15] One song from the last years of Franco's rule read, "This fascistic government / has us all intimidated / all us Spaniards / who are out of work."[16] A different source details musical performances in Catalonia and the Basque country where songs were sung in their forbidden native

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[11] Ortiz, 483-484.

[12] Sandie Holguín, *Creating Spaniards: Culture and Identity in Republican Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 198.

[13] Munoz, 178.

[14] David D. Gilmore, "The Democratization of Ritual: Andalusian Carnival after Franco," *Anthropological Quarterly* 66:1 (1993): 37. Gilmore's fascinating study compares the *carnaval* celebration in a small Andalusian town in 1973 and 1991. He finds that the political undercurrents of the 1973 festival were replaced in the 1990s with more gender-related themes.

[15] Gilmore, 42.

[16] Gilmore, 42-43.

languages. Such singing represented "a cultural expression of a people who were convinced of their right to sing in their own language."[17]

Outside of Spain, Franco's repression was initially condemned by the international community. Spanish émigrés in Mexico generated worldwide sympathy for the plight of Spaniards by means of literature, art, and music. They repeated the claims of the Second Republic, insisting that Spain's 'true' heritage had been uprooted and usurped by Francoism and its fascist tendencies.[18] In the aftermath of World War II, the anti-fascist language resonated with peoples all around the world. As a result, the Republican songs of the Spanish Civil War would become a sort of rallying cry against Franco's dictatorship, and later, tyranny in general.

Many Republican songs that were prohibited within Francoist Spain were still heard elsewhere. In the United States, protest songs responding to the civil rights movement and Vietnam seemed to have a cultural resonance with earlier songs of the Spanish Civil War. Wanda Whitman's 1969 book, *Songs that Changed the World* provides evidence of this trend. Several Spanish Civil War songs are included in her collection of mostly American protest tunes.[19] The music was no longer expressly associated with the Spanish struggle, but now formed part of the canon of protest music.

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[17] Ann Livermore, *A Short History of Spanish Music* (New York: Vienna House, 1972), 206.

[18] Sebastiaan Faber, *Exile and Cultural Hegemony* (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), ix.

[19] Wanda Whitman, *Songs that Changed the World* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1969).

Revolutionary Republican hymns likely filtered out of Spain via members of the International Brigades, who had always seen Spain's crisis as part of a larger battle against worldwide oppression. One recording produced by an American volunteer in the 1960s describes his record's purpose in the liner notes: "We pass these songs on to the youth of today humbly. For we know you face a future much more perilous than the one we faced… Witness Chile, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua… We are delighted to see that for today's battle you are creating your own songs, using today's form and beat, with words pertinent to today's situation, songs that will serve to inspire the young people to rise up together to say with such a roar: 'NO MORE WAR!'"[20] The Republican songs, many of which promoted liberal ideals of freedom and liberty, were appropriated to more current and universal struggles for human decency.

Other recordings from the 1960s showed a mini-renaissance of Spanish Civil War songs. Ernst Busch's recording, originally released in 1938, consisted of primarily German songs that originated during the war.[21] The record was re-released in the United States in 1961, the same year that Smithsonian Folkways Recordings released two volumes of Spanish Civil War songs interpreted by famous American folklore artists such as Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, and Tom Glazer.[22] It is no coincidence that these recordings were made when folk music was increasing in commercial appeal and new-Left politics were overtaking the United States' political arena. The ideological bond between the revolutionary

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[20] Carl Geiser, *Al Tocar Diana: Songs from a Franco Prison*, Folkways Records FH5435, 1982, 12-inch analog disc, 8.

[21] Ernst Busch, *Disco de las Brigadas Internacionales, España*, Keynote Recordings, MR-101-5 1938, 10 inch analog sound disc.

[22] *Songs of the Spanish Civil War*, Folkways Records, 1961, 12-inch analog sound disc.

songs of the Spanish Civil War and the popular protest songs of the 1960s likely contributed to their success. The inclusion of solely Republican songs in these albums is testament to this.

While the Nationalist songs flourished within Spain, and the Republican ones without, scholarship on the music itself remained thin. Even with the demise of Franco's dictatorship and the emergence of a new democratic state, the cultural aspects of the Spanish Civil War had been ignored until recently. One author attributes this lack of scholarship to the psychology of the Spanish people – they became so disillusioned with their recent history after Franco's death that they attempted to forget it, like "a dream that had suddenly evaporated."[23]

Not until the 1990s was work undertaken in the area of Spanish Civil War cultural studies.[24] In part, this was the result of historical forgetfulness and demographics – by Franco's death in 1975, only a minority of Spaniards could remember any other government. The historical perceptions belonging to most Spanish people had been scripted singularly by Franco's 'establishment historians.' The death of Franco, which was not greeted as a cathartic release but instead met with general uncertainty and anxiety, revealed the deep-seated insecurity of the Spaniards. The generational disillusionment with Spain's manipulated history and culture left many Spanish people searching for their true identity.[25]

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[23] Luis Díaz Viana, *Canciones Populares de La Guerra Civil* (Madrid: Taurus, 1985), 10.
[24] *See* Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, eds., *Spanish Cultural Studies: And Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) *and* Holguin, 6, 203.
[25] Stanley H. Brandes, "Peaceful Protest: Spanish Political Humor in a Time of Crisis," *Western Folklore* 36:4 (1977): 332.

This project has tried to trace the development and manipulation of that identity during the Spanish Civil War by using music and song culture as a compass. The songs of the Spanish Civil War not only guide our study of the conflict itself, but also provide a unique perspective on larger issues such as revolutionary song culture, Spanish nationalism, and mass propaganda.

The singing of songs in war was nothing new when the Spanish Civil War erupted in 1936. For centuries, songs had been used as a means of political expression as witnessed during the French Revolution, the American Civil War, and a variety of other conflicts. In a country where a strong folklore tradition has always been closely wed to its people, Spain sustained a robust song culture during its civil war.

This song culture, however, differed from that of other wars in several dramatic ways. When examining the diverse types and origins of songs from the Spanish Civil War, we see the emergence of a new phenomenon: government-sponsored songs with a wide distribution intending to shape cultural heritage. Competing political parties and organizations used centuries-old song forms for political ends in an attempt to pawn them off as instinctual expressions of the people. While songs from the bottom had traditionally *reflected* public sentiment in previous wars, in the Spanish Civil War they were accompanied by a new kind of song that attempted to *influence* public sentiment. The songs from the top in this war proved popular because of new technologies and the bureaucratic infrastructures that widely disseminated them.

The invention of the radio coupled with advancements in mass printing production enabled songs to reach a larger audience than ever before. The radio may have rendered obsolete the war song as a means of transmitting crucial information, but it also exponentially increased its recognition and popularity. Radio broadcasts of musical programs brought propaganda songs into millions of homes. Mass printing and the ease of publishing newspapers and leaflets further aided the dissemination of songs.

Officials on both sides foresaw the power that propaganda could have on the war's outcome. Therefore, the production of songs became bureaucratized as each side recruited musicians and poets to transform the elements of high art into more accessible popular art. Composers used certain musical devices in order to create triumphalist tunes that could easily be popularized. These songs, even though advertised as coming from the soldiers themselves, were in fact manufactured at the government's request.

Song culture of the Spanish Civil War also proved unique in its song content. Issues specific to Spain's crisis – historical identity, autonomy, regionalism, Catholicism, workers' revolution – fill the songbooks of the civil war. Propaganda songs of both sides selectively used these issues to define the conflict in their own terms. These cultural terms differed among Nationalists and Republicans, but both groups sought the same objective: increased unity and high morale. Significantly, as an uneasy makeup of different political parties, the Republic did not present as unified a vision of Spain as did the Nationalists.

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The lyrical content of soldier songs during the war proved both similar and dissimilar to propaganda songs. Partly influenced by propaganda songs, soldiers framed the war in terms of historical identity and cultural heritage. But the themes in soldier songs also presented a more nuanced depiction of the war. They included songs that detailed the horrors of war, the realities of trench warfare, insecurity about dying – in short, a well-rounded reflection of the war and the emotions that it inspired. Propaganda songs focused instead on optimistic triumph rooted in historical destiny, a theme that coincided with the larger goals of cementing unity among constituents.

Finally, a look at how songs were sung helps answer the question of how effective and influential song culture was during the war. Early on in the war, government-sponsored songs thrived as popular expression remained optimistic. Songs of this sort were performed in the trenches, in the streets, and in the countryside with unsurpassed revolutionary fervor. However, as the war matured, the novelty of propaganda songs waned. When the Republic began to falter, so did faithful adherence to their *Altavoz*-produced songs. Instead, soldiers sang in contexts that openly mocked the songs. As the Nationalist victory appeared imminent, Republican propaganda outfits ceased operation because of their inefficacy.

It is perhaps tempting to conclude that the outcome of the war undermines the idea that culture and music significantly impacted the war. Certainly, the Republic placed a greater emphasis on the 'cultural war' than did the Nationalists, yet still lost the overall war. But such a conclusion would be faulty on two

counts. First, the Nationalists' historical image of Spain and claim to power was much more unified and focused. Throughout the war, the internecine political battles within the Republic extended into the cultural realm as each party attempted to paint a vision of Spain with its own brush strokes. Such division and infighting certainly weakened the Republic's message of historical legitimacy, but culture still figured prominently in their effort to win the war.

More importantly, though, Republicans and Nationalists both attempted to put forth a vision of an unrealistic and untenable Spanish identity. As each side pitched its vision of unity to the public, they ironically further entrenched the divisions that split Spanish society. The Second Republic, even though it claimed to cherish Spain's regionalism and religious roots, alienated large segments of the population by promoting a unified Castilian culture that disdained the Catholic Church. Their reforms of culture and society were met with a competing set of more traditional values – one that also alienated large swaths of the population by supporting ultra-conservative Catholic thought and a Castilian-based culture. These competing ideologies chipped away at each other on the cultural battlefield for the war's duration until Franco's forces eventually triumphed. After the war, Franco succeeded where Second Republic had failed; he was able to endow Spain with a set of shared values, but only by means of coercive force. The Second Republic's inability to forge cultural unity was assured by its own founding principles. The liberal and democratic society espoused by Republicans hindered their ability to produce a shared vision of Spanish identity that would also consolidate their base of power.

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Nonetheless, a rich song culture helped define and reflect the values of war for all Spanish citizens. Songs, therefore, proved influential in a very real sense from 1936 until 1939. Charting this influence helps us recognize the ways in which new technologies used in the Spanish Civil War profoundly changed the nature of wartime song culture. The emergence of widely distributed propaganda songs during the war was a significant development that served as a harbinger of the propaganda campaigns to be conducted in later wars.

The songs of the Spanish Civil War also help us to uncover the cultural issues facing the Spanish people during the early twentieth century. The songs, working in tandem with other cultural forms, attempted to mend Spain's centuries-old rift and forge a new unity based on selective interpretations of the past. Thanks to innovative compositional and distributional efforts, the popularity of propaganda songs in the trenches and the rearguard not only reflected the war's issues but influenced them as well. In the end, some of these songs were rejected by the Spanish public, but if we take the time to listen, the songs reveal a lush soundscape of interweaving melodies and harmonies that sing the complexities of Spain's civil war.

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